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Letter from A. C. Van Raalte to Christina de Moen Van Raalte

A. C. Van Raalte

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1838

FILE NAME

July 20, 1838

Utrecht, the Netherlands

A letter of Albertus C. Van Raalte to his wife, Christina De Moen Van Raalte, stating that he had met with the Rev. Hendrik P. Scholte, about the "church situation." "Already I have discussed the church situation with him at great length. I believe this has benefitted me, and in this way our discussion served to revive brotherly love." p. 28. The next day Van Raalte planned to visit Anne Maurits Cornelis Van Hall, the lawyer who served the Separated churches. Van Hall was sick and died August 15, 1838.

Published by Leonard Sweetman in *From Heart to Heart Letters from the Rev. Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte to His Wife, Christina Johanna Van Raalte-De Moen, 1836-1847*, Heritage Hall Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1997, pp. 28-31, 65-66.

Sweetman provided extensive notations with this letter, which are very informative.

July 20, 1838

Dear Wife,

Through the Lord's goodness, I'm well. This I hope for you too and also for our Albert. I wish to share a short travel experience with you. Monday evening when I boarded the ferry, I found out, dear Wife, that your concerns about the mockery that I would experience there, were unfounded. I found that the Lord touched the passengers' consciences with the result that I did not experience any difficulty. I think there was not a minister on the ferry, but there was a doctor's wife from Scotland. The wind was and remained contrary. At first it was rather windy (but I slept well). Later it was calm so that we finally arrived in the city on Tuesday evening. Dirk was not at home. This family lives in a place near Soestdijk. I spoke with Chris.¹ Her beloved has returned again, but she had not yet spoken to him. A few days later he arrived in Amsterdam. She sends her greetings to you. She gave me a pair of stockings. She also expressed a desire to come in the fall.

I lodged with Mrs. Van Velzen.² She was friendly, but I discovered that bitter feelings are directed against Scholte. I also spoke with the elders and that was quite beneficial for me. Early Thursday morning I went to Utrecht. I am pleased that my way led me there. Scholte was home. Already I have discussed the church situation with him at great length. I believe this has benefitted me, and in this way our discussion served to revive brotherly love. I fear that the Devil quietly, through suspicion and distrust, causes destructive schism and friction among the brothers. Tomorrow morning I hope to go to Brother Van Hale.³ He must be very ill, and there seems to be no hope for his recovery. I very much long to see him. I have been informed that I am not able to schedule a conversation with Buddingh.⁴ Therefore, I have decided to go home Tuesday

morning. I would like to have the coach pick me up at 8 o'clock Tuesday morning at Schuier. Then, the Lord willing, we can go on our trip Wednesday morning.

Mrs. Van Velzen has written Van Velzen for me that our meeting probably should take place a few days later because of my delay. Scholte and his wife greet you. The Lord comfort you and give you joy. May He be your delight. Greet the brothers. Greet the servants. Kiss Albertus for me.

Your sincere, loving husband,
A.C. Van Raalte

1. Chris — Johanna Christina Van Velzen-De Moen, the sister of Mrs. Christina Johanna Van Raalte, the wife of the Rev. A.C. Van Raalte. Mrs. Van Velzen is the wife of the Rev. Simon Van Velzen. Cf. Letter of A.C. Van Raalte dated 24 April 1837, Note 1.

2. Mrs. Van Velzen — The Widow Van Velzen, the mother of the Rev. Simon Van Velzen. Cf. The addresses on the envelopes of the Letters of A.C. Van Raalte dated 2 October 1837 and 4 October 1837. Mrs. C.J. Van Raalte-De Moen, at that time was lodging temporarily with "Mejufvrouw the Widow [of] Van Velzen" who resided at the address designated "Behind the Canal" in Amsterdam.

3. Brother Van Hale — Anne Maurits Cornelis Van Hall, the lawyer of the Separated Churches. Van Hall died on 15 August 1838, twenty-six days after this letter was written. Cf. The Letter of A.C. Van Raalte dated 7 December 1836, Note 1.

4. Buddingh — Huibertus Jacobus Budding(h) was born 19 January 1810 at Rhenen in the province of Gelderland. He was educated in Utrecht, and became a pastor in the Hervormde Kerk on the island of Walcheren in 1834. In that year he was ordained in the Biggekerke. In Zeeland, at this time, "the dissatisfaction of the pious folk with the rationalist preaching" constituted the seed of secession from the Hervormde Kerk over the issue of the singing of evangelical hymns in the worship services in addition to the metrical Psalms. In the case of Budding, the version of the Psalms which alone possessed authenticity was the "old metrical psalm book of Datheen."

This differentiated Budding from the primary stream of The Secession Churches.

The Classis of Middelburg attempted to discipline Budding in the matter of his refusal to use evangelical hymns in the worship services. Budding followed the path which had been followed by others before him: he separated himself from the Hervormde Kerk, and became a minister in the Separated Churches.

Fines were assessed against him for preaching to more than twenty persons without the government having granted him permission to do this. His fines totaled forty thousand guilders, and Budding refused to pay his fine. As a result of this action, the government put Budding in prison for seven months, and then pardoned him. Budding protested, "The things I must suffer for Christ's sake I refuse to avoid by paying fines."

From 1844 until 1848, Budding served as a minister in Groningen. In 1848 Budding migrated to the United States. P.J.G. Hodenpijl, a professor of Modern Languages at Rutgers College in New Brunswick, New Jersey, was the "agent" for "The Netherlands Society for the Protection of Emigrants from Holland." This organization contacted a realtor who bought sections of land on the Grand River and Crockery Creek in Michigan to found a colony there. Hodenpijl was appointed the manager of this project. He advertised the project in the Netherlands, and he attempted to establish some sort of contact with Van Raalte in order to enhance the project in the eyes of people in the Netherlands. One place in which Hodenpijl attempted to establish another colony was Ravenna, Michigan. Budding received an invitation to join this colony as a pastor. Although his consistory in Groningen did not wish him to leave for this new post, the restless Budding left. His stay in Ravenna was not very long. By the beginning of 1849 he left Ravenna and joined a group at Town Eight, about eight miles from Milwaukee. The Rev. Budding visited or ministered in the Colony in Holland, in Buffalo, New York, and other "western settlements" until 1851 when he was ready to return to the Netherlands. For a time he left the ministry to purchase and operate a farm in Maryland. Here, also, his restlessness drove him to leave. Finally he returned to the Netherlands. From 1852 until 1870 he served as the pastor in Goes. The congregation he served in Goes was not a congregation of The Secession. This congregation, rather, was a Free Evangelical Congregation, independent of all ecclesiastical ties to larger corporate ecclesiastical bodies.

Budding died in 1870. He never married. A baker by the name of De Jong who served as a pastor in various places in the Netherlands during the early years of The Secession proclaimed the gospel at Budding's funeral. De Jong stated that this man who remained a bachelor all his life was "a friend

of everyone who loved the Lord Jesus unceasingly (onverderfelijkheid). He was a friend of the poor who were comforted and aided by Him. He was also a friend of children whom he attempted to bring to Jesus."

Cf. *Anderhalve Eeuw Gereformeerden In Staat En Land: Zeeland*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1984. Pp. 7-8. Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America: A Study of Immigration and Settlement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in the United States of America*, Vols. 1 and 2, Robert P. Swierenga, general editor, and Adriaan de Wit, chief translator. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985. Pp. 61, 65, 107, 303-304.

2. The words "te Stegeren" were inserted above the line.
3. A "Classikale vergadering" is a periodical meeting of representatives of the congregations in a particular area to conduct business which pertains to the congregations as a group; not merely to a particular congregation.
4. The meaning of the sentence is plain. The expression "handen in een" is inelegant.
5. "Gods" is inserted here above the line by Van Raalte in editing or correcting the text.
6. These words represent an imprecise reference to Romans 8:28 which reference is the result of a hasty reading of the passage; not an exegetically responsible and defensible reading.
7. In editing or "correcting" the text of the letter Van Raalte added "zijn" above the line. This introduces a grammatical problem, but Van Raalte's point is clear.
8. This seems to be a grammatical inelegance involved in a rapid composition of the letter. That Van Raalte wrote this letter in haste is evident in his penmanship.

9. The envelope is addressed:

Mejufvrouw
Mejufvr: C.J. Van Raalte
geb: De Moen
te
Genemuiden

The envelope is stamped with a circular red stamp: "ZWOLLE 29 DEC"

The envelope is sealed with wax; the impression of Van Raalte's seal is very clear: "A.C.V.R."

*Lieve gade!*¹

Door 's Heeren goedheid ben ik welvarende Zulks hoop ik van U gelijk alsook van onze Albertus ! — kwensch u een kort reisverhaal medetedeelen: Maandagavond op het veerschip koomende ondervond ik lieve vrouw dat Uwe bezwaren omtrent de spotterijen welke² ik daar zou ondervinden ongegrond waren ik ondervond dat er door de Heere beslag op de consciëntien gelegd werd Zoodat ik geen moeite ondervond: ik geloof niet dat er een predikant op de Beurtman was, maar de Doktersvrouw van Schokland was er aanwezig de wind was en bleef tegen, eerst was zij nog al hevig (maar ik heb er goed omgeslapen) naderhand wierd het stil, waardoor wij eerst dingsdagavond in de stad kwamen: Dirk vond ik niet te huis, deze familie logeert op een buiten bij Soestdijk, Kris heb ik gesproken haar geliefste was weder binnen 's lands maar zij had Hem nog niet gesproken maar over een paar dagen kwam Hij in Amsterdam Gij moet Har groete ontvangen: Zij heeft mij een paar kousen gegeven: ook openbaarde ze de begeerte om in het najaar te koomen.

Bij Jufvrouw Van Velzen heb ik gelogeerd Zij was vriendelijk, maar ik ontdek dat er bittere wortelen geschoten zijn tegen Scholte, ook heb ik nogal gesproken met de ouderlingen, en het is mij nog al van nut geweest: Donderdag morgen ben ik vroeg naar Utrecht gegaan; en ik ben verheugd dat mijn weg is herwaart leidende Scholte vond ik te huis en heb alrede alveel met Hem gesproken over de kerkelijke omstandigheden en ik geloof dat het mij nuttig is en in opzichten is het dienende dat de broederliefde verlevendige wordt, ik vreeze dat de Duivel ligtelijk onder de Broeders door achterdocht en wantrouwen schadelijke schuuring en wrijving veroorzaakt: Morgenochtend hoop ik naar Broeder Van Hale te vertrekken Hij moet slecht zijn en geen hoop op herstel schijnt er overig te zijn ik verlang

zeer ziens:³ Buddingh kan ik niet te spreken krijgen naar men mij berigt weshalve mijn voornemen is tegen Dingsdagmorgen weder te huis te koomen gaarne had ik dat tegen 8 Uur de chais bij Schuier mij afhaalde te weten Dingsdagmorgen om 8 uur: dan konden wij zo het den Heere behaagde woensdag morgen op reis gaan Zoo het den Heere behaagde: —

Jufvrouw Van Velzen heeft voor mij aan Van Velzen geschreven dat onze overkomst een paar dagen waarschijnlijk zoude later worden vanwege mijn oponthoud. Scholte en zijn vrouw groeten u.

De Heere trooste en verblijde u en Hij zij uwe verlustiging. Groet de Broeders groet de dienstboden Zoen Albertus.

Uw hartelijk Liefhebbenden Man
A. C. Van Raalte⁴

1. Normally Van Raalte uses the address: "Geliefde Vrouw" or "Hartelijk Geliefde Vrouw." "Gade" is a term used less and less frequently during the later part of the nineteenth century. Literally the term means "consort" and could be used to designate either "wife" or "husband."

2. The "l" in "welke" is missing in the text of Van Raalte's letter.

3. The reading of these last two words is difficult. There has been an editorial change, but it has not proven to be helpful. The sense of the comment is clear. The expression, itself, is not.

4. The envelope is addressed:

Mejufvrouw C.J. Van Raalte
geb: De Moen
ten huize van Ds. Van Raalte
VDM

(= Verbi Domini Minister, Minister of the Word of God)
Genemuiden

Theenvelopecontainsaroundstampwiththefollowing:"UTRECHT20/7"

The envelope is sealed with red wax which bears the imprint of Van Raalte's seal: "A.C.VR."

Hartelijk geliefde vrouw!

Zie hier een klein lettertje om U mijne overkomst tot hier medetedeelen: bij mijne aankomst in het logement al hier, ging ik dadelijk Colt opzoeken en overhandigde ze den Brief van den Heer Romein: dadelijk was hij zoo vriendelijk mij tot het supper te noodigen, in een woord ik vindt daar de harten ontsloten. Door middel van Mijnheer Colt ben ik geintroduceerd aan den Heer Kellogg Rechter te Alleghan, deze Heer doet insgelijksch voor mij al wat Hij kan: Hij wil met mij de bewuste plaats Ada gaan zien: daarenboven wil Hij met mij de strecken langs Ionia en de grand river gaan zien: Nu neemt Hij mij mede naar zijn huis in de stad¹ allegan in Allegan County liggen er nog zes townships voor gouvernements prijs te koop: ook deze hopen wij te gaan bezien: — Door domine Hoijt krijgen wij eene Juiste afteekening van bovengenoemde townships: — de plaatsen langs de grand river moeten wij zoeken in de Stad Ionia —

Door dit bestuur van Gods voorzienigheid zal ik mij in deze strecken wel enkele weken moeten ophouden: wanneer gij mij dan iets te schrijven hebt dan is mijn adres ten huize van Domine Hoijt wanneer gij geen adres weet te schrijven dan wil U Mijnheer Romeijn of Domine Duffield U wel helpen: — Domine Hoijt is zeer hulpvaardig, hier logeer ik, het schijnt een allesints godzalig man, mijnh: Colt insgelijksch vreest God: De Richter Kellogg wordt ook algemeen geschat als een trouw regtvaardig en verstandig man: Zoodat ik allesints reden van dankstof heb aan god van in zulke handen geraakt te zijn: — meer en meer denk ik dat deze Staat Michigan wel de Staat onzer wooning zal worden: bid veel den Heere dat Hij ons genadig zij en helpe dat Hij mij kennelijk moge leiden en ons

FROM HEART TO HEART

*Letters from the
Rev. Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte
to His Wife,
Christina Johanna Van Raalte-De Moen,
1836 – 1847*

Edited by
Leonard Sweetman

Translated by
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