

Noah's Flood – The Bible, the Science, & the Controversy

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Part 4 – The Controversy

Recap

So far in this series, we have looked briefly at the biblical account of Noah's flood and three well-known theories for how it might have occurred. In Part 1, we saw that the Vapor Canopy Theory (VCT), built upon the framework of atheist Isaac Vail, lacks biblical and scientific support, and few creation scientists today view the VCT as scientifically or biblically viable.

In Part 2, we discussed the Hydroplate Theory (HPT), a flood explanation that is consistent with the biblical record and relies on the application of God's laws of science without invoking extra-biblical miracles to solve scientific problems. HPT also explains many of the unexpected features of today's Earth and solar system. In addition and uniquely, the HPT has successfully predicted many later discoveries on Earth and in space, powerfully strengthening its case as a viable flood explanation.

In Part 3, we saw that Catastrophic Plate Tectonics (CPT), which is built upon the secular uniformitarian plate tectonics theory (PT), inherits PT's technical problems and creates some of its own. To solve these problems, CPT relies on multiple miracles not mentioned in the Bible. Further, the CPT scenario is not consistent with the biblical account.

Nonetheless, the major creation science organizations currently oppose HPT; have published misleading information about it; squelch rebuttals from HPT supporters; have privately and publicly discouraged others from investigating the HPT for themselves; and some have falsely accused Dr. Brown of threatening to sue the Institute for Creation Research (ICR). Instead, they promote CPT despite its many scientific problems and lack of biblical support; another explanation with far less scientific and biblical support, or take no position at all, maintaining that developing a viable flood explanation is beyond the realm of scientific research.

All but one of the 16 creationist scientists and leaders whom I interviewed agreed that there was harmful division in the creation research community over this issue and expressed hope that it could be resolved. In this final part of our series, we will explore some of the issues that divide us.

The History

In his video production, Pastor Bob Enyart refers to the creation community's opposition to Brown and the HPT as the "elephant in the room."¹ He traces its roots to more than 30 years ago. Brown frequently received questions about the VCT during the one-hour Q&A sessions that concluded his creation seminars. (Between 1981 and 1999, Brown conducted 200 full-day seminars in the United States and Canada.)

Brown says, *"I never brought up the subject, and always tried to make my answer accurate but brief. I knew how explosive any opposition to the VCT was, but in about half the seminars, someone in the audience would*

¹ *The Global Flood and the Hydroplate Theory*. Produced by Real Science Radio (rsr.org), 2014. DVD/Blue-Ray.

ask about it. I could see the crestfallen expressions on many in the audience when I laid out problems with the canopy theory. I am sure that many people were calling ICR and reporting heresy in the creationist ranks.”

Remember that ICR’s founder, Henry Morris, popularized VCT in his book *The Genesis Flood*, and VCT was the accepted flood explanation for decades afterwards. To expose VCT’s scientific and biblical flaws in the 1980’s was virtual heresy and perhaps viewed as an attack on the venerable Morris himself. As Pastor Enyart says, broken relationships are difficult to heal, *“even though now they all agree with him [Brown]!”*

As word spread that Brown opposed the VCT, repercussions followed. In a cordial telephone conversation in 1982, Morris asked Brown to set up his own organization, one not affiliated with ICR.² Then in 1984, Morris published *The History of Modern Creationism*, which included a negative description of Brown’s leadership during his tenure as head of the mid-west office of ICR.³ The second (1993) edition of Morris’ book omitted that negative section. According to Brown, the reason that Morris’ deleted the section from his updated edition was a result of a discussion the two men had about the single source of that misinformation, someone who wanted to be a board member on Brown’s new organization but was not selected.

Brown adds, *“Unfortunately, Henry Morris did not first check the facts with me. Later, he learned how incorrect that piece was, so he removed it from the second edition. However the damage was done. Demand for our seminars dropped, and people even began canceling seminars that were already scheduled. I closed our Chicago office and moved to Phoenix to be near my aging parents and consider our next steps. Peggy [Brown’s wife] went back to teaching.”*

Brown’s fall into disfavor with ICR over VCT seems to have encouraged additional, unnecessarily severe opposition from other creation scientists with competing flood explanations and gossip from others. Thirty years later, the four largest creation organizations and their followers are still largely opposed to HPT, damaged relationships remain unhealed, and false gossip and misinformed criticisms continue.

Here, we will briefly examine some of the reasons for this division and close with thoughts on how we can move forward with restored trust and mutual respect, even while acknowledging our differences.

Appealing to Authority

As I quickly discovered in my interviews, many in the mainstream creation science community today dismiss HPT because “few creation geologists support it.” For example, the recently-retired former President of CMI, Dr. Carl Wieland, told me, *“It is something I can’t help paying attention to. Over the years, I’ve known many qualified geologists in the creation science movement. I can’t help noticing that in the Brown camp, there is a real paucity of geologists who support it.”*

In another example, the author of one online CMI article mentions the biblical strengths of HPT but then states, *“Yet it has failed to attract the support of many creationist geologists and geophysicists, many of whom have no reason to reject a successful flood model.”*⁴ This claim, from an extraordinarily accomplished and highly

² In the late 1970’s, Brown decided to retire from the Air Force - foregoing his next opportunity, an important assignment as Director of the Air Force Geophysics Laboratory near Boston – in order to devote more time to his creation studies, lecturing, and writing. Upon his 1980 retirement from the military, Brown declined a job offer from a large corporation in order to become the Director of the “ICR Midwest Center” in the Chicago area at Henry Morris’ request. Brown began presenting creation seminars while serving in this capacity.

³ Morris, Henry M. *A History of Modern Creationism*. San Diego, CA: Master Book Publishers, 1984. (This incident is also discussed on page 296 of the book *Christian Men of Science: Eleven Men Who Changed the World* by George Mulfinger and Julia Mulfinger Orozco.)

⁴ Sarfati, Jonathan. “Flood Models and Biblical Realism.” Flood Models Biblical Realism. Accessed February 07, 2016. <http://creation.com/flood-models-biblical-realism>.

respected creationist, is false on its face. Scientists, throughout the history of science, including creation science, are highly competitive and often guilty of “groupthink.”

Arguing against HPT because some creation geologists oppose it is reasonable. *Dismissing HPT* outright because some creation geologists oppose it is to commit the logical fallacy of an “appeal to authority.” It is similar to the secularist who says, “*Creation must be false because most scientists believe in evolution; therefore, I don’t need to investigate the case for creation myself.*” **Further, not a single creation geologist with whom I spoke had actually read the entire Hydroplate Theory, and their remarks revealed a great lack of understanding regarding it.** Most simply repeated HPT criticisms that originate from CPT authors and their allies.

Pastor Kevin Lea of Calvary Church Port Orchard in Washington State is a passionate apologist for creation and the flood and has a naval nuclear engineering background. After his own in-depth study of the HPT, he wondered why so many in the major creation science groups were opposed to it. He relates, “*I contacted other prominent AiG and ICR detractors of Walt’s theory trying to learn their technical reasons for disagreement. Not one responded with any kind of technical argument, written or oral. What continued to shock me was that none had read the book. One detractor, Russ Humphreys of ICR, agreed to make a technical response if I would send him a free copy of the book. I sent the book. Six weeks later, he told me that he still had not read the book, did not intend to, and would not make any kind of technical response, since he knew the Catastrophic Plate Tectonic Theory was correct and therefore the Hydroplate Theory had to be wrong.*”

In my own experience over the 18 months or so that I have worked on this project, it has been amazing to observe the devotion of some geologists to PT/CPT *despite* that:

1. The PT/CPT is inconsistent with the Bible
2. CPT relies on numerous ad hoc assumptions to work
3. The CPT explains very few features of our earth and contradicts many
4. The CPT has demonstrated little or no predictive capability, a key hallmark of a viable scientific theory
5. The HPT is consistent with the Bible
6. The HPT is consistent with laws of physics
7. The HPT explains numerous features of our earth and solar system
8. Many predictions based on the HPT have already been fulfilled.

So why *do* these creation geologists oppose HPT? We’ve seen two reasons already – Brown exposed the scientific flaws in the VCT in the early 1980’s and that offended ICR and other influential VCT supporters. Further, HPT contradicts CPT, and that offends influential CPT authors and supporters today. But I’ve learned that there is more to it than this.

Challenging an Established Paradigm

That some creation geologists are antagonistic to the HPT – will not even read it – is not surprising because the HPT is a radical departure from the established paradigm, which is plate tectonics. All geologists were schooled in plate tectonics for many years, and most accept its core aspects as fact. (Remember that CPT is plate tectonic theory, only accelerated a billion-fold by assuming miracles not mentioned in the Bible.) Plate tectonics is the accepted paradigm and basis for today’s secular *and* creation geologists – their theories, talks, publications, books, and videos.

However, the HPT rejects plate tectonic theory and re-interprets the physical evidence in light of the Bible and the laws of physics. In fact, one of my interviewees stated, “... *I know of no one that does not believe in plate subduction. This is a significant problem for his [Brown’s] model... And a lot of people have not bothered to*

read it because he doesn't believe in plate subduction."⁵ It appears that asking a geologist to consider the HPT is somewhat like asking my atheist friend to consider the evidence for creation. She doesn't even want to consider it because it conflicts with her established paradigm.

The history of science is replete with examples of the inherent bias against any new theory that challenges an established paradigm. Well-known examples are the discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo, and Semmelweis.⁶ Thomas Kuhn, in his classic, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962), explained how and why this happens:

1. Each scientific advance brings with it a cadre of scientists (the "experts") who understand and teach it in the universities. Their prestige, power, and income derives from this new advancement, which becomes the reigning paradigm. Professors train many graduate students who become the next generation's teachers of the reigning paradigm, and so forth.
2. After years with the "reigning paradigm" however, its proponents usually begin to notice anomalies—observations that contradict that paradigm. At first, such anomalies might be ignored. But then *"...its defenders will do what we have already seen scientists doing when confronted by anomaly. They will devise numerous articulations and ad hoc modifications of their theory in order to eliminate any apparent conflict."*⁷
3. If however, the anomalies continue to accumulate without resolution under the reigning paradigm, someone will propose another theory, one that explains not only all that the reigning paradigm did, but the anomalies as well. *"Almost always, the men who achieve these fundamental inventions of a new paradigm have been very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change... These are men who, being little committed by prior practice to the traditional rules of normal science, are particularly likely to see that those rules no longer define a playable game and to conceive another set that can replace them."*⁸ This brings hostility from "the establishment" – scientists, professors, textbook publishers, and universities who fear loss of their prestige, power, and income. Thus, a crisis results. Such a crisis *"may end with the emergence of a new candidate for paradigm and with the ensuing battle over its acceptance."*⁹

Creation science is a major paradigm shift from secular science, which rejects outright any supernatural explanation for the existence of the world, its inhabitants, and the rest of the universe. This current battle over flood explanations is a minor paradigm shift, understood primarily by active creationists. But a huge paradigm shift will likely follow because a correct understanding of the flood seems to explain hundreds of anomalies that contradict (1) the theory of evolution, (2) plate tectonic theory, and (3) the theory for the origin of the solar system. The global flood is the explanation for many of these anomalies. The HPT provides a scientifically and biblically-consistent explanation for the flood in a way that students at many levels can understand.

Consider fossils. A fossil is formed when an animal or plant dies and is buried in sediments (mud, sand) that will harden into rock, preserving the organism's shape and often, even its biological tissue. Where did all these sediments come from? If they accumulated over thousands of years, as the evolutionists maintain, wouldn't the plants and animals have decayed (or been eaten) long before they were completely buried? Where did the cementing agents come from? Why are fossils of sea life found on top of every major mountain range on Earth, even on Mount Everest, which rises more than five miles above sea level? At present, the HPT best explains

⁵ In Table 4 at creationscience.com/onlinebook/Trenches5.html, Brown lists 17 reasons why plate subduction cannot occur.

⁶ Medical pioneer Dr. Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis (July 1, 1818 –August 13, 1865) promoted antiseptic procedures. His life provides a classic case study of what happens when a scientific community rejects an alternate view – even in the face of evidence – because it is not supported by the majority. wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignaz_Semmelweis

⁷ Kuhn, Thomas S. "The Response to Crisis." In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 78. Fourth ed. Chicago: Chicago Press, 2012.

⁸ Kuhn, *op. cit.*, 90.

⁹ Kuhn, *op. cit.*, 84.

the sources of the sediments and cementing agents, the rapid burial necessary for fossil formation, the one-time horizontal layering, and how the layers then folded, buckled, or inclined globally. The HPT also provides a source for the additional water needed to flood the entire earth.

Most proposed theories, of course, never become a ruling paradigm. The new theory must survive challenges in broader and broader forums. Brown has a standing offer to engage in a moderated, public oral and written debate on the HPT with anyone who is willing to read the entire theory beforehand. I proposed this to each HPT critic I interviewed and to another 16 creationist leaders who had declined to be interviewed. All declined (directly or by non-response).¹⁰ Reasons included being too busy and objections to his proposed format (which includes recorded and transcribed phone exchanges) and the requirement for the debate to be made available to the public. Brown is now even more eager to debate creation and the flood versus evolution with a leading evolutionist.

The Tongue – Slander and Gossip

Most of my interviews were cordial, engaging, informative, and open. However, more than a few with whom I communicated repeated false gossip and outright slander. For example, several repeated statements like “Walt can’t be trusted” and “Walt is a nasty person.” Dr. Baumgardner wrote me, “*From the nasty interactions that Brown had with ICR in the 1990’s, including threats of lawsuits ... Walt seems to have a very short fuse with people who cross him. I personally have no desire to deal with such nastiness.*” After reading for myself all the correspondence on the “lawsuit issue” and sharing with Dr. Baumgardner the actual history, he then replied, “*I admit my understanding of the interactions between Walt Brown and ICR was all based on second-hand sources on my part.*”

Shockingly, even the president of the Creation Research Society, Dr. Don DeYoung, said to me, “*You may even be aware that there have been lawsuits between Walt Brown and ICR. Saying that they have stolen each other’s ideas.*” I respectfully challenged him on this because I knew that it was not true. He claimed to have documentation proving that it was true, but declined to produce it. I then asked him to speak directly with Brown and me on this subject, but again he refused.

What is the source of this false gossip? It sprang from events in 1989 when an ICR creation geologist (and CPT co-author) read Brown’s breached lake explanation for the formation of the Grand Canyon in the 5th edition of Brown’s *In the Beginning* and then adopted and published it as his own. For several years, HPT readers shared their concerns about this plagiarism, but Brown thought it best not to respond. Eventually, however, this geologist began telling others that Brown had plagiarized *his* work. This lie began affecting more people and endangering at least one person’s investment in a costly creation project. Having read all of the voluminous correspondence between the parties in this dispute (which others can do as well), I can say without reservation that Walt Brown never threatened or implied that he might sue ICR. Instead, he laid out a proposal for impartial Christian mediation with this individual and his superior at ICR.¹¹ This was mostly successful, even though the geologist subsequently broke the mediation agreement.¹²

It is clear that those who had knowledge of these interactions either carelessly or intentionally told others that, “*Brown was suing ICR.*” The Scriptures (1 Corinthians 6:1-8) teach that believers should avoid going to court against one another. As such, this false gossip, which has spread for decades by leaders in the creation

¹⁰ However, in April 2016, one CPT proponent agreed to speak with Dr. Brown by informally telephone. The result was an amicable discussion, but largely unfruitful since this person had not read the HPT and had no rebuttals for any of Dr. Brown’s challenges to the CPT. An offer for follow-on discussions that would be moderated and recorded was disallowed by this person’s organization.

¹¹ Christian mediation provides an alternative way to resolve disputes within the church without going to court.

¹² After receiving many inquiries over the years on this, Dr. Brown added a summary of the issue in his book with a link to the complete history and correspondence. See Endnote 39 at www.creationscience.com/onlinebook/GrandCanyon17.html.

movement, impugned Brown's reputation and continues to harm him today. I hope and pray for public retractions from Drs. Baumgardner and DeYoung on their false allegation and have arranged for such to be published online at rsr.org/retractions.

My research indicates that the history of this controversy includes other instances of slander against Brown's scientific integrity and personal character, which has occurred within creation circles for decades and with apparent impunity. Our Lord commands us to control our tongues, and the Scriptures contain grave warnings about the evils of gossip.¹³

But even if Brown *were* a nasty person, this would not be a valid reason to dismiss the HPT from consideration. Many brilliant scientists would be unlikely to win popularity contests.

Peer Review

Another criticism is that Brown will not allow his work to be peer-reviewed. Brown recalls this criticism circulating since the first International Conference on Creationism in 1986. At that ICC, he chose to present the HPT in the General Track instead of the Professional Track, which included an automatic peer review. Brown says, *"I did that for a very simple reason. My challenge, and I believe the challenge of most creationists, is to explain technical topics so laymen can understand them. Technical people are not usually turned off by that and were free to attend."* No one from the large ICR contingent at this conference attended Brown's two-hour presentation. And thus began *"Brown won't allow his work to be peer-reviewed."*

Consider though, what is "peer review?" In science, the peer review process is intended to ensure that scientific work to be published in a journal meets quality standards for good research – for example, it acknowledges and builds upon other work in the field; it relies on logical reasoning and well-designed studies; backs up its claims with evidence; and so forth. The journal editors ask other scientists who work in the same field (the "peers") to provide feedback on the article.

While a quality peer review provides benefits, it is rarely as rigorous and pristine as we might expect, and the process has its detractors. Studies have shown that peer reviewers often fail to identify technical errors and even false data. Some critics also warn that peer review leads to the suppression of some scientists' results. *"...a reviewer – an established scientist in his field – might reject research that conflicts with his own. Such a reviewer might be accused of maintaining the 'scientific establishment' at the cost of innovative ideas."*¹⁴

A recent article in the journal *Nature* explored the peer review process from an historical perspective concluding that, *"Current attempts to reimagine [re-define] peer review rightly debate the psychology of bias, the problem of objectivity, and the ability to gauge reliability and importance, but they rarely consider the multilayered history of this institution... The imagined functions of this institution are in flux, but they were never as fixed as many believe."*¹⁵

As we have seen, creationists are not bias-free either. When asked how CMI's editors find peer reviewers, Dr. Walker told me, *"It is a challenge. We are aware of who is in whose 'camp' on particular issues. We will often try to send it to one or both sides and maybe a third person, someone new to the issue. There are people who will be objective – go either way, depending on the evidence."* With a chuckle, he adds, *"People say you can decide the outcome of your paper by the reviewers you choose."*

¹³ For example, Leviticus 19:16, Proverbs 10:18, Galatians 5:16-26, and James 3:8-10.

¹⁴ Harris, William. "How Scientific Peer Review Works." HowStuffWorks: Science. Accessed February 07, 2016. <http://science.howstuffworks.com/innovation/scientific-experiments/scientific-peer-review1.htm>.

¹⁵ Csiszar, Alex, "Troubled from the Start." *Nature* 532, 21 April 2016, 306-308.

When asked why he does not publish in the mainstream creation journals, Brown states, “*Those making the complaint define ‘peer review’ as writing a short article and submitting it for their approval. I would need to summarize 360 pages of evidence and explanations in a short article, omitting much and leaving readers with many honest questions. Such an incomplete article would be more confusing than helpful. I believe I can make best use of my time and make HPT accessible (for free) to a larger and more diverse audience by independently publishing my work in my book and at the CSC web site.*” (Brown’s work, *In the Beginning*, is currently in its 8th print edition, and the 9th edition is available online free of charge.)

In fact, Brown has received constructive criticism from scores of scientists and engineers, both creationists and evolutionists, throughout his career as a creation scientist, and continues to do so. Brown adds, “*I welcome informed criticism from people who have actually read HPT, and I frequently receive helpful comments from many technically sophisticated people. In fact, those investigating the HPT know that I wish someone would formally peer review the HPT, provided: (1) The reviewers claim to be neutral, are named, and have read the latest version of the Hydroplate Theory; (2) I am allowed equal space to respond; (3) Both sets of comments are available to the public.*”¹⁶

How We Disagree

As we’ve seen, some of the reasons that the HPT is opposed by the mainstream creation science community have nothing to do with the HPT’s technical soundness or biblical consistency. That does not mean, however, that other creation researchers have no technical objections to the HPT – we’ve looked at some of these in Part 2. This is the normal and expected state of research in progress. Our scientific understanding often advances as theories are discarded or corrected and refined through informed debate on areas of disagreement. Such debates between researchers can and should be transparent, cordial, and ruthlessly accurate. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

*Unless the LORD builds the house,
they labor in vain who build it.*
Psalm 127:1a (NASB)

For example, I was surprised to learn that creation journals do not, as standard practice, provide an advance courtesy copy of a critique to the theory author for fact-checking before publishing it to a wide audience. As a result, published criticisms can be inaccurate. While it is certainly not wrong to disagree with someone’s theory, it is wrong misrepresent it.

People are People (unfortunately)

When you also factor into this controversy the vast differences in personality, culture, and communication styles; differences in technical training and experience, biases, perspectives, and approaches to research and problem-solving; along with personal and organizational pride – it is not at all surprising that there is conflict and misunderstanding.

Where To From Here?

Yet as followers of Christ, we have God’s abundant grace and wisdom available to help us resolve these conflicts and misunderstandings. In fact, God commands believers to be “*diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*” (Ephesians 4:3)

Creation science organizations are obligated not only to God, but to the larger body of Christ that supports them to govern in accordance with biblical principles, not the world’s methods and standards.

¹⁶ Usually, reviewers are anonymous and their comments and the author’s responses are unavailable to the public.

Certainly God will answer our prayers for reconciliation as we humbly seek His direction to restore trust, respect, and productive communication. As a start, I propose the following challenges and changes:

Challenges to Creation Researchers

Ask God how you, as an individual and/or leader in your organization, can help bring about restored trust and mutual respect in the creation science community. ([Ephesians 4:3](#))

When you have an issue with another person (or his theory), go directly to that person first – in a manner that is (in our case) both scientifically professional and Christ-like. Remember that critiques published without input from the originating source frequently lead to misinformation and then division. ([Romans 15:2-7](#))

When you disagree with another researcher, do your due diligence to ensure you understand their position before criticizing it to others. In accordance with professional courtesy, send an advance of your critique to the other person to ensure that you have accurately represented their work before publishing to a wide audience. ([Proverbs 10:9](#))

Agree to disagree and debate the science without personal attacks or unseemly defensiveness. ([Ephesians 4:15](#))

Do not gossip. Challenge others when they do. ([Proverbs 16:28](#); [Proverbs 20:19](#); [Romans 1:29](#)).

Know that your labor is not in vain ([1 Corinthians 15:58](#)).

Special challenge to ICR – Consider how your organization can do more to inform the Christian lay community that creation scientists no longer view VCT as a scientifically or biblically valid theory for the global flood.

Challenges to the Church of Jesus Christ

Know your Scriptures! As Bible-believing Christians, we are responsible to test *everything* – including scientific theories – against the truth of the Bible. ([2 Timothy 3:16](#))

Be assured that the ever-growing scientific case is on our side! Equip yourselves and your children to defend biblical truth using the wealth of resources available from creation ministries. ([Proverbs 22:6](#))

Focus on the majors. Do not succumb to “information overload” or get side-railed by minor details that may still be in dispute among creation scientists. Pray for the Lord to lead you to the best information and right conclusions. ([James 1:5](#))

Do not believe everything you read and hear about creation or flood theories and creation scientists. Check out the facts for yourselves. Gossip is evil and does much harm. Watch what *you* say and how you say it. (The Lord has shown me through this effort how far I have to go in this area.) We will one day all give an account. ([Romans 14:12](#))

Pray for creation ministries and those who labor in them. They face the ridicule of their secular colleagues and often experience professional and financial loss because of their stand for the truth of biblical creation. Pray that they would seek and follow God’s ways instead of the world’s. ([Proverbs 25:2](#); [1 Samuel 12:24](#), [Isaiah 55:8-9](#))

Ask God to pour out a spirit of grace, humility, repentance, forgiveness, healing, and restored trust among the creation science community and its supporters for His glory and the benefit of the entire of Christ. ([Romans 14:19](#); [Psalm 133:1](#); [Psalm 17:23](#))

Financially support creation ministries as you are able. Unlike institutions that support evolution, creation ministries receive no public funding and depend upon the financial support of each believer and of their churches. ([Philippians 4:19](#))

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