Chapter 34

A Major Mystery of Uniformitarian Geology

Planation surfaces are common all over the world. This is a major mystery for uniformitarian geomorphology. C.H. Crickmay writes:

Flat, near-horizontal land cannot be seen to have been made at the heights at which most of it is now seen. Such landscape as flat-topped hills or high plateaux shows no process in action that might favour or maintain its flatness. Consequently, one cannot say that any geological work now observable has made it as flat and level as it is. The completion of its flattening appears to have been in the past. ... The very existence of much flat, near-level ground at all elevations demonstrates not only its extensive forming, but also its long survival. ¹

Cliff Ollier corroborates: "It is very difficult to know how plains were originally created, but they can undoubtedly be seen in the landscape..." In fact, present erosion processes are destroying the flat surfaces: "Most fluvial erosion is concentrated in river valleys, which should destroy flat surfaces, and not maintain flat surfaces as they are lowered." Because planation surfaces are not forming today, their existence is contrary to the principle of uniformitarianism upon which most of geological interpretation is based. The only planation surfaces forming today are small scale, when a river floods. If we use river floods as an analog, we would be forced to conclude planation surfaces were formed by at least regional-scale floods. Considering their size and the fact that they are a global phenomenon it is reasonable to conclude they all formed at the same time, during the global Flood.

Bradley summarizes his work in attempting to understand the many planation surfaces from the Appalachians to the Coast Ranges of the western United States. He focuses on the Colorado Front Range (Figure 34.1). There is confusion on terminology, dates, the number of surfaces, and despair over ever solving the origin of planation surfaces. All observers of the Colorado Front Range agree that there is at least one planation surface, and that the problem of their origin remains unresolved.

Evolutionary geomorphologists, Ollier and Pain, marvel that planation surfaces even exist:

The remarkable thing is that plains of great perfection are ever made, despite all the obvious possibilities of complications. But they are real, and planation surfaces were widespread before the uplift of the many mountains of Plio-Pleistocene age.⁵

They go on to say planation surfaces were mysteriously formed *late* in geological time:

There is nothing special about the climate in the late Miocene-Early Pliocene period

[Late Cenozoic] when there often occurred planation that suggests an increased erosion rate, and in any case the mountains discussed are in a wide range of latitudinal and

¹ Crickmay, C.H., 1974. *The Work of the River: A Critical Study of the Central Aspects of Geomorphology*, American Elsevier Publishing Co., New York, NY, p. 140.

² Ollier, C., 1991. Ancient Landforms, Belhaven Press, New York, NY, p. 78.

³ Ollier, C. and C. Pain, 2000. *The Origin of Mountains*, Routledge, London, U.K., p. 241.

⁴ Madole, R.F., W.C. Bradley, D.S. Loewenherz, D.F. Ritter, N.W. Rutter, and C.E. Thorn, 1987. In, Graf, W.L. (editor), *Geomorphic Systems of North America*, Geological Society of America Centennial Special Volume 2, Boulder, CO, pp. 215–220.

⁵ Ollier and Pain, Ref. 3, p. 302.

climatic situations. At present, the cause of the observed high rate of planation remains a mystery.⁵

Ollier and Pain attempt to blame the climate for their origin, but no one knows how climate change, possibly transitioning from a dry to a wetter regime, can plane the land. In fact, it is well known water does just the opposite; it dissects the land. Lester King also accepts the late Cenozoic formation of worldwide planation surfaces. This is where we would expect to find them, late in the Flood, after all the sedimentary rock was deposited and planed by the Genesis Flood as it ran off the uplifting continents (see Parts II and III).

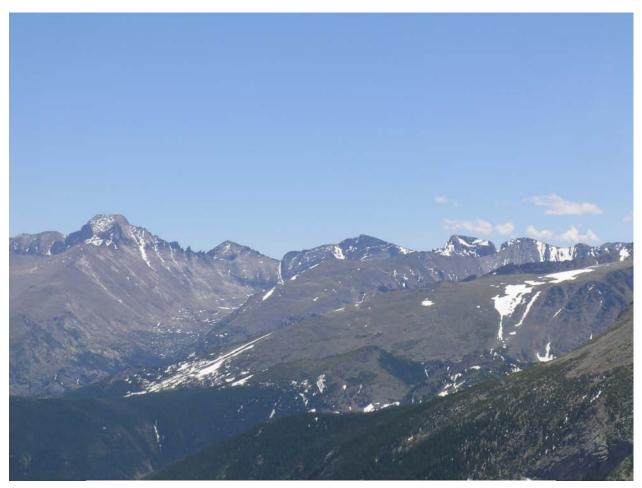


Figure 34.1. Flat topped mountains in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado.

The existence of planation surfaces shows the bankruptcy of uniformitarianism, as well as the vague concept of actualism, in which the features formed in the past by some "natural process" that just happens to not be observed today (see Chapter 1). But what uniformitarians find so perplexing is easily explained within the Retreating Stage of the Flood.

⁶ King, L.C., 1983. *Wandering Continents and Spreading Sea Floors on an Expanding Earth*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, NY, pp. 19, 86.