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**Category 3 Points**

**The Great Controversy Chapter Reviews and Reactions**

**Chapter 32: Snares of Satan**

White writes about the beginnings of the end in this chapter, so to speak. She outlines what Satan, who, at that time is putting his all into bringing down the people of God, will be doing to entrap them. Most of his schemes will be subversive, set to trick us into going his way and not God’s, through trickery. His schemes will not involve coming right out and asking people to worship him. No, he will sow seeds of anger in the church itself. The people of the church will start to turn on, look down on, and judge those who are not like them, creating an unhealthy sense of exclusivity inside the church, and a barrier of entry to those outside the church.

Satan will also try and lead us to the notion that what we believe does not matter. He will spread the falsehood that what we believe about the Bible and the principles we follow will not guarantee us salvation, and he will push the “believe what you believe is right” agenda. Due to this, the Bible will start to be mis-interpreted heavily. False teachings will start to get spread around and will cause many to fall off the wayside. Doubt and unbelief will rise sharply. Even the strongest members of the church may succumb to this and start to question God and His teachings. The weakest members of the faith and church will be snatched up quickly by this agenda. Satan will use these main tactics to sow the seeds of chaos among the church to weaken it for the final time of trouble.

Reading this chapter opened my eyes to some of the things going on in the church now. Even now, the culture of exclusivity is rising, and many outsiders (some of whom are my close personal friends) are complaining that they don’t feel welcome in the church anymore, and therefore stop caring about the faith altogether. Since it was foretold in the prophecy, I have a feeling that there is nothing we can do to counteract it as a society; we should instead focus inwards and try and identify where these themes live in us and stamp them out as soon as possible. Reading this also made me realize how in the thick of it we are, and the following chapters reinforced that idea even more. To be totally honest, it scared me a little, knowing that these times are coming fast, as the signs are manifesting themselves now.

**Chapter 33: The First Great Deception**

In this chapter, White writes about the first great deception: the deception at the Tree of Good and Evil. To start the chapter, White recounts the events that happened there, about Eve being tempted and succumbing to the serpent, and Adam following shortly. The torment that has been caused by that fall has been widespread and has affected not just our world, but others as well. Had God let Adam and Eve back into the garden to eat from the tree of life, sin would have become eternalized and spread through the universe like a plague.

What happened there is not unlike what is going to happen leading up to the time of trouble. Satan will work his best to try and get us back into sin through deception and subversive lies, as outlined in the previous chapter. The wicked will become even more wicked, and the holy will struggle with sin like no other time in history. The wicked who have fallen have not developed characters that are fit for heaven, but they have been given every opportunity to do so. Because they do not have a character fit for heaven, and love sin so much, they would hate being in heaven. It would torment them to no end, for all they love is evil.

This chapter was interesting to read. I did not fully realize the effects of sin until I had it written out in front of me. I also never considered that sin could have become eternal had they been given the Tree of Life back. That was interesting. While I was reading, I stopped to imagine how the universe would have changed if sin would have become eternal. There’s no way I can accurately portray that in my head; all I could imagine was a universe where Satan ruled supreme. I imagine that universe would die out quickly or, at the very least, just the living beings on earth would die. White drew a lot of parallels that I had not connected, such as that of the first deception and the deception to come. All in all, this chapter revealed a lot of information that I had not previously known and gave me a new perspective on the topic of sin.

**Chapter 34: Spiritualism**

Satan will use spiritualism to his advantage in the end times. White writes about another, probably more blatant form of deception used in the end times. As we approach the time of trouble, Satan will try to pose the practice of spiritualism and demon worship in a positive and endearing light. His biggest tool is luring people in with the hopes that they can see their dead friends and family in through conjuration. The masses who participate will believe that these conjurations are their dead relatives, when, they are demonic entities that are posing convincingly. People will start to question why God won’t allow that. The immediate gratification of conjuration will appeal to lots.

Satan is going to put all his effort into these deceptions. Spiritualism will be tempting. Satan know us better than we know ourselves and knows exactly what buttons to push to get us going on his path. For many, that’s the temptation of seeing a loved one again. It will require massive strength in character to get us through the end times and past the spiritualism that he will present to us. Satan’s push for spiritualism will be the next step into getting people away from God for when the time of trouble hits.

This chapter had an effect like the first chapter (chapter 32) had on me. I connected the dots between the end times and the rise in wiccan spiritualism we see today. Barnes and Noble sells books on various spells and guides on how to conjure things in your own home. Movies, specifically horror movies, often portray spiritualism and demonic dealings in a positive light, something that the characters use to solve their problems. Access to that kind of information is as accessible as it ever has been with the internet, and it’s taking people down a path of wrongly placed curiosity. Honestly, this whole book has opened my eyes to a lot of the things that are going on around us.

**Chapter 35: Aims of the Papacy**

The papacy and Catholic church are going to have a huge role in the end times. It’s already had a massive negative influence on God’s people and has largely been the work of Satan at the highest level, but it will become an even more powerful force. In this chapter, White writes about the Catholic church’s role in Satan’s plan. White urges us to look backwards at the history of the church. We have a culture nowadays that says that by just repenting of and denouncing our past ancestor’s actions, that we can absolve us of any responsibility. While that may be true if we choose to rectify those actions, it is not true of the Catholic church. The papacy continues to apologize for the actions of it’s past, denouncing the horrible things they’ve done, but never change. It’s a front that they use to lure people into their faith and to victimize themselves. The Roman Catholic church was and is like how the Jewish church was in Jesus’ time: hating of the true word, and willing to persecute anyone who believed in the truth.

Catholicism is a huge example of how Satan is at work in the upper levels of society. He has people physically in the meetings, whispering in the ears of the church officials, using their influence to get people to turn away from the truth and ingratiate themselves into the lie that is the papacy. With its huge, widespread influence, they will then teach falsehoods for everyone under their reign to believe, guiding people further away from the truth and into the plot of Satan.

I didn’t realize how influential the papacy was. Until now, I had viewed them as simply another religion with a mis-interpretation of the Bible. Now I see that their practices are genuinely meant to lure people away from the truth. It makes me wonder about all the seemingly innocent people who choose to live in those ways willingly. Are they in the wrong for holding onto the beliefs they’ve had since they were children? If they do not know about the true nature of the church, are they doing harm?

**Chapter 36: The Impending Conflict**

White describes the problems we’ll face starting with the time of trouble in this chapter. She writes about the conflict that true believers will have with the outside world, and how the differences will start to form between the two parties. In the previous chapters, she has set up what Satan is going to do outside of the church and its believers. Now, in this chapter, we see how those ideals will conflict with those who believe the truth. First off, God’s word will not be taken seriously anymore. Since the belief will be spread that it doesn’t matter what you believe if you are a decent person, the Bible will be totally disregarded. This will conflict with the believers, as they will either start to question whether this idea is right, or they will have to double their efforts in counteracting this idea in their communities and to the people they preach to.

Crime and sin will be pushed to the forefront of society and put on a pedestal after the morals of society start to go down the drain. Believers will have to live in a world where evil things are always happening. Some will start to act worldly and participate without even realizing it. And so, the believers will start to be chipped away at even more, until those who are strong of character are the only ones left. The only thing left to defend against all of this is the scriptures, which is what White talks about in the next chapter.

I suppose my only thought through this chapter was “this is all a mess”. I began to think about what we could do to counteract all of this. The answer was in the next chapter: The Scripture. White writes about all the problems that we’ll face in the end times, and I can’t help but question them a little, as I ask myself “how could things get worse?”. But as history shows, anytime someone asks how things get worse, things somehow get worse.

**Chapter 37: The Scriptures a Safeguard**

In this chapter, White gives us insight on how the Scriptures will safeguard us from the evil in the world during the end times. We will need to totally plant ourselves in the Scriptures, totally and fully, to avoid falling off the path of truth. Even those who may think they are totally planted are still susceptible to temptation, and some may fall. White writes that there will be a people that still maintain and keep the scriptures in their hearts to empower the believers that remain. She also writes that we will need “moral courage” (597) to endure the end times, courage that we have never had.

The scripture, in the end times, needs to be studied with prayer and personal study. The fall of the scripture will be those theologians that study the Bible purely from an analytical standpoint. This can lead to false beliefs about what the scripture is really trying to say. Divine inspiration is the only thing that will make the pieces fall together and the truth to be revealed. Those who misinterpret the Bible will find false teachings that lead them to sin, and will revel in their newfound “belief”, which is just sin in an of itself.

Throughout the course of this class, I’ve commented on how I believe the study of theology is pointless without the divine inspiration. We can pick apart the Bible verse by verse all day, but without prayer and personal study, the truth won’t be revealed to us. Now, more than ever, I’ve been compelled to study on my own and learn what the Bible is really trying to tell us.

**Chapter 38: The Final Warning**

White writes about the final times and warnings given by God. This is the time just before probation closes. Four angels will bring warnings to the people, and those that reject the four angels will have their fates sealed. The Sabbath, during this time, will be a trivial matter. No one will choose to worship on the Sabbath. As stated before, the Bible will become trivial, so the Sunday will become the norm. Most will believe that what they do and say does not matter in the plan of salvation, and thus will throw away the Sabbath as unnecessary.

During the final warnings, believers will have to preach with more zeal than they ever have before. They will have to try their best to counteract the apathy and complacency that non-believers are rooted in. They have little time left to convert the masses back to God. The leaders of the non-believing churches will be angered by this crowd that is refuting their teachings. Even through this, White writes that the believers will be “powered up” to preach the word of God in fervor.

This is one of the more interesting chapters. I really liked how God is going to give physical power the believers to preach His word. I find that fascinating. It raises a few questions, like why doesn’t he do this earlier in the process to save more people? I’ve always wondered why God doesn’t just fight back with unrelentless force against Satan to the point where he can’t win. There’s probably a reason in scripture, I just haven’t found it.

**Chapter 39: The Time of Trouble**

In this chapter lies the end of the probationary period. The probation period’s end marks the closing of the gate to new believers. “Those who are evil, let them be evil still. Those who are holy, let them be holy still” says God as he closes the book of judgment. White writes that this is when the floodgates of evil will open. She says that the “wicked will be unrestrained”. Any barrier that God put up between the wicked and the holy will be removed, and the wicked are free to act against the believers in any way they choose. Christians will be hated, hunted, and severely persecuted for their beliefs. Evil will cover the whole earth at this point, and all the believers can do is stand up and endure against it.

Satan will try his best to wear down the believers from the inside. He will try to convince them that their past sins are unforgiveable, and that God doesn’t want them. The believers will be tormented by their past, caused by Satan. The believers will remain holy still, but it will be tougher for them to endure the time of trouble. The wicked will do everything to bring them down.

I just wonder how severe the wicked are going to become. The Bible speaks of atrocities that we cannot even fathom. My parents always told me that believers would be slaughtered, although I’m not too sure about this one, as White set a tone that seemed to describe a time where the believers would be persecuted but saved from death. I was unsure about this when I first read it. Will we have to literally “run for the hills”?

**Chapter 40: God’s People Delivered**

White continues telling about what will happen to the believers after all laws are lifted regarding believer’s safety. Christians will be hunted and persecuted in masses. But there is hope, writes White. She tells of how God is going to come down and deliver His people out from the persecution. There will be sunlight at midnight, presumably from God’s own glow. Even though the sky is overcast, the light will shine through and illuminate all the earth. After that, there will be a giant earthquake, one that we have never seen before or can even fathom. This earthquake is going to flatten mountains, change entire land masses, and create rifts in the earth that act like canyons.

The non-believers and opposers of God are going to look on in absolute horror. After seeing the pure awe that is God and the destruction going on around them, they feel nothing but pure terror. They try to repent and run for hiding, but God has already sealed their fate. While this is happening, the believers are being risen from the dead. White writes that Adam is going to rise in his tall stature, standing taller than anyone else. The non-believers are being wiped out, eradicated by the pure power that is God’s eminence. The believers are taken up to God and taken away from the earth to start the 1000 years in heaven. Meanwhile, the earth is left desolate and without form.

This chapter is quite the read. Just imagining that level of destruction is hard, and it’s even harder to try and imagine yourself in that scenario. I used to be terrified of tornadoes as a kid, so bad that if one came near us, I would wish for a quick death should one come around. I can’t imagine what it’s going to be like for those that see their entire earth crumble around them with no place to hide. I also wonder what it’s going to be like raising the dead who have been dead for millennia, as they would be nothing, but ash and dirt scattered across the world at that point. I wonder how He’ll do it. Normally, if this was not prophecy, it would be something of fiction. What makes it real is the fact that it is prophecy, and that something of this magnitude is in fact going to happen without a shadow of a doubt.

**Chapter 41: Desolation of the Earth**

After the destruction described in the last chapter, White briefly writes on how the earth is going to be during the 1000 years we are in heaven. Sinners are totally gone, wiped off the earth until the second return after the 1000 years are up. The world is described as a wasteland. White compares it to how the earth was before creation. Desolate and without form.

The only living being on the planet is Satan and his allies. They have been banished to the earth for a thousand years to live out the last years of their lives in total isolation. No longer can they harm any other world or species with their sin. They are made an example of the penalties of sin and the destruction it can cause. During this time, Satan has time to think on what he’s done, to reflect on the wrong that he’s caused. Does he repent? No. But he does dwell on it. With no one else to corrupt, he has nothing to do but wait down here on the earth he destroyed with sin. When God comes back, he will be there waiting.

In the chapter, White writes about the 1000 years. That doesn’t seem that long for a celestial being, but for us, a thousand years ago put us in around the dark ages, where modern civilization was barely taking shape. So much has happened in these last 1000 years, and to think that Satan is going to have to live in total isolation for those years is hard to wrap my head around. For me, sitting alone in a room for more than 48 hours drives me nuts. I have absolutely no sympathy for Satan, but it’s interesting to think about what that will be like. When we’re in heaven, will we come back and check on him as a reminder of what sin does? Will we be allowed to?

**Chapter 42: The Controversy Ended**

The final chapter. The judgement day for Satan, his allies, and the wicked. White writes about the final battle in this chapter as well. We descend back to earth with New Jerusalem, the city of gold that houses all the saved and holy. We find Satan where we left him, doing nothing on the desolate earth he destroyed. It is then that the wicked are resurrected to be finally judged. And judged they are. Every sinner has access to all their sins laid out in front of them. Everyone, not just the sinners, can see where the wicked went wrong, and what action led them down the path of destruction. Each wicked person is judged, and we, the heavenly host, are onlookers to this whole ordeal.

Then comes the final battle. The wicked deem their judgement unfair. Satan takes this opportunity to revolt against God. He gathers all the wicked and puts them in control of his military leaders. White writes that the military leaders leading the charge against God are the same leaders of armies in the old world: generals, commanders, national leaders who fell to the wicked ways, and are now leading the charge against God. Satan powers up and begins the fight, but there is no fight to be had. With a final blow, God strikes down Satan, his allies, and the wicked. Sin is no more. New Jerusalem lands on the earth, and eternity with God begins.

I’ve never read the Great Controversy before, at least not all the way through. This is an amazing finale. I’ve read through Revelation before and have caught a glimpse at what it might be like, but the writings of Ellen White really put you in the thick of it. The book almost reads like a piece of fiction, with settings, characters, and plot. I wish I could say I enjoyed it, but this is not a book to be casually enjoyed. There is prophecy here, and that prophecy needs to be taken seriously. There were times where I was a little terrified reading it, especially the parts describing what was going to happen to the believers in the end times. It also made me question myself. Am I ready to endure this and make it to the gates of heaven? My faith has been wavering as of late, and sometimes I wonder if I have or will stumble off the path to truth. The book triggered a lot of introspection. Honestly, I’m inspired to read my Bible all the way through now, to really gain a better understanding of what God wants.

My reaction could take multiple pages up of me rambling on about all the thoughts I had going through it. I’ll be re-reading this all the way through soon. It’s given me a new-found perspective that I didn’t know I needed. I’m excited to see what God has in store for us, and am looking forward to getting to know Him better through the studies of Ellen White and the Bible.