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More Startling Statements

In our previous Prophetic Bulletin, we cited Ellen G. White about the long delay of the Second Coming. She made it abundantly clear that Jesus would have returned well over a century ago if his Church, sanctified and empowered by the Holy Spirit, had finished the work of proclaiming the Three Angels' Messages.

Reacting to that Bulletin, researcher Steve D. Emse sent us more material from her pen on this topic. He had discovered it several months ago. Some of these statements about what could and should have been immediately after 1844 are startling, to say the least.

From the time of his expulsion from heaven, Satan directed his efforts against the law of God. He heaped upon it the rubbish of tradition and prejudice. But in 1844 God directed the eyes of his people to the sanctuary, and the first angel's message was proclaimed. Satan saw that this work must not go forward unhindered, or the world would soon be warned. He said, "This must not be. If we cannot do something to hinder the advancement of this work, the knowledge of the binding claims of God's law will go speedily to the world. A vast army will be raised up for the Lord, to enter the dark places of the earth. Our rule will come to an end. The sins of those who accept Christ will be laid upon us." {Ms194-1901.3}

Satan went forth as a deceiver, to put a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets. He accomplished that which he purposed. Taking advantage of the disappointment of 1844, he shook the faith of the believers in Christ's coming. He threw them off the track, blinding their understanding in regard to the sanctuary question, which, if properly understood, would have established their faith in the prophecies. Unbelief came in. Many gave up the faith. Some remained in confusion and perplexity, not knowing what to believe as truth. Had they been able to see the temple of God opened in heaven, their faith would have been established and strengthened. Love and harmony would have prevailed. {Ms194-1901.4}

Up to 1844 the body of Advent believers were united in their work. Brotherly love was cherished, and prevailed. This was an important time—the beginning of the great day of atonement. Oh, if all had been obedient to the light sent from heaven, if all had held their position without wavering, if none had cast away their confidence, if there had been no drawing back, how gloriously would the Lord's purpose have been fulfilled! Strong in his strength, the Adventists would have united their voices in proclaiming the third angel's message. The Sabbath reform would have gone forward with greater power than did the reform under Martin Luther. The truth would have been given to nations, kindreds, and tongues. In all the countries of the world sentinels for God would have raised their voices in defense of his truth. Speedily the tares would have been bound in bundles to be burned, and the wheat would have been gathered into the heavenly garner. {Ms194-1901.5}

But Satan's device succeeded marvelously. Division came in among the believers, and God's work was hindered. {Ms194-1901.6}

Shortly after the disappointment of 1844 there were a few who began to search earnestly for the truth on the sanctuary question. Great light shone upon them from the open door. They found a firm platform of faith, and took their stand steadfastly upon it. Those who refused to accept the light upon the sanctuary question became bitter opponents of those who advocated the truth. Their obstinate determination not to see light made them an easy prey to Satan's devices. They joined the world and the churches in opposing the truth. They became instruments in Satan's hands to present to the people fables and traditions. The enemy exulted that he had been able so completely to deceive those who had been used by the Lord in giving light to the world. {Ms194-1901.7}

Thus was hindered the work which began so gloriously, and which should have moved forward in majesty and power. This is why we are still on the earth. The great adversary hindered the work which should have been done in a few months. {Ms194s-1901.8}

How sad! It haunts the imagination that in the better situation that could have been "the Sabbath reform would have gone forward with greater power than did the reform under Martin Luther." And that the work of preparing the world for the Second Coming "should have been done in a few months"!

What is more, our cunning foe who aborted what could and should have been 175 years ago is still at work to achieve additional delay, by again causing strife among believers.

For many years, he has been stirring up factions of Seventh-day Adventists against one another about women's ordination to the gospel ministry. In this very year, at the 61st session of our General Conference, originally scheduled to meet at Indianapolis, Indiana, during June 25 to July 4, a dangerous so-called Compliance Document was due to be presented to punish leaders in North American and European Union Conference for failing to discontinue that practice. Much brain power, time, and masses of the Lord's money had been spent on this distraction from preaching the Three Angels' Message. In this year of grace 2020, it could have torn the denomination apart. But then the Covid-19 intervened, and the government suspended all air flights that would have brought delegates from around the planet, many of whom could have beaten their fellow servants and done the devil's work. In May, 2021, they may try again.

Satan has also been using theistic evolution, so-called emergent Christianity, erroneous views about Bible prophecy, attacks on the Trinity doctrine, and other heresies to keep us very busy. In the meantime, while we are distracted by all these issues and fighting against one another, the papacy and its allies have been very busy. They are trying to bring about a new world order including Sunday legislation and will attempt to crush us.

But our heavenly Lord will not allow him to succeed. Through the Holy Spirit, he is going to quicken many believers with a fervent love toward one another and a zeal to proclaim to everyone whom they can reach that Jesus is about to come.

The Coming of Satan

But before the Lord returns, the devil will impersonate him. In the past, at different times, false prophets and false christs have appeared, just as Jesus had told his apostles (Matt. 24:24). Paul, predicting the work of false apostles, added: "And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14).

In the end time, because people in their doctrines and conduct have increasingly deviated from the teachings of the Bible, not only men but demons are allowed to fasten the world in their deceptions. The servant of the Lord has left us several predictions of what lies ahead.

She startlingly tells us:

As men depart further and further from God, Satan is permitted to have power over the children of disobedience. He hurls destruction among men. There is calamity by land and sea. Property and life are destroyed by fire and flood. Satan resolves to charge this upon those who refuse to bow to the idol which he has set up. His agents point to Seventh-day Adventists as the cause of the trouble. "These people stand out in defiance of law," they say. "They desecrate Sunday. Were they compelled to obey the law for Sunday observance, there would be a cessation of these terrible judgments." From **Devotional: Maranatha**, p. 176.

Satan works through the elements also to garner his harvest of unprepared souls. He has studied the secrets of the laboratories of nature, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows. When he was suffered to afflict Job, how quickly flocks and herds, servants, houses, children, were swept away, one trouble succeeding another as in a moment. It is God that shields His creatures and hedges them in from the power of the destroyer. But the Christian world have shown contempt for the law of Jehovah; and the Lord will do just what He has declared that He would—He will withdraw His blessings from the earth and remove His protecting care from those who are rebelling against His law and teaching and forcing others to do the same. Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard. He will favor and prosper some in order to further his own designs, and he will bring trouble upon others and lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them.

While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he will bring *disease* and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by *the pestilence*. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. Destruction will be upon both man and beast. "The earth mourns and fades away," "the haughty people. . .languish. The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." Isaiah 24:4, 5. "The Impending Conflict," *The Great Controversy*, 589, 590 (emphasis added).

At present, the whole world is distressed by Covid-19. Note that it is Satan who, among other calamities, causes pestilences. But there is more to come:

As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air: "Christ has come!

Christ has come!” The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion. Like the Samaritans who [p. 624] were deceived by Simon Magus, the multitudes, from the least to the greatest, give heed to these sorceries, saying: This is “the great power of God.” Acts 8:10.

But the people of God will not be misled. The teachings of this false christ are not in accordance with the Scriptures. His blessing is pronounced upon the worshipers of the beast and his image, the very class upon whom the Bible declares that God's unmingled wrath shall be poured out.

And, furthermore, Satan is not permitted to counterfeit the manner of Christ's advent. The Saviour has warned His people against deception upon this point, and has clearly foretold the manner of His second coming.... For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Matthew 24:24-27, 31; 25:31; Revelation 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. This coming there is no possibility of counterfeiting. It will be universally known—witnessed by the whole world. *The Great Controversy*, 624, 625.

Nevertheless,

The great deceiver will persuade men that those who serve God are causing these evils. The class that have provoked the displeasure of Heaven will charge all their troubles upon those whose obedience to God's commandments is a perpetual reproof to transgressors. It will be declared that men are offending God by the violation of the Sunday sabbath; that this sin has brought calamities which will not cease until Sunday observance shall be strictly enforced; and that those who present the claims of the fourth commandment, thus destroying reverence for Sunday, are troublers of the people, preventing their restoration to divine favor and temporal prosperity. Thus the accusation urged of old against the servant of God will be repeated and upon grounds equally well established: “Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, ‘Is that you, O troubler of Israel?’ And he answered, ‘I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed the Baals.’” 1 Kings 18:17, 18. As the wrath of the people shall be excited by false charges, they will pursue a course toward God's ambassadors very similar to that which apostate Israel pursued toward Elijah. “The Impending Conflict,” *The Great Controversy*, 590.

His Forerunners

Just as the Lord's people prepare the way for Jesus to come by proclaiming the Three Angels' Messages, the great enemy of the human race has spokesmen and women for his false theology and prophetic interpretations. Having said so, we must, however, remember that some of them could be honestly deceived and may yet, like Saul of Tarsus, be converted to the truth.

Let us therefore look at a few recent theological reactions to the Coronavirus, which has suddenly intruded into the lives of Americans, for many of whom religion is still important. Some are fairly well reasoned, though strange, while others are downright peculiar. All, we think, are potentially dangerous because of the hatred they could stoke.

1

Caitlin Dickson, senior reporter for Yahoo News (May 14, 2020), headlined a recent report as follows: “Some evangelicals fear the ‘mark of the beast’ from a coronavirus vaccine.” This was soon after Dr. Anthony Fauci, the infectious disease expert on the administration’s coronavirus task force, had incurred President Trump’s disfavor for disagreeing with him about when the American economy should be reopened. A veritable witch hunt had begun to probe the poor physician’s political and ideological background.

Ms. Dickson discovered considerable worry about a potential vaccine to counter the virus. Nearly one in five Americans, i.e., almost 20 percent, said they would refuse to accept it; and an additional 26 percent weren’t sure if they’d take it. Probably some of this reaction was inspired by anti-vaccine disinformation spread on social media for more than a decade.

But others believe that Dr. Fauci is part of the “deep state” along with Bill Gates, another prominent villain of coronavirus conspiracy theorists. They think the entire interest in developing the vaccine is “driven by money” as well as “a socialist agenda” designed to “get control of us.” As they imagine it, the vaccine will include some sort of human tracking device. As one of them put it, this would be “Kind of like in the end days, as the Bible says, you’ll be numbered.”

According to Seventh-day Adventists, the mark of the beast, dealt with in Revelation 13 and 14, symbolizes future legislation to make Sunday observance compulsory and persecute Sabbathkeepers. But this interpretation is rejected by those who believe that Jesus changed the Fourth Commandment to sanctify the first day of the week. For them, the mark of the beast and the number of the beast (666) are one and the same thing.

Mrs. Dickson pointed out that a large segment of Americans viewed current events in the light of Biblical prophecy. Such people interpret every significant political and social development “as a possible harbinger of the return of Jesus Christ. And so the coronavirus pandemic has created the perfect environment for apocalyptic Christianity to fuse with antigovernment libertarianism, New Age rejection of mainstream science and medicine, and internet-fueled gullibility toward baroque conspiracy theories about secret cabals ruling the world through viruses.”

2

Initially founded as an online publication in March 2004, *The Christian Post* is now a widely read Evangelical Christian, nondenominational newspaper. Originating in the United States, it is headquartered in Washington, D.C. It is also a global partner of the World Evangelical Alliance and a Member of the Evangelical Press Association. In 2017, its website had a monthly average of 10 million visits. Its executive editor is Richard Land, president of the Southern Evangelical Seminary as well as president emeritus of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. With news, information, and

commentaries, *The Christian Post* reports on the activities of Christian groups in the United States and around the world.

On April 20, 2020, Anugrah Kumar, one of its contributors, wrote about the Coronavirus and its theological implications: “Is the pandemic God’s judgment? America has 10 reasons to think so, argues a theologian.” He was referring to Peter Leithart, a Presbyterian, president of the Theopolis Institute for Biblical, Liturgical, and Cultural Studies in Birmingham, Alabama. It fosters “catholicity among churches,” that is, an ecumenical relationship across denominational lines.

Dr. Leithart is an author, minister, and theologian. Considering the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, he wondered whether this could involve God’s judgment, especially since reasons for it abound. Referring to Jeremiah 7:34, he said: “It’s difficult to read biblical descriptions of cities and nations under judgment without being struck by the resemblance to the world, April 2020,” and added: “We should ponder the possibility that the Lord has had enough of our trampling of His courts, and so has put an end to our new moons and feast days (Isaiah 1:10-15).”

He could think of ten reasons why God could test or punish America. These include “myriads of idols and quasi-idols, to which we are so devoted that we sometimes even call them (celebrity, movie, sports) idols.” At the same time, “we leave the homeless unhoused, the naked unclothed, the hungry hungry.” Since 1973, about 46 million abortions have taken place in the country. At the same time, we “defy God’s sexual norms, and insist on our Constitutional right to do so. Many mock the very notion of sexual purity.”

We also “know no Sabbath in our 24/7 economy.”

In his concluding remarks, Leithart said that if normalcy returned, that would be the Lord’s mercy. “But we shouldn’t misconstrue relief as God’s approval,” he warned. “Our repentance needs to be radical, or soon enough we’ll face something else, something worse.”

3

New Boston Post: The Hub of Conservative Thought, was founded as an online publication by Christine D. J. McCormick, Ph.D., a Roman Catholic. Familiarly known as Tina McCormick, she is also the president of the New Boston Post Foundation. On April 1, 2020, it published a piece by Joseph Tortelli, a freelance writer, entitled “If History Rhymes” in which he looked forward to the time when the Coronavirus shutdown would end. He thought things would largely be as before, except that people would no longer hug and kiss one another as before or even shake hands. Also, “Catholics may avoid the post-Vatican II ‘Sign of Peace’ and recapture a traditional sense of Stoic piety. It’s possible that we’ll think the better of blowing a few hundred bucks on some concert or sporting event that traps us in an enclosed box for several hours amidst the screams and spittle of rabid fans.”

Tortelli did, however, hope that something else could compensate for these disadvantages: “At least one societal change resulting from the quarantine could do wonders to reinvigorate our national sense of family, faith, and community. Let’s give serious thought to reinstating at least some of the time-honored Sunday closure laws, sort of a one-day-per-week modified stay-at-home request. Such action would rededicate our society to a regular day of rest, family meals, civic associations, and religious observance.”

He waxed enthusiastic about more Americans observing “each Sunday” as “a common day of rest.” Although he did foresee that many groups would reject this idea, he thought they were misguided. “Libertarians and classical laissez faire economists oppose any such

restrictions on commerce, blissfully unaware that most states protected the Lord's Day from big business encroachment for nearly two centuries, while encouraging free enterprise on the six other days. Even those who claimed 'the business of America is business' were willing to concede one day a week for faith, family, rest." Obviously he was thinking of the period before the 1787 Constitution and its Bill of Rights were enacted and ignored Sabbathkeepers like Orthodox Jews and Seventh-day Adventists. Therefore, he asked: "After that quarantine passes, why cannot we also envision higher priorities for 52 Sundays of family dinners, neighborhood gatherings, and church bell chimes? Yes, that could be the sweetest sound."

4

Another speculation about Covid-19 as a possible punishment from the Lord has appeared in the *National Catholic Register*. This conservative bi-weekly newspaper was founded in 1927. Nowadays it belongs to Eternal Word Network, which also owns the Catholic News Agency. It deals with a variety of topics, including news and features from the United States as well as the Vatican and the rest of the world. On April 8, 2020, it contained a Commentary, "Is the Coronavirus Pandemic a Judgment From God?" by Mary Healy, S.T.D. Her doctorate is in Biblical theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, a Jesuit institution.

A professor of Sacred Scripture at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, she is also a general editor of the *Catholic Commentary on Scripture* and author of two of its volumes, apart from other books that she has written. Dr. Healy's stature is further indicated by the fact that she chairs the Theological Commission of CHARIS (Charismatic Renewal International Service) in Rome and is on the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian unity, as a member of the Pentecostal-Catholic International Dialogue. In 2014, Pope Francis appointed her to serve on the Pontifical Biblical Commission, one of the first three women ever to do so.

In her Commentary, she makes it clear that the Lord should not be seen as actually causing Covid-19, yet he does for his own purposes allow calamities. "When society deliberately turns away from God, choosing to worship idols of its own making, as our own global culture has done, it removes itself from God's blessing and protection and therefore exposes itself to various kinds of evil."

Dr. Healy reflects on a number of what she considers to be society's sins and failures. She says we have perhaps made idols of money and possessions, also of sports and entertainment. Our spouse, children, siblings, or parents are being neglected. Catholics have been robbed of their ability to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist. Then there is Sunday desecration. Here is how she speaks of the last mentioned transgression:

"Half the human race is under some form of lockdown, as if suddenly consigned to an involuntary retreat. Have we sometimes failed to honor the Lord by keeping the Lord's Day? Have we treated Sundays just like any other day, as a time to go shopping, get work done and pursue our own agenda, instead of taking time to deepen our relationship with Jesus and relax with family and friends? In the Old Testament, God decreed that Judah would go into exile for a time corresponding to all the sabbaths they had broken, 'until the land has retrieved its lost sabbaths' (2 Chronicles 36:21). So now, perhaps our frenetic society is [through a lockdown] retrieving its lost sabbaths."

Her final plea is: "We are summoned to pray, fast and repent, for our own sake and the sake of the world. The prayer of Daniel during another national calamity provides a great model of such humble, contrite intercessory prayer (Daniel 9)."

But to see a parallel between the ancient Babylonian exile of the Jews and people's being confined to their homes is surely farfetched. Yet for Seventh-day Adventists, acquainted with how end-time events will unfold, pronouncements like these are ominous, especially if we consider the Catholic sources from which an insistence on Sundaykeeping has already been emanating.

The Present Crisis

We are not suggesting that the Covid-19 crisis will necessarily bring on the final events as predicted by the Spirit of Prophecy or that it will culminate in the coming of Satan. But the reactions described above uncannily foreshadow those that are yet to be.

Second Pentecost

The book of Acts contains a record of what happened after the Lord's ascension when the Holy Spirit was poured out on and worked through the apostles as well as other believers. Peter stood up and preached a very controversial sermon, in which—among other things—he accused those who heard him of murdering the Messiah. They were touched to the quick and asked: "What must we do?" He told them to repent and accept Jesus. As a result, on just that first day, three thousand were converted and were baptized. They were really the belated fruitage of the Saviour's own labors.

Shortly before the Crucifixion, he had also predicted: "They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service" (John 16:2). Also, "they will deliver you over to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake" (Matthew 24:9). "These things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me" (John 16:3). "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (vs. 12). Writing his last epistle from a Roman dungeon, not long before his own execution, the apostle Paul wrote: "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). (All quotations from the NKJV.)

Many conversions and miracles followed the day of Pentecost, but also persecution unleashed by the Sanhedrin, which culminated in the stoning of Stephen. Herod had the Apostle James beheaded and imprisoned Peter. Then afterwards, wherever Paul and his companions preached the Gospel in the years that followed unbelieving Jews tried hard to kill him.

This will also to a large extent the pattern for what we call Second Pentecost.

Then, too, the everlasting Gospel will be preached with great power and glory. In our previous Bulletin we quoted details from the Spirit of Prophecy, some of which we here repeat:

"Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth, there will be, among the people of the Lord, such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and His Word. Many, both of ministers and people, will gladly accept those great truths which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time, to prepare a people for the Lord's second coming."—FLB 326.2.

In some parts of the planet, this is already happening. Reports by Adventist World Radio and similar, often self-supporting, ministries tell how pastors from other denominations, together with their members, have accepted the truth and joined the Remnant Church.

Sister White also wrote:

“It is with an earnest longing that I look forward to the time when the events of the Day of Pentecost shall be repeated with even greater power than on that occasion. John says, “I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory” [Rev. 18:1]. Then, as at the Pentecostal season, the people will hear the truth spoken to them, every man in his own tongue.”—6BC 1055 (1886). That is, the true gift of tongues—an ability to communicate in every human language on earth—will again enable the Lord’s people to witness for him more powerfully.

Also manifest will be the gift of healing and other wonders: “In visions of the night, representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God’s people. Many were praising God. The sick were healed, and other miracles were wrought. A spirit of intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great Day of Pentecost.” —9T 126 (1909). “The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel, are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. . . . Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers.”—GC 611, 612 (1911).

A Final, Fierce Persecution

Also, as in the day of the apostles, the devil will be enraged and seek to destroy the people of God whose mission he can no longer thwart. Apart from lukewarm, unconverted, and compromising Seventh-day Adventists, who have now been shaken out, a host of believers are united in love for the Lord and finishing his work. Therefore, Satan and his fellow demons exert themselves to fasten in deception the impenitent rejecters of God’s Law and grace.

Finally, as shown above, he will impersonate Jesus. Pretending to have changed the Sabbath, which he has always hated, he will incite the children of disobedience first to oppress and then to kill the Lord’s faithful and obedient people. These are the ones whom the Bible calls the saints of the Most High. But, once probation has closed, they will be protected by angels that excel in strength. And then the Son of God with the heavenly host will appear to save and take them up in glory, while he destroys their oppressors with the brightness of his coming. Our fervent prayer is that we will all, by grace from above, remain faithful until that glad day.

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