

The Grand Canyon Controversy: Thirty Years of Plagiarism and Slander within the Creation Science Community

Abstract: The record clearly shows that between 1989 and 1992, Dr. Steve Austin, a geologist then working for ICR, plagiarized key discoveries of Dr. Walt Brown pertaining to the breached dam formation of the Grand Canyon. When people noted the similarities, Austin responded by accusing Brown of plagiarizing *his* work.

Austin's slander quickly spread and began to threaten not only Brown's work, but the work and reputation of other professionals who supported his theory. As result, Brown approached Austin / ICR in 1993 to resolve the matter privately. When this failed, Brown proposed and ICR initially agreed to Christian binding arbitration to resolve this dispute. At the last minute, however, ICR backed out of their agreement, stating they would participate in only *non-binding* Christian mediation. Brown reluctantly agreed.

At the conclusion of the mediation session held June 21, 1994, the panel found in favor of Brown, but Austin/ICR subsequently failed to honor the terms of the agreement. Since then, they and others have added to their slander by spreading the lie that "Brown threatened to sue ICR." The lies continue to this day and Austin continues to use some of Brown's discoveries without attribution, causing much confusion and hindering access to the only explanation for the formation of the Grand Canyon that provides a scientific explanation and answers key problems.

Background. In the late 1980's, Dr. Steve Austin (at the time employed by ICR) was "supposing" (his word) that the Grand Canyon was a post-flood related marvel created by a large lake that breached a dam. He muses about this possibility in ICR's 1988 version of Austin's *Grand Canyon Field Guide (FG)*. He also mentions several problems that must be overcome by any explanation, but proposes no solutions, answers, or evidence.

During 1986-87, Dr. Walt Brown devoted one full year to researching the formation of the Grand Canyon. He discovered unique features of the surrounding high country that led to his theory that the Grand Canyon was formed when a massive, now-extinct lake at 5,700 feet breached its dam at the Marble Canyon funnel. Brown named this lake "Grand Lake." He began describing his discoveries in lectures, presentations, and radio interviews in 1988.

In 1989, Brown published his theory in the 5th edition of *In the Beginning - Compelling Evidence for Creation and the Flood (ITB)*, including data on the elevation, name, location, and breach point of Grand Lake. He was the first to lecture on and publish these specific data along with dozens of pieces of field evidence in support of his explanation.

Before long, people were telling Brown that Austin was saying Brown had plagiarized his (Austin's) breached dam theory. At first, Brown ignored the rumors. However, the slander continued to spread and was threatening the ministry efforts of a friend. As a result, Brown followed our Lord's instruction in Matthew 18 and, in 1993, approached Austin and ICR privately. He requested that they stop the deception and correct the record.

Austin and ICR rebuffed Brown's attempt to settle the matter privately. Instead, Austin falsely claimed priority based on his *FG*, supposedly copyrighted in 1988, which he sent to Brown. Upon comparison with his own copy of Austin's 1988 *FG*, Brown noted that the booklet Austin sent him had been modified to insert a map of a large lake, which Austin had captioned "*ancient lake which breached its dam to form Grand Canyon*" (Attachment 1). Other discrepancies made

it obvious that this map had been quickly inserted prior to publication of the 1989 *FG*, which was then falsely labeled with a 1988 copyright. (Further, after reading Brown's newly published *ITB* 5th Edition in 1989, Austin added other details from *ITB* to his 1990 *FG* without attribution, including the name Grand Lake, which Austin later admitted he took from Brown. He used this lake name for three years before changing to Canyonlands Lake when he published his own book, prior to mediation.)

Following the instructions of Matthew Chapter 18 and 1 Corinthians 6, Brown then proposed binding arbitration with Christian arbitrators as an alternative to making the entire story publicly available. After initially agreeing in writing to binding arbitration, Austin and ICR President Henry Morris II backed out at the last minute. Upon the counsel of their attorneys, they stated they would participate only in (non-binding) mediation. Reluctantly, Brown agreed to mediation.

In 1994, the mediation panel of three Christian attorneys and one retired federal judge reviewed the facts of the debate and found for Brown. The lead mediator, Peter Robinson, Associate Director and Assistant Professor of Law at Pepperdine University, wrote in a September 21, 1994 letter to Austin that Austin was to stop using the name "Canyonlands Lake" when referring to the Grand Lake explanation for the formation of the Grand Canyon. Instead, Austin was directed to use "Grand Lake," the name given by Brown, as "a symbol of his commitment to reconcile with Dr. Brown and to acknowledge Dr. Brown's contributions regarding this body of water." Their finding instructed Austin / ICR to insert an errata sheet into the remaining stock of his book, *Grand Canyon: Monument to Catastrophe* to correct the record.

Not only did Austin and Morris fail to insert the errata sheet into the existing stock, but they also failed to make the correction in the next printing and have continued to use Canyonlands Lake to this day. (Had Austin / ICR complied with the original ruling, Austin's plagiarism and slander would have been exposed.) Since the mediation was non-binding, Brown had no recourse. Soon another malicious lie was circulating – that Brown had "threatened to sue ICR." Prominent members of the creation science community continue to spread this lie to this day.

Attached is a chronology of the key events in this sad story as of January 2022.

Conclusion. The facts above are documented beyond dispute. All documentation is available on *Real Science Radio's* well-trafficked web site (<https://kgov.com/icr-steve-austin-plagiarized-walt-brown-see-proof-of-fraud>; kgov.com/Leas-Austin-Brown-mediation-on-grand-lake; and kgov.com/Leas-Austin-Brown-mediation-exec-summary). These facts are also laid out in the published 8th Edition of Brown's *ITB*, Note 39 to the Grand Canyon Chapter (Attachment 2) and is a planned two-page Side Note in the soon-to-be published 9th Edition (draft attached as Attachment 3).

As Christians, we know that the truth always prevails, and the plagiarism, lies, and slander perpetuated by Austin, his colleagues, and the organizations they are associated with, including ICR, will eventually become part of the historical record. ICR can correct these wrongs and salvage its reputation with a simple letter that will set the record straight. This will also send a clear message to the creation science community, the Church-at-large, *and* the world that ICR is willing to stand for truth and is committed to the integrity that God requires of His followers, even at a cost.

H. J. ...

limestone cliffs. If such cliffs are the result of continuous slow erosion over hundreds of thousands of years, we might expect a progressive increase in the decomposition of talus on the benches away from cliffs. Such boulder aging has not been demonstrated. Instead, we see shale benches which appear to have been swept clean of larger rocks by large flooding. Then after significant flood modification, a recent talus has accumulated.

When I favored the antecedent river and precocious gully theories, I had the problem of explaining where the products of 70 million years of river erosion went. I could not find appropriate erosional or depositional features to the west or east of the Grand Canyon which would have been produced by the long-continued action of the primeval Colorado River, and I knew that such incessant river action would erode and deposit one million cubic miles of material. With the catastrophic drainage theory there is no requirement for the Colorado River to erode for tens of millions of years because the river only needs to be thousands of years old. The lack of features which would be produced by an old river is an argument for a young river. The vast erosion off the plateaus could be produced by sheet flooding when the flood water retreated off the plateaus. It would have removed the sediment far from the plateaus. We would expect no stream deposits adjacent to the plateau. Then, after the Kaibab Upwarp occurred, impounded water behind the plateau was released by catastrophic breaching and drainage. The Grand Canyon and the establishment of the Colorado River through northern Arizona would be very recent geologic features. This explains why the products of the Colorado River's erosion and sedimentation are confined to near-surface sedimentary layers.

CONCLUSION

There will need to be more investigations of how the Grand Canyon was eroded. The notion that the Colorado River carved the canyon, as the antecedent river theory assumes, over millions of years is untenable and now recognized so by most geologists. The concept of Grand Canyon erosion from stream capture by enlargement of a gully involves an accident of incredible improbability. The explanation of recent erosion of the canyon in association with catastrophic drainage from a great flood seems to integrate and coordinate a great number of facts in believable fashion. I found that the statements of Scripture provide an acceptable framework for interpreting the erosion of the Grand Canyon.

BIBLIOGRAPHY ON GRAND CANYON EROSION

- Anonymous, 1985, Grand Canyon legend: Ex Nihilo, v. 7(3), p. 11.
(Review of the catastrophic drainage legend of the Havasupai who live in the Grand Canyon.)
- Austin, S.A., 1984, Rapid erosion at Mount St. Helens: Origins, v. 11, no. 2, pp. 90-98.
(Analysis of blocked and breached drainage of the North Fork of the Toutle River which has a miniature "Grand Canyon" formed by catastrophic erosion since 1980.)

barbed canyon to the northwest. Later, during a trip into Rider Canyon, the fault—and much more—were found!

Between Rider Canyon and Marble Canyon is what I will call a peninsula. If you look closely in [Figure 119](#), you will see that it narrows, or “necks down,” along the solid white line. [See also [Figure 118 on page 218](#).] Along that line are many sinkholes and a long depression. They show that subsurface water drained below that line and removed considerable material, as if the line marked a nearly vertical fault (a plane of weakness, slippage, and drainage). Drainage would have spilled out where the solid-white line segment intersected Marble and Rider Canyons, undercutting and removing material, thereby narrowing (necking) the peninsula.

Also, vertical cracks, several hundred feet deep, have dramatically opened along the edge of Rider Canyon. [See [Figure 140](#).] Some large blocks have fallen, or are about to fall, into Rider Canyon. The tension that split open and formed Marble Canyon no doubt produced these parallel cracks.

If block faulting produced the 2,000-foot Echo-Vermilion Cliff system as the Colorado Plateau was hydraulically uplifted, why was the fault's offset, as seen at the Colorado River, only about 100 vertical feet and not 2,000 feet? Answer: As Grand Lake's breaching removed mass south of the funnel, the south side of the fault steadily rose and arched upward, reducing the original offset. More mass was eroded as the ground rose, so even more ground rose. Movement stopped when the south side of the slightly *reversed* fault slammed into the north side. (Note: For upward movement to occur, block faulting will produce a slightly *reversed* fault, not a *normal* fault. Consult a physical geology textbook to understand the difference between normal and reverse faults.) “[Plateau Uplift](#)” on pages [222–223](#) explains the mechanics of block faulting.

These discoveries along the solid-white line segment in June 1988, convinced me that block faulting had occurred and that Echo and Vermilion Cliffs had been joined along the dashed white line. (Block faulting obviously occurred at several places directly north in Utah: Book Cliffs, Roan Cliffs, and the Grand Staircase.) The funnel also supports the presence of Grand Lake whose shoreline was 15–20 miles to the northeast. The funnel was carved as Grand Lake breached the 2,000-foot-high Echo-Vermilion Cliff. This led to the formation of Marble Canyon and the Grand Canyon.

36. [Note 39](#) T...ation (named Jack Point) are
3...W.
37. H. S. Alexander, “Pothole Erosion,” *Journal of Geology*, Vol. 40, January–December 1932, pp. 305–337.
38. Norman Meek and John Douglass, “Lake Overflow: An Alternative Hypothesis for Grand Canyon Incision and Development of the Colorado River,” in Young and Spamer, pp. 199–204.
39. I first proposed the hydroplate theory in 1972. In 1986–1987, after a year of study and field work in Arizona, Utah, and Colorado, I located, using geological and topological features, the boundaries of a large, now-extinct lake and named it

Grand Lake. In the fall of 1988, I described, in lectures and recorded radio broadcasts on more than a hundred different stations, its location and how its breaching formed the Grand Canyon. This explanation for the Grand Canyon was first published in July 1989. [See Walt Brown, *In the Beginning*, 5th edition (Phoenix: The Center for Scientific Creation, 1989), pp. 75–76, 83.] Another extinct lake, Hopi Lake, had been described earlier. [See R. B. Scarborough, “Cenozoic Erosion and Sedimentation in Arizona,” *Arizona Bureau of Geology and Mineral Technology*, 16 November 1984.]

Dr. Steven A. Austin of The Institute for Creation Research (ICR), as he eventually admitted in writing, purchased the 5th edition of *In the Beginning* “in August 1989, a few weeks after it was published.” [Steven Austin, personal correspondence, 29 August 1994.] In early 1990, Austin published, as if they were his, some key ideas of mine concerning Grand Lake and the formation of the Grand Canyon. I learned this on 7 May 1990, but said nothing to anyone about it for three years. On 4 November 1990, two people told me that Austin, on the previous day, had publicly said I had taken those key ideas *from him*. Again, I kept silent.

By mid-June 1993, I realized that Austin's false allegations against me were spreading and starting to hurt others. (Austin was also the unnamed geologist mentioned in [Endnote 138 on page 296](#).) For example, in September 1992, Dr. Robert V. Gentry filmed me at the Grand Canyon presenting the Grand Lake explanation, as part of a professional and very expensive video production. Then, on 10 June 1993, Gentry told me that Dr. D. Russell Humphreys (who had worked closely with Austin and was then at ICR) was reporting that I had plagiarized ideas of Austin's. (Humphreys later wrote that he did not use the word “plagiarize,” but Gentry insists that was the intended meaning.) Gentry told Humphreys that he did not believe that was true, but Gentry was naturally concerned about the consequences of those allegations for his production, so he appealed to me for help. I then realized that the issue had to be addressed.

By way of background, geologists have known since at least 1861 that canyons can be carved by the breaching of a lake. [See [Newberry](#), [Endnote 25](#).] The discoveries of J Harlen Bretz in 1923 have shown generations of undergraduate geology students how a breaching lake can produce canyons in weeks. [See [Endnote 27](#).]

In 1980, Austin and many others saw that a small lake on Mount St. Helens had breached and the escaping water had quickly carved a small canyon. In 1985, John H. Whitmore, a student of Austin's, wondered in a term paper if the former Hopi Lake (now a dry lake bed directly east of the Grand Canyon) could have breached the Kaibab Plateau and carved the Grand Canyon. That would have been highly unlikely, because (1) the Kaibab Plateau is about 2,000 feet higher than the lake could have been, (2) the water would have had to penetrate 30 miles of hard rock that

was denser than concrete, and (3) any spillage down such a gradual slope to the west would erode little.

In 1986, Dr. Edmond W. Holroyd told Austin that if a dam were built across the Colorado River near Grand Canyon Village, a very large lake would form. (Its area would have included and been larger than the combination of both Hopi Lake and what I later identified as Grand Lake.) Holroyd drew his big lake on a map and noted that some believed that if a very long east-west fault had then developed between what are now the north and south rims of the Grand Canyon, the lake's escaping waters might have carved the Grand Canyon. However, such an east-west fault has never been found, and faults in the Grand Canyon region typically run perpendicular to the canyon, not parallel. Furthermore, a canyon that eroded along a fault would not bend or meander, as the Grand Canyon does.

The work of Newberry and Bretz and the ideas of Whitmore and Holroyd led Austin to wonder in a very tentative way (as his writings show) if the breaching of Hopi Lake, directly east of the Grand Canyon, had carved the Grand Canyon. Austin knew the serious problems (mentioned above) that faced any proposal suggesting that the Grand Canyon was carved by the breaching of Hopi Lake. What he did not realize, as his writings revealed, was that a much larger *and separate* post-flood lake was north of Hopi Lake. (Austin could not produce any spoken or written record showing that he knew, before 1989, anything about Grand Lake, yet in 1990, he published a map—shockingly similar to the one I had published in 1989—showing, as he labeled it, “Grand Lake.”) In 1988, I had discovered not only the boundaries of Grand Lake, but also its breach point.

When Grand Lake breached, the escaping torrent of water quickly caused the breaching of the western end of Hopi Lake as well. Both breach points are easily seen at the extreme north and south ends of Marble Canyon. I call the northern breach point (where Grand Lake spilled) *the funnel*. It is shown on pages 218–223. The southern breach point (where Hopi Lake spilled) is marked by the unique terrain where the Little Colorado River enters the Colorado River. After both lakes breached, the escaping waters carved the Grand Canyon in weeks and lifted (upwarped) the Kaibab Plateau. This chapter presents two-dozen other evidences, which I gathered over a year's time (1988–1989), that support the Grand Lake explanation.

The chapter “**The Hydroplate Theory: An Overview**” on pages 111–150 and the chapters on liquefaction (pages 193–208) and limestone (pages 255–262) fit together other necessary pieces of the puzzle: What produced all the sediments? What layered the strata and sorted the fossils? What

cemented the rocks so uniformly? Why does the Grand Canyon expose so much limestone? And what were the forces, energies, and mechanisms that lifted the Rocky Mountains and raised the Colorado Plateau so high? *Today's Grand Canyon would not exist if the Colorado Plateau had not first risen more than a mile above sea level.* If the Grand Canyon is a consequence of a global flood, where did all the flood water come from, and where did it go afterwards? Any attempt to explain the Grand Canyon without answering these broader questions is shallow at best. And, of course, any explanation that is not accompanied by definite predictions is hollow.

After pondering Bob Gentry's appeal for me to respond to Humphreys' allegation, I realized I needed to go to the source and address these spreading accusations. **(If I had simply been seeking priority over a lake's name, as some have implied, I would have done so years earlier.)** So, on 18 June 1993, I wrote Austin explaining the seriousness of the matter and asked if these stories I had heard were true. That same day, I also wrote ICR's Director, Dr. Henry M. Morris (now deceased) to inform him of this issue.

In all, Morris, Austin, and I exchanged six letters during the summer of 1993. Austin always denied that he had accused me of plagiarism, although I explained how he could contact the witnesses who heard him and were shocked by what he had said. He never contacted those witnesses. He also denied taking any ideas of mine, although some of the new details he had published were so specific that they obviously had come from my work. (Mapmakers usually place on their maps tiny, unique details—even intentional errors—so that anyone who copies the map will be clearly shown to be guilty of copyright infringement.) Austin tried in several deceptive ways to show that he had come up with the Grand Lake explanation first. All were easily shown to be false—as a reading of our correspondence clearly shows.

By 19 August 1993, it was clear that we would not be able to resolve the issue ourselves, so I proposed in a letter to Morris and Austin that we put the messy matter into the hands of an independent Christian arbitrator to thoroughly study and resolve. Morris and Austin flatly refused. Denials and “bobbing and weaving” continued. Finally, after we had exchanged thirteen more letters, I told Morris and Austin that if they did not allow this matter to be arbitrated so it would not create further dissension and confusion, and so that behind-the-scenes accusations against me and my associates would cease, I would make the issue public. They reluctantly agreed, but, in various ways, Morris and Austin thwarted all efforts to seek arbitration. For example, after consulting with their lawyer, and only four days before the arbitration was to take place, they backed out of their written agreement to arbitrate and announced that they would participate only in *nonbinding mediation*. (Arbitration is binding.) After months of effort, and having finally reached agreement on the time, place, and arbitrator, I felt betrayed. With plane tickets purchased and all preparations in place, I decided

to proceed anyway, hoping mediation would produce an agreement. This mediation occurred on 21 June 1994.

However, by 28 September 1994, Austin had clearly broken even the agreement we signed at the mediation, as a reading of our correspondence will show. I also wrote everyone involved that Austin had broken the agreement. As of this writing (2008), misinformation is still coming out of ICR. Therefore, to answer questions from those hearing this misinformation, the entire matter will be placed on the table for anyone to examine. People can reach their own conclusions.

(Notice that I followed the procedure laid out in Matthew 18:15-17. First, privately speak to the party you believe acted wrongly. Second, if he denies the allegations, present one or two witnesses to verify those allegations. Third, if that does not produce change, tell the church. I am now telling the church—the body of believers. Anyone wishing to receive a free CD-ROM containing all correspondence and writings can simply mail a stamped, self-addressed CD mailer containing a blank CD-ROM and case to: CSC, 5612 N. 20th Place, Phoenix, AZ 85016.)

Some may wonder why Austin and I have never worked together.

- ❖ My first attempt toward that end was in the summer of 1976. I flew to ICR in San Diego, in part to meet a “Stuart E. Nevins.” At the time, I did not know that Austin had been writing under that fictitious name to conceal his identity as a creationist. At lunch with Henry Morris, I said that I would like to meet “Stuart Nevins.” Morris, hiding the true situation, simply said that “Nevins” was out of town.
- ❖ In 1980, I flew to ICR for a series of meetings with its leadership. In an informal gathering, a person asked me to explain the hydroplate theory to those standing around. I declined, saying that I could not explain it in the brief time available. The group urged me to do so anyway; I again declined. Austin then walked in and also urged me to explain it, saying that he knew all the ideas about the flood and would quickly recognize what I had in mind. I began, but had completed only a few sentences when Austin interrupted to tell the group a related story. A minute or two later, he stopped talking and excused himself to catch his ride home. Our gathering dispersed.
- ❖ In March 1981, an acquaintance of Austin’s had just attended a full-day seminar I had conducted in Chicago. Afterward, he called Austin and urged him to learn about the hydroplate theory. Austin’s response was simply, “I wish these nongeologists would stay out of our business.” Later, on two occasions, I related this to Austin, but heard no denial or retraction—only silence.
- ❖ Since 1984, false comments, derogatory letters, and negative innuendos about me have periodically come from ICR. Most recently, ICR has written that the hydroplate theory is “laughable.” The specifics of these comments show that the writers have not read the theory.

On several occasions, I have offered to debate the scientific merits of our respective understandings of the flood, but ICR always declines. One simple, quick format is explained in **“What Is the Direct (Oral and Written) Refereed Exchange?”** on page 551.

40. The most authoritative source for geological definitions is the *Glossary of Geology*. It defines a plateau as:
Any comparatively flat area of great extent and elevation; specifically, an extensive land region considerably elevated (more than 150–300 meters in altitude) above the adjacent country or above sea level. [See Robert L. Bates and Julia A. Jackson, editors, *Glossary of Geology*, 2nd edition (Falls Church, Virginia: American Geological Institute, 1980), p. 482.]
41. The Colorado Plateau has been lifted an average of 6,200 feet above sea level, *but the portion of the Moho directly below has been correspondingly depressed.* [See Professor George C. Kennedy’s statement on page 119.] This means that the plateau was lifted by material injected between the plateau and the Moho.

Several miles above the Moho was the subterranean water chamber. [See [Figure 54 on page 124](#).] The chamber largely collapsed near the end of the flood and became a thin, ready-made conduit, corresponding to the thin, horizontal channel in [Figure 124 on page 222](#). Undoubtedly, some water remained at the floor-roof interface, but even with no water, the interface would have been the easiest path for magma to escape from beneath the sinking Rockies.

42. While I follow convention in using the name “Kaibab Plateau,” as geologists and mapmakers have for a century, technically it is not a plateau, but *an upwarp*. A plateau’s layers are generally horizontal. The upwarp aspect of the “Kaibab Plateau” can be seen easily in the layers in the East Kaibab Monocline that slope downward like a ski slope.

What is a monocline? Lay a book on a table; then drape a handkerchief over the book and onto the table. The handkerchief’s shape is that of a monocline. [See [Figure 114 on page 214](#) and [Figure 141 on page 249](#).]

What caused the bending or warping? The book on the table represents a block that rose by the hydraulic mechanism described in **“Plateau Uplift”** on pages 222–223. As the block rose, the wet, pliable layers above deformed into the shape of the handkerchief—and became a monocline.



PREDICTION 18: A very deep vertical fault lies beneath the steepest slope in the East Kaibab Monocline. Nonstratified sediments will be found on the downthrow side of the fault. Those sediments washed in to fill the void immediately after the fault formed. The edge of the uplifted block will be found to have slightly cut into the draped layer directly above.

Massive mudslides off the southeast end of the *rapidly rising* Kaibab Plateau exposed the East Kaibab Monocline. These mudslides are explained in item 12 on page 236.



Attachment 3 - Excerpt from Prepublication Draft of Dr. Walt Brown's 9th Edition, *In the Beginning - Compelling Evidence for Creation and the Flood*

A Controversy

“Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.”—Sir Walter Scott

All documents, background material, and correspondence between the parties in this controversy are available for anyone to read.⁹³ Others have read, studied, and reported on it. You can hear one of the clearest and most complete reports in a radio broadcast at <https://kgov.com/the-initial-conditions-that-preceded-the-grand-canyon>

If anyone feels this unpleasant situation should be resolved and can set up a video-taped face-to-face meeting with all involved parties, I will, if physically possible, fully participate.

In 1972, I proposed the hydroplate theory. After a year of study and fieldwork in Arizona, Utah, and Colorado in 1986–1987, I located, using geological and topological features, a basin that once held an enormous lake. I named it Grand Lake. [See **Figure 119** on page 214 and **Figure 140** on page 235.] Beginning in my fall 1988 seminars in the United States and Canada and on a 16 September 1988 radio broadcast over 200 stations,⁹⁴ I described Grand Lake’s key features, location, and how its breaching formed the Grand Canyon in weeks. I first published this explanation for the Grand Canyon in July 1989.⁹⁵ Another extinct lake, Hopi Lake, was described earlier by R. B. Scarborough.⁹⁶

Dr. Steven A. Austin, then at The Institute for Creation Research (ICR), finally admitted that he purchased my 1989, 5th edition of *In the Beginning* in August 1989, weeks after it was published. [Steven Austin, personal correspondence, 29 August 1994.] In early 1990, Austin published, as if they were his, essential ideas of mine about Grand Lake and the formation of the Grand Canyon and also claimed he discovered Grand Lake. I learned this on 7 May 1990 but said nothing about it for three years. On 4 November 1990, two people [initials J.B. and D.B.] told me that Austin, on the previous day, said in a large public presentation that I took those critical ideas *from him*. Again, I kept silent.

By mid-June 1993, Austin’s false allegations against me were spreading to a broad audience connected to ICR and starting to harm others. For example, in September 1992, a television crew hired by Dr. Robert V. Gentry filmed me at the Grand Canyon, presenting the Grand Lake explanation as part of an expensive television production. Then, on 10 June 1993, Gentry called to tell me that Dr. Russell Humphreys (who had worked closely with Austin and was then at ICR) was reporting that I had plagiarized Austin’s ideas. Humphreys later wrote that he did not use the word “plagiarize,” but Gentry insists that was the intended meaning. Gentry told Humphreys that he did not believe that was true, but was naturally concerned about the consequences of those allegations for his costly film production, so he appealed to me for help.

I then realized I had to address the issue, even though I knew it would anger ICR, the largest, most well known and popular creationist organization at that time, plus many of its followers, and its leader, the father of the creation movement, Henry Morris, Jr.

By way of background, geologists have known since at least 1861 that canyons can be catastrophically carved in weeks by waters suddenly released by the breaching of a lake’s boundary.²⁷ *The discoveries of J Harlen Bretz in 1923 also showed this to generations of undergraduate geology students.*³⁰

In 1980, Austin and many others saw that a small lake on Mount St. Helens had breached, and the escaping water quickly carved a tiny canyon. In 1985, John H. Whitmore, a student of Austin’s, wondered in a term paper if the former Hopi Lake (now a dry lake basin directly east of the Grand Canyon) could have breached the Kaibab Plateau and carved the Grand Canyon. That would have been highly unlikely, because (1) the Kaibab Plateau is 2,000 feet higher than Hopi Lake could have been, (2) the water could not penetrate 30 miles through the Kaibab Plateau—hard rock that was denser than concrete, and (3) any spillage down such a gradual slope to the west would erode little material.⁹⁷

In 1986, Dr. Edmond Holroyd told Austin that if a dam that was larger than the largest dam in the world blocked the Colorado River near Grand Canyon Village, a vast lake, larger than Hopi Lake and Grand Lake combined, would form. Holroyd drew his hypothetical lake on a map and noted that if a very long east-west fault had then developed between what are now the north and south rims of the Grand Canyon, the lake’s escaping waters might have carved the Grand Canyon. However, no one has found such an east-west fault, and faults in the Grand Canyon region are typically perpendicular to the Canyon, not parallel. Furthermore, a canyon that eroded along a fault would not bend or meander, as the Grand Canyon does.

The discoveries of Newberry²⁷ and Bretz³⁰ and speculations of Whitmore and Holroyd led Austin to wonder (in a very tentative way, as his writings show) if the breaching of Hopi Lake, directly east of the Grand Canyon, had carved the Grand Canyon. Austin probably knew the severe problems mentioned above that faced any proposal that the breaching of Hopi Lake carved the Grand Canyon. What Austin did not realize, as his writings exposed,⁹⁸ was that a much larger *and separate* postflood lake, Grand Lake, was north of Hopi Lake. Despite my repeated written requests, *Austin was unable to produce any spoken or written record showing that he knew before 1989 anything about Grand Lake.* However, in 1990, Austin published a map—shockingly similar to the one I had published in 1989—showing, as he labeled it, “Grand Lake” and giving its elevation (5,700 feet above sea level)—just as I had announced in many forums a year earlier in 1988 and published in 1989, along with the boundaries, elevation, and breach point of Grand Lake.

When Grand Lake breached, the escaping water also breached the northwest corner of Hopi Lake. The two obvious breach points define the north and south ends of Marble Canyon and explain many of its unusual characteristics described in this chapter. I call the northern breach point (where Grand Lake spilled) *the funnel*. [Pictures of it are on pages 222–224.] The southern breach point (where Hopi Lake spilled) is marked by the unique terrain where the Little Colorado River enters the Colorado River. The near-simultaneous breaching of both lakes catastrophically carved the Grand Canyon in weeks and upwarped the Kaibab Plateau via the water-balloon effect (explained on page 227). A torrent of water then cut down through the rising Kaibab Plateau. This chapter presents two dozen other points of evidence that I gathered in 1986–1987 that confirm the Grand Lake explanation.

The chapters **The Hydroplate Theory: An Overview** (pages 111–151), **Liquefaction** (pages 195–213), and **Limestone** (pages 259–265) fit together the other essential pieces of the puzzle: What produced all the sediments, layered the strata, and sorted the fossils? What cemented the rocks so uniformly? Why does the Grand Canyon expose so much limestone? How was limestone produced? What raised the Colorado Plateau, and how could the Colorado River flow through the Kaibab Plateau? What forces, energy, and mechanisms buckled the Rocky Mountains? *The Grand Canyon would not exist if the Colorado Plateau had not first rapidly risen more than a mile above sea level and lifted two large lakes. (Large lakes rarely form at such high elevations where rainfall is rare, and evaporation is rapid.)*⁹⁹



If the Grand Canyon is a consequence of a global flood, where did all the floodwater come from, and where did all that dirt and water go? Centuries after the flood, was there enough water to transport 2,800 cubic miles of dirt? Any attempt to explain the Grand Canyon without first answering these broader questions is incomplete. Of course, any explanation that is not accompanied by published predictions is weak science. *The breached-dam explanation requires the hydroplate theory to explain many critical details that Austin's writings never addressed.*

After pondering Bob Gentry's appeal for me to respond to Humphreys' false allegation, I realized I needed to go to the source of these spreading accusations that I stole Austin's ideas. (If I had simply been seeking priority, as some have alleged, I would have done so years earlier.) So, on 18 June 1993, I wrote Austin explaining the seriousness of the matter and asked if it was true that he made those accusations against me. That same day, I also wrote ICR's Director, Dr. Henry M. Morris, Jr. (now deceased), to inform him of this issue.

In all, Morris, Austin, and I exchanged six letters during the summer of 1993. Austin always denied accusing me of plagiarism (intellectual theft), although I explained how he could contact those who clearly recalled Austin making those accusations. Austin never contacted those witnesses. He also denied taking any ideas of mine, although some details he published were so specific that they obviously came from my work. With each attempt to evade, he created more problems for himself and left his fingerprints.¹⁰⁰ (Mapmakers usually place tiny, unique details on their maps—even intentional errors—so that copyright infringement will be easy to prove if anyone copies, sells and claims ownership of the map.) Austin tried in several deceptive ways to show that he had come up with the Grand Lake explanation first. They were easily shown to be false—as a reading of all our correspondence clearly shows.⁹⁸

For example, Austin backdated his 1989 Guidebook by one year, giving it a false 1988 copyright date. This is easily seen by the date on the book's cover and later dates in those pages.¹⁰¹

By 1991, Austin must have realized plagiarism and copyright infringement were shown by his using the name "Grand Lake" on a map in his Guidebook he sold. He then changed his name for the lake to "Canyonlands Lake." Having two names for the gigantic lake responsible for the formation of the Grand Canyon will continue to produce confusion and prevent others from going to the source for the evidence and full explanation for Grand Canyon's origin.

On 19 August 1993, I proposed in a letter to Morris and Austin that we put this unpleasant matter in the hands of an independent Christian arbitrator to thoroughly study and resolve, because we were unable to resolve it ourselves. Morris and Austin flatly refused. Denials and "bobbing and weaving" continued. Finally, after exchanging thirteen more letters, I told Morris and Austin that if they did not allow an independent arbitrator to resolve this matter, so it would not create further discord, confusion, and accusations against my associates and me, I would make the issue public. They reluctantly agreed, but, in various ways, thwarted all efforts to seek arbitration. For example, after consulting with their lawyer, and only four days before the arbitration was to occur, they backed out of their written agreement to arbitrate and announced that they would participate only in nonbinding mediation. (Arbitration is binding.) After months of effort, and having finally reached an agreement on the time, place, and arbitrator, I felt betrayed. With plane tickets purchased and all preparations in place, I decided to

proceed anyway, hoping mediation would produce an agreement. Mediation occurred on 21 June 1994 at Pepperdine University.

However, by 28 September 1994, Austin had clearly broken even the agreement we signed at the mediation, as a reading of our correspondence will show.⁹³ I then wrote everyone involved (including Henry Morris and each member of ICR's board of directors) that Austin had broken the agreement. Misinformation is still spreading. Therefore, to answer questions from those hearing this misinformation, the entire matter will be placed on the table for anyone to examine.⁹³ People can reach their own conclusions.¹⁰²

To resolve this matter, I followed the procedure laid out in Matthew 18:15-17. First, privately speak to the party you believe acted wrongly. Second, if he disagrees, present one or two witnesses to verify your allegation. Third, if that does not produce change, tell the church. I am now telling the church—the body of believers. ~~Anyone wishing to receive a free CD containing all correspondence between Morris, Austin, and me can mail a stamped, self-addressed CD mailer containing a blank CD-ROM and case to:~~
~~Walt Brown, 5612 N. 20th Place, Phoenix, AZ 85016~~

Some have asked why Austin and I never worked together.

- My first attempt toward that end was in the summer of 1976. I flew to ICR in San Diego, in part to meet a "Stuart E. Nevins." At the time, I did not know that Austin had been writing under that fictitious name to conceal from evolutionists and the academic community that he was a creationist. At lunch with Henry Morris, I said that I would like to meet "Stuart Nevins." Morris, hiding the true situation, simply said, "Nevins" was out of town.
- In 1980, I flew to San Diego for a series of meetings with ICR's leadership. In an informal gathering, someone asked me to explain the hydroplate theory to the group. I declined, saying that I could not explain it in the brief time available. Apparently, Austin was listening in the next room and may have "planted" that question, because he picked up on the conversation where it had been seconds earlier, walked in and urged me in stronger terms to explain the hydroplate theory, saying that he knew all the ideas about the flood and would quickly recognize what I had in mind. I began but completed only a few sentences when Austin interrupted to tell the group an unrelated story. A minute later, he excused himself to catch his ride home. Our gathering then dispersed.
- In March 1981, a friend of Austin's [initials T.M.] had just attended the first of 200 full-day seminars I conducted between 1981 and 1999 in the United States and Canada. He called Austin to urge him to learn about the hydroplate theory. Austin's response was simply, "I wish these nongeologists would stay out of our business." Later, I twice related this to Austin in face-to-face conversations but heard no denial or retraction, only silence—and a blank "deer-in-the-headlights" stare.
- Since 1984, false comments, derogatory letters, and negative innuendos about me have periodically come from ICR. Most recently, some at ICR have written that the hydroplate theory is "laughable." The specifics of these comments show that they had not read the theory.
- On several occasions, I have offered to debate the scientific merits of our respective understandings of the flood. We could follow the simple format explained on page 571: "What Is the Direct (Oral and Written) Refereed Exchange?" ICR always declines.