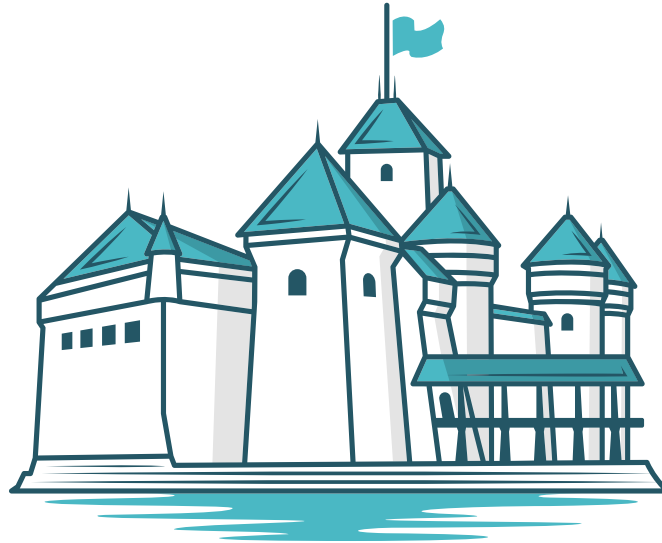




REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5*

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Editor: Rev. Andrew Lanning
From the Ramparts Editor: Dewey Engelsma

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Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

—Exodus 40:34–38

The Lord Comes to His Tabernacle

The culmination of the book of Exodus is upon us. Everything that came before has been leading to this moment. All has been done as God had said, for Moses has finished rearing up the tabernacle. All the boards and bars are in place. All the curtains are stretched and fitted and hung. All the furniture is set in order and all its service arranged. “So Moses finished the work” (Ex. 40:33). It is time to see what the book of Exodus has been all about.

“Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Ex. 40:34). Here is the culmination: Jehovah God came to his tabernacle! Jehovah’s mighty pillar of fire-cloud that had led the people out of the land of Egypt descended and “covered the tent of the congregation.” God in all his blazing splendor and majesty took up his habitation within, as “the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” It was a holy and solemn event. It was a magnificent and awesome event. It was the almighty God of heaven taking up his throne and his abode among his people in his palace-tent.

We cannot fathom the majesty of God’s coming to his palace. All we can do is marvel. Listen to scripture’s description of the holy God upon his throne:

I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne,
high and lifted up, and his train filled the

temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. (Isa. 6:1–4)

We cannot fathom the glory of God’s coming to his palace. All we can do is marvel. For consider that the glory of God upon his throne was so great that even “Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Ex. 40:35). Moses, who had gone into the fire-cloud of God’s glory upon the top of Mount Sinai! Moses, who had heard from God’s mouth the holy law! Moses, to whom God had talked face to face as a man talks to his friend! Moses, to whom God had revealed his glory as he hid Moses in a cleft in a rock and passed by! So great was the glory of God as he took up his tabernacle throne and tabernacle home that not even this Moses could enter.

We cannot fathom the grace of God’s coming to his palace. All we can do is marvel. For consider that the God of heaven made his home among the children of Israel. God, who dwells not on the earth! God, who cannot be contained by heaven or

even by the heaven of heavens! God, who dwells in the light that no man can approach unto! So great is his grace to his people that this exalted God condescended to make his abode among them.

And consider that the people among whom God dwelled were the children of Israel. Israel, who murmured and complained against Moses! Israel, who tempted God in the wilderness! Israel, they of the golden calf and the discarded clothes and the brazen will-worship! Israel the sinners! So great is the grace of God that he made his palace a tent among the tents of his lowly and sinful people.

And now, would you like to see the fulfillment of this covenant majesty, glory, and grace of our God in coming to his tabernacle? Behold Jesus Christ! God tabernacles with his people in Jesus Christ. For in Jesus' incarnation "God was manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16). In Jesus "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us (Matt. 1:23). Jesus "spake of the temple of his body" (John 2:21). Jesus, "for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man" (Nicene Creed). In Jesus God has made his dwelling among his people.

How can it be that the holy God tabernacles with men? Only through the righteousness that God has provided through Jesus Christ. "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). Being righteous by faith through the body and blood of our Lord, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1–2).

And through Jesus Christ God has made ready our eternal home with him in glory. For our home with him is not a tent in the wilderness, which was only a picture, but it is heaven. For Jesus is "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:2). "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (9:24).

Yes, in Jesus Christ God makes his covenant home with his people! All of scripture testifies of it. Listen to the prophecy concerning Jesus: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 3:1). Listen to the promise concerning him: "The dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78–79). Listen to the announcement concerning him: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Listen to the gospel concerning him: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (I John 1:3).

What unfathomable majesty, glory, and grace! In Jehovah's coming to his tabernacle is revealed the infinite mercy of the infinite God in the infinitely deep way of his grace in Christ.

But before we go, shall we linger a moment longer at the culmination of the book of Exodus to see what shall become of the children of Israel? For the last words in the book point us to "all their journeys" (Ex. 40:38). Shortly the children of Israel must pack up their tents and leave Mount Sinai. Shortly they must wander as pilgrims in their wilderness journeys. What shall become of those helpless and sinful people in their wilderness? Indeed, what shall become of us? For their dry wilderness is our dry life; their sins are ours; and their journeys are all our wanderings during all our days here below. What shall become of them and of us? This: God's covenant presence all our days! For Jehovah went with his people in all their journeys.

And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. (Ex. 40:36–37)

And now we must take our leave, the unfathomable grace of God in Christ filling our view and the peace that passes all understanding filling our hearts. For God's people, who begin in the house of bondage, end in the tabernacle of God. "For the

cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys" (Ex. 40:38).

—AL

FROM THE EDITOR

On this, the tenth day of the tenth month, a new issue of *Reformed Pavilion* arrives your inbox. This being issue 27, we have crested the halfway point of the volume year and are already racing our way into the second half of volume 4. Week by week, issue by issue, God continues to provide us a little flour and a little oil. God be praised.

This issue marks a significant milestone for *Reformed Pavilion*. Today's meditation completes the book of Exodus. Exactly three and a half years ago—in volume 1, issue 2—*Reformed Pavilion* carried a meditation on the opening verses of Exodus 1. All these weeks and months and years later, this issue carries a meditation on the closing verses of Exodus 40. Week by week, issue by issue, God continues to provide us a little flour and a little oil. God be praised.

Also in this issue is a lovely poem by Mrs. Connie Meyer. She wrote the poem for the high

school literature class that she teaches at Pavilion Christian School. She was kind enough to share the poem with the readers of *Reformed Pavilion*. Take a while to sit in The Arbor and enjoy the poem on this fine autumn day. Week by week, issue by issue, God continues to provide us a little flour and a little oil. God be praised.

The review of Prof. David J. Engelsma's *Reformed Theology* continues in this issue. Perhaps in another week or two we can finish it up—hopefully before the review itself becomes a book! The undersigned has not forgotten that there is a series on the Canons of Dordt to return to. But for now it has been profitable for this reviewer to wrestle through some of the matters that Engelsma has raised. Perhaps a reader or two is being profited as well. For week by week, issue by issue, God continues to provide us a little flour and a little oil. God be praised!

—AL



BOOK REVIEW

Reformed Theology, volume 1. David J. Engelsma. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2026. 444 pages, hardcover, \$59.95. [Reviewed by Rev. Andrew Lanning]

Overall, David J. Engelsma's *Reformed Theology* is a sound statement of the Reformed faith, and this reviewer agreed with most of the book. However, there were certain things that the undersigned found puzzling, as we began to explore last week. This week let us continue working our way through some of these puzzles and disagreements.

Content: Does God's Threeness Qualify God's Oneness?

In his otherwise excellent treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity, Engelsma teaches that God's threeness *qualifies* God's oneness. Engelsma is working with the fact that God is three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—who subsist in one divine being—God. Thus, God is both three and one: he is three in person and one in being. In the following quotations, Engelsma is explaining that God's threeness does not compromise his oneness. God can be three in person and yet remain the one only God.

The threeness of God, that is, the three persons, does not compromise the oneness, that is, the one, simple being. The three persons do not divide the being among them. Rather, each person shares the entire, infinite being of God. Each person is the one, infinite God. (174)

So far, so good.

The difficulty arises when Engelsma writes, "Yet, threeness qualifies the oneness, so that the oneness of God is a unique oneness: the oneness of three" (174). But is it true that anything *qualifies* God's oneness of being? If God's oneness is a qualified oneness, doesn't that mean that God's oneness is something other than true oneness? Mustn't we then say about God's oneness that it is not *actual* oneness but *qualified* oneness?

When Engelsma writes that God's threeness qualifies God's oneness, he does not in any sense mean that God's threeness divides his oneness. Rather, Engelsma means that God's oneness is a unique oneness. It is a oneness that no other being has. It is a oneness that God alone possesses as the triune God. "The oneness of God is a unique oneness: the oneness of three" (174). However, this does not rescue Engelsma's doctrine. In fact, though Engelsma means to protect God's oneness from compromise, he nevertheless compromises God's oneness by his qualification. For God's oneness of being is not unique. If God's oneness is unique, it is something different than true oneness. If God's oneness is qualified, it is a limited oneness.

Let us not misunderstand: God is certainly unique! There is none like unto God in the heavens above or in the earth beneath or in the waters under the earth. To whom shall we liken God? To whom would we compare him? With what likeness could we fashion his image? Oh yes, God is unique! He alone is the triune God. No one else is one and three, three and one. We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity—and there is no other!

But when we speak of God's oneness of being, that oneness is an absolute oneness. It is not a qualified oneness. It is not a unique oneness. God's oneness of being is unqualified and absolute. It is not even possible for God's threeness to qualify his oneness because his threeness and oneness refer to different truths regarding God. God's threeness refers to his persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—not his being. And God's oneness refers to his being—that one, simple, divine being that is God—not his persons. Therefore, the oneness of God's being is an absolute and unqualified oneness—nothing divides God's being or makes God's one being anything other than one. The three persons do not divide God's being

or make his one being anything other than one; the perfections of God do not divide God's being or make his one being anything other than one. Engelsma also confesses clearly and robustly that God's being is not divided. But he follows that confession of God's oneness with a "yet" that qualifies God's oneness. "Yet, threeness qualifies the oneness" (174). But there may be no "yet." God's oneness of being is absolute, with no ifs, ands, or buts—or yet—about it.

And it must be said that God's absolute oneness of being does not compromise God's real threeness of persons. Engelsma has done as much as any theologian of the last century to defend and advance the church's understanding of the real threeness of God's persons. If the church at large has tended to emphasize God's oneness at the expense of God's threeness, Engelsma has brought the threeness of persons back to the foreground. And Engelsma has done so according to the biblical revelation of God's divine covenant life as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Whether the Protestant Reformed Churches or her children know it or not, Engelsma has taken hold of Hoeksema's doctrine of the divine covenant life and brought our understanding further. We are indebted to Engelsma for this, and we thank God that he has been pleased to use Engelsma to this end. But this reviewer supposes that, in the interest of defending the real threeness of God's persons, Engelsma errs by qualifying the oneness of God's being. However, neither Engelsma nor anyone else need fear that the absolute oneness of God's being will compromise the real threeness of God's persons. For just as the threeness of God's persons is not qualified by the oneness of God's being, so the oneness of God's being is not qualified by the threeness of God's persons.

It is confessional for a Reformed church that God's oneness of being is absolute and unqualified. When the creeds describe the three persons, they in no sense qualify God's oneness of being by God's threeness of persons. The constant refrain of the Athanasian Creed, for example, is that "the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal" (art. 6). Therefore, "they are not three eternals, but one

eternal" (art. 11); "they are not three almighties, but one almighty" (art. 14); and "they are not three Gods, but one God" (art. 16).

The above observation about Engelsma's doctrine is no mere quibble about words. For qualifying the oneness of God's being gives ammunition to the cults. The cults—Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.—attack the doctrine of the Trinity as teaching three Gods. And though Engelsma repudiates the cults and their attack, the cults could point to Engelsma's doctrine as proof that when one teaches three persons, he will inevitably have something other than one God. "Threeness qualifies oneness," so that the oneness of the being of God is something other than an unqualified and absolute oneness of being. Engelsma's qualification weakens the Christian response to the cults. Instead of Engelsma's qualification, our response to the cults is that their attack is false, for we teach that there is one only God, whose oneness of being is absolute and unqualified and nothing other than one. This one God is three persons but not three Gods. For God's threeness of persons refers to something other than his oneness of being and therefore does not qualify it in the least. "The catholic faith"—which the cults are outside of—"is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity" (Athanasian Creed, art. 3).

Content: God's Covenant with Adam

God's covenant with Adam has been a controversial topic for more than one hundred years. Early in his ministry, Herman Hoeksema criticized the traditional Reformed view of God's covenant with Adam. The traditional Reformed view is that God's covenant with Adam was a covenant of works. In this covenant of works, God stipulated certain conditions for Adam to fulfill in order to attain the higher life of heaven. Hoeksema rejected the concept of a conditional covenant of works as unbiblical and essentially Arminian. Contrary to the traditional view, Hoeksema taught that God's covenant with Adam was essentially friendship and fellowship between God the friend-sovereign and man the friend-servant. Hoeksema's description of God's covenant with Adam as friendship is in keeping with scripture's conception of the covenant as a

relationship and bond of fellowship between God and his people in Christ. To this day, the Protestant Reformed Churches and her sisters and daughters reject the idea of a covenant of works.

Engelsma agrees with Hoeksema's description of God's covenant with Adam, maintaining that it was not a conditional covenant of works.

This inherent and prominent notion of merit in the doctrine of the covenant of works is fatal to the theory. Even in the case of an unfallen Adam in paradise, it is impossible for man to merit with God. The theory is ungodly. (267)

Contrary to the covenant of works, Engelsma maintains that God's covenant with Adam was a relationship of friendship. "The covenant in paradise was fellowship between God and man, the fellowship between Father and children made in God's image" (272).

Engelsma's criticism of the covenant of works is bold and excellent. Equally bold and excellent is Engelsma's contention that God's covenant with Adam was fellowship. But it seems to the undersigned that Engelsma's doctrine of God's covenant with Adam needs further development. This is not unique to Engelsma. The Protestant Reformed conception of God's covenant with Adam appears to stop short of the full truth. Engelsma's (and the Protestant Reformed Churches') doctrine of God's covenant with Adam avoids the Arminianism of a conditional covenant. This is no small advance over the traditional view! But Engelsma's doctrine of God's covenant with Adam still conceives of that covenant as something different from God's covenant of grace in Christ. Engelsma even rejects the name "covenant of grace" to describe God's covenant with Adam.

Regardless of the extraordinary relationship between the covenant with Adam and the covenant with Christ, such is the uniqueness of the grace of God in the new covenant that the covenant with Adam ought not to be called a "covenant of grace"... The best name for the covenant with Adam before the fall is "covenant of creation." This name

allows for the fullest description of its free goodness, while distinguishing it from the covenant of God's grace in forgiving and justifying guilty sinners by the cross of Jesus Christ. (271)

Engelsma's view of God's covenant with Adam is unsatisfactory in that it is a covenant without Christ. Engelsma has the eternal covenant God making two essentially different covenants with man. One covenant is gracious; the other was not. One covenant is eternal; the other was temporary. One covenant is in Christ; the other was not. Even though the essence of both covenants is friendship, they are not essentially the same covenant. Engelsma apparently feels the weight of this criticism, for he acknowledges "the extraordinary relationship between the covenant with Adam and the covenant with Christ" (271). Nevertheless, Engelsma has the eternal covenant God making a covenant with man outside of Christ. But does scripture ever describe God's covenant dealings with man to be outside of Christ? Is not Christ the mediator of the covenant (Heb. 8:6)? In fact, is not Christ himself the covenant (Isa. 42:6)?

How should we conceive of God's covenant with Adam, then? God's covenant with Adam was God's covenant of grace but in typical form. God's covenant with Adam was not outside of Christ but was with Adam as a type of Christ. Adam was "the figure"—the type—"of him that was to come" (Rom. 5:14). Jesus is "the last Adam," who fulfills "the first man Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45). Jesus is "the second man" who is "the Lord from heaven," who fulfills "the first man" who is "of the earth, earthy" (v. 47). So also God's covenant with the first Adam was a type of his one covenant of grace with the last Adam. This understanding, too, needs development. But our understanding should run along these lines, for these are the lines that the scriptures give us. May God illuminate us in these mysteries by his word and Spirit.

Content: Are Chastisements Judgments Due Us?

In describing man's blame for the fall, Engelsma writes about the judgments that God inflicted on man. Engelsma acknowledges that "for the

Christian, these judgments are a chastisement that serve his or her good” (303). But Engelsma then appears to place the child of God under the curse of these judgments. “Nevertheless, we must submit to all evils in life as judgments *due* us because of the fall and in accord with God’s word in Genesis 3” (303; emphasis added).

Engelsma’s point is well taken that we must submit to God’s chastisement without complaint or resentment. But is that the same thing as all evils in life being “judgments due us because of the fall”? The judgments that Engelsma mentions include “death itself” (303). Is death itself due God’s elect people in Christ because of the fall? Isn’t it rather the case that in Christ no judgment—in the sense of a curse visited upon sin—is due us? Isn’t it the case that all the curse of judgment that was due to us has been visited by God upon our head and savior in our place? Isn’t it true that what is due us for Christ’s sake is only ever blessing and life? Every evil of life, every affliction and sorrow, every pain and persecution, even all our dying is entirely blessing. Just as surely as God’s curse is in the house of the wicked, so that every pleasure is a curse, so God blesses the habitation of the just, so that every pain is a blessing (Prov. 3:33). Chastisements are for our good (Rom. 8:28). Chastisements are for our salvation (Ps. 4:8)!

They may be the blessing of a warning, a correction, and instruction, but they are not the judgments of a curse that is due us for our sin. Being justified by faith, the believer has peace with God and has no fear that God has anything other than peace in his heart toward him (Rom. 5:1).

Yes, Engelsma’s point, certainly, is that the child of God should humbly submit to chastisement without rebelling against God. Amen. But the way Engelsma puts it goes beyond submission to chastisement and is terrifying. For if all the evils in life are judgments due us because of the fall, then the curse is due us, and we must perish now and forever. But here is peace: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). And here is peace: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (v. 15). And here is peace: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth” (v. 33).

That is enough comment on Engelsma’s content for now. Next time, Lord willing, a few comments on the style of *Reformed Theology*; and then we will wrap it up by noting the fatal flaw of the book.

(To be continued)

—AL



A Treasure Found

The truth is like
rock
solid ground,
round
with center and core,
no less and no more—
perfection
in harmony,
and sound.
That's what I've found.

It shines,
it glistens
with facets
of diamond and gold.
It holds
the weight of the stars
in its hand,
and unfolds
seas of light
beyond bound.
That's what I've found.

The truth
is above all,
high
as the clouds,
far
as a feather of dust
from a pound,
worth more
than one's breath
in life,
or death.
"He that findeth his life
shall lose it:
and he that loseth his life
for my sake shall find it"
crowned.
That's what I've found.

*Now please,
don't end this poem
without telling
what this truth is,
swelling
like ocean waves
dwelling
in deepest depth
to highest mound.
Such truth
I have not found!*

All will see
eventually,
but even now
Truth is known
in part.
Step in the rock's crevice
and cover
your heart.
If a key rests there
bound,
Truth
is what you've found.

*No, wait!
How can this be?
A key unlocks
the truth for me?
How will I know
I have it?
What is this key
thus bound?
Though I search
with sight of an eagle
or scent of a hound,
I don't understand
what is to be found.*

One last stanza.
One last clue.
The key is exactly
what binds you to
the only One
who is True.
Faith is that bond,
the living glue.
By faith you will see
and know
what's true.
But do not fret
or frown anew.
To be bound
to him
is not what you do.
Only he puts that key
inside of you,
and you
are what is found.

—Connie L. Meyer

REFORMATION DAY LECTURE

MARTIN LUTHER'S "Theology of the Cross"

Friday, October 30, 2026 · 7:00 p.m.

Martin Luther is most remembered for his 95 Theses, nailed to the church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. But though his 95 Theses may be Luther's most famous contribution to the Reformation, he made his most profound contribution six months later at the Heidelberg Disputation on April 26, 1518. With the eyes of Europe and the church upon him to see if he would soften his 95 Theses, Luther ran even further into the Reformation with his "Theology of the Cross." It electrified the audience. Not only did Luther not soften his 95 Theses, but he advanced beyond them by leaps and bounds. Luther's "Theology of the Cross" was unlike anything the wisdom of man had heard before. Europe staggered; the church was scandalized; the best and brightest men mobilized against it. Still today, Luther's "Theology of the Cross" appears to be great folly to the wisdom of man. Ah, yes—it appears to be great folly to the wisdom of man; but the "Theology of the Cross" is a sweet comfort to the mind of faith. For the "Theology of the Cross" is simply the gospel of our Savior applied to the doctrine and life of his church.

What is Luther's "Theology of the Cross"? It is not so much a doctrine to be set alongside other doctrines. Rather, the "Theology of the Cross" is a way of thinking. It is the way for faith to think like God and not like man. For God did not glorify himself in the palace of a king but in the sweat and blood and death and curse and scandal of the cross. When the church grasps this by faith, then she understands all of theology and all of life.

This Reformation Day weekend, we would be very pleased if you would join us for a lecture on Martin Luther's "Theology of the Cross."

DATE	Friday, October 30, 2026
TIME	7:00 p.m.
SPEAKER	Rev. Andrew Lanning
TOPIC	Martin Luther's "Theology of the Cross"
PROGRAM	Lecture, followed by Q&A and refreshments
VENUE	Pavilion Christian School 9181 Kenowa Ave. SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49534
HOST	Remnant Reformed Church

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