



REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 45

FEBRUARY 15, 2025

*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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He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death. And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.

—Exodus 21:12–14

Murderer

Is any man so monstrous as the murderer? The murderer's soul is shriveled and black with hatred and envy and revenge. The murderer has no human feeling for his neighbor but counts his neighbor's life as a cheap thing. The murderer stalks and plots and deceives until the ruthless moment when he rips away the life of his fellow man. The murderer is worse than a rabid beast, for at least the beast kills in the ignorance of his disease. The murderer is a monster of iniquity, the basest of men, a devil made of flesh.

One of the judgments that God delivered to Israel concerned the murderer. "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death" (Ex. 21:12). A hard law to punish a monstrous sin: the murderer must die.

What made a man a murderer? The murderer was the man who slew his victim on purpose. There were men in Israel who slew a neighbor by accident. A man might lose control of a heavy load that would crush his neighbor. Or a man might share spoiled food and poison his neighbor. Such a man was not a murderer. In his sovereign providence God had delivered the neighbor to death through that man's actions. Such a man could flee to the cities of refuge that God would appoint, where the accidental—really, providential—death would not be laid to the manslayer's charge. But the murderer was "he that smiteth a man, so that he die" (Ex. 21:12). The murderer was the man who came "presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile" (v. 14).

Murder is such a monstrous sin because the murderer presumes to be God. The murderer came "presumptuously upon his neighbour." But life and death are not in the hands of every man, so that every man decides for himself who shall live and who shall die. Life and death belong to God, who gives life and who takes life according to his will. Some men God appoints as magistrates to bear the sword. But the murderer assumes to himself the authority that God has not given him over his fellow man's life. The murderer is devilish, for the devil was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). The murderer is like Cain, who was of that wicked one and slew his brother (I John 3:12).

What a monster is the murderer! Well-deserving was the Israelite murderer of the hard punishment of death. And not just death but hell besides. For "thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die" (Ex. 21:14). The murderer had no place with God.

Do you hear, you who murder? You must die!

But can any man bear this judgment against the murderer? Can you? Can I? For who is the murderer? "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (I John 3:15). You are the murderer! I am the murderer! And the murderer must die! A hard law for our monstrous sin.

Now hearken to the lovely gospel of the innocent. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to fulfill the law and the prophets. He who knew no sin was made sin for us. He who never murdered was numbered with us murderers. By his blood

he has cleansed us murderers from all our guilt.
And by his innocence he has made us righteous.
He was made sin for us, that we might be made

the righteousness of God in him. The murderer
must die. For Jesus' sake we live.

—AL

THE ARBOR

What Is Faith?

What is faith? How came it hence?
“Knowledge true and confidence”
Sums the definition's sense.

So is faith what we must do,
Working to know what is true,
Mustering some trusting too?

After all, are not we told
To believe and to be bold
To confess the faith we hold?

And then James is plain to say
True faith always will obey—
Living faith is shown that way.

Hebrews points this out also:
Faith is seeing when there's no
Evidence to prove it's so.

Even though I cannot feel
Substance hoped for, it's so real.
I can grasp it in faith's zeal!

Yet I firmly disagree
That faith is a work that we
Must perform unfeignedly.

Here's the problem with that said:
Spiritually all men are dead.
Knowledge is in no one's head.

And by nature none can see
Things divine or heavenly.
Faith's a work? That cannot be!

Faith's a gift!—a graft where two
Join as one, but not with glue.
Sharing life is what they do.

Faith's a bond, a mystery:
One's alive; yet dead boughs see
From inside that Living Tree.

Understand that faith is how
One can know and trust and vow,
For we see through Christ's eyes now.

Eyes that see are not your own,
Nor is knowledge yours to hone.
You belong to Christ alone!

All your sight of truth is his.
All your knowledge known is his.
That is faith. That's what it is.

—Connie L. Meyer



The Christian School

Reformed Pavilion is pleased to present to our readers the following correspondence on the glorious doctrine of the Christian school. The correspondence consists of letters exchanged between Mr. Philip Rainey, on the one hand, and Deacon Jay Van Baren and the undersigned, on the other hand. The occasion for the correspondence was a mutually-acknowledged disagreement between Mr. Rainey and Remnant Reformed Church on the doctrine of the Christian school. Because our unity as brethren is in the truth, the purpose of the correspondence was to give instruction in the doctrine of the Christian school, to see if we might come to an agreement. The correspondence took place from October 2024 through February 2025.

It is unusual for *Reformed Pavilion* to publish this correspondence because the correspondence was part of the work of the council of Remnant Reformed Church. The deacon and the minister were a committee of the council, who wrote on behalf of the council and whose work the council approved. The council is not in the habit of publishing its correspondence and keeps its private work confidential.

However, in this case it seemed that the correspondence between Mr. Rainey and the council might be of broader use. The doctrine of the school has been opened for reinterpretation by some who are in the process of leaving the Reformed Protestant Churches. And, regardless of whether the doctrine of the school is an open question for anyone, instruction in the doctrine of the school is always profitable.

It also seemed that it might be possible to publish the correspondence between Mr. Rainey and the council because it does not concern private matters but the public matter of the doctrine of the Christian school. Remnant Reformed Church's doctrine of the Christian school is a

matter of her public confession in Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism ("that...the schools be maintained") and article 21 of the Church Order ("The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant"). As the reader will see, the correspondence between Mr. Rainey and the committee dealt with the confessions and the Church Order. In light of all this, it seemed possible that the correspondence might be published for the edification of others beyond Mr. Rainey and the committee.

When the editor approached Mr. Rainey about the possibility of publishing the correspondence, Mr. Rainey was agreeable. When the editor suggested various possibilities for how the material might appear—perhaps publishing the letters without Mr. Rainey's name or perhaps leaving Mr. Rainey's letters out entirely and rewriting the committee's letters as articles, so that there would be no trace of our correspondent—Mr. Rainey graciously agreed to publish the letters as they stand: "Regarding your idea of publishing the correspondence, I am agreeable to that and I don't see any need for anonymity." Our sincere thanks to Mr. Rainey for allowing his letters to be published so that our readers can follow the back-and-forth of the conversation.

The letters are published here without editing, with the exception of adding dates and signatures that were not in some of the letters but that were in the emails to which the letters were attached. There is also a very slight redaction of an unrelated matter in Mr. Rainey's first letter.

The doctrine of the Christian school is one of the most precious facets of the doctrine of God's covenant with believers and their seed. But the doctrine of the Christian school has fallen on hard times among Reformed people. In many

places Reformed churches have severed the connection between the covenant and the school, thus dooming their schools by removing them from their covenantal foundation, which is the only foundation that can weather the inevitable storms that will come against the schools. In other places the school doctrine is a hodge-podge of contradictory ideas, crafted to please first this one and then that one, so that the honest believer can make neither heads nor tails of his school doctrine. In other places there is objection to any suggestion that the Christian school is a demand of the covenant or that the holy law of God has something to say about the Christian school.

Over against all of these assaults on the Christian school stands the Reformed conception of the school, as that conception is set down in Lord's Day 38, Church Order 21, and other places. That Reformed conception can be summarized in the following quotation from the correspondence:

Our position is that the basis of the Christian school is God's covenant with believers and their seed, out of which covenant the school spontaneously and organically arises without any assistance

whatsoever from the law of God or from the mandate of the consistory. Our position is also that God's law requires the Christian school as the thankful obedience of covenant parents, which grateful obedience is never *unto* the covenant but is always *because of* the covenant. Our position is also that the consistory must see to it that parents are forming and using schools, not because the school arises out of the church or out of consistory mandates, but because Christ calls the elders "to take the oversight of the church which is committed to them, and diligently to look whether every one properly deports himself in his confession and conversation" (Ordination of Elders).

The following correspondence, then, is published as a call to Reformed churches, Reformed schools, and Reformed believers to return to their glorious, God-given, Reformed heritage by returning to the Reformed conception of the Christian school. May our covenant God yet refresh us with his covenant mercies to us and our covenant seed.

—AL

October 21, 2024

Dear Reverend and Jay,

At our last meeting with you, I said I would write something about the issues that separate us and about which I am willing to acquiesce. I outline why I disagree with the doctrine of the Christian Day School as held in Remnant Reformed Church (or at least as I understand the Church's position). As we have discussed, there is also the issue of [redacted]. But I think the school doctrine is probably more urgent, not least because the doctrine of the day school is a confessional matter for Remnant.

The position of Remnant Reformed is that "the good Christian school institution is a

requirement according to Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 38". This position was declared as binding doctrine at the September 2022 Classis meeting of the Reformed Protestant Churches and Reverend has confirmed to me that this is also Remnant's position. The answer of Lord's Day 38 begins: "First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained" The argument goes that the word "schools" means the institution of the day school. Hence the day school is commanded by the law of God.

This position, I believe, makes the Christian school a matter of the church institute rather than a parental institution. During my time in

the Protestant Reformed Churches, I understood that Christian education including the institution of the school was rooted in the family. Thus, we spoke of parentally controlled Christian schools. The institution of the school was a help or auxiliary to the family in the education of their covenant children. That the school is rooted in the family is, I suggest the biblical position. The command of Deuteronomy 6 to diligently teach children is in the context of the home: “and shalt talk of them [God’s statutes and commandments] when thou sittest in thine house (6:7). My understanding of the passage is that the references in verses 7,8 and 9 of sitting in thine house, walking by the way, lying down, rising up, writing them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates refer to parents teaching their children *in all these ways*. The New Testament’s position is the same: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). The children’s education in the institution of the school is part of and arises out of the calling of parents to “nurture” their children. The school is an adjunct or auxiliary of the family.

The matter can be stated this way: The education of children is rooted in the covenant family (major premise; the school is an auxiliary of the family (minor premise); therefore, the school is rooted in the covenant family. On the other hand, I believe the position of Remnant Reformed is that the school is rooted in the church institute.

Remnant’s position that the school is rooted in the church institute is, I suggest clear from a couple of considerations. First, and practically, it makes the school and its use a matter of ecclesiastical mandate. Reverend has written this in *Sword and Shield*. His position (correct me if I’m wrong) is that after working with parents who

refuse to send their children to the school if they should still refuse, they should be disciplined. The position that the school is a requirement of the fourth commandment obviously makes the school and its use a “thou shalt” of the law. That the institution of the day school is a requirement of Lord’s Day 38 and thus of the fourth commandment, makes it a matter of church discipline just as repeated refusal to diligently frequent the church of God, repeated non-observance of the sacraments, or refusal to contribute to the relief of the poor are matters of ecclesiastical discipline.

Second, by making the establishment and use of the school a matter of the fourth commandment (Lord’s Day 38), your doctrine (Remnant’s doctrine) necessarily makes the school ecclesiastical. Consider Lord’s Day 38. According to the answer of the catechism, our obligations have to do with our attendance of the institute church and our use of her means of grace – the ministry of the gospel and the sacraments. My point is by making the institution of the day school a matter of the 4th Commandment, it is put on the same plane as the institute church and her means of grace. In other words, the day school *as an institution* is made another means of grace. And if it is made a means of grace, it is necessarily ecclesiastical for the simple reason the means of grace belong to the church institute.

In sum, I believe the day school is a demand of the covenant not in the sense of the institutional aspect of the covenant, namely the church institute. But the day school is a demand of the covenant in the organic aspect of the covenant, namely the Christian family. In that aspect the elders may (and should) promote the good Christian school, but they should neither establish nor mandate the use of a certain school.

Best regards,
Philip



Dear Philip,

Thank you for writing to us regarding your view of the Christian day school. Your letter was encouraging, because we believe that we are in essential agreement regarding the school. We also believe that your concern regarding our position could be alleviated fairly simply.

We were very happy to find that you believe that the Christian day school is a demand of the covenant, for that is also our view. In our experience, the view that the *school* is a demand of the covenant has been the main point of controversy regarding the school. Those who disagree with our doctrine usually hold that the covenant demand is Christian *education*, but that the demand does not specify the Christian day *school*. Therefore, it encouraged us greatly to read that we are united in the view that the Christian day school itself is a demand of the covenant. We take this to mean that we are in essential agreement about the Christian day school.

We were also very happy to find that you believe that the Christian day school is rooted in the covenant family, for that is also our view. We believe that the Christian day school is parental, not ecclesiastical. The root of the school is not the church institute. Rather, the root of the Christian day school is the family, the covenant of God, the promise of God to believers and their seed, and the mutual membership of God's people with each other in Christ.

In our judgment, we are united on this point; but in your judgment, we are divided on this point. Your concern is that our view of Lord's Day 38 necessitates the school being rooted in the church institute and not the covenant family. We would like to explain this part of our view, with the hope that it would alleviate your concern and that it would further our agreement as brethren.

First, the fact that something is ecclesiastically mandated does not make that thing ecclesiastical. The fact that something falls under the regulation of God's law, which law the church upholds, does not mean that thing is rooted in

the church institute. For example, marriage in the Lord and marriage for life are ecclesiastically mandated according to the seventh commandment. But that does not make marriage ecclesiastical. Even though Remnant must see to it that those who marry, marry in the Lord; and even though Remnant would discipline the divorced and remarried for their sin against the seventh commandment; this does not imply that Remnant views marriage as rooted in the church institute. The root is one thing; the mandate is another thing.

So also, the fact that the fourth commandment requires God's people to maintain the schools, according to Lord's Day 38, does not imply that the school is rooted in the church institute. The school can be rooted in the family, in the covenant, in the promise of God to believers and their seed, and in the mutual membership of God's people with each other in Christ; and the school can at the same time be required according to the fourth commandment. The root is one thing; the ecclesiastical mandate according to God's law is another.

Second, our interpretation of "school" as "Christian day school" in Lord's Day 38 does not put the school on the same plane as the instituted church and her means of grace. A commandment—and the catechism's explanation of the commandment—can address more than one plane. Lord's Day 38, for example, addresses the plane of the church institute ("diligently frequent the church of God") and the plane of the Christian's daily life ("all the days of my life"). This does not imply that the one plane is the same as the other. So also Lord's Day 38 can require maintaining the ministry of the gospel and maintaining the Christian day school without in the least confounding the Christian day school with the church.

Finally, we would like to emphasize how precious the doctrine of the covenant and its application to the Christian day school is for Remnant Reformed Church. A significant portion of our organic life as God's people, who

share our life together in Christ, takes place in our Christian school. One of our chief expressions of organic unity in God's covenant is the school. The gospel preached on Sunday echoes in the classrooms on Monday. Our unity we have in Christ and his gospel both draws us together into his house on Sunday and draws us together to rear our children on Monday. The gospel upon which we are founded as the church produces the fruit of the Christian school for our child-rearing. The school is as precious to us as the church, since both are built by and given to us by Christ and his gospel.

Therefore, unity in our view of the school is essential. To introduce another view of the school than that which Remnant Reformed Church has been given would be to introduce

division and strife into Remnant. To introduce another view of the school would be to inflict a wound that would bleed our commitment.

If we have understood you correctly, we believe that we are essentially one in our view of the school. We both believe that the school is rooted in the covenant, and we both believe that the school is a demand of the covenant. We pray that our explanation in this letter will help alleviate any concerns that you have.

We look forward to hearing your response, when you are able.

In Christ's service,
Deacon Van Baren
Rev. Lanning

November 12, 2024

Dear Reverend,

Thank you for your and Jay's reply to me on the school. Your reply points out a contradiction in what I wrote. On the one hand I do not believe "school" in Lord's Day 38 refers to Christian day school, thus I do not believe the school is a matter of the law of God. On the other hand, I said I believe the school is a demand of the covenant. I'm sorry I didn't see that at the time, but that is clearly contradictory. I will have to resolve that contradiction. If indeed Church Order Article 21 makes the institution of the school a demand of God's law, then it may be that I don't agree with the Church Order.

The doctrine of the day school is a big matter for Remnant. I understand that. You have stated your position very clearly and I thank you for that. In order to do justice to the weightiness of the matter, I feel the need to further study the matter, especially the history of the school in the Reformed churches. I intend to do that upon my return to the US.

Thank you once again for taking the time to write.

Best Regards,
Philip

December 30, 2024

Dear Reverend and Jay,

In my last communication with you I said I needed to study the matter of the school doctrine a bit more. I have concentrated on Church Order Article 21 in this submission. I recognize that the article is one of the pillars of Remnant Reformed's doctrine of the school and that what

I have written here is in outright opposition to Article 21. Be that as it may I still ask that you read and consider what I have written. To be upfront, I believe Article 21 contains a seed of consistory lording over parents. And the problem with seeds is that given the right soil they come to fruition. That is my concern.

I believe Article 21 applies in the context of a parochial school. First, this is clear from the language of the article itself. It is the language of stipulation: “The consistories *shall see to it ...*” Article 21 is a stipulation, that is an authoritative charge or command to the consistory to establish and supervise a Christian day school. The article doesn’t stipulate that the parents establish and maintain a school. Parents are indeed mentioned in the article, but the article’s stipulation is not to parents; the article’s stipulation is to the consistory. Article 21 mandates the consistory to establish and maintain a Christian day school. To me, that is the natural reading and sense of the article. And if that is so it follows that the school established by such ecclesiastical mandate is a parochial school – it is an institution established by consistory mandate.

That Article 21 applies in the context of a parochial school is also clear from the history of Dutch Reformed schools. Historically the schools to which the article applied were parochial schools. Parentally controlled Christian schools simply did not exist among Reformed people until the end of the nineteenth century. When the Synod of Dordt formulated Article 21 of its Church Order, church and state were one in the Netherlands. Unlike today, there simply was no separation between church and state. In the Netherlands it was not until 1801 that elementary education became secular.

When Article 21 was written, the Christian day schools were promoted and financed by the Dutch government. The Dutch Republic had become officially Calvinist promoting and establishing in law the Reformed Church. There was no separation between church and state. In this context the government gave to the church the responsibility to educate the population, to make them good Calvinist citizens of a Calvinist country. Van Dellen and Monsma in their commentary on the Church Order¹ (afterwards I will just use the reference *Van Dellen*) describe the history: “At the time when the original Church

Order was adopted free, parental Christian Schools were unknown. Holland was leading the world in popular education, but its schools were controlled and supported by the government” (93). Van Dellen goes on to describe how the governments of Europe stood committed to either the Roman Church or to the Protestant Churches. Separation between Church and State was unknown. As he says, “the governments officially promoted and sponsored both religion and education.” Regarding the relationship between the Dutch government and the Church with respect to the schools he writes: “But it should be noted further that the government used the Reformed Churches to establish, promote, and supervise its schools. As might be expected, not all saw the need of a general schooling for all children, and not all realized the import of thorough Christian education. In some places the people failed to organize and to open schools. In other places inferior teachers were in charge, some of whom were not Reformed in confession and life. Consequently, at various times the Churches gathered in Synod charged the Consistories to be loyal and vigilant. And whereas the true welfare of the Churches depended to a large extent upon the schools, the promotion and control of which the government committed to the Churches, Article 21 of the Church Order of Dordt charges the Consistories as it does” (93).

What Van Dellen writes is consistent with all that I have read on the history of Dutch Reformed schools. There is a very interesting essay on the CACE (Center for the Advancement of Christian Education) website by Henk Aay entitled “Present from the Beginning: Reformed Dutch Day Schools in North America, 1638–2019”². This essay traces the history of day schools in America from the first Dutch colonies in New York to the present day. It explains how the day schools in the colonies were established and maintained on the same model as the Dutch homeland: they were promoted and financed

¹ Van Dellen and Monsma, *Commentary on the Church Order*, 1949

² Just type into Google Search *History of Dutch Reformed Schools in America* and its one of the first to come up

by the State, but established and supervised by consistories. The education of Dutch Reformed children was a joint venture between church and state. Aay writes “The schools of New Netherland were replicas of the village schools in the home country. Such schools were present throughout the republic; the Netherlands had achieved high accessibility to elementary education during the seventeenth century, although not all parents took advantage of its availability. In nearly every settlement with a church, there was a coeducational elementary (Nederduitse) school These elementary schools throughout the country were both public and parochial at the same time. Civil magistrates and ecclesiastical authorities (ministers, church consistories) together governed and administered the schools” (5).

I think we probably find it difficult to appreciate the radical disjunction between the historical circumstances prevailing when Article 21 was formulated and today’s model of parentally controlled schools. Commenting further on the historical circumstances then prevailing Aay writes: “Of course, the civil authorities themselves were also Calvinists. The Reformation had earlier replaced the Roman Catholic governing authorities at all levels with Protestant adherents who introduced and enforced Calvinistic regulations respecting church and school. Teachers were required to be members of the Reformed state church and, following the mandates of the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619), to sign the so-called Three Forms of Unity: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt. Those who would not, were dismissed” (5&6).

Significantly, Aay explains in his essay how this model of state-financed parochial schools developed and changed in the Dutch communities of America. Essentially what happened was that around the time of the American Revolution the day schools became outright parochial schools. That is to say the local civil authorities no longer promoted and financed the Reformed day schools. The American Revolution’s political philosophy was inimical to the traditional church

control in these communities, including their control of the day schools. Hence the schools became church schools with no tie to the civil authority. This model – outright parochial schools – existed until sometime in the late nineteenth century. Largely due to the influence of Dr Abraham Kuyper’s sphere sovereignty theology, Reformed people came to understand that it was not the role of the church to establish and supervise schools; hence the model changed to that of “free” or parental schools.

While the Reformed Church in America had given up on Christian day schools the newly-formed Christian Reformed Church took up the cause as a matter of principle. But even here the principle of parental schools as opposed to parochial schools was not settled until sometime around 1900. Symbolic of this change was the printing of school statistics (enrollment, faculty numbers and so on) in school society magazines rather than in congregational yearbooks as had been the custom. But what really indicated a change of doctrine on the school was the change of Article 21 in the year 1914.

The original article of Dordt read: “Everywhere Consistories shall see to it, that there are good schoolmasters who shall not only instruct the children in reading, writing, languages, and the liberal arts, but likewise in godliness and in the Catechism.” The original article charges the consistories to see to it that there shall be good teachers, whereas the current article charges the consistories to see to it that there are good Christian schools. This change was an attempt to reflect the changed historical circumstances. The original article was a product of its time; a time when church and state were one and where the Dutch Republic gave the church through her local consistories the responsibility to appoint and supervise the orthodoxy of teachers and their teaching. The original article could only function and make sense at a time when the consistories controlled the day schools and thus controlled the appointment and supervision of the teachers.

In addition to the formal cooperation of church and state in the operation of Christian day schools in both the Netherlands and Dutch-American colonies, Henk Aay describes other important ways in which the schools were parochial. One of these was the dual role of the schoolteacher. He writes: “Invariably, the teacher of the school also held a paid position in the church; because of his education, he commonly served as cantor (*voorzanger*, in Dutch), lay reader (*voorlezer*), and sometimes as sexton (*koster*). The cantor would start and lead congregational singing or sing verses solo; as lay reader, the teacher would read to the congregation from the Bible, the confessions, or liturgical forms. The sexton was the property manager of the church and tasked with a variety of services, such as readying the church for Sunday worship. The school (often in the teacher’s home) was in close proximity to the church, a reflection of this dual affiliation” (6). The point is that such a dual role for the teacher reflected also a dual role for the local consistories – overseers of the church *and* overseers of the education of the children of the Netherlands and of the Dutch-American colonies.

When we come to the revision of Article 21 by the CRC in 1914, we see an attempt to make the article conform to the new doctrine of the school, namely of a parentally controlled school. It now reads: “The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.” Under the old article, the consistory was to see to the appointment of the schoolteacher and to the instruction that they gave. The government gave this role to the church and the church through her consistories carried it out for centuries. The point is church-controlled schools are parochial schools. But such church control of the school is no longer possible in parentally controlled schools and so Article 21 had to be changed. The revision of Article 21 was therefore an attempt to make it conform to the new reality of parental schools.

In line with this new reality, the article mentions parents. The old article did not mention

parents; it did not mention parents because those who wrote the article believed it was the responsibility of the church to establish and maintain day schools. But by 1914 the doctrine of the school had changed and in order to reflect that change, Article 21 was changed. But the question is does the revised Article 21 succeed in reflecting the new reality of parental schools? Is it compatible with parentally controlled day schools? Does the mere mention of *parents* make the article consistent with such schools? I submit it does not.

Regarding the question(s) just posed, it is clear that the Christian Reformed Church (who gave us our current Article 21) recognized something of a contradiction, or at least tension, between its new article and the doctrine of parentally controlled schools. I have found such tension in a few instances of my reading of early Christian Reformed writing on the matter. It is seen for example in what Van Dellen has to say on the matter. In explaining the need for the revision, Van Dellen ably sets forth the new doctrine of the school. Van Dellen argues for the revised article, but manifests a certain tension in the CRC when he writes: “The wording of this article [the new Article 21, PR] might lead one who is not fully informed to think that our Church Order stipulates that Consistories, (1) must organize and maintain good Christian Schools, (2) must see to it that parents send their children to these Church schools. This, however, is not the meaning of Article 21. The wording of the Article may be explained from a desire to adhere as closely as possible to the wording of Article 21 in its historic form. Church schools have never been advocated by the Reformed Churches. All that know the history of our Churches and the history of Article 21, realize that the article as it reads today means to say that our consistories must promote the organization and proper maintenance of good Christian Day Schools by believing parents, and must urge the members of our Churches to use these schools for the education of their God entrusted children, if at all possible.”

The leading spokesman for the CRC is no sooner done with arguing for the revised article than he has to take pains to justify the article from the charge of parochialism. It's hardly a ringing endorsement of the new article's repudiation of parochialism.

At this point I want to come to the nub of the matter for me and to the nub of what divides us on the school doctrine. First of all, what the question is not. The question is not whether Remnant Reformed Church believes in or sees Pavilion Christian School as a parochial school. It evidently does not. Rather Remnant Reformed Church sees Pavilion Christian school as a parentally controlled school. It has a school society and a school board and to all appearance operates and is administered just like any other parentally controlled school. Neither is the question whether the consistory and the members of Remnant believe that the education of children is the responsibility of parents. I believe both consistory and members affirm that. But the real question is the propriety of Article 21. Are the natural sense and meaning of the words of Article 21 consistent with a parentally controlled, non-parochial day school? I submit they are not. That the article has a long history in one form or another and is inextricably connected to the great Synod of Dordt in no way establishes its propriety to exert any influence over today's parentally controlled Christian school. In fact, I would argue that the article is an anachronism and as such places both consistory and parents under a burden that neither can bear.

As I said at the outset of my paper the natural reading and sense of the article is that it mandates the consistory to establish and maintain a Christian day school. The article does not stipulate that the parents establish and maintain a school. Parents are indeed mentioned in the article, but the article's stipulation is not to parents; the article's stipulation is to the consistory. According to the article the consistory must do something – *must* do something. What must it do? It must “see to it”, it must exercise itself that there be a good Christian

school and that the parents must use the school for the instruction of their children. That is the natural sense and meaning of the article as written. It matters not that Van Dellen, nor the consistory of Remnant Reformed Church, nor indeed anyone else who upholds Article 21 deny parochialism in education the article as written affirms parochialism in education.

Van Dellen believes the revised form of Article 21 aligns with the new reality of parental schools (*new* in 1914). In his mind, the mention of parents absolves the article from any charge of parochialism. This is also the view of Professor Herman Hanko in his notes on the Church Order. He hangs a whole doctrine of parental schools on the mention of parents in the article. This is also the position of Reverend Lanning: “The consistory is to ‘see to it’. This does not mean that the consistory itself sets up a Christian school. The school is parental. The school is that ‘in which the parents have their children instructed.’ The parents establish the school, maintain the school, and govern the school” (Sword & Shield October 1, 2021, p12). But can the mere mention of parents in Article 21 bear the weight of the doctrine that is erected upon it? I submit it does not. For one thing, what if the article was to read this way: “The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the children are instructed according to the demands of the covenant.” Would the omission of the reference to parents make any difference? It would not. For one thing, the mention of parents is redundant. Of course children have parents, it goes without saying. For another thing, parents are not being addressed; the article addresses *consistories*. Consistories are to do something, namely see to it that there are schools and that the instruction is “according to the demands of the covenant.” The article neither addresses parents nor does it tell them to do anything. To put it simply, the word parents makes no material difference to the meaning of the article.

If the inclusion of the word parents makes no material difference to the meaning of Article 21

how then does our current article differ from the original? It differs only in its terms of reference. As I have discussed at length the original article is obviously and incontrovertibly a product of a time when church and state were one. It mandates consistories to appoint and supervise schoolteachers and their instruction. By definition such a mandate makes the schools parochial. But the new article also mandates the consistories to do something. They must “see to it”, that is they must exercise themselves that there be good Christian schools and that the parents have their children instructed in said schools. So, the terms of the article’s stipulation are different – that there be good Christian *schools* instead of good *schoolmasters* – but consistory mandate of the school and its instruction remains. If the language “Everywhere the consistories shall see to it, that there are good schoolmasters who shall not only instruct the children

” was understood to mean that consistories established and supervised day schools then how come the language “The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools

” means something completely different. If the stipulation language of the original – “the consistories shall see to it” – means parochial school, how does the stipulation language of the current article not mean parochial school?

Van Dellen reads Article 21 as if it means the consistory is to “promote” the day school and to “urge” its establishment and maintenance upon the parents. This view is shared by many who have written on the subject. Personally, I share that view and would advocate for it. But I ask, is that an honest reading of Article 21? Promote is by no means the same as “shall see to it”. To see to something is more than to garner support for, or to encourage, or to advance something. To see to something is to bring that thing to pass; it is to demand that thing; it is to take the necessary action to bring that thing to pass.

To his credit, Rev Lanning upholds the language of Article 21. Anyone else I’ve read takes the view that the article means the consistory shall promote, advise, and encourage the

establishment and maintenance of good Christian schools. In contrast Rev Lanning affirms the language of stipulation: “Article 21 uses the language of obligation and duty: ‘The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools.’” In line with this language, Rev Lanning clearly affirmed in his article both a consistory mandate to the parents to *establish* a school and a consistory mandate to the parents to *use* the school.

While Rev Lanning’s position does justice to the language of stipulation in Article 21, I believe it does not do justice to Article 21. In common with others, Rev Lanning sees the article as requiring parents to establish and maintain the good Christian school or that the article assumes such a requirement for parents. In this view, the words “in which parents have their children instructed” supposedly makes the article align with a parentally controlled school. In this view, Article 21 requires *parents* to do something, namely establish and use the school. Speaking of Article 21’s stipulation Rev Lanning writes: “The consistory’s role is not to establish, maintain, and govern the school but to see to it that the parents are doing so.” And again, “article 21 requires that parents *use* the good Christian schools.” My problem with this is that it is not what the article itself says. As I’ve argued above at some length, Article 21 does not address parents at all. Article 21 addresses the calling and responsibility of one entity and one only – the consistory. Parents are mentioned as an aside. Article 21 gives a requirement to the consistory and to the consistory alone.

My point here is this. It may very well be that someone believes in parentally established and maintained schools. I do. It may very well be that someone believes the consistory should require parents to establish and use such schools. I do not. But you cannot get that out of Article 21. Plain and simple, Article 21 is simply not fit for purpose for such a doctrine of the school. I believe that those who believe in parentally established and parentally controlled schools and at the same time affirm and uphold

Article 21 try to marry two things that don't belong together. They affirm and uphold a Church Order article that contradicts the principle of a parental school – a school free from consistory control.

It is the burden of this submission that the 1914 version of Church Order Article 21 no more frees the Christian day school from parochialism than the original version established parochialism. As I said before, Van Dellen obviously felt the tension and contradiction of the article with the new reality of parental schools when he tried to justify it against the charge of parochialism. In fact, his leading justification against those who charged the wording of the article with parochialism was this: “The wording of the Article may be explained from a desire to adhere as closely as possible to the wording of Article 21 in its historic form.” That is a singularly poor argument. Why in the world would one revise Article 21 in line with a new doctrine of parentally controlled schools while retaining the wording of the original that so clearly applied to parochial schools?

I think the only reason for this misguided approach is found in what Van Dellen wrote just before he attempted his justification of the wording of the new article. Speaking of the new doctrine of the school – of parentally established and maintained schools – he concludes this way: “Now it was out of consideration of the foregoing reasons that Art.21 was made to read as it does today, when our Synod of Roseland, 1914, revised our time-honored Church Order.” So, it's out of deference to the venerable document (“time-honored Church Order”) that we chose “to adhere as closely as possible to the wording of Article 21 in its historic form” while giving a nod in the direction of parental schools. That is the reason why I said above that the

article is an anachronism and as such places both consistory and parents under a burden that neither can bear.

Perhaps no one in Remnant Reformed feels Article 21 is such a burden. It seems to me the school is progressing well, that the parents use the school willingly, and that there is a harmonious relationship between the instruction of the church and the instruction of the school. That is as it should be and I thank God for it. But in our circles Article 21 is allied with Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 38 to make the school a demand of the law of God. And it is a demand of the law of God that comes in the form of Article 21 as a consistory mandate to the parents. Let us for argument's sake concede “school” in Lord's Day 38 means day school. That does not of itself get you to consistory involvement in the school and consistory mandate to parents with respect to it. Marriage, for example is a demand of the seventh commandment, but that does not mean a consistory mandate for how the home is to operate. My concern with the doctrine of the school as held by Remnant (and Reformed Protestant before it) is that Article 21 is used to enforce the school and its use upon the parents. And although it seems to me that Pavilion Christian School is spontaneously and willingly used and maintained by the parents, nevertheless my concern is with the doctrine. To me the doctrine partly based as it is on Article 21 contains the seeds of consistory lording over the parents. Let the consistory promote, encourage, urge, and preach the school, but let the school never be a matter of consistory mandate. Article 21 is not consistent with the principle of day schools free from church control.

Philip



Dear Philip,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We received and read your paper on Article 21 of the church order. In your paper you contend that Article 21 “contains a seed of consistory lording over parents” because Article 21 “applies in the context of a parochial school.” Article 21 reads: “The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.” You contend that “the consistories shall see to it” means that the consistory must “establish and supervise a Christian day school.” You demonstrate your contention from the language of the article (“see to it”) and from the history of the article (which was originally written regarding church and state schools in the Netherlands).

We believe that your contention misinterprets both the language and the history of Article 21.

Regarding the language, “see to it” does not mean that the consistory itself must establish and maintain the school. There is certainly a stipulation and command to the consistory: “see to it!” But the stipulation is not this: “see to it that you establish and maintain a school.” Rather, the stipulation is this: “see to it that there are good Christian schools.” The language does not either explicitly or implicitly require the consistory to establish the school. In fact, the article goes on to give the responsibility for “hav[ing] their children instructed” to the *parents*. The place of parents in the article is by no means an aside or a mere mention but is essential. It is not the consistory that has its children instructed; it is the “parents” who “have their children instructed” in the school. The language of the article—succinctly and precisely and exactly—describes a parental school, with the consistory’s role being to see to it that the parents are establishing and maintaining and using the school according to the demands of the covenant.

The language “see to it” is used elsewhere in the church order and can help us understand Article 21. The church order requires the consistory to “see to” something in marriage without in the least making marriage a parochial institution. Article 70: “The consistories shall see to it that those who marry, marry in the Lord, whether it be in a private ceremony or in an official worship service...” We presume that you would not interpret “see to it” in Article 70 to mean that that consistory must arrange marriages, or that marriage is a sacrament of the church, or that marriage is in any other way a parochial institution. We even presume that you would not criticize Article 70 as containing “a seed of consistory lording over” dating and marriage. So also “see to it” in Article 21 does not make the school parochial, nor does it even contain the seed of a consistory lording it over parents.

Regarding the history of Article 21, we appreciated your thorough research of the Christian school in the Netherlands. That was a very interesting section of your paper. However, we believe that your conclusion missed the point of the history of Article 21 and the Christian school. When the Reformed churches finally understood that the school is to be parental—not parochial or civil—the Reformed churches changed Article 21 to reflect their better understanding. If a proponent of parochial schools were to appeal to Article 21 today, the very history that you laid out would rebuff his appeal. The churches used to have parochial and state schools and a church order article to match; but God reformed the churches and gave to them parental schools and a church order article to match.

Although the churches retained some of the phrasing when they changed Article 21, that does not imply that they also retained the erroneous doctrine of a parochial school. Nor does the retention of some of the original language make the article weak, confusing, or contradictory. The nature of reformation is not that the

church throws out everything and starts over anew. Rather, the nature of reformation is that the church goes back to the old paths by retaining that which is good, recovering that which was lost, and reforming that which was deformed. So also, when Article 21 was revised, it was in perfect keeping with the nature of reformation to retain some of its good language.

In short, we are not convinced by your contention that Article 21 requires a parochial school. We remain convinced that Article 21 requires parental schools and that both the language and history of Article 21 support our contention.

Having read your paper and having set forth this reply, we do wonder whether parochial versus parental is really the issue between us. It seems to us that the issue is not whether Article 21 requires a parochial school or a parental school, but whether Article 21 requires a school at all. We believe that Article 21 requires a school and that the consistory is to see to it that the parents are establishing, maintaining, and using the school. After your previous communication, we thought that you had come to agree with this position. But now it appears that you do not agree that the consistory may see to it that the parents are establishing, maintaining, and using the school, and that if the consistory does mandate the school, then the consistory is lording it over the parents. You close your paper: “Let the consistory promote, encourage, urge, and preach the school, but let the school never be a matter of consistory mandate. Article 21 is not consistent with the principle of day schools free from church control.”

Your list is quite familiar: promote, encourage, urge, and preach the school. Our question would be: on what basis? On what basis should the minister—in the name of Jesus Christ—preach the school to God’s people? On what basis should the elders—as the representatives of Jesus Christ—enter a family’s home and urge the parents to send their children to the school instead of homeschooling them? This question gets us to the foundation of the Christian school.

If the basis for the minister’s preaching the school and the elders’ urging the school is God’s covenant with believers and their seed, then we are not merely dealing with encouragement, but with a mandate. But if the basis for the minister’s preaching and the elders’ encouraging is merely their preference, or the preference of most Reformed people, or the best option among several options, then the minister and elders are just preaching their own wisdom and will.

The question of basis also gets us to the true freedom regarding the Christian school. If the Christian school is a demand of God’s covenant, then preaching it, promoting it, encouraging it, urging it, and even mandating it is not bondage, but freedom. God’s covenant is life, and life in God’s covenant is liberty, not bondage. But if the Christian school is not a demand of God’s covenant, then preaching it, promoting it, encouraging it, urging it—even if no one ever mandates it—is wretched lording. Families who have complete liberty to eschew the school will be in bondage under the minister’s and elders’ preaching, encouraging, promoting, and urging upon them something that God has not required of the family. If the school is not the will of God but the wisdom of man, then any preaching of it is bondage. But if the school is the will of God and not the wisdom of man, then preaching and mandating it is not bondage but liberty.

We believe that the previous two paragraphs are the heart of the issue regarding the Christian school. We appreciate your determination to exegete Lord’s Day 38 (in your first paper) and Article 21 (in your second paper). But we believe that there is a foundational issue under both the Lord’s Day and the article. Lord’s Day 38 and especially Article 21 base the school on God’s covenant with believers and their seed. Therefore, the consistory’s mandate to the parents to establish, maintain, and use the Christian school does not put the parents under the consistory’s lording, but points the parents to what Christ has liberated them to do.

Therefore, we would like to ask some questions of you in the interest of getting to the heart

of the school. (We do not ask these questions to trap you or to back you into a corner. We ask these questions in good faith as part of our conversation about the school. We also ask these questions with the hope that the very questions themselves will be instructive for both you and us. Perhaps the questions themselves will help us discover the foundation of the school and the implications for the consistory's role.)

1. What is the basis of the Christian school?
2. What implications does that basis have for the parents?
3. What implications does that basis have for the consistory as it oversees the parents' thankful life?

4. What is the Christian's liberty regarding the law of God?
5. What implications does that liberty have if the school is God's will?
6. What implications does that liberty have if the school is not God's will but only the wisdom of man?

May the Lord give us all wisdom from above as we wrestle with the matter of the Christian school. Thank you for your paper, and we look forward to hearing from you again, when you are able.

In Christ's service,
Deacon Van Baren
Rev. Lanning

February 5, 2025

Dear Reverend and Jay,

You are correct that the difference between us is the basis of the Christian school. I want to state what I believe to be your position on the basis of the Christian school. If I am wrong then you may correct me. Your position is the basis of the school is a demand of the covenant understood as a law of God. Specifically, the school is demanded as the law of God under the fourth commandment. That is why in all discussion of the basis of the school you cite Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 38 and Church Order Article 21 as twin pillars of your position. I would define your position this way: *the basis of the Christian school is a demand of the covenant where the demand is a "thou shalt" of the law which in the form of Article 21 comes to the parents as an ecclesiastical mandate.* That seems to be your meaning when you say on page 2 of your response: "We believe that Article 21 requires a school and that the consistory is to see to it that the parents are establishing, maintaining, and using the school." That the school is the law of the fourth commandment was explicitly stated at Classis September 2022 in the first question of the

classical examination of two elders: "Do you believe that the good Christian school institution is a requirement according to Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 38?"

This is the school doctrine that was articulated and defended as dogma in the Reformed Protestant Churches when we were all members there. As I understand your position it is also dogma in Remnant Reformed Church. Now if my above definition of your position is accurate, then I say that although you speak of the covenant with believers and their seed being the basis of the school, it is really the law of God that is the basis. The Christian school therefore is established and maintained on the basis of the fourth commandment. The Christian school as to its origin and basis is a matter of the law.

It is my conviction that the basis of the Christian school is not the law. The basis of the Christian school is not a commandment of the law. Parents do not establish a school because the consistory comes to them with a demand of the law. Rather the origin of the school is the covenant as a bond of friendship between God and his people. The origin and basis of the

school then is not the law and certainly not the law in the form of consistory mandate. The basis of the school is a bond of friendship which is to say the basis of the school is organic. The basis of the school is not legal (a commandment of the law); neither is ecclesiastical mandate any part of its basis. Rather the origin of the school (as it is of all parental instruction) is the living relation of friendship that God establishes with his people.

Consequently, the school arises spontaneously among the people of God. Just as the husband loving his wife and the wife submitting herself to her husband does not arise out of the command to do so but out of the covenant, so the desire among parents for and their establishment of a school does not arise out of the law, but out of the organic life of the covenant. The parents establish and maintain a school not because they have to, but because they want to. Does this not beg the question: where does the idea of consistory mandate of the school fit in any of this? Why cannot we leave the school and the education of children in the covenant considered organically? Why do we have to insert the school and the education of children into the institutional side of the covenant – the church institute?

As you say in your response, there are attendant questions that flow from the basis of

the school. We all agree that the basis of the school is determinative for these other questions. I am not sure I can answer all of those subordinate questions. One of those questions is what implications does the school's basis have for the consistory as it oversees the parents' thankful life. I believe there is a role for the consistory in the promotion of the school among parents. Just as the consistory may urge and promote the practice of family devotions during family visitation, it may urge and promote the education of our children as a blessed covenantal calling. During my time in the PRC the consistories urged support for the school. I can remember that being done from the pulpit at least (I don't recall it in family visitation probably because I don't have children). My point in mentioning the PRC is: you don't need to base the school in the fourth commandment in order for the consistory to exercise a role among parents with respect to the education of their children (the PRC did not have the doctrine of the school as a law).

I have tried to outline as concisely as I can my position of the Christian school's basis in contrast to yours. And as I said, if I misrepresent or misinterpret your position please tell me.

Christian regards,
Philip

February 13, 2025

Dear Philip,

Greetings in the name of our covenant head and mediator, Jesus Christ.

We read your latest letter regarding the basis of the Christian school. We were encouraged by your confession that God's covenant is the basis of the Christian school. But we were puzzled by your statement of our position. "I would define your position this way: *the basis of the Christian school is a demand of the covenant where the demand is a "thou shalt" of the law which in the form of Article 21 comes to the parents as an*

ecclesiastical mandate." That is not our position regarding the basis of the Christian school. Rather, we believe that God's covenant is the basis of the Christian school. We realize that you fear that it is mere lip-service on our part to confess that God's covenant is the basis of the school, but we assure you that it is our hearty belief. Quotations could be multiplied from every page of our correspondence, but this passage is representative:

We were also very happy to find that you believe that the Christian day school is

rooted in the covenant family, for that is also our view. We believe that the Christian day school is parental, not ecclesiastical. The root of the school is not the church institute. Rather, the root of the Christian day school is the family, the covenant of God, the promise of God to believers and their seed, and the mutual membership of God's people with each other in Christ.

We have also written about the spontaneous, organic nature of the school as it arises out of God's covenant, and we have never stated or implied that the school arises out of the law or the consistory's mandate. This passage is representative:

Finally, we would like to emphasize how precious the doctrine of the covenant and its application to the Christian day school is for Remnant Reformed Church. A significant portion of our organic life as God's people, who share our life together in Christ, takes place in our Christian school. One of our chief expressions of organic unity in God's covenant is the school. The gospel preached on Sunday echoes in the classrooms on Monday. Our unity we have in Christ and his gospel both draws us together into his house on Sunday and draws us together to rear our children on Monday. The gospel upon which we are founded as the church produces the fruit of the Christian school for our child-rearing. The school is as precious to us as the church, since both are built by and given to us by Christ and his gospel.

However, even though we believe that you have misrepresented our position, your statement of our position does help us to address what may be a deeper issue in our correspondence. It seems that we are actually wrestling together with the distinction between the law and the gospel, as that distinction applies to the Christian school. We believe that if we could

come to agree on how the law/gospel distinction applies to the school, we would be firmly united in our doctrine of the Christian school.

The first principle of the law/gospel distinction is that the gospel alone—not the law—saves and blesses God's people. The gospel is Christ, and Christ alone saves. "Man cannot by this law obtain saving grace" (Canons III/IV.5). "What...therefore neither the light of nature nor the law could do, that God performs by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word or ministry of reconciliation, which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah, by means whereof it hath pleased God to save such as believe, as well under the Old as under the New Testament" (Canons III/IV.6).

Applied to the doctrine of the school, this means that God's covenant alone—not the law or a consistory mandate—produces a school for God's people. Christ is the gospel and Christ is the covenant. Only Christ by his gospel and by his covenant can give the school to his people and their seed. The Baptism Form, in the questions to parents, implies that the school in which parents cause their children to be instructed arises out of the covenant. "Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have heard that baptism is an ordinance of God to seal unto us and to our seed his covenant... [Do] you promise and intend to see these children, when come to the years of discretion...instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?"

To err on this principle is fatal. If righteousness (and salvation and blessing and life and heaven and gratitude and the church and the family and the school) come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain (Gal. 2:21).

The second principle of the law/gospel distinction is that the law serves to expose our sin and to be the rule of our grateful life. The Heidelberg Catechism explains the law in its first section: "Q.3. Whence knowest thou thy misery? A. Out of the law of God." The Catechism also explains the law at length in its third

section: “how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance” (LD 1, Q&A 2). The key to this principle is that the law is not *unto* salvation but *because of* salvation.

Applied to the doctrine of the school, this means that the “demands of the covenant” to have a school (Church Order 21) serve to expose parents as sinful in the rearing of their children. No parent can ever say that he has been as zealous and diligent in the rearing of his children as he should have been. The parent’s blessed salvation and comfort comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ, for Christ has fulfilled the law for the parent. The “demands of the covenant” to have a school also regulate the grateful life of the child of God. The law does not give the child of God his gratitude; but the law shows the child of God how to express that gratitude: maintain the schools (LD 38).

In its proper place the law is not a threat to the gospel, because the place of the law is not to save or to bless. So also, in their proper place, the “demands of the covenant” to have a school do not threaten the covenantal basis of the Christian school. The demands of the covenant to have a school are not demands *unto* the covenant but are demands *because of* the covenant. The gospel is not the law, and the law is not the gospel. Therefore, at one and the same time, but in different respects, the Christian school can be founded on God’s covenant (gospel) and can be required as our gratitude (law).

With this proper understanding of the law/gospel distinction applied to the school, we can also understand the role of the consistory. The elders are appointed by Christ “to take the oversight of the church which is committed to them, and diligently to look whether every one properly deports himself in his confession and conversation” (Form for the Ordination of Elders). The consistory is to “see to it” (CO 21)

that God’s people live thankful lives—not because consistory mandates give us thankful lives, but because we are wandering sheep who must be constantly gathered in by God’s gospel and instructed in the rule of our gratitude by God’s law. And if there are any sheep who live in impenitent ingratitude by disregarding the demands of the covenant, their impenitence reveals an unbelief that must be corrected by the spiritual means that Christ has given to his church.

In light of this, we can state our position as follows. Our position is that the basis of the Christian school is God’s covenant with believers and their seed, out of which covenant the school spontaneously and organically arises without any assistance whatsoever from the law of God or from the mandate of the consistory. Our position is also that God’s law requires the Christian school as the thankful obedience of covenant parents, which grateful obedience is never *unto* the covenant but is always *because of* the covenant. Our position is also that the consistory must see to it that parents are forming and using schools, not because the school arises out of the church or out of consistory mandates, but because Christ calls the elders “to take the oversight of the church which is committed to them, and diligently to look whether every one properly deports himself in his confession and conversation” (Ordination of Elders).

May the Lord give us the wisdom of our covenant head as we consider these things. We pray that viewing the doctrine of the school through the lens of the law/gospel distinction will benefit all of us, and, we hope, will be the foundation for our unity. We await your response, when you are able.

In Christ’s service,
Deacon Van Baren
Rev. Lanning



Article XCVII. The New King and His Kingdom: The Covenant with Noah (continued)

We have been discussing the significance of the rainbow as it occurs in a few Scripture passages. The passages of the Word of God we examined thus far, Ezek. 1 and Rev. 4, both speak of the rainbow as the sign of God's covenant of grace in its cosmic significance and manifestation. Ezekiel, who is called to prophesy of the displacement of the old covenant and temple by the new, receives at the beginning of his prophetic career a vision that plainly speaks of this covenant of God in its cosmic extension. And the book of Revelation that pictures to us the displacement of the last dispensation of time and imperfection by the eternal form of the covenant and kingdom, also begins with a similar vision that speaks of that glorious manifestation of God's kingdom when all creation shall be redeemed and give glory to Him that sitteth upon the throne. And in both visions, thus we found, the rainbow occurs as a sign of God's grace.

There is, as far as we know, but one more passage in Holy Writ in which mention is made of the rainbow, namely, in Rev. 10. And also to this passage we must briefly call your attention.

It is necessary to understand in the first place that chapter 10 of Revelation constitutes one of the episodes, one of the interludes in the book. You know, no doubt, that the general plan of the book of Revelation from chapter 4 to the end is indicated by the seven seals. The book with its seven seals, given to the Lamb that standeth as though it hath been slain, is opened seal after seal. And when the last seal is broken and the book is completely opened, the mystery of God is fulfilled. The seventh of these seals

reveals itself as seven trumpets; and the seventh of these trumpets again dissolves into seven vials or bowls of wrath that are poured out on the earth. These seals and trumpets and vials constitute the general plan, the groundwork of this part of the book of Revelation. However, not all the material in the book is to be brought under these seals, trumpets and vials. There are some visions that have nothing to do with the seals or trumpets or vials as such, passages, scenes that are thrown in between, episodes, sort of interludes. One of these episodes we find in Rev. 7, between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals; the portion that speaks of the sealing and glorification of the one hundred and forty-four thousand. And another of these interludes we also have in Rev. 10, thrown in between the blowing of the sixth and seventh trumpets; the chapter that speaks of the strong angel with his feet on land and sea giving to John the little book.

The purpose of this part is, no doubt, to assure God's people that after the blowing of the sixth trumpet the mystery of God shall soon and certainly be fulfilled.

Terrible things had been revealed in the preceding chapter. With the blowing of the fifth trumpet the locusts out of the abyss had been liberated, causing a plague so terrible that men in agony seek death and cannot find it. At the sound of the sixth trumpet the four angels that were bound unto the exact hour by the great river Euphrates had been set free. And the result had been a monstrous army of horsemen, spreading death and famine and pestilence. But

these plagues, terrible though they were, had not finished the mystery of God, had not brought to manifestation the kingdom of glory, had not downed the power of opposition. The effect they had on the godless world is rather described in the words of 9:20, 21: “And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass, and of stone and of wood; which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their thefts.” They repented not! The power of iniquity continued to reveal itself even under the most terrible judgments! And the question might arise whether the mystery of God would ever be finished, whether it were, indeed, possible to down the power of opposition, and to overcome iniquity, and to reveal the kingdom of glory. To this question the first part of chapter 10 supplies the answer.

John beheld a mighty angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud, the rainbow upon his head, with his face as the sun and his feet as pillars of fire. He set his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the earth. And lifting up his hand to heaven he swore by Him that liveth forever and ever, that created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein; and in his oath he gave the assurance that there should be no more time, no more delay, but that in the days of the seventh trumpet the mystery of God should be finished according to the good tidings which He declared to his servants the prophets.

The angel, the strong angel as he is called, which John beholds, is undoubtedly a representation of Christ himself. This is to be concluded first of all from his appearance. He is arrayed with the cloud, the symbol of royal judgment, with which Christ is always pictured as coming. His face shineth as the sun, and his feet are like pillars of fire, both of which features cause us to think of the appearance of Christ in the midst of

the golden candlesticks, as pictured in the first chapter of the book. Moreover, what he does could hardly be performed by a created angel. He places his feet on land and sea, thus expressing that all things are and must be subjected under him. He has dominion over all. And also the swearing of the oath brings us to the same conclusion. For Daniel once beheld a similar vision at the River Hiddekel. He saw “a man, clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as flaming torches, and his arms and his feet like unto burnished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.” From this description it may be safely concluded that the man Daniel beheld was no other than Christ in his glory. Especially a comparison of this passage (Dan. 10:5, 6) with Rev. 1 leads to this conclusion. Now then, this man clothed in linen held up his hands to heaven “and swore by him that liveth forever that it shall be for a time, times and a half” (Dan. 12:7). A comparison of the two passages in Daniel with our chapter, Rev. 10, can scarcely leave any doubt that this strong angel is Christ himself.

But what is of more importance is that Christ here appears in connection with the final manifestation of his universal kingdom. The message which his appearance here brings is, first of all, that He is the powerful sovereign over all things, and that all things are very really subjected to Him. This is expressed in the act of placing his feet upon the land and upon the sea. But this is also expressed in his oath. He swears by Him that liveth forever, and by Him that is Creator of all things. With special emphasis all things are mentioned. The heaven and all things that are therein, the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein. All creation and all creatures are mentioned. And the thought is that since God is the Creator of all things, they belong to Him and He is their ultimate King. They do not belong to the power of sin and the devil, even though for a time the evil one may have dominion. They shall be

redeemed. The kingdom of glory shall redeem all things. And this is also implied in the oath itself. The strong angel swears that soon and certainly the mystery of God shall be finished, as He revealed it to his servants the prophets. That mystery is nothing less than the perfecting and reunion of all things in Christ Jesus, the coming of the perfected Kingdom and final manifestation of God's covenant.

And the remarkable fact is that in this connection, where this strong angel appears with the assurance of the quick and certain coming of this final manifestation of the Kingdom, in which all creatures shall participate, the angel is crowned with the rainbow.

The rainbow is here once more symbol of God's covenant and kingdom of grace in its final and universal aspect and significance. It speaks also in this passage of woe to the enemies, and of final deliverance to the people of God.

Remarkable, therefore, it is, that in every passage where the rainbow is mentioned, outside of Gen. 9, it appears as sign of the covenant of grace, of the covenant and kingdom in its cosmic significance. And safely it may be said that the covenant of which the rainbow was set as a sign in the heavens is none other than this very covenant of grace.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

