

becomes when knowledgeable scientists examine the hypothesis. I am not accusing the young-earth leaders of purposeful deception in the erroneous teachings which they propagate. The problem seems mainly to be that their long-term, almost total isolation from the profession of sedimentary geology has left them knowing almost nothing as to what the earth's sedimentary cover is like.

3. The Practice of Assuming that Because Some Parts of the Earth's Sedimentary Cover Were Formed Rapidly, Then All Parts Were Formed at Similar Rates

Students in Christian schools are very frequently taught to think in this illogical manner. They usually learn only about the strata or formations which show evidence of having been deposited rapidly and ignore the existence of the other sedimentary layers. There are several common forms of this abuse of logic among teachers of "Flood geology." We will briefly consider one form here.

In a few places in the world there are coal seams which contain some evidence of their having been deposited in a comparatively short time. For example, one or more tree trunks have been found preserved or fossilized in a slanting position which cuts across two or more layers of coal. These are sometimes called "polystrate fossils," and seem to be an indication that the tree was buried in a mass of other vegetation which eventually turned to coal. A sudden burial of a large amount of vegetation in a thick mass could easily be caused by a local, catastrophic event such as an earthquake or tsunami occurring in an area where vegetation was abundant. Yet, persons who are looking for evidence that all coal and all strata of the earth were formed rapidly by catastrophic means have often cited polystrate fossil trees as an argument in favor of this hypothesis. As a result, young-earth creationists have widely taught, for the past two decades, that polystrate fossils are a strong evidence that at least most of the earth's sedimentary strata were formed very rapidly.

(1) What Would Be Necessary to Confirm This Hypothesis

In order for such a hypothesis to be confirmed, polystrate fossils, or other distinct evidence of rapid deposition, would have to be observed and systematically recorded in an immense number of geologic formations from all over the world. Such data would have to be collected in all geographic areas and at all levels (depths) in the local geologic column of each locality in order to confirm such a hypothesis. But, up to now, coal seams which have been carefully studied over broad areas in most parts of the world, nearly always give evidence of only slow deposition. Not only are the coal layers nearly always composed of vegetable matter which shows evidence of having fallen and been preserved in the natural environment in which it grew, but almost without exception the rock and sediment layers lying between and on top of the coal seams show unmistakable evidence of slow deposition. Furthermore, in a high percentage of geographic areas where coal is found--for example, in the Appalachians--there are at least several thousand feet of sedimentary rock formations of many types lying beneath the coal fields. In order to confirm the rapid-deposition hypothesis cited above, one would have to find evidences of rapid deposition to be the rule, not the exception, in those deeper sedimentary formations.

However, the drilling of many thousands of deep, oil and gas wells into the strata which underlie the coal fields has clearly shown that rapid deposition was the exception. The subsurface beneath many of the coal fields of West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and other states has been carefully studied from the drilling records, cores and other samples from these wells. Several of the deep formations penetrated have a high content of well-preserved, marine fossils--especially in the Silurian,