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Members of the Consistory of the First Reformed Church Met with a Committee of the Classis of Holland of Which Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte Presided as Chair of the Classis Committee

A. C. Van Raalte

J. Schrader

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13 October 1873

Holland, Michigan

Members of the consistory of the First Reformed Church met with a committee of the Classis of Holland of which Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte presided as chair of the classis committee. The meeting concerned the matter of Free Masonry. Van Raalte clearly dominated the discussion. He is quoted to have said that membership "in the Free Masons is not a sufficient reason to excommunicate an individual. Synod would not approve such an action. There must be sins which flow forth from masonic membership, for example, transgression of the Ethical (Moral) Law (before excommunication can take place)." The discussion "was closed without resolution."

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

Original in the records of the Pillar Christian Reformed Church at the Joint Archives of Holland, vol. II, p. 97.

Special Consistory Meeting, with the Classical Committee.
October 13, 1873

Present: Brothers van den Berge, Beeuwkes, Kruidenier, Keppel, Wilterdink, Schrader, Vaarwerk. From the Classical Committee: Dr. A. C. van Raalte; Elders Labots and van Bree.

Dr. van Raalte, as president, opened the meeting with prayer.

The chairman asked for the archives of the classis to the First Church of Holland. The clerk read the material requested, and then asked whether the committee wished to have the articles from our minute books read, in the matters concerning the Free Masons. The chairman judged that this was not necessary and indicated that he, not for a moment, doubted whether we had failed to deal with these people with all patience and long-suffering. Classis, in his opinion, will also not doubt this. He further asserted that the document from the committee of order and discipline did not represent the opinion of classis. At this point, the other committee member insisted that it (the document) was, indeed, the opinion of the classis. Dr. van Raalte then, with many argumentations, laying aside the above-mentioned document, point by point, explained the reason for his argumentation as follows:

Membership in the Free Masons is not a sufficient reason to excommunicate an individual. Synod would not approve such an action.

There must be sins which flow forth from Masonic membership, for example, transgression of the Ethical (Moral) Law (before excommunication can take place).

Classis would never, otherwise, give approval, and he (Dr. van Raalte) will oppose such action as long as he can. No contra-argument could help in the differences between the chairman and the brother committee member. Hence, the discussion was closed without resolution.

The meeting was closed with prayer by Rev. van der Meulen, who was present for a short time with us.

A. C. van Raalte
J. Schrader, clerk

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