

BOOK REVIEW

Title: *Tornado in a Junkyard: The Relentless Myth of Darwinism*

Author: James Perloff

Publisher: Rufuge Books, 1999

Reviewer: unknown

Up to about 150 years many Christians believed that God created the world in six days, some 4,000-5,000 years before the birth of Our Saviour. Some of the Fathers of the Church, such as St. Basil the Great, thought that the six days probably represented aeons, not literal 24-hour days such as we know them. Then *Origin of Species* was published in 1859 by Charles Darwin. Although there was significant dissent at the time of publication, most scientists jumped on the bandwagon, the theory of evolution entered into the mainstream of Western man's thought (via the media), and the world changed irrevocably. Nothing again would be the same. Immense, unimaginable time spans were accepted uncritically, the older the better, bones of apelike creatures were dug up, dated at millions of years and proclaimed to be the ancestors of modern human beings. Because the media proclaimed the truth of evolution, it was seen to be a much better explanation than Scripture, and with the separation of Church and State, schools have been banned from teaching a God-centered, creationist explanation of the universe and our earth. We have been carefully taught that human beings are just another form of animal, that all animal life evolved from one-celled molecules, that our earth is a tiny speck on the edge of an ordinary galaxy, somewhere in the back-of-beyond. The account of creation as told in Genesis was relegated to the shelf, just another myth similar to those told by every primitive group of people. And God Himself? Totally unnecessary.

I was raised as an atheist. Evolution and the enormous age of the earth always seemed like very interesting, even exciting, things to read about, even though I had no science background. I read books on recent discoveries in biological evolution and gazed in wonder at reconstructions of Neanderthal and Australopithecine bones. I was always fascinated by the theory of plate tectonics and continental drift. I took a geology course at the University of Washington and wrote a successful term paper on the volcanism of Iceland, the birth of the Island of Surtsey, and the fact that Iceland is part of the Mid-Atlantic Rift. I accepted all the theories because they were so neatly packaged in textbooks and popular science books and

were always favorably reported on by the media. It just all seemed so reasonable. The account in Genesis? Impossible.

After becoming Orthodox, I began reading the Bible with great interest, love, and attention. I found I deeply desired to believe that the account in Genesis was absolutely correct. But I had been so thoroughly indoctrinated in the theory of evolution that I just couldn't make the leap. After all, weren't the scientific dating systems infallible (+- some hundreds or more years, of course), weren't there proofs of evolution, such as the peppered moth and the horse? I was very ignorant, but not more so than most people, I would venture to guess.

Then I bought a copy of *Tornado in a Junkyard* from the St. Nectarios Book Store. The lights began to go on! I found out through this book that the "proofs" I had accepted had been debunked. The peppered moth "proof" had turned out to be merely variations already present in the moth species, and the highly touted scenario of horse evolution (complete with pictures) had been proved totally wrong. Perloff describes how scientists must interpret all discoveries and results of dating systems (of once-living matter and of rocks) in the light of evolution, thereby sometimes creating imaginary links between fossils and accepting some dating results but discarding others as not reasonable according to the theory. The public, of course, is told only of the discovery and the date that was deemed to be acceptable to the evolutionist scientists. And if it appears on the evening news, then it must be correct, correct?

Perloff carefully dissects all the legs on which evolution stands - dating systems, fossil record, mutation, etc. - and finds them all to be quite shaky. For example the Carbon-14 test for dating once-living matter is very unreliable, even giving an age of some 27,000 years to the shells of living snails (pg. 141). The lava dome of Mt St Helens, formed in 1980, was radiometrically dated at 2.8 million years (pg 146). In addition, there are many unresolved problems, not answered by the evolutionists, such as the amount of helium in the atmosphere, the amount of salt in the oceans, the size of the Mississippi delta, to name just a few.

Perloff also discusses the effects of mutation, one of the cornerstones of evolution. In the theory of evolution, mutation is believed to be the most important (alongside survival of the fittest) method by which one type of creature gradually evolved into a higher form of life over vast eons of time. In real life, however, mutations (birth defects, as we call them today) are nearly always a very negative occurrence, making it very difficult or even

impossible for the creature to survive. One additional difficulty is that mutations are recessive, making it mandatory that both the father and the mother have that particular mutation in order to reproduce it in their offspring. Another difficulty is that many processes found in living creatures, such as the remarkable poison-spraying mechanism of the bombardier beetle or the human eye, are so incredibly complex and so interdependent on the various components of the process that the process simply could not have evolved over long periods of time; i.e., if one component of the process were missing or underdeveloped, the whole mechanism would be inoperable. The structure of DNA and the information contained in it is difficult to reconcile with the theory of gradual evolution from simple to complex, since, for example, mutations involve a loss of DNA information, not an increase, which would be necessary for a species to evolve.

The abundant quotes from scientific journals that Perloff cites strongly indicate that the fossil record does not support evolution. Each creature found in the fossil record appears at the lowest level in the exact same form as it does in the most recent level, allowing for slight variations of the type in individuals. Even the evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould admits (as quoted on pg 18): "Most species exhibit no directional change during their tenure on earth. They appear in the fossil record looking much the same as when they disappear; morphological change is usually limited and directionless." Trilobites, arthropods found in vast numbers at the very lowest geological levels, are an unsolved mystery for the evolutionists. A quote from <http://www.peripatus.gen.nz/Taxa/Arthropoda/Trilobita/Trilobite.html> is enlightening on the question of the origin of trilobites (and also on the way evolutionists habitually refer to anyone who disagrees with them):

The big problem with the earliest known trilobites, is that they are trilobites. That is to say, their earliest representatives - from the order Redlichiida and in particular the Fallotaspidae - are distinctly and emphatically trilobites, and they do not look like anything else. They provide few clues to which other arthropod groups may be their close relatives, or to their origins. Although it is true that one or two of the Ediacaran forms such as Spriggina superficially resemble early trilobites, to date the detailed case for such an ancestry is far from compelling.

Tornado in a Junkyard contains a wealth of material, very clearly footnoted for easy further reference, on the unreliability of all that supports the theory of evolution and the growing doubts about the validity of that theory. Perloff also has quite a bit to say about the effects of the teaching of evolution on the minds of young children and its overall effect on society as

a whole. As he says (pg 231), "One hundred years ago students learned they were created in God's image. Today they are told in effect: 'The universe was created by chance. You therefore are here by accident. Your life has no purpose or meaning. There is no afterlife; you have no soul. You are just a blob of molecules . . .'" The inference for the individual and for society is inescapable: eat, drink, and be merry, for there is nothing else. It seems reasonable to extrapolate this mind-numbing brainwashing to the rise in drug use, child suicide, depression, crime, abortion, and other ills of our day.

This book is a perfect introduction to a study of just how far the "proofs" of evolution can be accepted. Also, we Orthodox Christians are prompted to explore what the Church Fathers have to say about how we should approach the Holy Scriptures. The popularity of the evolutionary theories calls for some counterbalancing, and a thorough study of the claims is needed. It is very difficult for the non-scientific layperson (like myself) to discern error from truth in such a complex arena. I submit, however, that our best guide is the Church's approach to the Holy Scriptures. A partial list of Christian Mysteries include: the Holy Trinity; bread and wine becoming the Body and Blood of our Lord, God, and Saviour, Jesus Christ; the spiritual and physical healing that comes from partaking of that Mystery; the Incarnation; the Virgin Birth; the Resurrection; the miracles performed by our Saviour; the existence of angels. As Orthodox Christians, we accept these Mysteries and many more through our faith in God's Word revealed to us through Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition. Not one of these Mysteries can be proved through scientific means. It is only because science has challenged the creation *ex nihil* by God and the account of the Flood of Noah that these particular Mysteries cause us problems. But we must remember that physical science is not only fallible, but it is also the product of worldly wisdom and knowledge that, even if correct in some aspects, is extremely limited and can never progress into the realms of God's revealed Mysteries. Only love for God and faith in His Scripture can do that. We do not know the Mind of God and we cannot plumb the depths of His mysteries. We don't have to have been born prior to *The Origin of Species* to know and believe that with an easy conscience.

The paper, Rationalism and Fundamentalism – The Two Banes of Western Theology, Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, should be read with Perloff's book to give us a more Orthodox Christian perspective on the question of evolution.