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7-15-1869

A Letter of A. C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps

A. C. Van Raalte

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No. 51

Amelia C. H., Va., July 15, 1869

A letter of A. C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps, responding to Phelps' request that he accept an appointment by the Council to raise funds for the endowment. ACVR is reluctant, however, to leave "the Virginia Settlement." It would cause disappointment there and besides "I consider it to be my missionary work which I am not allowed to part with."

Original in the Archives of Hope College.

4

with female education?
Do you see a chance or possibility for sending Van Putten's or ^{pt. Suckering} Superior pointed money.

We are well by God's kindness, though I am weak. My wife is a wonder in my eyes. The marriage festivities are past: they are gone to the mountains.

Mrs Van Raalte sends her love to Mrs Phelps. and receive together the best wishes of us all.

Your friend & Brother

P^r afterwards if I do H. Van Raalte accept the appointment this may be considered to be an official letter No. 1. But don't expect you to keep it entirely to yourself.

Exhortation - etc.
Member of the Theological Society

51

Rev. Dr. P. Phelps.

Amelia H. V.
July 18 / 1869.

Dear Brother,

I can not see through to the end: but I must be contented to have light for each step. - It seems that I am shut up to the indwelling work, by its all controlling importance: and though it seems to me an absurdity to undertake such work on account of the loss of things yet it will not do, to show even the appearance of indifference, or cold shoulder. I say at least try. Who knows God may give strength? This is not written for acceptance of the appointment. It is written sub wise. I do not wish to reveal my thoughts: the people is always ahead of me in drawing conclusions. I will not give them hereby certain directions: and then I want first to settle some

doubts in my mind. I ought to be understood. If the acceptance was understood to leave the Virginia settlement to itself then I would cause disappointment. I consider it to be my missionary work which I am not allowed to part with.

It seems also to me impossible to define the time of living at Holland or Virginia. The East seems to be the main field of labor. And yet Holland and Virginia will call me: then I am somewhat dependent of my wife's choice.

Do you have any plan about the work itself? Is there to be kept in view some features of the old work?

Must the traveling expenses come out of the salary?

Are you going to the East during the vacation? Through mother's heart, desires to visit Michigan, lack

of money makes me to consider to go to the Surroundings of Albany to begin the work. - What do you think of this. It seems to me the only thing to go to work at once patiently as much time as is possible.

What do you think of seeking a boarding place in a country place on the railroad, where my wife could stay, to procure a resting spot, which I shall want on account of my exhaustion?

Is it necessary for me to be this fall in Michigan?

Please tell me, what has been the synodical object in my appointment?

Is there any benefit in that I should be a nominal member of the Theological faculty? -

Please answer me if possible by returning mail.

Is there any contemplated plan of action in connection

Amelia C H Va
July 15/1869

Revd Dr P: Phelps

Dear Brother,

I can not see through to the end but I mst be contented to have light for each step. -It seems that I am shut up to the endowment work by its all controlling importance: and though it seems to me an absurdity to undertake such work on account of the loss of strength yet it will not do to show even the appearance of indifference or Cold Shoulder. Today at least try. Who knows God may give Strength?! This is not written for acceptance of the appointment. It is written Sub Rosa. I do not wish to reveal my thoughts: the people is always ahead of me in drawing conclusions. I will not give them hereby certain direction. and then I want first to settle some doubts in my mind. I ought to be understood to leave the Virginia Settlement to itself then I would cause disappointment: I consider it to be my missionary work which I am not allowed to part with.

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Is there any contemplated plan of action in connection with female education? Do you see a chance or possibility for raising Van Puttens of Superior Point's money. -

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Mrs Van Raalte sends her love to Mrs Phelps and receive together the best wishes of us all

Your friend and Brother

A.C. Van Raalte

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July 15 / 1869

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69-07-15 [GS51]

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It seems alsoo to me impossible to define the time living at Holland or Virginia: the East seems to be the main field of labor: and yet Holland and Virginia will call me: then I am Somewhat dependent on my wife's choice.⁵

Do you have any plan about the work itself? Is there to be kept in view Some features of the old work?

Must the traveling expenses come out of the Salary?--

Are you going to the East during the vacation?⁶ Though mother['s] heart desires to visit Michigan; lack of money⁷ makes me to consider to go to the Surroundings of

¹ Van Raalte was again willing to put himself on the line for Hope College. He was considered a very successful fundraiser.

² When Van Raalte wrote Phelps confidentially, it is likely that he did not expect Phelps to save the letter permanently.

³ When it is realized how well known Van Raalte was, it can be assumed that he was the subject of many conversations, especially since if his decision to leave Virginia now and return to Holland would be a very key decision.

⁴ Doing missionary work always surfaced as the principal reason why Van Raalte would undertake this ill-advised move to Virginia and attempt to colonize Dutch immigrants again.

⁵ This was an understatement. Christina's health condition and certainly that of the Van Raalte's son-in-law, Rev. Pieter J. Oggel, were uppermost considerations as to how long the family would stay in Amelia.

⁶ This was not an unusual question. In the first place, the Phelps family went back to visit family in Albany, New York, every summer. Asking this question at this date was also not unusual. Hope academic year concluded the middle of July.

⁷ This remark indicates that Van Raalte had his usual "cash flow" problems. The problem would likely end the following year when Holland's City Council voted to commit \$16,000 to the proposed railroad project. Original in the Archives of the State of Michigan, rgms 44, box 218, fldr 10. Within a short time, the Van

Albany to begin the work. –What do you think of this. it seems to me the only thing to go to work at once patiently as much time as is possible.

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We are well by God’s kindness, though I am weak: my wife is a wonder in my eye.¹⁰ The marriage festivities are past: they are gone to the mountains.¹¹

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Raaltes contributed \$4,000 to Female Seminary program. Van Raalte sold a considerable amount of land for railroad right of way.

⁸ It is unclear what Van Raalte is referring to. There is no indication in the minutes of the General Synod of 1869 that there was any objection to his appointment. In fact, his appointment letter states the glowing attributes of Van Raalte for the position. It reads as follows: “The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America rep[r]ising confidence in your piety, learning and talents have elected you a Professor in their Theological College at Holland, Mich[igan]. The branches in which you are to instruct the youth committed to your charge are those of Evangelistic Theology.” Van Raalte collection, archives of Calvin College.

⁹ No information exists that can explain Van Raalte’s question to Phelps.

¹⁰ The Virginia climate must have agreed with Mrs. Van Raalte. However, she was suffering from “consumption” by this time.

¹¹ Daughter Christina and Rev. William B. Gilmore were married by Van Raalte at Amelia Court House, Virginia, 14 July 1869. Location of original unknown; copy exists in the Van Raalte files of the Van Raalte Institute, Hope College.