

CATASTROPHE IN RHYME

by I. Doolittle Wright

*I repeat my perennial scold,
Our profession is shaped by the mold,
Of the covert view,
That the roots of the new,
Are not to be found in the old.*

*The source of the general rule,
Transmitted by Marcellin Boule,
That Neanderthal,
Had no offspring at all,
Is the Neocatastrophist School.*

*But it seems unaccountably strange,
To deny that the strength of a range
Of natural forces
Suffice as the sources
That shape biological change.*

*There's something completely absurd,
In the view that's been recently heard;
The claim that stasis,
Can serve as the basis,
Of all that has ever occurred.*

*Mechanics are never detected,
In the popular view that's projected;
Since all that works,
Is change by jerks;
And Darwin is flatly rejected.*

*For that's how most scholars behave,
And it's easy enough to be brave,
When objection at most,
Is the groan of the ghost,
As it turns in its Westminster grave.*

*But if Darwin were with us today,
Consider just what he might say;
'Examine the strata,
Containing the data,
And use the ensuing array.'*

*Now ponder that primitive brood,
Eating their undercooked food;
The ones that are early,
Are rugged and burly,
With tools that are simple and crude.*

*Then look at what happens with time,
As a result of the technical climb.
The reduction of stress,
Means there's more of the less,
With moderns emerging sublime.*

*If we stick to the fossils involved,
The problem is easily solved;
Since Neanderthal form,
Can serve as the norm,
From which our species evolved.*

[From C. Loring Brace, "Modern Human Origins: Narrow Focus or Broad Spectrum." The David Skomp Distinguished Lectures in Anthropology, Delivered April 16, 1992, Indiana University.]