

# Contents

Preface	vii
<i>Part I Introduction</i>	1
<b>1 What is a catastrophe?</b>	3
Definitions old and new	5
The question of scale	8
Catastrophe – the right word	12
More styles of change	14
Why study catastrophism?	17
<b>2 What is catastrophism?</b>	22
Guidelines for studying the Earth	22
Theories of the Earth	27
Ways of viewing Earth history	33
<i>Part II The rise and fall of catastrophism</i>	39
<b>3 Non-actualistic catastrophism and the inorganic world</b>	41
A succession of catastrophes in a timeless world	41
Singular events in a timebound, violent world	43
The English diluvialists	55
Scriptural geology	57
<b>4 Actualistic catastrophism and the inorganic world</b>	59
Endless revolutions in a timeless world	59
Repeated catastrophes in a timebound world	60
Conclusion	72

<b>5 Gradual change in the inorganic world</b>	74
The roots of gradualism	74
Stately change in an unchanging world	76
Slow, directional change	81
Catastrophism versus uniformitarianism	85
<b>6 Catastrophes, gradual change and the organic world</b>	88
Progression through catastrophes	88
Sudden change in a steady-state world	93
Gradual progression	96
Gradual change in a steady-state world	104
 <i>Part III The revival of catastrophism</i>	109
<b>7 Inorganic history</b>	111
Background to the modern debates	111
The rate debate and the inorganic world	113
Time's arrow or time's cycle?	127
Different worlds, different processes	145
<b>8 Organic history</b>	150
Levels of evolutionary change	150
The motor of organic history	154
The tempo of organic change	157
The tempo of biotic change	163
Direction in the organic world	181
<b>9 Synthesis</b>	193
Neocatastrophism and uniformitarianism	194
Non-linear dynamics and Earth processes	196
 References	201
Index	233