

Book Review by Martin Sponholz
The Flood in the Light of the Bible, Geology, and Archaeology

Dr. Alfred M. Rehwinkel

1968 by CPH, originally published in 1951 by CPH.

The following comments by Martin Sponholz are taken from his 1986 paper, "The Saving Waters."
Editor Mark Bergemann.

An excellent Lutheran reference work published thirty five years ago, in 1951, by Dr. Alfred M. Rehwinkel, was a masterful work of the heart titled *The Flood in the Light of the Bible, Geology, and Archaeology* and served well for many of us teaching about the flood. Ten years later, out of the Baptist and Presbyterian camp, came a more scientific volume *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and its Scientific Implications* by Rev. John C. Whitcomb and Dr. Henry M. Morris. Nearly every church or school library of our synod [WELS] has these two volumes. Aside from needing a little updating of changing scientific views, these books still provide an encyclopedic list of scientific phenomena associated with the account of the flood in the Bible. Most of us studied all or parts of these books.

I confess Rehwinkel's book was of interest to me in college, but it did not strengthen my faith. The Word of God in Bible class and in sermons on Sundays and Holy Communion kept me in the faith during eight years of university studies.

Dwelling on science at the expense of learning the truths of Scripture can lead to error even when not intended. I am sure Rehwinkel had pure Christian motives when he discouraged teaching about ice ages. He believed such ice fields would have to be many thousands of feet thick at their source in order to cover the large portions of Minnesota and other vast regions of North America. In 1951, when he wrote his book *The Flood*, deep ice core drilling of both Greenland and Antarctica did not exist. Using laws of science from physics, Rehwinkel rightly claimed ice thicker than 2000 feet would melt of its own weight at its base, thus not permitting ice ages. I lived on ice 11,000 feet thick with temperatures as low as one hundred twenty one degrees below zero, and I did not float away. An ice age is possible.

Is evidence for the flood a gift of God to reinforce our faith or could it be a product of the devil to provide a false foundation easily crushed? I will say yes to both parts. The changing laws of science tend to trap a teacher into giving out false crutches to prop up the faith. I spoke earlier about Rehwinkel rejecting the ice ages using good laws of physics of his day. Factual discoveries in Antarctica have changed that. As teachers we must stress the historical changing nature of science (Sponholz, "The Changing Laws"). We must first use the two edged sword of God's Word before we try innovations of human ideas. The past is the key to the present. Moses and the prophets have told us the truth about the past.

We also have the disciple Thomas, who indeed was ready to go to Jerusalem and even die with Jesus (John 11:16). When he would not accept the word of his fellow disciples, all of whom failed, Jesus came to him with medical evidence. *The Flood* by Rehwinkel and *The Genesis Flood* by Morris and Whitcomb were important to me at times on the university campus. They also at times were a detriment. Pastor Richard Balge, Dr. Siegbert Becker and Prof. Roland Hoenecke always patiently listened to one wild scientific story of mine after another. They also always brought me back to the Word. I do not think it was the wounds in Jesus' hand, feet and side that convinced Thomas that his Lord and Savior was alive. It was the recognition of his Lord Who came to him when he was weak. Truly those who believe and have not seen are blessed. Ideas from science are weak compared to the Word. The flood did occur. It

did leave its mark. It is part of God's infallible Word. A doubting believer is not the same as a doubting unbeliever. A doubting believer rarely demands infallible proofs. He knows he does not live in an intellectual vacuum. The Bible describes a real world to him, and he wants a touch more of a scientific explanation. When you show him some such scientific evidence, but properly qualify it with the limits of science, always returning to the Word as the final authority, then there is room for the Holy Spirit to show our weak brother his Lord and Savior.

The Christian can be assured that studies of nature cannot ever contradict the true and Holy Word of God. The Christian cannot be assured that scientific studies will always find the truth. Nor can a Christian boldly pursue a scientific career without facing incredible challenges to his or her faith. At one time in my life I was compelled to walk away from some of the most exciting frontiers of scientific knowledge. My Lord called me to teach ninth grade, I believe less for the sake of the ninth graders, but more for me, that I might be required to come to Him daily in preparation for teaching the children. People of today who reject the record of the flood in the Bible do so not because of overwhelming evidence one way or the other. They reject such teachings because they, like the people in Noah's day, want to reject what they really know as true.

First of all you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and with water. By water also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.
(2 Peter 3:3-7, NIV)

The covenant of the rainbow shines only to the physical world and physical life, and we can never find our Savior in any book of nature, but only in His written Word. We have that Word. We live in the world saved by the flood. We have the Word that plainly shows us Jesus as the fulfiller of all of God's promises. If he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; . . . then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority.
(2 Peter 2:5, 9-10, NIV)

When we see His rainbow, we know much more than the comfort that there will not be another flood. We know much more than the comfort that our Lord is in control of the seasons and the times. We know He has gone to great lengths saving each of us. We know He continues to guide and protect us in everything we do. We know when we die His angels will lead us to Him where we might live forever. The rainbow can remind us of that. His Word assures us of that.