

LA SIERRA SERMON - AND A REPLY

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On Sabbath morning, March 20, Southern Adventist University Church canceled the church service. Instead, as announced, they held an "art exhibition of the paintings of Harry Anderson." This large collection of paintings is primarily owned by the Review & Herald, with perhaps some by Pacific Press. We cannot but feel that it is unfortunate that Sabbath morning church services in America are canceled so the members can tour a gallery of denominationally owned paintings—while the Chinese who know nothing of Christ and Christianity are refused the opportunity to see them and the Bible studies which go with them.

Since the 11 o'clock service at the SAU Church is always broadcast over the university radio station, the school administration decided March 20 would be a good opportunity to broadcast yet another sample sermon to the Baptists of Chattanooga (the city is full of them), which clearly shows that Adventists believe essentially the same as all the hard-shell Baptists in town. As you will see below, without calling it that, the message of the morning was *once-saved-always-saved*.

The sermon broadcast that day was a tape of a sermon delivered by Dan Smith, Senior Pastor of the La Sierra University Church. In view of so much worldliness that goes on there, you may have wondered what sermons at that church are like. You are about to find out. In the sermon, Smith mentions that he has pastored the LSU Church for the past ten years. He has an excellent speaking voice; and it made his message all the more attractive. *Here are quotations, quickly copied from Smith's sermon:*

[Illustration of how the king held out the scepter to Esther, letting her come in.]

"Christ has already died for all our sins. Once and for all . . . We can all go to heaven . . .

"God has already poured out all heaven for us. All we have to do is walk across and accept it. We're already in . . .

"Wonder no more about God. He is always a God who accepts us. We are all accepted. Once and for all . . .

"It is paganism to think that God is going to destroy us . . . We can slide into the thought that when we sin, God is angry with us. Even though surrounded by a pagan world, David [when he killed Uriah] found that God demands nothing. He is a forgiver. Grace has nothing to do with our behavior. God pours out His grace apart from works . . .

"God has given us grace; why would you try to do any part of it? It's all of grace . . . Once He accepts us, He never takes it back . . . It's settled at the cross . . .

[Illustration of how he stayed at the expensive Ritz-Carleton Hotel in Los Angeles for three days.]

"In every other situation [on earth], your behavior, if you don't perform, is not accepted. But God says, It's done; I'm for you. God is a God of grace forever . .

[Illustration of how he went to a hockey game.]

"Nothing can separate us from the love of God—not even our sins . . . I grew up thinking I would have to ask for forgiveness when I sinned. But it's all been settled . .

"Do you know you're saved, if you are saved? If you are married, do you know whether you are married? Of course you do. If you are already saved, should you question whether you are saved? Of course not. Christianity is not complicated. If you have the Saviour, you're in. You can't be lost if you have the Son; you have assurance of salvation . .

"We are free. Still in the prison of this world. But the war is already over. Christ has died. We have crossed over from death to life. In 1971, listening to a sermon at La Sierra College, it was settled between me and Christ. I confessed Christ, and I have life . . As soon as we confess Christ, we have life. But our salvation is never based on our behavior. But always on Christ's grace . . God always says Yes. He is always gracious. You will always receive it.

"When asked what God will say when we all come to the Judgment, Merrell Street [movie actress; spelling uncertain] said, "Everybody in!" At Calvary, God said, "Go on in." And that is my message to you today, "Go on in."—Dan Smith, Senior Pastor of La Sierra University Church, sermon entitled, "Go On In." Pre-recorded message broadcast by Southern Adventist University, Sabbath morning, March 20, 2004.

An extended comment is demanded, so I shall provide you with one. Here it is:

Especially selected by the administration of Southern Adventist University as a message everyone should hear, you just had an opportunity to attend a morning service at the La Sierra University Church. It is typical new theology: down with obedience to the law and up with grace—but with only one requirement.

That requirement is that, at some time in your life, you profess faith in Jesus Christ as your Saviour. That is it; that is all there is to it. Nothing more, forever.

Smith quoted several Bible texts about the love of God and how we may freely come to Him. We also believe that.

How then do we differ?

According to Smith, all you need to do is receive the grace; you do not even have to ask for forgiveness—for anything you have ever done!

We agree that God's grace is basic to every aspect of the plan of salvation—from start to finish. But Smith chops off and saves a smaller portion of true grace, and throws the rest away. He keeps the part about how God will forgive us when we come to Him. But He omits the greater part of God's plan for our lives:

- We must repent of our sins, truly repent.
- We must determine to put them away.
- We plead with God for forgiveness of our sins.
- We then arise in newness of heart. We immediately set to work living a better life, making more changes and improvements, and ever growing in grace as we draw closer to Him and live to help and bless others.

Each of these details is done through the grace of Christ, every bit of it. The only thing we add to it is our decision to come, to repent, to plead. Our full cooperation is needed in the good work which follows.

Smith and his cohorts assume that we were all saved at Calvary; all we need do now is accept it. But, in reality, every Christian can be lost if he chooses the way of evil and refuses to separate from his cherished sins. Throughout this earthly life, we must continually be careful, cautious, keep crying to God for help, keep running back to Him. *We are on enemy ground.* The certainties of paradise have not arrived yet.

The enemy of souls has a big smile when anyone preaches such a message. He rubs his hands in satisfaction, as precious souls for whom Christ died nod approvingly and accept such errors. Satan well-knows that all such will ere long be his captives in sin.

The hollowed-out grace which Smith and the new theology offers is insidious. It is not Christianity, it does not truly connect us in a living relationship to God, and it encourages us to presume on God's goodness and dabble even more in sin. *Such grace will prove a treacherous friend in times of personal crisis.*

Joseph in Potiphar's house would never have made it if he had such grace.

Consider the implications of such a religion: It teaches that the necessity of obedience to the law ended at the cross. *Henceforth, for Christians, there is no law!*

No requirements, no commandments. No obedience necessary. Our moral behavior is irrelevant to our salvation. We can mistreat our bodies and put anything in them. We can mistreat others. It matters not.

Free from the law / Oh happy condition! / Do as I please / I Need fear no perdition.

Can you imagine it! In this weird world (imagined

by Smith and fellow travelers), as far as Christians are concerned, *Heaven has no government!*

What is a government? What is it for? Well, first there is a king or some kind of legislative body that makes laws. But the liberal Adventist heaven has no king, no legislature. *No more laws.* None exist on the books. *Indeed, for these professors, at Calvary the books of judgment were thrown away.* Angels do not even keep records anymore of what professed Christians do. They stopped keeping track of your actions as soon as you professed Christ decades ago.

Free from the law / Predestined salvation / Enjoy the world / Fear no damnation.

Yes, this new gospel is also predestination. It begins the moment you profess faith in Christ. At that moment, according to the folk at Smithville, your future is determined.

A government also has a Department of Justice to enforce the laws. *But the liberal Adventist heaven has no police!* No justice, only mercy.

Just once, just say you accept Christ. And that's it. Relax, enjoy life; *you cannot be lost.*

Because there is no law governing these professed Christians, *they have no standard of conduct governing their actions.* No right or wrong.

The preachers of this new theology repeatedly declare, "Behavior does not affect your salvation. It was already yours at the cross. When you first professed faith in Christ, you are bound for the glory land; and nothing you henceforth say or do will ever keep you out."

I say such Christians are very brave. As long as they avoid looking at 99% of the Bible, if they only read a few verses in Galatians and Romans, they can claim that theirs is a Biblical religion.

But, oh, how they need to be constantly reassured! All their professedly Christian life, their consciences repeatedly convict them when they say and do bad things. Conscience is the voice of the Holy Spirit warning them to come to God and repent and put away their sins. But they keep ignoring it, because their preachers say they don't need to bother with it. It is just their old nature pestering them, they are told. They have become wise above that which is written all through Scripture.

It is dangerous to ignore your conscience. Doing so leads to the sin against the Holy Spirit.

"No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent."—*5 Bible Commentary, 1093.*

"The most common manifestation of the sin against the Holy Spirit is persistently slighting Heaven's invitation to repent."—*Desire of Ages, 324.*

"The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not lie in any sudden word or deed; it is the firm, deter-

La Sierra Sermon - and Reply

1 mined resistance of truth and evidence."—*5 Bible Com-*

2 *mentary, 1093.*

3 *New theology advocates continually need assurance of salvation,* because their consciences tell them they do not have peace with God. Their only solace is to keep rehearsing the words of their preachers, who keep telling them they have "assurance of salvation."

Poor souls. They are told that the only reason they do not feel assured of salvation is because of their earlier training that they needed to obey the law, do what is right, and avoid the wrong. Once again the reassuring words are given them: "But now you are free from worries about your behavior! It matters not to God what you do. You have accepted Christ and that is all you need do. So now celebrate your salvation, already received!"

But, after church, when the church members return home, a mountain of unconfessed sins will weigh heavily on their hearts and their assurance of salvation quickly evaporates. Oh, how they need their liberal pastors to keep reassuring them that it is safe to keep on sinning and there is no need to prepare for the coming Judgment!

In stark contrast, genuine believers in the full (full) grace of Jesus Christ confess their sins to Him and, in His strength, live their prayers! They are empowered by the grace of Christ to overcome one sin after another in their lives. *Oh, what victories they continually experience! Oh, what joy in the Lord is theirs!* No need for reassuring sermons on "assurance." They have full peace with God through Jesus Christ their Lord and Saviour!

They do not believe in dead grace and no works. They daily receive complete grace that forgives their past and enables them to do good works in putting away sin and living to help and bless others.

Is this what you want? You can enter upon the experience right now. God will give it to you. It is not a phony religion; *it is Bible religion.* It is the religion of Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Daniel, John the Baptist, John, Paul, and the martyrs.

It is the genuine article. You will find it all through the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. *Everywhere in the Inspired Writings are commands and promises.* Commands to be obeyed and promises of the fullness of divine aid in obeying them.

The true gospel is not defective. *It does not consist of cheap grace,* the go-to-heaven-in-your-sins grace. The God of genuine grace is not handicapped, unable to do more through Calvary than let sinners in the backdoor of heaven. The Creator God is all powerful. He is able to empower His trusting children to become like Himself. He does it all by grace, but only with their willing cooperation.

The liberal gospel is forgiveness in sin while the gospel presented in the Bible is forgiveness for genuine repentance, followed by power to obey. *That alone is fullness of grace.* The kind offered by the liberals is a worthless shell, a husk without the kernel.

Forgiving grace and enabling grace—this alone is a complete, rounded, balanced grace.

As the great Dispenser of such grace, God once again has a government. Once again, He has a department of justice. Once again, He requires obedience. The result is changed characters, changed lives, truly happy people.

But, thank God, *He provides 100% of the empowerment to render that obedience!* And all you need do is willingly submit to His control and guidance. All you need do is become His humble, believing child and co-operate with the good work He does in your life.

The genuine article is a sweet walk with God. Of course, you can be lost. But you have experienced such joy in Christ that you have no intention of doing so. *Your will is the key to the whole matter.* God will not save you apart from your will. But as you daily choose to submit anew to Him, He guides you beautifully through the day. Oh yes, Satan will try to give you as much trouble as he can. For he has lost a subject. One who used to be happy in his sins has left the devil's ranks.

But trials and troubles only cause you to press all the closer to your kind heavenly Father. You have learned that you can trust Him. You have learned that He will lead you all the way down the path to the City of God. You have learned that fullness of forgiveness, fullness of empowered help, and fullness of enveloping love is sufficient to meet every problem and every emergency.

He convicts you as to what needs to be done. You step forward and try to do it; you try to obey. *Immediately,* the Holy Spirit will guide and strengthen you—and you will be enabled to obey!

But notice that you had to do your part. You had to push on. You had to try. You had to resist the wrong. You had to ask God for help. You had to believe that He would give it. You had to fear the face of no man and refuse to relent. You had to step forward to do the right.—And then God provided the fullness of enabling might needed to carry it all through to success.

That is genuine Christianity. That is a life worth living. That is a life that honors and glorifies God. This is a standing rebuke to Satan's oft-repeated charge that God's laws are unjust and humanity cannot obey them. It fulfills God's plan for your life in the working out of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

We have come to a fearful time when the special people, appointed by God to warn all the world to return to obedience to the Ten Commandments through the enabling grace of Christ,—turn their backs on the message. I will conclude with some Inspired Statements. Recognizing that the new theology cares naught for the Spirit of Prophecy while paying little attention to the Old Testament, here—in the little space which remains—are a few of the many passages in the New Testament about the importance of obeying God, His Word, and His holy law:

OBEDIENCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach [them], the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."—Matthew 5:17-19.

"And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."—Matthew 12:49-50 (Matt. 19:17).

"And He answered and said unto them, My mother and My brethren are these which hear the Word of God, and do it."—Luke 8:21.

"But he said, Yea rather, blessed [are] they that hear the Word of God, and keep it."—Luke 11:28.

"And they [Zacharias and Elizabeth] were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."—Luke 1:6.

"And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."—Luke 6:46-49.

"But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish."—John 10:26-28.

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments."—John 14:15.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings."—John 14:23-24.

"But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do."—John 14:31 (Heb. 10:7, 1 Thess. 1:9, 2:10).

"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love. If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and [that] your joy might be full."—John 15:9-11 (John 13:17; 14:15, 21).

"Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."—John 15:14 (Acts 23:1, 24:16, 2 Cor. 6:3).

"I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit."—John 15:16 (Phil. 3:12-14).

"And they called them, and commanded them not to

speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."—Acts 4:18-19 (2 Tim. 1:3).

"Then Peter and the [other] apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."—Acts 5:29.

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things [is] death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Romans 6:17-23.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."—Ephesians 2:10 (Eph. 4:1, 6:6-8).

"Wherefore, My beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in My presence only, but now much more in My absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [His] good pleasure."—Philippians 2:12-13 (1 Tim. 6:14).

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one [point], he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty."—James 2:10 (James 1:22-25).

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied . . As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning [here] in fear."—1 Peter 1:2, 14-17 (Heb. 13:16, Rev. 2:19, 3:4, 14:4-5).

"And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."—1 John 2:3-6 (*very powerful*: 1 John 2:17; 3:22, 24; 5:2-3; 2 John 6, 9).

"And, of course, those sweet promises to the faithful in these last days: Revelation 12:17, 14:12, and 22:14.