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December 14, 1955

Elder R. R. Figuhr  
General Conference of S.D.A.  
Washington 12, D. C.

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General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
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My dear Brother Figuhr:

Your communication of December 1, concerning the Wilkinson letter, signed by him and twelve others, has been received.

About the same time a note was rushed to me by Ralph Crawford, containing this sentence: "My signature on that whole letter was unauthorized." He also sent me a carbon copy of the letter sent to you, and three or four other brethren, in which essentially the same statement is made.

In his letter to me he states that he looks upon this as a side issue and really as a smoke screen.

I know nothing about the content of the Wilkinson letter. I rather gather that it has something to do with the honey business. At least that is the point that Brother Crawford, for he said that Elder J. P. Neff had contacted him on that phase.

May I make this simple statement: I was not alluding to a hush-hush campaign by the Officers, but by some of the men who were exceedingly vocal over the years, who sent letters and documents broadcast everywhere maligning not only me, but others. Now, when the shoe pinches a bit on their own feet, they have become quite agitated.

I appreciate what you state in your letter, and upon my return I will have a further talk with you.

Perhaps I might give you a little background that would serve as a setting for some of these matters. In the first place, I was called to the General Conference in 1926 to be a junior associate to Elder A. G. Daniells. That, in itself, was enough to damn me for all times with a certain group. These were the men who fought Daniells tooth and nail, and finally got him out of presidential office because there had been conflict between Daniells and B. G. Wilkinson over his sensationalism and over numerous things that need not be put on paper.

Not too long after coming to the General Conference I was unfortunately named chairman of a committee to examine and report upon the book that had been privately published, called "Our Authorized Bible Vindicated," by B. G. Wilkinson. The committee did conscientious work, and we were unanimous in recommending to the officers that the book was unreliable, could serve no helpful purpose, was based on misinformation, and was totally unsound in its arguments and conclusions. It was in direct conflict with the writings of the Spirit of prophecy and the usages of the Spirit of prophecy in our denominational positions. Dr. B. G. was mightily stirred.

He brought a whole suitcase full of books, which Brother J. S. Washburn carried as his right-hand man, and laid out on the table before him to make an elaborate defence of his position. You see, the book was privately published, without authorization, without any protective reading committee, and was filled with wild statements.

The General Conference Committee and officers heard Dr. Wilkinson and voted to reaffirm their position asking him not to continue the sale of the book. However that was flagrantly flaunted. It continued to be sold as before.

This all stems back to a concept that the book Daniel and Revelation was virtually an inspired volume. It taught the old view of the Daily. It taught the Arian view of the Godhead, and therefore denied the eternal pre-existence and deity of Jesus Christ. And those who differed were enemies of the faith, subverters of the cause we love, and they felt bound before God to fight it to the utmost. They felt that the Union had been placed geographically to keep the Headquarters from going to perdition and leading the denomination after them.

Professor W. W. Prescott was a particular target because he taught the eternal pre-existence of the deity of Jesus Christ. He also taught the new view of the Daily, as did Daniells. And in their attempt to safeguard the denomination, they entered into these schemes that are perhaps somewhat well-known now.

When the revision of Daniel and Revelation was contemplated, I was named as chairman of the revision committee, but I immediately disqualified myself because I knew it would never do. There was too much prejudice against me because of other relationships, and so Professor Howell was named the chairman. The revision involved the elimination of all the allusions to the Arian view concerning Christ. Elder Detwiler was fearfully upset over this. His blood vessels stood out like whipcords on his neck and his face was red as a beet, and some people feared that he might have an attack of apoplexy. Elder Spicer was pretty warm also because of the charges made and the defences in behalf of the book. This was all in the spring meeting of the committee at the Woodstock Hotel, in New York City. It was there that Brother Spicer made a remark that was regrettable. He said that the book D&R has done more harm than it had done good. I think that was not really his thought. I think he meant that so far as the deity position on Christ had been a terrible blow to us all through the years. And we have found in recent time that that is one of the chief reasons for placing among the unChristian cults.

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When my books began to appear--the Prophetic Faith volumes--there was a terrible furor on the part of this group. Uriah Smith was the inventor or discoverer or expositor of all of our wonderful positions on truth. And for me to have the temerity to try to make out that anyone else had held those positions beforehand was blasphemy. Furthermore, many of these men had elements of error, and I was repeating error, and the Spirit of prophecy says to never repeat error, when I exposed the fallacies of some of these expositors in the course of these volumes.

I was publicly denounced in the chapel at the Washington Missionary College by Dr. B. G. Wilkinson as the most dangerous man in this denomination. But the real campaign was the covered on, in which J. S. Washburn was a front man, and Dr. B. G. was the hidden instigator. There was a never-ending barrage of letters from him, J. H. Wirtz, Claude Holmes, and others that could be named. These attacks were so violent that Elder McElhany and other leaders had to write in no uncertain terms, particularly to Washburn. Even Brother Detwiler warned him that if he didn't change his spirit, he would lose his own soul. I happen to have a copy of that letter, and I have knowledge of many more. Of the attempts by certain Columbia men to put Brother Washburn in an institution, and of many of the other features that Mrs. Tewalt touches upon, I have no knowledge and far less interest.

When I asked her if these charges and statements of hers were true, concerning her father and Dr. Wilkinson in their special relationship, she sent me these letters, which I have and which I shall retain. I think about the last thing that Dr. B. G. Wilkinson would want to have would be the public reading before some ecclesiastical tribunal of these letters with their attacks, not only upon me, but upon denominational leaders and institutions and godly men like M. E. Kern and others that could be named. I have not shown these letters to others and do not purpose to do so unless counselled otherwise. I do think that you could have access to letters of a more general character that were sent to your assistant treasurer, Brother Adair. They are on file. I have read some of them, for Brother Adair gave them to me to read.

It is to be remembered that these are the men that were the custodians of the orthodoxy concerning Christ as a created being, not eternal in His pre-existence and deity, and in related matters. The very fact that our relation to the deity of Christ, the completeness of the atonement of the cross, so far as the atoning sacrifice is concerned, our relationship to the transaction with the scapegoat, and particularly the nature of Christ during the incarnation are on every hand the criteria by which we have adjudged and condemned as heretics and a cult that is not even Christian in its connotation,-- these facts in contrast and confirmation of the Spirit of prophecy counsels, which are repeated and reiterated, telling us what we should emphasize and the fundamental importance of bearing a true and prominent message thereon,-- all tie together to show that we are following the way of the Lord in our present attempt to correct these unfortunate misapprehensions. But in so doing, Elder Figuhr, we inevitably run into the last of the die-hards on the other view, who consider that they are the ones who are saving the day and preserving the faith.

Figuhr

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It is a sad story, but conflict over these fundamentally variant views,  
I suppose, is inevitable.

Believe me to be,

Very sincerely in the Master's  
service,

*L. E. Froom*

L. E. Froom

LEF:es

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