



November 13, 2012

Elder Daniel R. Jackson, President  
North American Division of  
Seventh-day Adventists  
12501 Old Columbia Pike,  
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600

Dear Elder Jackson,

May I congratulate you on your sermon, broadcast by HOPE, on the needs and challenges of the Church in North America. Your remarks were pertinent, accurate, courageous, and alarming. Alarming, I suggest, because they describe a condition that, like the US Government deficit, needs an urgent remedy. What you said needed to be said.

May I, drawing on 51 years of pastoral and evangelistic experience, be so bold as to state that the solution is within our doing, though fraught with painful obstacles. It will be easier to “*kick the can down the road,*” but the viability of the Church, like the US Government, is dependent on immediate remedial action. Prophecies concerning the triumph of our church are certainly conditional, and the theme of Scripture is that Israel will indeed be cut off if she fails to fulfill the will of God for her. (Rev. 3:16; Romans 11:20, 21) But, to look on the sunnier side, she can and will fulfill her glorious destiny if she clothes herself with sackcloth, repents (Rev. 11:3) and obeys the Word of God.

I firmly believe that the root cause of all our problems is our failure to grasp, comprehend, accept, and proclaim the one true Gospel of Christ. Paul in Galatians 1:12 declared he received the Gospel, not from men, but by **revelation**. Luther was right when he said that the Gospel was like quicksilver—hard to hold. This is because of our fallen corrupt natures that persist until the Last Trump. As the old theologians were fond of saying, “*Sin remains but it does not reign.*” A recognition of our sinfulness is, as I am sure you would agree, the prerequisite to obtaining a knowledge of the Gospel and salvation. (Hence Rev. 11:3) As Luther again expressed it, “*A Christian is always a sinner, always a **penitent**, always right with God.*” Such a penitent attitude is the sword that slays the Goliath of respectable legalism and frigid self-righteousness.

Gospel churches are warm welcoming communities. People gather at the fire to be warmed, not at the refrigerator. Now I do wish to make it plain that I am not talking about a superficial, feel-good, anything goes brand of Christianity. Some time back the Christian Science Monitor carried an article that appraised North American evangelical Christianity. It was hardly complimentary. It complained that almost all young North American Christians were “monumentally ignorant,” and judged the whole evangelical movement as deserving, not a bailout, but a funeral.

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*John Carter • President*

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Tough talk indeed!

What I am talking about is a robust, red-blooded, personal, passionate Christianity that is based on the battle cry of the Protestant Reformers. Of course you know those famed historical theological concepts:

***Sola Christus, (only Christ)***

***Sola Scriptura, (only Scripture)***

***Sola Gratia, (only grace)***

***Sola fide. (only faith)***

(Ellen White on many occasions endorsed the Gospel of the Reformation.)

I continually hear stories of Gospel-less Adventist Churches. One American friend confided, “*I have attended church in...for six years and I have never heard a Gospel sermon, not one mention of the atoning blood of the Savior.*” This man is not a dissatisfied critic; he is a loyal Adventist who is hungry to hear the Gospel. There is a multitude like him, **everywhere**.

Dear Elder, there needs to be a mighty revival of Gospel preaching among us. Spirituality cannot be legislated, but what a difference it would make if all our pastors, presidents, administrators and educators started forthwith by reading slowly and thoughtfully two monumental classics: “***Feed My Sheep***” by HMS Richards, and “***The Cross of Christ***” by John Stott. I tell you, there would be a revival among us. There are other splendid books of course, but I am talking here about two books especially dedicated to **true** Gospel preaching. Not all that professes to be Gospel is Gospel.

The Anglo Church, as you indicated, is sounding the Retreat. Some time back, I was asked to address the British Union Conference Committee. There I was informed that the British Anglo Church is dying out. In the vast city of London, there are scarcely 100 Anglo Adventists. What struck me on that occasion was the attitude of defeatism that emanated from the Anglos present. Public evangelism would never work was their cry, and of course among these Anglo pastors it doesn't. *How could it?* It is working among the West Indian Adventists in England because they have a totally different attitude. As someone said, “*Attitudes are more important than facts.*”

The British attitude has spread to the shores of the USA. “*Evangelism doesn't work*” is the dying gasp of many, and of course for them it doesn't. When I was a boy preacher I was taught that “***evangelism is the lifeblood of the church***” and observation has proven it true.

What a change would be wrought in the church if every pastor, president, and administrator were required every year to go out into the cold hostile world and hold evangelistic meetings! I mean, in the **world**, not in a comfortable church building, but on the battlefield where the guns are blazing and men and women are dying without Christ. (Ephesians 2:12) We would not need to be praying for revival. It would come. Mere talk about revival is counterproductive.

*What would happen if our young people got involved in evangelism?* And let us remember that evangelism, as my old Greek teacher taught me, is the proclamation of the Gospel. It is not talking about **rules and man-made regulations**. It is the preaching of Christ, His dying and living for us, and His coming in glory to take us Home. It is the proclamation of God's Good News!

It also seems to this old preacher that we are watering down the Message of God. No, I am not advocating a harsh, unkind presentation of bare theological and prophetic facts. I am talking about loyalty to God in the preaching of the Three Angels' Messages. These are great, grand, soul stirring truths that need to be taught in love, in the power of the Spirit. It seems to me that we are more interested in **looking** good than in being good and doing good. We are not called to preach smooth things; we are called to teach the holy truths of Scripture in the context of the love of the Savior. (2Tim.4:2-5) Some experienced pastors and laymen believe that our HOPE channel, while doing some good things, could be more forthright and courageous in this area. We are mission and message driven, and where and when our distinctive message is not proclaimed the Church loses its unique relevancy.

Be of good courage. You are in a position where you **can** make a difference, in spite of the inertia of the denominational bureaucracy. Thank you for your time. May God fill you with His Spirit, and continually reveal to you fresh revelations of the Mystery kept secret for ages past but now disclosed to His saints. (1 Col. 1:26)

With every best wish,



John Carter, Pastor  
President  
The Carter Report Ministry

JC/sp

PS You will be receiving in the mail a copy of "The Cross of Christ," which comes to you with our compliments.

PPS It is our intent in order to strengthen and support your ministry to place this letter on The Carter Report website where it will have a large readership.