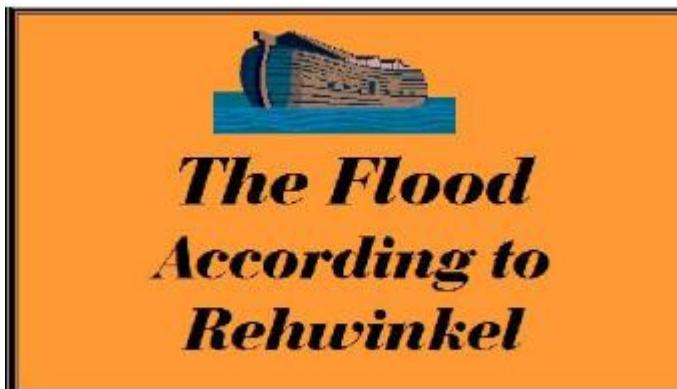




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A Book Review by Warren Krug

**The Flood in the Light of the Bible, Geology, and Archaeology.¹**

Alfred M. Rehwinkel, A.B., M.A., B.D., LL.D. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951. 372 pages.
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In 1961 a book was published which many scientists consider the launching pad for the current creationist movement. This classic scientific treatise, entitled *The Genesis Flood*, was co-authored by Reformed theologian Dr. John C. Whitcomb and engineer Dr. Henry M. Morris.² They wrote in a scholarly style which seemed to appeal to many Christians who felt under attack from the faith-destroying theories of evolutionists.

1. The first edition of this book, usually referred to simply as *The Flood*, has been reprinted at least 17 times — both hardback and paperback. Concordia Publishing House published a 2nd edition in 2000.

2. Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961.

Yet, this was by no means the first attempt to show that science — correctly understood — was in harmony with a literal reading of the first chapters of Genesis. Ten years before *The Genesis Flood* appeared, Dr. Alfred M. Rehwinkel, a confessional Lutheran professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, had written a book called *The Flood in the Light of the Bible, Geology, and Archaeology*.

Rehwinkel's book was among the creationist writings which were very helpful in keeping me, when I was a naïve college student, from caving in to the doctrines of Darwinism. Doubts about the creation account as presented in the Bible had been planted in my mind by an evolutionist "Lutheran" biology professor during my freshman year at an Indiana university, and it was enlightening to hear the other side of the story. I recently decided to reread *The Flood* to see what a half century of scientific discoveries and creationist thinking might have done to the validity of Rehwinkel's work. It should come as no surprise that some of his ideas are today considered outdated. However, much of what he presents in his book has stood the test of time well.

THE BOOK. Having lost my original copy of *The Flood*, I was happy to see that it's still available for purchase. It is 374 pages long (including the index), and its bibliography contains over 100 entries. Judging from their titles, many publications in this list appear to fall under the heading of "creation science," showing that creationism as a science has been with us much longer than many realize.

FLOOD GEOLOGY. Like *The Genesis Flood*, Rehwinkel's *The Flood* presents the idea that many or most of the Earth's geological features today can be traced to the global deluge often called "Noah's Flood." Even in 1951, flood geology was not a new concept. Some aspects of this idea have been around since the early centuries of the Christian era.³ But the modern revival of flood geology has been traced to the writings of George McCready Price, a Seventh-Day Adventist geologist, who wrote a book in 1923 that supported this idea. Rehwinkel lists several of Price's books in his bibliography. What follows are some of the highlights of *The Flood*.

3. "Flood geology," Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flood_geology (accessed February 13, 2010).

THE NATURE OF THE FLOOD. Rehwinkel leaves no doubt as to where he stands on the matter of the severity of the Flood. He regards it as a disaster "unparalleled in all the history of the earth" (page 67), "the most destructive catastrophe this world has ever experienced" (84), and a "violent cataclysm" (101). When he mentions the "breaking forth of the fountains of the great deep" (Gen 6:11 kjv), he says that we should not think of this event like babbling brooks or refreshing streams quietly welling forth out of the earth. Instead, "it means that the earth was rent, that great fissures and chasms appeared on the surface of the earth" (101). Also, "the earthquakes of the present day are certainly but a faint reminiscence of those telluric (i.e. terrestrial) movements to which the structure of almost every mountain range bears witness" (103).

THE FLOOD WATERS. The author certainly recognizes two sources for the waters which flooded the earth — the waters which fell from the sky and the waters which came gushing up from underground when the earth's surface broke apart. Rehwinkel believed the Hebrew expression "the windows of heaven were opened" meant "incessant torrential rain pouring down upon the face of the earth" (98). He believes the atmosphere of the antediluvian (i.e. pre-Flood) earth was much more humid than today's atmosphere, stating, "It is quite possible that the water contained in the prediluvian (*sic*) atmosphere and that which floated over the earth in clouds was equal to the total amount of water on the face of the earth" (98). If he means the total amount of water on the face of the earth today, I believe many scientists today including creationists would have trouble accepting that statistic. (Cf. below for a discussion of the water vapor canopy theory).

Rehwinkel also mentions the possibility of volcanoes accompanying the Flood which could have created clouds that would have added to the rainfall (99). Previously he had quoted from the Babylonian tradition of the Flood which talked about terrible "water spouts" (87). This reasoning fits in well with the thinking of many current creationists who believe that volcanoes may have been one source, or even the major source, of water which fell from the sky. Reportedly, up to 70% of what comes out of volcanoes is water, often in the form of steam.⁴

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4. "Noah's Flood – Where did the water come from?" Answers in Genesis, <http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/tools/flood-waters.asp> (accessed February 26, 2010).
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CLIMATE CHANGE. Rehwinkel understands that the world's climate before the Flood was far different than what it is today. He quotes Martin Luther as calling the pre-Flood climate "a veritable paradise compared with the world that followed" (2). Rehwinkel accepts the idea that the climate was more uniform before the Flood, and, as evidence, points out how fossils of warm weather flora and fauna have been found in areas too cold for them today. He says there was more habitable living space because deserts had yet to develop, neither the oceans nor mountains covered nearly as much surface area as they do today, and apparently there was no tundra nor ice-covered land. The mountains that did exist, he says, were much lower than they are today and did not influence the climate as much as today's higher peaks. Rehwinkel does not seem to recognize the possibility of tectonic plate movement at the time of the Flood, as some modern creationist geologists believe may have happened. 5 However, he does appear to hold out the possibility that the "lost continent" of Atlantis may actually have existed prior to the global deluge (5).

5. John Baumgardner, "Catastrophic Plate Tectonics: the Geophysical Context of the Genesis Flood," *Journal of Creation* 16, no. 1 (April 2002): 58-63; http://www.answersingenesis.org/tj/v16/i1/plate_tectonics.asp (accessed February 20, 2010).
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Rehwinkel provides three possible scientific reasons which have been suggested for what caused the warmer climate in the pre-Flood world (9-13). First he mentions the theory that the earth's axis tilted 23½ degrees during the Flood. If its axis had been exactly perpendicular to the plane of its orbit before the Flood, every point on earth would have received the same amount of heat and sunshine throughout the year, resulting in a more uniform climate. Today, some creationists urge caution before accepting this idea. 6 The second theory proposes that warm ocean waters may have kept the climate warmer, possibly by means of ocean currents such as today's Gulf Stream. Thirdly, Rehwinkel talks about the water vapor canopy theory — the idea that a heavy layer of water vapor which covered the planet diffused the sun's rays to such an extent that all parts of the globe had a similar climate. Once very popular, this theory has now been put on the back burner for various reasons, such as the immense heat such a canopy would have caused on the earth's surface and the failure to explain what would have kept the canopy suspended. 7 Of the three theories Rehwinkel thinks the first two are the most reasonable, though he admits it is impossible to know whether any of the three are correct.

6. Jonathan Sarfati, "Arguments We Think Creationists Should NOT Use," Creation Ministries International, <http://creation.com/arguments-we-think-creationists-should-not-use> (accessed February 20, 2010).
7. Warren Krug, "The Vapor Canopy Theory — Is It in Trouble?" *LSI Journal*, May-August 2003; also available at <http://www.lutheranscience.org/2003-VaporCanopyTheory1.html> (accessed February 20, 2010).
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FOSSILS. Rehwinkel has a high regard for fossils and considered them convincing evidence for Noah's Flood. Of the fossils, he writes, "This (fossil) record is reliable and true and is written in large and legible letters in the very foundation rocks of our present world." He mentions that Tertullian (an early Christian apologist) and Luther both wrote about fossils and interpreted them correctly (7). He mentions the evidence that fish had to be buried suddenly to leave such perfectly-preserved fossils as we frequently see and refers to experiments he personally undertook that showed fish can't last more than five or six days before decaying (204). Rehwinkel writes, "I merely wish to refer to (the fossils) as evidence and conclusive proof that the physical condition of the world of Noah, the climate, animals, and plant life, was vastly different from that of our world today" (7).

DINOSAURS. Rehwinkel quotes some unnamed writers as claiming that dinosaurs, which he described as being "dragonlike," once may have been as numerous as the buffalo (American bison) at their peak. He points in particular to the "Bad Lands" and the Red Deer Valley in Alberta as being sites where dinosaur fossils are numerous (13). He refers to the large variety of dinosaurs known even at that time, although he errs innocently in claiming that the brontosaurus was the largest of the great beasts (14). We now know that the brontosaurus never existed, being instead a mistake in which a scientist put the wrong head onto the body of an Apatosaurus. Although Rehwinkel notes that some dinosaur varieties were as small as dogs, he seems to link the great size of the larger beasts to the fact that other species found in fossil form were also much larger than their modern day counterparts. In particular he mentions discoveries of a ten foot tall bird, a snail with a shell a foot in diameter, and a six-foot long lobster (20).

CAVEMEN. The author criticizes the view which prevailed at the time (and which is still generally true today) that early humans or alleged pre-humans were all savages and dimwits. He says that while archaeology has shown the Bible to be an absolutely reliable book, scientists refuse to consider seriously the Bible's description of all the accomplishments of Adam and his descendants (43).

Two Views of Neanderthals.

The left outdated artist's depiction of a Neanderthal, made in 1888, shows the ancient man looking only semi-human. The picture on the right is a recent computer rendering of a young Neanderthal female made by scanning a skull found in Gibraltar. (Pictures from Wikipedia.)



Rehwinkel seems to accept the notion that because some early humans lived in caves, they must not have been as sophisticated or civilized as other humans (42), though he blames this on degeneration and did not consider them to be some kind of pre-human beings. Perhaps he accepted the prevailing view that Neanderthals were grunting

savages. In any event, today we know that Neanderthals could speak, used tools as advanced as those of other humans, probably mated with other humans, and even wore makeup. **8**

8. Warren Krug, "Neanderthals Wore Makeup," the LSI Blog of the Lutheran Science Institute, comment posted January 13, 2010, <http://lutheranscience.org/10-01-13.html> (accessed February 20, 2010).

NOAH'S ARK. The exact nature of the gopher wood (gopher is a transliteration of the Hebrew word according to Rehwinkel) which was used to build the ark is unknown, but he mentions that some scholars thought it may have been cypress, a common wood used in shipbuilding in ancient times (58). Concerning the size of the ark, Rehwinkel writes that the ships of the ancient Phoenicians and Romans and even those of the Middle Ages were "mere toys" compared to the ark. Even though the exact length of the cubit which Genesis uses to provide the measurements of the ark is not known, Rehwinkel's estimate that the ark was at least 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high is similar to measurements for the ark provided by authors today (58-60).

Rehwinkel answers some questions about Noah's vessel. Did Noah's family have the strength and know-how to build the ark? He answers that concern by pointing out other ancient building accomplishments such as the Egyptian pyramids (65). Was the ark large enough to hold representatives of every species of the animals alive at that time?

Rehwinkel would agree with modern creationists that not every species of animal would have had to get onto the ark, because the Biblical word "kind" (Gen 6:20) is a broader term than "species" (67-71). How did all those animals get to the ark? God planted a "special instinct" in these creatures, he says, which caused them to come to Noah at the right time, just as the animals in the Garden of Eden came to Adam to be named (72).

THE RECORD IN THE ROCKS. Our author discusses the hypothetical nature of the geologic column and the dates assigned to the various layers by secular scientists. He notes several discoveries which contradict the standard interpretation. First, the so-called younger rock layers are frequently found on top of rocks considered to be millions of years older; yet there is nothing in the way of erosion layers separating the younger from the older. This is evidence, he says, that the rock layers were laid down rapidly (268). He points out that the older rocks sometimes are found on top of the younger rocks without evidence that any disturbance had flipped the layers (272). He also mentions the discoveries of fossilized trees standing in upright position and passing through several strata, something that could not have happened had it taken millions of years for each layer to develop (287). All these observations are frequently echoed by creationist geologists today. **9**

9. For example, see Steven A. Austin, "Mt. St. Helens and Catastrophism," Institute for Creation Research, <http://www.icr.org/article/mt-st-helens-catastrophism> (accessed February 22, 2010).

THE ICE AGE. Like today's creationist scientists, Rehwinkel supports the idea that the global deluge caused a major change in climate, a radical cooling period that could have produced large masses of floating ice which likely changed the earth's topography. But what about glaciers? While he asserts that one can either accept or deny the glacial theory without violating Scripture, he personally does not favor the idea. He writes, "Water in a volume sufficiently great and sufficiently disturbed by great upheavals, such as might be caused by earthquakes, volcanoes, and great storms, is capable of becoming a force so cosmic in proportion that it is quite able to accomplish most or all of the changes ascribed to the action of great mountains of moving ice" (329). By doubting a major Ice Age, Rehwinkel would be out of step with current creationist thinking. **10**

10. For example, see Michael Oard, "Where Does the Ice Age Fit?" *Answers in Genesis*, November 22, 2007. <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/nab/where-does-ice-age-fit> (accessed February 26, 2010).

This review covers only some of the highlights of *The Flood*. Alfred Rehwinkel has much more to say about science and the Flood, such as accounts of a worldwide flood found in the ancient writings of other cultures and some reports that the Ark has been discovered. It is very important that he reminds us about the limitations of science as a source of truth by quoting Thomas Aquinas:

There is a point, however high it may be, beyond which reason must confess its inability to understand, but it is just at this point that faith comes to the rescue of reason, the mind in matters of faith gives the assent to truth upon the authority of God manifested through revelation and thus man completes the edifice of his knowledge with the structure of supernatural truth. The realm of faith then is not to be conceived in opposition to the realm of natural truth but as the culmination, for in both reign supreme the same divine intelligence. **11**

11. Page 77. Rehwinkel is quoting Aquinas from Pierre J. Marie, *History of Christian Education*, vol. 1 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1924), 169.

While science can never provide the assurance of truth which the Bible affords, a study of God's world alongside God's Word can help answer attacks which skeptics all too often level against the Scriptures. In this respect, creation science as represented in books such as *The Flood* can be very helpful. *LSI*

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