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Meeting Notes of the Consistory of the First Reformed Church

A. C. Van Raalte

Gerrit Wakker

William Buursma

Althea Buursma

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18 January 1859

Holland, Michigan

At a meeting of the consistory of the First Reformed Church at which Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte presided and Gerrit Wakker served as clerk, a considerable discussion was held about a horse deal. The seller, a Mr. Mulder, claimed that Elder Teunis Keppel had no right to renege on a deal. The consistory decided it was not competent to make a judgement and instead admonished the parties to settle their differences in a Christian manner. The entire meeting was taken up with this issue.

In Dutch; translation by Rev. William and Althea Buursma, 2000.

Original in the records of the Pillar Christian Reformed Church in the Joint Archives of Holland, vol. II, pp. 85-87.

and that there are reasons to believe that it will result in a complaint to the secular authorities. It was decided to investigate this matter as speedily as possible, in the persons of Rev. van Raalte and Brother Broek.

ARTICLE 5 – A discussion ensued over certain religious people, who are not members of the congregation by confession but who were, before arriving at years of discretion, recipients of the sacrament of baptism, and thus members of the church. They have now reached these years of discretion and have children, whom they wish to receive the sacrament of baptism. Various viewpoints were expressed on this subject, but, because of the late hour, the discussion was terminated and will be brought up later.

Rev. A. C. van Raalte invited the members of the consistory to a preachers' meeting, where the subject will be discussed. This invitation was happily accepted.

The meeting was closed with prayer by Brother Hekhuis.

A. C. van Raalte
G. Wakker

Consistory Meeting of January 18, 1859

All members were present.

ARTICLE 1 -Rijna Vork, Albert Baltman, Fenna Baltman, nee Groote, and Filip Fielipse requested permission to the table of the Lord. After discussion with them, all four were admitted by an unanimous vote.

ARTICLE 2 – A certain Mr. Mulder, with his servant and two members of the congregation, Veeneklaasen and Bloemers, entered the meeting; the first, as accuser and the three others as witnesses against Brother Keppel, concerning the purchase of a horse. Mulder, who had sold the horse to Keppel, and, after the purchase, Keppel is supposed to have said that he wanted to wait awhile to see whether it could work well alongside his horse. Although this was done without negative comment, Keppel broke the agreement for purchase, and the complaint against him is that he has handled this matter wrongly and dishonestly.

Veeneklaasen, serving as a witness, confirmed that Mulder's version is correct and that the purchaser had, indeed, said that it was a healthy and tough horse, broken in for wagon and plow. The statement had not been made that the horse was free of imperfection. The servant of Mulder, as the second witness, agreed, and the third witness, Bloemers, also added

that, at the time of purchase, Keppel had wanted to try it out, particularly in regard to the ability of the horse to walk properly. If so, there was the common agreement that the purchaser was obligated to keep the horse. His returning of the animal was a violation of the terms.

Brother Keppel expresses disagreement with this account. He says that, indeed, he had insisted upon trying out the animal, and if satisfied would keep it. After he had placed the horse in front of his wagon, he discovered that he could not back up. Moreover, that his front legs were stiff. Consequently the horse was not correctly described in the declaration of the seller, and, therefore, unsuitable for the work he intended. The natural consequence of this was that he returned the horse to its owner, in harmony with the specified condition. He expressed amazement that anyone could have objections to his reaction.

The seller, however, rejected the explanation of Keppel, and would not agree that the purchase had been made under the above-mentioned conditions. He had only indicated that the horse was good when working his wagon and plow and that the animal was healthy and domesticated. The horse was not stiff. He states that the purchaser describes as stiff what was simply the natural gait of the horse and that there had never been any talk about first trying it out, and that the only condition was that his horse could work alongside the horse of Keppel. Consequently, he feels that he has been unjustly treated, etc.

Having heard all of this, the consistory noted the stubbornness of the attitudes, and several consistory members stated that they believed that the consistory was not competent to make a judgment. The assumption was made that both parties, according to their testimonies, spoke the truth as they saw it from their personal point of view. It is, indeed, possible, in the judgment of the consistory, that both parties sincerely believe the statements that they have made. Since there was no ethical transgression, and since the consistory members are not legally trained, nor could they know the precise intentions, they made no decision. Both parties were encouraged to solve the matter between themselves in a Christian fashion. The parties involved were not satisfied, and each one again attempted to defend his position. There was mention made of a possible middle ground. Upon hearing this, Mulder said that he would let the matter rest for \$10.00. Otherwise he would have asked \$25.00. The consistory noted the increased anger and fearing

that the matter would have bitter consequences attempted to find a middle way, which would not irritate either party. This effort was hindered because Brother Keppel was so sure of the righteousness of his cause that under no circumstances would he make a settlement involving money to be given to Mulder, but demanded damages, because so much of his time and effort had been occupied with this. He had no regrets about the purchase, and anything related to it, since the sale never became a reality.

The consistory, although convinced that his complaint had merit, nevertheless, attempted to persuade him to suffer loss rather than to allow this agitated atmosphere to continue. In spite of this plea, Brother Keppel refused to listen to this advice but insisted upon receiving justice. At this point, further discussion was broken off. The president warned Veeneklaasen, before his departure, that he should cool his anger before he destroyed himself, and that since he was already an old man, he ought to be an example. He added that the wrathful rage would surely have a negative influence upon his children, and all who knew him. This warning was not received in a friendly fashion, based on a comment made by (Veeneklaasen).

The meeting was closed with a decision to meet again on Friday evening at 6 o'clock

A. C. van Raalte
G. Wakker

Consistory Meeting of January 21, 1859

Except for Brother Ploeg, who was hindered because of bad weather, all of the members were present.

ARTICLE 1 – The meeting was opened with prayer by the president. The minutes of the two previous meetings were read and approved.

ARTICLE 2 – Mr. Veeneklaasen enters the meeting and requests the baptism of his child, even though neither he nor his wife are members. The members of the assembly express differing points of view and are not able, as is the practice of neighboring ministers, to accommodate themselves to the wishes of individuals. They decide to inquire of the father the reason for his desire and his knowledge concerning religion, in particular