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978-0-521-81928-2 - Perilous Planet Earth: Catastrophes and Catastrophism Through the Ages

Trevor Palmer

Frontmatter

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## Perilous Planet Earth

Catastrophes and Catastrophism through the Ages

*Perilous Planet Earth* places our present concern about the threat to Earth from asteroids and comets within an historical context, looking at the evidence for past events within the geological and historical records. Professor Palmer argues that the better we understand our past, the greater the likelihood that we will be able to take appropriate action to preserve our civilisation for the future.

Two particular historical aspects are considered. Firstly, the book looks at the way in which prevailing views about modes of global change have changed dramatically over the years. The move away from support for change through relatively rare catastrophic events, toward theories of uniformity and incremental change, is charted. The author then discusses how modern theories consider both catastrophic and gradual change to be important forces in shaping the world around us. The second theme considers the way in which catastrophic events are now seen to have influenced the course of evolution in the distant past, as well as the rise and fall of civilisations in more recent times. Professor Palmer reviews a host of myths and legends that may have had their origin in actual catastrophic events, and makes a case for more research on the frequency and causes of natural catastrophes so that we are better prepared for future events.

Professional academics and students from a variety of disciplines will enjoy this book, which incorporates aspects from a wide range of subject areas, including palaeontology, geology, evolutionary biology, astronomy, social anthropology and history. Written in a clear and engaging style that avoids jargon, the book will also appeal to a wider audience of general readers.

TREVOR PALMER was awarded a Ph.D. in 1973 by the University of London, for his research into inherited medical disorders. From this emerged the two main interests of his subsequent career, enzymology and evolution, the latter stimulating a further interest in catastrophism. He moved to the Nottingham Trent University in 1974, initially as a lecturer in biochemistry, before becoming Head of the Department of Life Sciences (1987), Professor of Life Sciences (1990), Dean of the Faculty of Science (1992) and the University's Senior Dean (1998). Professor Palmer is a member of council of the Society for Interdisciplinary Studies (SIS), which provides an international platform for discussions about catastrophism and chronology. He was Chairman of the SIS from 1995 to 1998 and from 2000 to 2002. Professor Palmer has written and edited numerous other books including *Natural Catastrophes During Bronze Age Civilisations* (1998) and *Controversy – Catastrophism and Evolution: The Ongoing Debate* (1999).

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This book is dedicated to the members of the Society for Interdisciplinary  
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