

ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

COUNSELS FROM  
THE SPIRIT OF  
PROPHECY ON  
LABOR UNIONS  
AND CONFEDERACIES

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY



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**Counsels from the Spirit  
of Prophecy on Labor  
Unions and  
Confederacies**

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**Ellen G. White**

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Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one's faith.

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Prepared by the Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty

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## Introduction

As labor unions have grown in size and political power many of our church members have encountered difficulty in securing employment without joining or supporting these organizations or have suffered disadvantages in the lines of work to which they have turned because of this situation. It is understandable that many church members have been led to seek the counsel God has given to us on this point through the Spirit of Prophecy. This counsel is presented here.

During the period from 1890-1907 Ellen G. White penned many messages of warning and instruction to the church concerning confederacies and labor unions. Some of this material appears in her various published books. Statements which have not been published, while at times repetitious, support and illuminate that which has been available in print. This document is intended to bring the full range of counsel on labor unions together in its normal chronological sequence. It is a fuller presentation than was possible in *Country Living* or *Selected Messages*, book 2.

A careful reading will reveal that these messages were for the guidance of both individuals and church-affiliated institutions. The basic principles involved in joining or financially supporting labor unions are clearly presented in them. These messages, incorporating vital Bible principles, are set forth in simple, yet strong language. They are, of course, intended for use only within the household of faith.

The statements appearing in this document have been drawn together in counsel with the Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate. They are sent forth with the prayer that their counsels may provide safe guidance for the remnant church today, as it meets the pressing problems of labor unions and other confederacies.

## The Peril of a Confederacy

“For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread.... To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” [Isaiah 8:11-13, 20]. The world is not to be our criterion. Let the Lord work, let the Lord’s voice be heard. *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 463.

The question has been asked, What do you mean by a confederacy? Who have formed confederacies? You know what a confederacy is,—a union of men in a work that does not bear the stamp of pure, straightforward, unswerving integrity.—*E. G. White Manuscript 29, 1911. The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 4:1142.*

Do not feel that you are to be bound in any way or necessarily to confederate with unbelievers. It is well always for ministers to make friendly visits with ministers and to seek by that friendly acquaintance to disarm opposition. The same with the physician. There is too much keeping apart with association with both parties. But association does not mean confederacy. You must not confederate with unbelievers or give them preference to our own people. *E. G. White Letter 107b, 1900.* [4]

## Trusting in Men

Again and again I have been shown that the people of God in these last days could not be safe in trusting in men, and making flesh their arm. The mighty cleaver of truth has taken them out of the world as rough stones that are to be hewed and squared and polished for the heavenly building. They must be hewed by the prophets with reproof, warning, admonition, and advice, that they may be fashioned after the divine Pattern; this is the specified work of the Comforter, to transform heart and character, that men may keep the way of the Lord.—*Testimonies to Ministers*, page 464.

## World Control

Since 1845 the dangers of the people of God have from time to time been laid open before me, and I have been shown the perils that would thicken about the remnant in the last days. These perils have been revealed to me down to the present time. Great scenes are soon to open before us. The Lord is coming with power and great glory. And Satan knows that his usurped authority will soon be forever at an end. His last opportunity to gain control of the world is now before him, and he will make most decide efforts to accomplish the destruction of the inhabitants of the earth. Those who believe the truth, must be as faithful sentinels on the watchtower, or Satan will suggest specious reasonings to them, and they will give utterance to opinions that will betray sacred, holy trusts. The enmity of Satan against good will be manifested more and more as he brings his forces into activity in his last work of rebellion; and every soul that is not fully surrendered to God, and kept by divine power, will form an alliance with Satan against heaven, and join in battle against the Ruler of the universe.—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pages 464-465.

[5]

## **No Confederacy With The World**

There is to be no change in the general features of our work. It is to stand as clear and distinct as prophecy has made it. We are to enter into no confederacy with the world, supposing that by so doing we could accomplish more. If any stand in the way, to hinder the advancement of the work in the lines that God has appointed, they will displease God. No line of truth that has made the Seventh-day Adventist people what they are is to be weakened. We have the old landmarks of truth, experience, and duty, and we are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world.—[Testimonies for the Church 6:17](#).

## The Spirit Of Confederation

In all our great cities there will be a binding up in bundles by the confederacies and unions formed. Men will rule other men and demand much of them. The lives of those who refuse to unite with these unions, will be in peril....

These words I have been instructed to write out plainly. The condition of things before the flood has been presented to me. The same binding up in unions that exists today existed in Noah's day....

This is a wonderful age in which we are living. God is beholding the deplorable state of society. He requires those who believe His gospel to come out from the world. "Be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" [2 Corinthians 6:17].

God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. The selfishness that exalts one man to rule the minds of his fellow men, is not inspired of God; for the Lord works in and through those who will be worked by Him, and who in every line of Christian service will act in accordance with divine enlightenment.

God is the author of all that is good. He blesses the children of men with prosperity, and gives abundantly to them by causing the earth to yield her treasures. But what does He behold among the few educated and trained men of talent?—Not many are working after the divine order. Yielding to temptation, they rule the markets and control the merchandise in accordance with Satan's principles. They have the money which belongs to the people, the money which would give them a fair chance. God's poor are left to suffer and perish, while man's cupidity grasps every advantage.—*E. G. White Manuscript 145, 1902.*

[6] **The Planning Of A Power We Should In No Wise  
Acknowledge**

Men are seeking to bring those engaged in the different trades under bondage to certain unions. This is not God's planning, but the planning of a power that we should in no wise acknowledge. God's Word is fulfilling; the wicked are binding themselves up in bundles ready to be burned.

We are now to use all our entrusted capabilities in giving the last warning message to the world. In this work we are to preserve our individuality. We are not to unite with secret societies or with trade unions. We are to stand free in God, looking constantly to Christ for instruction. All our movements are to be made with a realization of the importance of the work to be accomplished for God.—*E. G. White Letter 157, 1902*, last two paragraphs in [Testimonies for the Church 7:84](#).

## Gigantic Monopolies

The work of the people of God is to prepare for the events of the future, which will soon come upon them with blinding force. In the world gigantic monopolies will be formed. Men will bind themselves together in unions that will wrap them in the folds of the enemy. A few men will combine to grasp all the means to be obtained in certain lines of business. Trades unions will be formed, and those who refuse to join these unions will be marked men....

The principles governing the forming of these unions seem innocent, but men have to pledge themselves to serve the interests of these unions, or else they may have to pay the penalty of refusal with their lives.

These unions are one of the signs of the last days. Men are binding up in bundles ready to be burned. They may be church members, but while they belong to these unions, they cannot possibly keep the commandments of God; for to belong to these unions means to disregard the entire decalogue.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself” [Luke 10:27]. These words sum up the whole duty of man. They mean the consecration of the whole being, body, soul, and spirit, to God’s service. How can men obey these words, and at the same time pledge themselves to support that which deprives their neighbors of freedom of action? And how can men obey these words, and form combinations that rob the poorer classes of the advantages which justly belong to them, preventing them from buying or selling, except under certain conditions! How plainly the words of God have predicted this condition of things. John writes, “I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. . . . and he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy

[7]

or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” [[Revelation 13:11, 16, 17](#)].

The forming of these unions is one of Satan’s last efforts. God calls upon His people to get out of the cities, isolating themselves from the world. The time will come when they will have to do this. God will care for those who love Him and keep His commandments.—*E. G. White Letter 26, 1903*, Portions in [Selected Messages 2:142, 143](#).

## **Labor Unions That Are Formed Or That Shall Be Formed**

The same state of things exists today that existed before the flood, and the nearer we get to the large cities, the worse the evil is. My message is, Do not build up sanitariums in the cities. The laws of the land will become more and more oppressive, as in the days of Noah.

How long will the Lord suffer oppression of the poor that rich men may hoard wealth? These men are heaping together treasures for the last days. Their money is placed where it does no one any good. To add to their millions, they rob the poor, and the cries of the starving are no more to them than the barking of a dog. But the Lord marks every act of oppression. No cry of suffering is unheard by Him. Those who today are scheming to obtain more and more money, putting in operation plans that mean to the poor starvation, will in the last day stand face to face with their deeds of oppression and injustice.

Those who claim to be the children of God are in no case to bind up with the labor unions that are formed or that shall be formed. This the Lord forbids. Cannot those who study the prophecies see and understand what is before us? The transgressors of the law of God have taken sides with their leader, the general of rebellion. He understands how to devise his satanic schemes and through whom to work for the carrying out of them. He is striving to lead every soul to take sides with him, and under the influence of his temptations, thousands are binding themselves up in bundles, ready to be consumed by the fires of the last day. Those who yield to his temptation become in their turn tempters, standing among the ablest of his helpers.

In the time of the harvest the Lord will say to His reapers, “Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” ([Matthew 13:30](#)). God has a people on the earth who will see the evil of every phase of oppression, and [8]

will refuse to unite with the enemy in carrying out his plans.—*E. C. White Letter 201, 1902*. Portions in [Selected Messages 2:144](#).

## **Keep Out Of Them And Away From Them**

The crisis is coming soon in Battle Creek. The trades unions and confederacies of the world are a snare. Keep out of them and away from them, brethren. Have nothing to do with them. Because of these unions and confederacies, it will soon be very difficult for our institutions to carry on their work in the cities. My warning is: Keep out of the cities. Build no sanitariums in the cities. Educate our people to get out of the cities into the country, where they can obtain a small piece of land, and make a home for themselves and their children. When the question arose in regard to the establishment of a sanitarium in the city of Los Angeles, I felt that I must oppose this move. I carried a very heavy burden in regard to the matter, and I could not keep silent. It is time, brethren, that we heeded the testimonies sent us in mercy and love from the Lord of heaven. [The General Conference Bulletin, April 6, 1903](#), pages 87, 88. Portions in [Selected Messages 2:142](#).

## The Power Of Mind Over Mind

The influence of mind on mind, so strong a power for good when sanctified, is equally strong for evil in the hands of those opposed to God. This power Satan used in his work of instilling evil into the minds of the angels, and he made it appear that he was seeking the good of the universe. As the anointed cherub, Lucifer had been highly exalted; he was greatly loved by the heavenly beings, and his influence over them was strong. Many of them listened to his suggestions and believed his words. “And there as war in heaven; Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was heir place found any more in heaven” [[Revelation 12:7-8](#)].—*E. G. White Letter 114, 1903, The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 7:973.*

## Confederacies, Trade Unions And Secret Societies

Cast out of heaven, Satan set up his kingdom in this world, and ever since, he has been untiringly striving to seduce human beings from their allegiance to God. He uses the same power that he used in heaven,—the influence of mind on mind. Men become tempters of their fellowmen. The strong, corrupting sentiments of Satan are cherished, and they exert a masterly, compelling power. Under the influence of these sentiments, men bind up with one another in confederacies, in trades unions, and in secret societies. There are at work in the world agencies that God will not much longer tolerate.—*E. G. White Letter 114, 1903*. Portions in [The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 7:973](#). [9]

## Have Nothing To Do With These Organizations

The wicked are being bound up in bundles, bound up in trusts, in unions, in confederacies. Let us have nothing to do with these organizations. God is our Ruler, our Governor, and He calls us to come out from the world and be separate. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing” [[2 Corinthians 6:17](#)]. If we refuse to do this, if we continue to link up with the world, and to look at every matter from a worldly standpoint, we shall become like the world. When worldly policy and worldly ideas govern our transactions, we cannot stand on the high and holy platform of eternal truth.

God promises that if we will separate ourselves from the world, He will receive us, and will be a Father unto us, and we shall be His sons and daughters, Shall we not separate ourselves from the world, and claim this sacred relationship now, that when our Father comes He may acknowledge us as His children?—*E. G. White Manuscript 71, 1903*. Portions in [The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 4:1142](#).

## **One Of The Agencies To Bring A Time Of Trouble**

And the trades unions will be one of the agencies that will bring upon this earth a time of trouble such as has not been since the world began.—*E. G. White* [Letter 200, 1903](#). [Selected Messages 2:142](#).

## An Oppressive Power

The time is fast coming when the controlling power of the labor unions will be very oppressive. Again and again the Lord has instructed that our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one. We should now begin to heed the instruction given us over and over again: Get out of the cities into rural districts, where the houses are not crowded closely together, and where you will be free from the interference of enemies.—*E. G. White Letter 5, 1904. Selected Messages 2:141.*

## **Violence And Death Mean Nothing To Them**

Last night I slept only three hours, from eight to eleven. O how my soul longs to see the people of God zealous in repentance. I entreat them to prepare to meet their God. Can they not see in the rapid growth of trades unions, the fulfilling of the signs of the time? Those forming the labor unions are determined to have their own way. Violence and death mean nothing to them if their unions are opposed. The spirit is working in those who profess to believe the truth, but who, because they do not live the truth, are always in contention.

The judgments of God are in the land. The wars and rumors of wars, the destruction by fire and flood, say clearly that the time of trouble which is to increase until the end, is already in the world.—*E. G. White* [Letter 93, 1904](#).

## **The Cause Of The Most Terrible Violence Ever Seen**

Satanic agencies are becoming more determined in their rebellion against God. The trades unions will be the cause of the most terrible violence that has ever been seen among human beings.

The Spirit of God is being withdrawn from the earth, and unrepentant sinners are being left to the control of the enemy, to the destiny that they themselves have chosen. Those who persist in violating the holy Sabbath of the Lord, set apart by Him as a day of rest, will soon see that God will punish the transgressors of His law. Men are to reap as they have sown.

God stands at the helm. He is calling upon His people to come into harmony, to remain no longer in strife and disunion.—*E. G. White* [Letter 99, 1904](#).

## A View Of The Conflict

In vision I saw two armies in terrible conflict. One army was led by banners bearing the world's insignia; the other was led by the blood stained banner of Prince Immanuel. Standard after standard was left to trail in the dust as company after company from the Lord's army joined the foe and tribe after tribe from the ranks of the enemy united with the commandment-keeping people of God. An angel flying in the midst of heaven put the standard of Immanuel into many hands, while a mighty general cried out with a loud voice: "Come into line. Let those who are loyal to the commandments of God and the testimony of Christ now take their position. Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters. Let all who will come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." [11]

This is the scene that is presented to me. But the church must and will fight against seen and unseen foes. Satan's agencies in human form are on the ground. Men have confederated to oppose the Lord of hosts. These confederacies will continue until Christ shall leave His place of intercession before the mercy seat and shall put on the garments of vengeance. Satanic agencies are in every city, busily organizing into parties those opposed to the law of God. Professed saints and avowed unbelievers take their stand with these parties. This is no time for the people of God to be weaklings. We cannot afford to be off our guard for one moment. [Testimonies for the Church 8:41, 42.](#)

## The Manipulation Of A Power To Rule Men

I am bidden to declare the message that cities full of transgression, and sinful in the extreme, will be destroyed by earthquakes, by fire, by flood. All the world will be warned that there is a God who will display His authority as God. His unseen agencies will cause destruction, devastation, and death. All the accumulated riches will be as nothingness. Notwithstanding the scientific care with which men safeguard buildings from destruction, one touch of the great and rightful Ruler will bring to nothingness the idolatrous possessions that have been laid up in a sightly and magnificent display. The devices of men will come to naught.

The injustice in our world, the masterly power man has taken unto himself, the oppressive, man-made unions that bring confusion and violence and strife, and the manipulation of a power to rule men and to acquire means through underhand deceptions,—these conditions God cannot pass by with silence. Those who are under the influence and teaching of the great deceiver, will find that although God has borne long with their deceptive acuteness, He has not been deceived, and He will reward every transgressor according to his works. He keeps a strict account of every lie framed, and when He takes matters in His hand, He will deal in accordance with every man's secret and hidden devising.

[12] Bible history is to be repeated. Calamities will come—calamities most awful, most unexpected; and these destructions will follow one after another. If there will be a heeding of the warnings that God has given, and if churches will repent, returning to their allegiance, then other cities may be spared for a time. But if men who have been deceived continue in the same way in which they have been walking, disregarding the law of God, and presenting falsehoods before the people, God allows them to suffer calamity, that their senses may be awakened.—*E. G. White Manuscript 35, 1906. Portions in Evangelism, 27.*

## Do Not Qualify For God's Rule

Cause will always be followed by effect. God's laws, obeyed, would bring men into harmony with the principles of heaven. The light of the world would shine forth amidst the moral darkness. Truth would triumph; the glory of God would be revealed.

A disregard of God's law brings discord, violence, crime, war, and bloodshed. It has made the world a vast lazar-house. It has led men to defy God, to take leave of reason, to try to control the minds of their fellowmen.

The unions that are being formed all over the world will never qualify men for the rule of the Prince of Peace; for in them everyone is striving for the mastery, seeking for the highest place. History is being repeated. Men have a burning desire to rule men. But they are not willing to be ruled by the Governor of the universe. They have never laid aside their quarrelsome traits of character, their desire to be first. The enemy takes possession of their minds, and works out through them his own purposes.—*E. G. White* [Manuscript 51, 1906](#).

## **When Men Seek To Carry Out Their Own Plans And Will**

The wickedness that is being revealed in the cities ...shows that the world is fast becoming as it was before the flood. The union men who have struck for higher wages, by their destruction of property, and their attempts to destroy life, are plainly showing to what a pass men will come who are determined to carry out their own plans regardless of others. Many of the police will not come out and act their part. They are discouraged. What the end will be, the human mind cannot determine.

The Lord is bringing the perplexities of these social problems to our notice that we may see the evil of seeking to carry out our own way and will. This is an evil that has appeared again and again in our work, and which is appearing now. The natural man needs to be converted; the Spirit of God is needed to operate upon human hearts.

[13] Many of our church members are becoming weak because, instead of depending upon God, they are self-sufficient.

I am instructed to say to our churches, Study the Testimonies. They are written for our admonition and encouragement upon whom the ends of the world are come. If God's people will not study these messages that are sent to them from time to time, they are guilty of rejecting light. Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, God is sending instruction to His people. Heed the instruction; follow the light. The Lord has a controversy with His people because in the past, they have not heeded His instruction and followed His guidance.—E. G. White [Letter 292, 1907](#).

## Satan's Aim

During the Christian dispensation, the great enemy of man's happiness has made the Sabbath of the fourth commandment an object of special attack. Satan says: I will work at cross purposes with God. I will empower my followers to set aside God's memorial, the seventh-day Sabbath. . . I will make the observance of the seventh day a sign of disloyalty to the authorities of earth. Human laws will be made so stringent that men and women will not dare to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. For fear of wanting food and clothing, they will join with the world in transgressing God's law.—[Prophets and Kings](#), 183, 184.

## Worldly Customs

The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death.—[Testimonies for the Church 5:463](#).

## Safe Instructions For Closing Days

A wealth of moral influence has been brought to us in the last half century. Through His Holy Spirit the voice of God has come to us continually in warning and instruction, to confirm the faith of the believers in the Spirit of Prophecy. Repeatedly the word has come, Write the things that I, have given you to confirm the faith of My people in the position they have taken. Time and trial have not made void the instruction given, but through years of suffering and self- sacrifice have established the truth of the testimony given. The instruction that was given in the early days of the messages is to be held as safe instruction to follow in these its closing days. Those who are indifferent to this light and instruction must not expect to escape the snares which we have been plainly told will cause the rejectors of light to stumble, and and be snared, and be taken. If we study carefully the second chapter of Hebrews, we shall learn how important it is that we hold steadfastly to every principle of truth that has been given.—[Selected Messages 1:41](#).

[14]

## Stand Alone

It does not seem possible to us now that any should have to stand alone; but if God has ever spoken by me, the time will come when we shall be brought before councils and before thousands for His name's sake, and each one will have to give the reason of his faith. Then will come the severest criticism upon every position that has been taken for the truth. We need, then, to study the word of God, that we may know why we believe the doctrines we advocate. We must critically search the living oracles of Jehovah.—[The Review and Herald, December 18, 1888.](#)

## Warmth From Coldness

All who will gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their defections, and loyalty from their treason, will triumph with the third angel's message.—[The Review and Herald, June 8, 1897](#). [Sons and Daughters of God, 201](#).

## **Stand Against Fierce Opposition**

The work which the church has failed to do in a time of peace and prosperity, she will have to do in a terrible crisis, under most discouraging, forbidding circumstances. The warnings that worldly conformity has silenced or withheld, must be given under the fiercest opposition from enemies of the faith. And at that time the superficial, conservative class, whose influence has steadily retarded the progress of the work, will renounce the faith, and take their stand with its avowed enemies, toward whom their sympathies have long been tending. These apostates will then manifest the most bitter enmity, doing all in their power to oppress and malign their former brethren, and to excite indignation against them. This day is just before us. [Testimonies for the Church 5:463.](#)

## Encourage One Another

Perplexities will increase; but let us, as believers in God, encourage one another. Let us not lower the standard, but keep it lifted high, looking to Him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith. When in the night season I am unable to sleep, I lift my heart in prayer to God, and He strengthens me and gives me the assurance that He is with His ministering servants in the home field and in distant lands. I am encouraged and blessed as I realize that the God of Israel is still guiding His people, and that He will continue to be with them, even to the end.—[Selected Messages 2:406](#).

## Nothing To Fear

In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.—[Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 196.](#)

## **Additional Study Material**

Those wishing to study further on the question of labor unions and the Seventh-day Adventist relationship to them should send a request to the Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 6840 Eastern Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20012

A companion volume to this entitled “Country Living” by Ellen G. White is available at your local Book and Bible House.