

Q. Has the message you teach been brought to the leaders in your church to see if they see light in it? Sister White is clear that we should not accept a new teaching without first bringing it to the church leaders and seeing if they see light in it. 5T 293

My response:

*“Has the message you teach been brought to **the leaders in your church** to see if they see light in it?”*

Let’s begin with taking a closer look at what Jonathan and many others feel “*Sister White is clear*” about.

“There are a thousand temptations in disguise prepared for those who have **the light of truth**; and the only safety for any of us is in receiving no new doctrine, no new interpretation of the Scriptures, without first submitting it to **brethren of experience**. Lay it before them in a humble, teachable spirit, with earnest prayer; and if they see no light in it, yield to their judgment; for ‘in the multitude of counselors there is safety.’”
Testimonies, Vol. 5, 293.1 [1885]

If I take this statement to read just as many suppose it does then I would understand that I am to place unreserved confidence in the “*leaders*” of the church; and it’s not been made clear who they are exactly, and yield to their decisions as to whether or not there is any light in the message I bear.

My mind is instantly taken back to a time when this very concept was executed by two men who were recipients of “greater light”. In Minneapolis, 1888, “greater light” was submitted to the “church leaders” and a catastrophe was the result. There were attempts made by Jones and Waggoner to share the validity of the “new light” and what was the result? They rejected it corporately! Did their rejection of that light therefore mean that it was in fact NOT light at all? How would I apply **your** interpretation of Sister White’s quote, so loosely applied today, to that experience?

First, in order to understand her intentions, we have to qualify who the “*brethren of experience*” were that she was speaking of when she penned this statement. Many would have us believe it’s those in leadership positions TODAY throughout Adventism at every level; or maybe just the General Conference as a whole. That part has never been made clear to me.

I will now show here that Sister White, in referring to the “*brethren of experience*”, was in fact pointing us to the pioneers of the Adventist church who had gained an experience that qualified them to consider any “*new light*” and determine if it contradicted the established faith of the body or whether it was in fact “greater light”.

The first thing to notice is that this statement in *Testimonies, Vol. 5* was penned in 1885 when the pioneers, who “*had an experience*” in the history of the first, second and third angel’s messages, were an average age of 60-65 years of age. **They** were those who **understood** their location in prophetic history; who **understood** the old landmarks; and who partook in the “light” of the midnight cry thereby making them the possessors of “the light of truth”. Before I qualify that however, let us first consider this statement she penned concerning how she viewed the “*brethren of experience*” --the General Conference and leadership as you would have us believe, a hundred and nine years ago! And this was AFTER their restructuring which occurred in 1901.

"The showing by the past leadership of the Conference is not after God's order. There has been a work done of a character that has **not been approved of God**. The result we have before us in the ruins where once stood that large printing plant, with its expensive facilities.

"The divine statutes have been set aside. The time will soon come when God will vindicate His insulted authority. "The Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." 'But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?'

"In the work of God no kingly authority is to be exercised by any human being, or by two or three. The representatives of the Conference, as it has been carried with authority for the last 20 years, **shall be no longer justified in saying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we."** The men in positions of trust have not been carrying the work wisely.

"The Lord calls for wise men to preside over His work, and to be faithful shepherds of His flock. He has a work to be done in every city. **The General Conference has fallen into strange ways, and we have reason to marvel that judgment has not fallen,** showing 'by terrible things in righteousness' that God is not a man that He should lie.-- Manuscript 26, **1903**.

Now by this statement we should be able to see even at a casual glance that Sister White did NOT have unreserved confidence in the church's authority or ability to discern between light and darkness. And this is just ONE quote- but then we could fill volumes with her statements of concern over the leadership's lack of wisdom in choices; at EVERY level.

So then to assume that the "*men of experience*" are the "church leaders" by default, reveals a faulty reasoning and therefore an intentional or unintentional blindness to the reality that leadership has ever been problematic and plagued with a history of BAD choices.

"It is not the opposition of the world that we have to fear; but it is the elements that work among ourselves that have hindered the message. The efficiency of the movements for extending the truth depends upon the harmonious action of those who profess to believe it. Love and confidence constitute a moral force that would have united our churches, and insured harmony of action; but coldness and distrust have brought disunion that has shorn us of our strength.

"The Lord designed that the messages of warning and instruction given through the Spirit to his people should go everywhere. **But the influence that grew out of the resistance of light and truth at Minneapolis, tended to make of no effect the light God had given to his people through the Testimonies.** "Great Controversy," Vol. 4 has not had the circulation that it should have had, **because some of those who occupy responsible positions were leavened with the spirit that prevailed at Minneapolis, a spirit that clouded the discernment of the people of God.**" {GCDB, February 28, 1893}

Was it wisdom on the part of the church leaders to hinder the circulation of The Great Controversy? God's servant tells us that they were led by the wrong spirit. Is this then who I am to trust in when trying to determine if the light we and many others have been blessed to receive is in fact light? I see the word teaching me differently.

These *things* have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which **ye have received of him** abideth in you, and **ye need not that any man teach you**: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and **even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him**. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and **not be ashamed** before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

1John 2:26-29

Now I would share with you the evidences which prove who these "*brethren of experience*" were and still are today that Sister White was pointing us to. They are in reality the pioneers who emerged from the Millerite **experience** and KNEW what truth was.

The following quote is from a document found on EGW CDROM under the "Bibliography" tab entitled "*Reversing the Tide in the Pacific Northwest*". They were dealing with a condition of division caused by a William Raymond. He was very successful in bringing division and therefore had to be dealt with. He agreed to meet with the "*brethren of experience*" and this is the portion I have included here. The Bibliography was accomplished by EGW's grandson Arthur White, one of seven grandchildren to Sister White.

THE PACIFIC COAST COUNCIL AND CAMP MEETING AT EAST PORTLAND

Ellen White and those traveling with her from Walla Walla arrived in Portland on Tuesday at noon, June 17. Regarding the situation at the encampment Waggoner declared: {3BIO 253.2}

"From the first it was evident that the meeting would be one of hard labor. The condition of the people was not favorable; most of the members of the principal churches had taken quite a decided stand against the action of the General Conference, which made it very difficult to reach them. Our working force was found to be none too strong for the occasion; and had it not been for the pointed testimonies of Sister White, we have every reason to fear the meeting would not have accomplished the object desired."—Ibid. {3BIO 253.3}

Writing to Smith, Ellen White noted:

"The work in this conference was of the same character as the work above [at Walla Walla], only more so. We have had one of the hardest battles we ever had to engage in. The leading men in this conference seem to have no respect for the General Conference. The people have no respect for ministers or president. . . . We cannot give you all particulars. We had men hard to deal with, difficult to be impressed. The labors of our ministers were accounted of no more value than their own wisdom and judgment. The only thing they did not dare to reject was the testimonies. To these they did bow after long delay." —Letter 20, 1884. {3BIO 253.4}

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Raymond was at this camp meeting and the Pacific Coast Council. At the Walla Walla meeting he had made confessions and had attempted to draw near to his brethren, but cherished views are not easy to part with. There was another confrontation in east Portland. Wrote Ellen White in her letter to Smith: {3BIO 254.1}

“Brother Raymond has done a work that was tearing down. New views after the order of the views of Brother Owen were presented to the council for examination. The same was done with Brother Raymond's views. A council heard his arguments and then wrote out their answer. He has consented to abide by the decision of his brethren.—Letter 20, 1884.” {3BIO 254.2}

Shortly after the meeting Ellen White wrote her testimony dealing with the Raymond matter. It may be found in Testimonies, volume 5, where he is referred to as “Brother D.” She indicated the procedure that should be followed under such circumstances: {3BIO 254.3}

“There are a thousand temptations in disguise prepared for those who have the light of truth; and the only safety for any of us is in receiving no new doctrine, no new interpretation of the Scriptures, without first submitting it to brethren of experience. Lay it before them in a humble, teachable spirit, with earnest prayer; and if they see no light in it, yield to their judgment; for ‘in the multitude of counselors there is safety.’”—5T, p. 293. {3BIO 254.4}

This counsel was not new from the pen of Ellen White. Her first book, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, published in August, **1851**, sounded the note: {3BIO 254.5}

“I saw that **the shepherds** should consult those in whom they have reason to have confidence, **those who have been in all the messages**, and **are firm in all the present truth**, before they advocate new points of importance, which they may think the Bible sustains.”—*Early Writings*, p. 61. {3BIO 254.6} (Bold supplied)

Again in November, **1851**, Ellen White reported that while she was traveling in Vermont, the importance of laying new views before leading brethren, or “**messengers**,” as they were designated, was again opened to her in vision. Here is her account as it related to the meeting held on Sunday, November 9, 1851. {3BIO 255.1} (Bold supplied)

“I . . . also told them . . . that the messengers of God should be perfectly united in their views of Bible truth and should consult with each other, and should not advance any new view until they first went to the **messengers** and examined those views with the Bible, and if they were correct, let all the **messengers** spread them, and if they were error, lay them to one side. Then the gospel seed would be sown in union and raised in strength; and all the messengers east and west, north and south, would be telling the same story.”—Letter 8, 1851. {3BIO 255.2} (Bold supplied)

BRETHREN OF EXPERIENCE AT THE PACIFIC COAST COUNCIL

At this point it may be well to look at “the brethren of experience” at the Portland meeting: {3BIO 255.3}

-Joseph H. Waggoner, the senior minister, 64 years of age, a Sabbathkeeping Adventist since 1851. He was joint editor and publisher of a political newspaper in Wisconsin when he joined the church. In 1884 he was editor of the Signs of the Times. {3BIO 255.4}

-John N. Loughborough, pioneer minister, 52 years of age. He was a first-day Adventist lay preacher when he accepted the message in 1852. As an evangelist, in 1868 he pioneered the work of the church in California. {3BIO 255.5}

-William C. White, 30 years old, son of James and Ellen White. He started his career as manager of the Pacific Press and served in many positions in important interests of the church. In 1884 he was a member of the General Conference Committee. {3BIO 255.6}

-Sidney Brownsberger, 39 years old, first principal of Battle Creek College. In 1884 he was principal of Healdsburg College. {3BIO 255.7}

-William Ings, minister and publishing house worker. In 1877 he had been sent to Switzerland to assist J. N. Andrews. {3BIO 255.8}

-Ellen G. White, age 56, the messenger of the Lord. {3BIO 256.1}

-John O. Corliss, age 39. He became a Seventh-day Adventist in 1868; he was associated with James White for a time, and was tutored by Joseph Bates. {3BIO 256.2}

These were undoubtedly joined by G. W. Colcord and C. L. Boyd, presidents of the local conferences. {3BIO 256.3}

It was this group that heard William Raymond present his views and gave a written report of their findings. This experience in the Northwest **set the pace in dealing with questions relating to so-called “new light.”** {3BIO 256.4} (Bold supplied)

The “brethren of experience” were not just church leaders. We can see this in that the inspired counsel tells the leading men and pastors to go to the “messengers” for insight and guidance. Why? Because they were “*those who have been in all the messages, and are firm in all the present truth*”. Notice that this is a common theme with Sister White.

“There are **those now living** who, in studying the prophecies of Daniel and John, received **great light** from God as they passed over the ground where special prophecies were in process of fulfillment in their order. They bore the message of time to the people... The people now have a special message to give to the world, the third angel's message. **Those who, in their experience, have passed over the ground, and acted a part in the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages, are not so liable to be led into false paths** as are **those who have not had an experimental knowledge** of the people of God. . . . Manuscript 31, 1896” {2SM 102.1}

“I have acted a part in this solemn work. Nearly all my Christian experience is interwoven with it. There are **those now living who have an experience similar to my own**. They have recognized **the truth** unfolding for this time; they have kept in step with the great Leader, the Captain of the Lord's host. In the proclamation of the messages, every specification of prophecy has been fulfilled. Those who were privileged to act a part in proclaiming these messages have gained an experience which is of the highest value to them;

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and now when we are amid the perils of **these last days**, when voices will be heard on every side saying, 'Here is Christ,' 'Here is truth'; while the burden of many is to unsettle **the foundation of our faith** [The truths upon the 1843 chart] which has led us from the churches and from the world to stand as a peculiar people in the world, like John our testimony will be borne:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; . . . that which we **have seen and heard declare we unto you**, that ye also may have fellowship with us.'

"I testify the things which I have seen, the things which I have heard, the things which my hands have handled, of the Word of life. And this testimony I know to be of the Father and the Son. We have seen and do testify that the power of the Holy Ghost has accompanied the presentation of the truth, warning with pen and voice, and giving the messages in their order. To deny this work would be to deny the Holy Ghost, and would place us in that company who have departed from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits." {LS 430.1}

The men who passed through the **experience** of the Millerites, having been in "all of the messages"; the first, second and third angel's messages, were the one who KNEW what truth was as testified to by Sister White in the above quote. They could weigh the new light against what was PROVEN to be the true light and know instantly whether this "new light" was valid.

"In history and prophecy the Word of God portrays the long continued conflict between truth and error. That conflict is yet in progress. Those things which have been, will be repeated. Old controversies will be revived, and new theories will be continually arising. **But God's people, who in their belief and fulfillment of prophecy have acted a part in the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages, know where they stand. They have an experience that is more precious than fine gold.** They are to stand firm as a rock, holding **the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end.**" {2SM 109.2}

As we are at "the end" today, who then are qualified to become the "*brethren of experience*" that we are to bring our "new light" to?

"God has given me light regarding our periodicals. What is it?--He has said that **the dead are to speak.** How?--Their works shall follow them. **We are to repeat the words of the pioneers in our work**, who knew what it cost to search for the truth as for hidden treasure, and who labored to lay **the foundation of our work.** They moved forward step by step under the influence of the Spirit of God. One by one these pioneers are passing away. The word given me is, **Let that which these men have written in the past be reproduced.**" -- *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 28.1

Today, we are told that these men are still to have a voice when considering new light. Why? Because they "*knew what it cost to search for **the truth** as for hidden treasure, and "labored to lay **the foundation of our work**".*

-Children of Light-

The “greater light” is to be qualified as such by comparing it to the light that the pioneers; “*the brethren of experience*”, discovered which constituted the “**the foundation of our work**”! Today, within Adventism, we have come to the place where too often it is the “teachings of men” that are recognized above a “thus saith the Lord”. We are simply repeating the history of the Jewish nation.

In summary:

We’ve been told that the overwhelming majority of Adventist are going to go out from among God’s people; so much so that the church will appear to have fallen. The Bible teaches us that the path leading to destruction is broad and MANY will go down that path. We can see from these simple and clear examples that we need to be very guarded concerning the majority view! Right now the “majority view” has zero tolerance for what thousands upon thousands are embracing as new or “greater light”. And as you take this light and compare it to **the foundational truths** that were laid at the beginning of our work you will discover a perfect harmony that can only be of God.

So, to answer your question: **YES!** I have submitted these truths to the “*brethren of experience*” and they **AGREE** whole-heartedly! In fact they uphold many of these very truths themselves, i.e. the 2520 time prophecy. This is why so many today are confused by your use of the term “*new light*” when they were discovered by the **founders of our faith** and **ENDORSED** by Jesus Christ Himself through the pen of Inspiration!

PS: I can’t help but wonder if our leaders today have submitted their understanding of our message and mission to the scrutiny of our foundational truths as established at the beginning of our work?