

Non-biblical catastrophism

A review of:
Origins: Today's science, tomorrow's myth
 By James E. Strickling
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The author is described as 'a former creationist' who 'numbers himself among the "secular catastrophists"', and the book as '*an unprecedented critique of the creation-evolution controversy from the perspective of an unbiased observer*'. As he has his own ideas to present it may be questioned whether he is unbiased, although he does snipe at both sides.

Chapter 1 discusses the history of evolutionary thought.¹ On page 22 he sums up the circular reasoning employed in dating techniques:

'a geologist inquiring about the age of a particular layer of rock, on assumed by his scheme to be a billion years old, might turn to a physicist for "independent" verification. The physicist would then apply radiometric dating methods which themselves were developed and checked against the geologic column using uniformitarian assumptions. To no one's surprise, the radiometric dating would yield "appropriate" dates.'

On the following page he lists the rules of Darwinist methodology, described by Gould and Lewontin and quoted from Alexander Rosenberg:

1. If one adaptive argument fails, try another;
2. If one adaptive argument fails, assume that another, as

- yet undiscovered one, exists;
3. In the absence of a good adaptive argument in the first place, attribute failure to the imperfect understanding of where an organism lives and what it does;
 4. Emphasize immediate utility and exclude other attributes of form.²

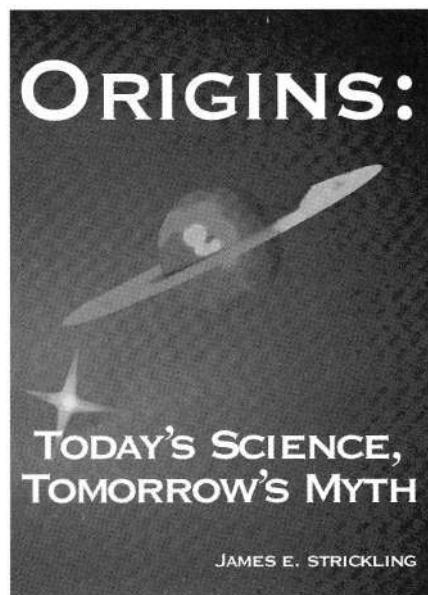
Chapter 2 is provocatively entitled *THE CREATIONISTS: Rebels without a Cause?* He mentions various ways employed to compromise creation in six days with orthodox geological dogma, i.e. the day-age concept, but acknowledges *'the idea of a literal day is clear enough Each day is said to have an evening and a morning, darkness and daylight'*.

He has a problem with how long ago this happened. Adam is said not to be identified in *'the first version of the creation'*,³ although Genesis 1:26 literally reads *'and God said, let us make Adam in our image'* although English translations do not render this as a personal name. Strickling wisely pleads being constrained to the English language on page 31. Also presented here is that old chestnut, Cainan of Luke 3:36.

The vapour canopy postulated in *The Genesis Flood* is dismissed as fiction, although some creation scientists have recently proposed scenarios without the canopy.⁴

Chapter 3, *DARWINISM: A Barrier to Evolution*, deals with material frequently covered in creationist literature.⁵

Chapter 4 is called *NOAH'S FLOOD: A Problem for Both Camps*. Who has the problem? Plausible explanations of terrestrial history are plentiful in creationist literature, while orthodoxy handles any problems a global deluge presents by dismissing the possibility



out of hand. Strickling concludes *'the record in the earth's strata cannot be attributed to a single flooding catastrophe'*. Maybe not when viewed through uniformitarian eyes, but the 'creative imagination' so idolized by evolutionists — ironically, only when they employ it themselves — can overcome such apparent obstacles.

Chapter 5, *THE SIGNATURE OF CATASTROPHE: The Origin and Nonorigin of the Geological Record*, casts doubts on the whole construction. On page 91 he observes that the Ordovician era was conceived to cover the overlap between strata bearing Cambrian and Silurian index fossils — *'its rocks have no singular characteristics'*. Similarly, the Devonian rocks contain an overlap of Silurian and Carboniferous index fossils. The division between Carboniferous and Permian deposits is *'unsettled'*, and while the upper boundary of the Permian is characterized by great extinctions it is *'not precise in some global areas'*.

'The Paleozoic rock sequence does not represent the Paleozoic era in the sense usually urged. Rather, it represents the time during which the Paleozoic era shook with its death throes — years in length, probably, but not

MILLIONS of years' (emphasis his).

On page 104 Strickling suggests that so much more time is assigned to the Paleozoic than to the Mesozoic because Darwinists need the extra time to accommodate life's progress from scratch.

The divisions of Tertiary time, Paleocene to Pliocene, were first determined by the percentage of current species represented in their fossil content.

'The upper boundary, Pliocene/Pleistocene, is extremely nebulous, as the Pleistocene is not represented by layers of sedimentary rocks typical of earlier times' (page 92).

'Much of the hypothesized geography of past eras is based on occurrences of remnant magnetism in igneous rocks', which Strickling explains in a similar way to that presented in Creation magazine.⁶

Chapter 6, *THE PATH OF LIFE: A History of Interruption*, looks at catastrophic fossilization and missing links. On page 120 he states,

'Biological transmutation is real. It is obvious through comparison of living forms to fossils. The cause and time frame (and sometimes direction) of that change are theory; they have not been demonstrated or verified.'

Yes, real at micro-, but not macro-, level And a few pages later (129),

'Only one of the means of transformation is generally recognized: natural selection ... Science's belief in natural selection as the universal transmutator of life-forms is indeed only faith.'

WHENCE HOMO? The seventh chapter, discusses the matter of apeman. The matter is more competently handled elsewhere.⁷

A chapter dealing with language follows, which topic has been discussed in this publication.⁸

Chapter 9, *THE MYSTERIOUS ORIGIN OF THE MOON—And the Nonmoon of Genesis*, argues that the

lesser light created on the fourth day was not the moon — it was captured as a satellite sometime before the Flood⁹ — but the planet Saturn, whose subsequent adventures are pursued through different mythologies in the next chapter.

The eleventh chapter discusses race,¹⁰ while the remaining three interpret some biblical events in the style of Velikovsky — not rejecting them as myth, but attempting to rationalize them into support for theories Strickling adopted from Velikovsky.

Strickling is a Velikovskian and therefore faces the foe of scientism as do creationists. On page 95 he notes how, upon the publication of *Worlds in Collision* (1950), Velikovsky was accused of '*creating new forces in nature to suit his needs*', but when Oort, in the same year, postulated the hypothetical cloud of gas, dust and comets which bears his name, with no supporting evidence at all, it was soon in the canon of scientism; much like the Alvarez story of cometary collision causing the Cretaceous extinctions. Strickling observed that Alvarez gave no recognition to Velikovsky for suggesting cosmic catastrophes as a force behind significant events in world history.¹¹

Undoubtedly events of the order of the Fall and the Flood, maybe others, would be accompanied by chaos in the skies. However, in offering such chaos as the mechanism for episodes Scripture clearly presents as the work of God, Strickling is tarring himself with a very nasty brush — Romans 1:17.

References

1. Taylor, I.T., *In the Minds of Men*, TFE Publishing, Toronto, 1984.
Morris, H.M., *The Long War Against God*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1989.
2. Rosenberg, A. *The Structure of Biological Science*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, pp. 236-7, 1985, quoted in Strickling's *Origins*.
3. Higher Criticism, i.e. the received wisdom of academia, insists that Genesis 1:1-2:4a is

from a different source to the rest of Genesis 2 and 3.

4. Rush, D.E. and Vardiman, L., *Pre-Flood Vapor Canopy Radiative Temperature Profiles*, Proceedings of Second International Conference of Creationism, pp. 231-242, 1990.
- Vardiman, L., A conceptual transition model of the atmosphere global circulation following the Genesis Flood, *Proceedings of Third International Conference of Creationism*, pp. 569-579, 1994.
- Walters, T.W., Thermodynamic analysis of a condensing vapor canopy, *CRSQ*, 28 (3): 122, 1991.
- Bixler, R. R., Does the Bible speak of a vapor canopy, *Proceedings of First International Conference of Creationism*, pp. 19-21, 1986.
5. Spetner, L., *Not by chance*, The Judaica Press, Inc., New York, 1997.
- Lester, L.P. and Bohlin, R.G., *The Natural Limits to Biological Change*, Word Publishing, Dallas, 1984.
6. Sarfati, J., The earth's magnetic field: Evidence that the earth is young, *Creation* 20(2):pp 15-17, 1998.
7. Lubenow, M.L., *Bones of Contention*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1992.
8. Taylor, C., Did mountains really rise according to Psalm 104:8? *CEN Tech. J.* 12(3):312-313, 1998.
9. A popular idea with some astronomers as it could conceivably account for dramatic changes in earth's history, though there is no agreement as to when it may have happened, except that it happened long before the time of man. The concept is not as yet part of scientism's canon.
10. Morris, H.M. and Parker, G.E., *What is Creation Science*, Master Books, Green Forest, 1982.
11. If he had given any credit to Velikovsky, Alvarez would not be famous! It is suspicious that Alvarez suggested cosmic cataclysm the year after Velikovsky's death. Is his idea so popular because he proposed the catastrophe long before man, in the eyes of scientism, where as Velikovsky's proposed catastrophes happened within historical time? Shades of 2 Peter 3:4-7!