

“do not despise prophetic utterances, but bring them all to the test and then keep what is good in them”
I Thess 5.20, 21 (NEB)

Testimony and Trauma: A Case Study¹

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Abstract

Ellen White’s last letter to John Andrews conveyed a strong critique of his temperament, his personality and his life’s work. It induced a significant psychological trauma in the recipient. Shortly afterwards he confided to his mother and sister-in-law his profound sense of hurt: “My life has been a total failure.” Did the communication function more as a source of wounding than as a framework for healing? Or was there a larger intent? Ellen White had been uncertain either about what to say in the testimony and how to say it. Over a period of three months, she made several attempts to write it and even after she sent it, she was still unsure. This paper will explore the contextual background of the document focusing on both the author and the recipient with a view to better understand authorial intent and expected outcomes and undertake a quest for insights about Ellen White’s uncertainty. It will also compare and analyze the extant versions of this letter in a quest to better understand the content. It is hoped that the case study will enable opportunity for reflection on issues of trauma that are raised by the episode, the ethics of confidentiality in counseling and the merit of counseling faced with the improbability of change.

¹ This paper draws on material in my work *J. N. Andrews: Mission Pioneer, Evangelist and Thought Leader* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2019), but explores further source material and the new questions posed by them. I am indebted to Denis Fortin for alerting me to these additional sources.

The Case

In early August 1883, founder of the church's mission to Europe, John Andrews, had read to him a demoralizing, though pastorally well-intentioned, thirteen-page testimony of rebuke from Ellen White. It was read to him by Elder Buel Whitney, the former New York and Pennsylvania Conference president called initially to help Andrews but then, because Andrews was so near death, assigned to replace him as leader.² At the time he received the testimony, fifty-five-year-old Andrews was confined to bed in the mission house in Basel suffering acutely from end-stage tuberculosis. It was the last letter he would receive from Ellen White. He would die of his disease ten weeks later.

The episode may be seen to relate to trauma from at least three perspectives.³ Ellen White, the author, eighteen months previously had experienced trauma in the sudden loss of her husband after he had endured a long stressful period of decline and increasing dysfunction occasioned by repeated strokes that at times had severely stressed their marriage. He had been obliged to exit church leadership in less than optimal or edifying circumstances. To what degree was she subconsciously concerned about protecting and preserving the reputation of her late husband? John Andrews, the recipient, had experienced repeated trauma in the death of his wife and two daughters and in multiple episodes of shaming and humiliation bordering on what could almost be termed spiritual abuse at the hands of the author's husband.⁴ James White's leadership style was highly autocratic and controlling which led to much conflict.⁵ More recently, the threat of closure of his French church paper, *Les Signes des Temps*, because of financial difficulties had

² Thirty-eight-year-old Whitney had been a minister for nine years and was the much-appreciated president of the New York and Pennsylvania Conferences at the time of his appointment. Releasing him to go to Europe caused distress and was considered a great sacrifice by his constituents. G. I. Butler, "The Camp Meeting at Glean," *RH*, June 12, 1883, 377.

³ I use the term "trauma" here in the broad sense used in the current literature on religion and trauma. Elizabeth Evans reports on the growing interest in the field in "A Growing Landscape of Religious Trauma," *Christian Century*, November 2025, 52-56.

⁴ At various times James White out of jealousy over Andrews' influence and dissatisfaction over his different style of pastoral interaction and leadership had actively sought to "destroy the confidence of God's people in Brother Andrews." Ellen White rebuked him for this. It had happened so often it was the "greatest wonder" to her that Andrews and his co-worker, W. H. Littlejohn, had "not lost their love and interest" for James already. E. G. White to J. S. White, September 2, 1871.

⁵ Marie Griffiths highlights the connection between "high-control" environments, conflict and trauma. Cited in Evans, *Ibid.*, 56.

traumatized him severely.⁶ These episodes had scarred him permanently and shaped his decision making and his attitudes in negative ways paralleling symptoms perhaps of what in the mental health professions has recently been diagnosed as moral injury.⁷ Thirdly, the testimony letter itself induced further significant trauma that impacted Andrews' mental health, deepening his depression.

At the time Ellen White sent the testimony to Whitney for him to read to Andrews, she had formed a very negative view of Andrews' work in Europe feeling that it had not progressed as it should have. When some asked whether she thought Andrews might die, she had burst out with a brusque reply: "I think he will, and I could not pray for his life, for I consider he has held and is still holding [back] the work in Switzerland." Really? She could not pray for this Adventist missionary? In Basel, at this very same time, struggling doggedly against his illness, Andrews and his editorial assistant Jean Vuilleumier believed that the painful production of each issue of the magazine was another miracle and a direct answer to their many prayers. Ellen White had also told Whitney, however, that she did "not want to injure Elder Andrews." She mentions in the testimony letter that Andrews had many times been accused unjustly at the hands of her

⁶ Jean Vuilleumier, Andrews' editorial assistant on the *Les Signes des Temps* records a conversation he had with Andrews about the stress of this decision. When Andrew learned of the "unexpected and barbarous news" it "gave Br. Andrews a painful blow, a deadly blow," as he "replayed all the sacrifices he had made," and "thought of the death of his girl, about his work, his sleepless times, about his worries to get the work done deciphering the European terrain." Andrews traced the loss of his "restorative power" to the decision to close the paper and move it to England. The threat caused a "terrible and painful struggle" and "unspeakable anxieties, the agonizing prayers" and "distress and bitterness." *Jean Vuilleumier Diary* May 6, 1883.

⁷ The concept, initially used in relationship to mental health care in military contexts is now seen to be useful more broadly. Harold Koenig describes moral injury as "persistent distress that arises from a personal experience that disrupts or threatens: (a) one's sense of the goodness of oneself, of others, of institutions, or of what are understood to be higher powers, or (b) one's beliefs or intuitions about right and wrong, or good and evil." When these symptoms become severe enough to cause impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning in ways that are out of proportion or inconsistent with cultural or religious norms concerning such experiences, and require clinical care and counseling, the moral injury becomes a moral injury disorder. VanderWeele, T. J., Wortham, J. S., Carey, L. B., Case, B. W., Cowden, R. G., Duffee, C., Jackson-Meyer, K., Lu, F., Mattson, S. A., Padgett, R. N., Petzet, J. R., Rutledge, J., Symons, X., Koenig, H. G. "Moral trauma, moral distress, moral injury and moral injury disorder: Definitions and assessments," *Frontiers in Psychology*, (2025) 16, 1422441.

husband.⁸ She had written with a deep pastoral intent, but the letter did injure her colleague. It was hurtful and damaging both to Andrews' psyche and to his reputation. Ellen White had often lamented her husband's inclination to carry grudges, a cruel tendency to "go back and call up the past" with a view to injuring Andrews' influence among his brethren and then expect him to repeatedly rehearse earlier confessions.⁹ In this she saw James as "unforgiving to your brethren and your children." And yet, this letter seems to do the very same thing. Ellen White had called up numerous incidents from the past to point out Andrews' faults for the purpose, it seems, of diminishing Whitney's confidence in him. Had past trauma also shaped Ellen White? The decisions made in the past Andrews could not undo. He was beyond repairing or addressing most of the faults the testimony letter described. Did the letter achieve its pastoral intent and did the injury lead to healing? How should counseling and reproof relate to the improbability of change and avoid causing further trauma? In some respects, this testimony letter might be seen by later readers as being injurious to the author almost as it was to the recipient. This paper explores the contextual background of the testimony letter in the context of trauma, focusing on both the author and the recipient with a view to better understand possible trauma-influenced authorial perspectives, authorial intent and expected outcomes. Further work on the episode might reflect on issues such as the ethics of confidentiality in counseling and the merit of counseling when faced with the improbability of change. To read the testimony letter in its entirety, see link: <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/4032.1#4>

Reactions to the Testimony

⁸ The voted operating ethos in the leadership relationships in the mid-1870s was that James White's associates would "cheerfully admit his authority to reprove and rebuke according to the light God had given him," and his colleagues could "claim no right to call his exercise of it in question." "Leadership," RH, November 18, 1873, 190. See also Kevin Burton, "Centralized for Protection: George I. Butler and his Philosophy of One-person Leadership," Andrews University MA Thesis, (2015) 59-62.

⁹ E. G. White to J. S. White, September 2, 1871. See the discussion in Valentine, 425 – 427. The pattern of relationships parallel those identified in cases of moral injury. See H. G. Koenig, & Al Zaben, F. "Moral injury: An increasingly recognized and widespread syndrome," *Journal of Religion and Health*, (2021) 60, 2989-3011 and B. T. Litz, "Moral injury: State of the Science," *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, (2025) 38 (2), 187-199.

Andrews, in his response to Ellen White just a month before he died, described this last testimony as a “severe rebuke.” Scholars in the light of longer and wider reflection have been seriously perplexed at the letter. Historian Grady Smoot read it as “the most severe rebuke” Ellen White had ever written to Andrews. Swiss theologian Daniel Augsberger said that Ellen White “scolded Andrews severely,” and language professor Pietro Copiz, noting that Andrews was on his deathbed, observes that the language of the letter may appear “unnecessarily harsh, almost pitiless.” To modern readers, the letter can come across as a harsh, devastating critique of Andrews’ temperament and personality with a very negative critique of the way he had done his work in Europe. As we have noticed, in her covering letter to Whitney, Ellen White had said, “I do not want Elder Andrews injured,” but injured indeed he was both at the time and in the wider public assessment of his reputation in the church when only this letter is used as the lens to make an assessment of his life.¹⁰ For many years the letter was considered so potentially injurious to other members of the Andrews family that it was not available for public reading (kept in Z file?). When, for example, the Swiss-French Daniel Walther, church history professor at the Seminary in 1955 requested permission to read the letter as part of his research for a class in denominational history, he was at first denied any access by Arthur White and then the following day he was allowed to read only eleven of the thirteen pages reportedly “because there were still some of the descendants living nearby.” Deeply offended, Walther suggested the suspension of his research class until the matter could be resolved. Whether the possibility of protection against injury to the author may have been a muted background concern on the part of descendants among the White Estate personnel is not mentioned.¹¹

And yet, on the other hand, when George Butler, president of the General Conference in 1883, read the testimony several weeks before it was read to Andrews, he saw it as an “excellent testimony” which had been written in “such a kind and blessed spirit so mild and clear.” Andrews was related to Butler by marriage (Andrews’ younger brother William had married

¹⁰ Ellen White had said to Whitney that the letter was intended for his eyes only and those of his wife. But as an afterthought she remembers that she had let her son Willie White read it, and her close friends recently returned from Europe, William and Jennie Ings. The letter was also read by George Butler. Uncertainty about what to say in the letter apparently led to the conversations with the Ings, although their perspective on the work in Europe and on Andrews might well be seen by Andrews as biased. See the discussion in Valentine, 606-614.

¹¹ Daniel Walther to A. V. Olsen, January 5, 1955; Daniel Walther to E. D. Dick, January 15, 1955, Walther Collection CAR.

Butler's younger sister Martha) and furthermore Andrews had been a spiritual guide to Butler in his early years. He had done "more to save me from infidelity than any other man," Butler reported. He owed him "a great debt of gratitude."¹² They had worked closely together in church work and Butler was thoroughly acquainted with Andrews' scholarly and "peculiar" academic temperament, his strong viewpoints, deep sense of duty and his inclination to rely on his inner impressions and convictions of his duty that sometimes seemed to offend the equally strong-minded James and his wife Ellen White.¹³ Ellen White, while valuing Andrews' distinctive gifts and his scholarly nature and skill set, nevertheless had difficulty accepting these within the framework of her urgent, imminent eschatology.¹⁴

What Butler read in the letter about Andrews' temperament resonated with his own encounters and association with him. Butler was an intimate friend of John Andrews. He was also one who was not afraid to disagree with Ellen White, telling her, for example, that she had misunderstood him and was mistaken in what she wrote about his role in establishing South Lancaster Academy. And he could disagree with her over her advice on the timing of a personnel appointment suggesting a modified approach or push back against criticism and explain in detail why he had taken a particular action.¹⁵ In regard to her letter to Andrews, however, he knew "from personal knowledge" that much of it was "true as scripture" and he had "not a shadow of doubt but every word of it is true," he related to Ellen White.¹⁶ What Butler really found helpful about this letter, whatever its inadequacies as an assessment of Andrews' work, was its timeliness in helping Butler resolve two urgent and very difficult administrative problems. Of late, Andrews had lost confidence in his General Conference brethren and written some cutting things to Butler that distressed Butler. But there was a back story to that.

¹² G. I Butler to Ellen G. White, May 27, 1883. Andrews had befriended Butler in the early 1850s and then studied with him in Waukon, Iowa where he had baptized him. Denis Fortin, *G. I Butler: An Honest but Misunderstood Church Leader*, (Omaha, ID: Pacific Press, 2023) 77-81.

¹³ And yet, Butler also worried that Andrews had been intimidated and cowed in the numerous conflicts with James and had lost his self-confidence as a result of frequent public humiliation by James. Butler lamented that Andrews would feel that he had to apologize and confess even when he had not done wrong but because somehow White had taken offense and Andrews felt he needed to keep the peace.

¹⁴ She conveyed an impatience with the time and effort Andrews put into careful footnoting.

¹⁵ G. I. Butler to E. G. White, May 16, 1882.

¹⁶ G. I Butler to Ellen G. White, May 27, 1883.

In the early years of the mission, Andrews had had to defend himself against public criticism from James White and other armchair critics in Battle Creek who insisted that in Europe he follow what Battle Creek called “the American model” for evangelism and church planting. White had publicly criticized Andrews in the *Review* for failing in this. Andrews, who had in the past often been criticized and humiliated by White, had insisted that given the huge cultural differences and the changed economic circumstances he faced on arrival in Switzerland, the “American model” simply was not possible – it would not work.¹⁷ In 1879 when grappling with financial crisis, church leadership had considered closing the work in Switzerland and moving the mission emphasis to England where James and Ellen rather naively expected to achieve more baptisms more quickly. Andrews felt betrayed by these moves and had become highly defensive of his French missionary paper trying to keep it alive. This was apparently interpreted by James and Ellen White as Andrews wanting to control and “hold” the work in Europe. Later, Andrews had taken offense at the visit of General Conference Committee member Stephen Haskell sent to do an “audit” of his work and of his mission expenses against a background of continuing suspicion of his work in Switzerland. Andrews had been deeply hurt at this turn of events, became suspicious of the General Conference and experienced a collapse of trust in his brethren over further financial misunderstandings.¹⁸ Failing health exacerbated his deepening depression.

When Butler had taken over leadership from James White in March 1880, Andrews had continued to be highly defensive of the European mission and his French journal and the

¹⁷ For an extended in-depth discussion of these issues see Gilbert Valentine, “J. N. Andrews and the ‘Success’ of the European Mission,” *Contours of European Adventism* eds Stefan Höschel and Chigemezi N. Wogu, (Möckern-Friedensau: Friedensau Adventist University, 2020), 27-58.

¹⁸ The finances of the enterprise were complex and often vague with the result that misunderstanding became inevitable. The General Conference had expected the Swiss Mission to quickly become self-sustaining. Local economic problems among the Swiss Sabbath-keepers prevented that – although Andrews was blamed for it even though it was outside his control. Andrews’ personal compensation arrangements were messy, vague and a source of misunderstanding. The General Conference declined to pay Andrews a regular salary as a missionary fearing that if they did it would encourage a dependency among the local congregations. There were several workers to support from Andrews’ budget, both overseas and local preachers. A policy framework did not exist. There were no financial allowances for such things as initial transport of personal effects or the travel and education expenses of dependent children. Who paid for mail expenses, advertising, and work beyond Switzerland? The lines between what were personal expenses, local mission expenses and mission outreach within Switzerland and beyond its borders were often blurry. Furthermore, delays in reimbursing expenses long after they were incurred complicated matters and often created desperate situations. All this was excruciatingly painful for the hyper-honest and sensitive Andrews. See Valentine, *Ibid*, 36-38.

approach to mission he felt he had been forced to adopt, with its accommodation to the local culture and the tightly constrained circumstances he had found himself facing.

Butler and Haskell (especially after Haskell's late-1882 inspection tour through Europe), actually became very supportive of Andrews and much more understanding of his approach and had sought to correct some of the misunderstandings that had gathered about his work, but Andrews in early 1883 did not yet perceive their support. Butler thought that Ellen White's testimony, above all, would help Andrews lay aside his distrust of his brethren before it was too late. Butler knew Andrews' impressions of himself and Haskell in this regard were quite wrong, although he put it down to Andrews' current state of depression and his "morbid" feelings rather than growing out of his memory of being unfairly accused and misunderstood. The testimony letter, in Butler's view, also helped solve the urgent problem of needing to overcome Andrews' resistance to the idea of sending his mother and sister-in-law across to Europe to help him in his sickness. Butler wanted to send Andrews' mother and sister-in-law to be with him. Andrews was so depressed he thought he would not live long enough to see them, and they would thus be trapped in Europe at needless expense. It would be better for them not to come. In this regard, Butler thought Ellen White's testimony letter to be very timely because it clarified that issue. Ellen White supported the idea of sending relatives and it reinforced Butler's suggestion. The "precious testimony could not hurt him I am sure," he wrote to Ellen White. He was wrong about that. And, actually, we have evidence that Butler feared Andrews might be hurt. Anxious that his friend would not live through the "shock" of getting the letter (after reading it himself), he wrote in advance to Andrews to try and alert him to what was coming and to try and soften the blow "rather than the whole come upon him in a lump."¹⁹ Thus, there is much ambivalence and numerous misunderstandings on the part of all participants in the background of this last sad communication to Andrews. There is the deeply troubling testimony letter from Ellen White. Andrews' own misunderstanding and misinterpretation of Haskell and Butler constitute a problem, and this informs Butler's attempt to read the situation in far-away Basel. Ellen White's larger misunderstanding of the situation in Europe is problematic.²⁰ Andrews' dogged defense of his journal and his perception of the importance of his defensive role had become a problem and

¹⁹ G. I Butler to E. G. White, May 27, 1883.

²⁰ See Appendix I for a list of the differing interpretations of the situation in Switzerland.

a misunderstanding that needed to be corrected.²¹ Butler's misunderstanding about Andrews' reasons for his distrust and suspicion of the General Conference led to further misjudgments. And there were misunderstandings on the part of all participants about the nature and course of Andrews' disease and their perceptions of providence and healing which complicated things further.²²

Andrews' Disease and its Outcome

Andrews likely caught the highly contagious consumption from his sixteen-year-old daughter Mary who had died of the illness five years earlier in late 1878.²³ Andrews had felt obliged to stay close at the bedside of his daughter as her life struggled to its end – a victim of the cruel “short consumption.” The loss had been traumatic – like the grief he had experienced six years earlier in 1872 when burying his treasured Angeline, his forty-eight-year-old wife of sixteen years. Angeline had died of stroke.²⁴ Andrews had been diagnosed with tuberculosis by two British doctors in Southampton, England in September 1880 when high fever and uncontrollable coughing spasms disabled him, took him to bed and he began coughing up blood

²¹ With a faulty theology distorted by depression, Andrews had come to see the mission in very personal terms. It had become all about him and that needed correction. See J. N. Andrews, “Report from Bale,” *RH* January 31, 1882, 73

²² The biological cause of tuberculosis had only just been discovered a few months earlier.

²³ Mary first coughing spasms alarmed her father in early August 1878. She may have caught the disease from Mrs Aufranc, wife of the French translator who occupied rooms on the third floor of their crowded and rather unhealthful apartment building in Basel. Mary died only fifteen weeks after succumbing to the disease.

²⁴ In the six years since her death, Andrews had not been able to resolve his grief. Her loss had come in addition to the earlier death of his one-year-old daughter while he was hundreds of miles away from home and the demands of evangelism meant he could not get back home for the funeral or to comfort his grieving wife. On that occasion, the duty of evangelism had not allowed him to return until three months after the tragedy, and he reported he had endured “weeks of anguish and distress” and evidently carried a sense of guilt. What his wife endured was also cruel. Andrews was acquainted with affliction.

In the Battle Creek Sanitarium in late 1878, Mary had pled with her widowed father not to leave her alone among the strangers and the strange environment as he had often had to leave Mary and her mother in the call of duty to preach. Expectations on him to preach and help lead the infant church had taken him away from home many times for weeks and months at a time, one time for almost eighteen months. Expectations from his senior leadership colleagues in the faith, James and Ellen, were heavy and constant and his own sense of spiritual duty was a stern master. This time his sense of duty to his daughter prevailed and he stayed during the last long night, in spite of the real fears of contagion. At that time, it was not known how the disease was transmitted but there were vague anxieties that coughing and sputum were somehow involved. It took the totally exhausted Andrews several months to physically recover from the death of Mary and the long period of stressful overwork he had undertaken for the General Conference associated with his return to the United States for the General Conference session of 1878.

during spasms.²⁵ The disease had ebbed and flowed over a period of two years but increasingly restricted his preaching and his energy. When Kellogg visited the skeletal Andrews in April 1883, he told him that from a human point of view he had not long to live and that he needed to put his affairs in order. Andrews did so. As an indication of his depression and his discouraged reading of how others in America were viewing his work, he wrote confidentially to his brother-in-law Uriah Smith, forbidding the editor to write any obituary in the *Review* other than a brief notice of death.²⁶

But Kellogg's visit fueled further misunderstanding and confusion. In public (or, to those back in Battle Creek), he diagnosed the ailment only as a "bronchial infection" from which, he apparently suggested, Andrews might recover. He recommended massage treatments and apparently communicated this misdiagnosis to others back in America.²⁷ Butler took Kellogg's assessment to mean that a change of attitude on the part of Andrews and more reliance on prayer would cure him and prevent his death. In reality, at the very time Butler and Ellen White were conferring in America about Andrews, Jean Vuilleumier reports that Andrews was unable to eat or keep food down other than a few sips of liquid. He had become skeletal and on his bad days he suffered distressing diarrhea, high fevers, interminable coughing spasms, intestinal cramps and a gasping for air. House matron Anna Oyer was also seriously ill with the same disease and had been confined to bed. Her role was eventually taken over by Mrs. Erzberger, wife of the German evangelist who occupied rooms on the second floor. According to Vuilleumier, the nineteen-year-old diarist, the last stage of the illness brought lengthy bouts of intense abdominal pain, with Andrews writhing and groaning on his bed seeking relief. On his good days, he could sit in bed and talk to visitors and occasionally get up and go to the dining room. But by that fall, he would die of consumption, gasping for agonized breaths before at last being given an opiate and he mercifully slipped into a coma on October 23. The matron of the mission house, Anna

²⁵ J. N. Loughborough Diary, September 20, 23, 1880. Loughborough identifies the two doctors as Dr Townshend and Dr Frankel.

²⁶ J. N. Andrews to U. Smith, April 14, 1883. On the occasion of James White's death the *Review and Herald* carried black borders and multiple tributes and eulogies. The contrasting treatment of Andrews' death is marked.

²⁷ Little hard information about the etiology of the disease was known at the time. German Physician Robert Koch had isolated the *tuberculosis bacilli* only in late 1882 and concluded that the disease was spread by coughing. If only a prescient health reformer could have recommended the use of face masks, the strategy might have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. The bacteria could cause a latent infection at first and become active later.

Oyer, would die less than a month after Andrews and Andrews' niece Edith Andrews, would die of the same consumption very shortly afterwards. Even Buel Whitney, Andrews' successor would die of infection from the same *tuberculosis bacilli* four years later.²⁸

When in March 1883, in California, some asked Ellen White if Andrews would die, she reported that she would reply, "I think he will; and I could not pray for his life, for I consider he has held and is still holding [back] the work in Switzerland."²⁹ The reply might seem callous given what we know about the misunderstandings that apparently misinformed her interpretation of the situation. But what did she understand as his situation? For his part during this same month across in Europe, Andrews was praying that despite his weakness God would give him enough strength to get material ready for his next issue. Looking on as an observer, his editorial assistant seeing the desperate struggle, believed God was answering Andrews' prayers. "The way Br. Andrews has lived so far, and not only lived, but worked the way he did, is no less than miraculous and providential. It is only thanks to divine intervention, very visible periodically. With every month Br. Andrews finds himself in a weakness close to death. So, he prays to God to relieve him and send him an angel to give the strength needed to write his articles."³⁰ During the last three months of his life, Andrews was periodically able to get up to meet visitors and with supreme effort managed to do so when his replacement and his family arrived though it exhausted him for days afterward. He continued doggedly with his writing and editing to the last even when confined completely to bed. He would often half-humorously observe that his drive to write and edit actually kept him alive.

With a faulty theology distorted by his morbid depressive state, Andrews was tempted to link his survival to the welfare of the mission in Europe. It had become all about him and that needed correction. He had linked his recovery from the disease to the welfare of the work in

²⁸ Whitney would return to the United States in the fall of 1887 suffering from mesenteric tuberculosis and would die of the disease in April 1888. "The Decease of Eld B. L. Whitney," *RH* April 17, 1888, 248. Mary Kelsey White, wife of W. C. White living in Basel at the time would also contract the disease around the same time that Whitney did and would die of it three years later. See Jerry Moon, "White, Mary Kelsey (1857-1890)," <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=CB5H&highlight=White,|Mary|Kelsey>

The disease posed problems for a spirituality that held that one's prayer life and positive attitude of belief could cure the illness. Did the sufferer not have a strong enough faith or did the supporting believers not pray hard enough? Either response from those holding this theology induced a measure of guilt.

²⁹ Ellen G. White to B. L. Whitney, March 30, 1883.

³⁰ JVD April 25, 1883.

Europe. “The burden of my heart is so heavy with regard to the advancement of the work in Europe that the turn things will take either for prosperity or adversity, will I believe, decide whether I shall live or die.” He had not been delivered from the disease, but he had been preserved from death. “Let no one say that God has not heard prayer in my case,” he wrote.³¹

Testimony and Trauma

The acutely critical letter of March 29, though infused with pastoral intent, was processed through a filter of memories of conflict and offenses of long ago but still remembered. It had a devastating impact on the dying missionary when I was read to him in early August. Physically feeling “so feeble” after hearing the testimony, Andrews felt he could not himself, right then, write out a response and had therefore given an oral response of acceptance and submission to the testimony. He reported later that he had asked Whitney to “send it promptly for me.” Whitney had not done so. And Andrews was embarrassed to learn several weeks later that this had not been done.

Ellen White had mentioned in a letter to her son W. C. White on Monday June 11 (ten weeks after completing her March 29 letter) that she had just spent the previous Sabbath [March 9] writing out a thirteen-page letter to J. N. Andrews and hastened to send it to Whitney so that it got to him before he left for Europe. “I feared that he might not get the light for him therefore I wrote him again.” She had not been well for some weeks and seems to have been somewhat confused. Already in mid-April, both Butler and Whitney had informed her that her March letter had been received.³² She complained to Willie that “my mind has been a blank. I could not think or act” but she remembered vaguely that ten days earlier on Friday, June 1 she had “seemed to arouse at one time” and had sent some advice to workers in Oakland about some meetings. She had mentioned to Willie that the labor of writing out the June 9 letter “did not

³¹ J. N. Andrews, “Report from Bale,” *RH* January 31, 1882, 73

³² Is it possible that the letter of June 11 may have been misdated and that Ellen White is referring to what she wrote on March 29? Tim Poirier of the White Estate, however, confirms that the June 11 date is consistent with the date of a later letter written to W. C. White. T. Poirier email to G. M. Valentine, October 27, 2025 (copy in author’s possession). If the June 11 date is correct, the thirteen-page letter Ellen White refers to is not extant. The only copy existing is the March 29 version of the testimony.

Both B. L. Whitney and G. I. Butler had already said in April and May that they had received the testimony letter for Andrews and its covering letter of instruction for Whitney. See G. I. Butler to E. G. White April 23, May 27, 1883. B. L. Whitney to E. G. White, April 9, 1883.

seem to injure me.” If the letter was a copy of the letter she had written to John Andrews on March 29, as we have noted, the rather harsh content certainly injured Andrews and at least for later readers, may injure the image and reputation of Ellen White as a caring leader.

A month later, after hearing Whitney’s reading and mulling over the testimony, Andrews confided to his mother Sarah and sister-in-law Martha, in a private conversation, his profound sense of hurt and bleak discouragement. “My life has been a total failure. No one among those who have tried to spread the third angel’s message has failed as much as I. Almost all my efforts for the advancement of the work have failed, and what I have done has not produced fruit that I was expecting. May God forgive me.” Andrews felt as if it had all been in vain. Martha had tried to provide consolation. Surely, he could take comfort in knowing that “his writing would remain and circulate and enlighten the world.” But Andrews was sure that “what I wrote will be quickly forgotten.”³³

As I note in my biography of Andrews, very few of the things Ellen White severely reproved in Andrews in this letter could actually have been changed so close to the end of his life. He could change his attitude to the General Conference president and his colleagues and apparently did so. But he could not change his temperament, undo his decision to not re-marry or re-educate his son. And he knew that pushing back on criticism with explanations of circumstances and reasons for decisions with limited options somehow did not help or carried risk. In the months following his arrival, Buel Whitney was facing similar difficulties to those that Andrews had faced.³⁴ But Andrews had long ago prayed for the grace of submission, and he found it again on this occasion. A month before his death, he replied to Ellen White after discovering to his embarrassment that Whitney had not done what he asked he wrote to her, “I have tried to humble myself before God to receive the severe rebuke.” Ellen White had discreetly inquired through family members about his silence.³⁵ “I most cordially thank you for your faithfulness in

³³ The conversation is reported in Jean Vuilleumier’s diary on September 8, 1883, just six weeks before Andrews died. Vuilleumier did not know of the letter-testimony that had been read to Andrews.

³⁴ According to Jean Vuilleumier Whitney had the same difficulty in adjusting to the new culture and securing assistance with translators and Swiss believers unable to take themselves away from their labor to help him as he had requested. Jean’s father Albert had considered helping but had to recuse himself. Whitney had approached several others, all of whom declined and thus Whitney on this occasion in frustration went without a translator and took his wife as a travelling companion. JVD August 29, 1883.

³⁵ Anxious to learn how Andrews had responded to her testimony she had asked Butler if he had heard anything. Butler enquired through his sister Martha. Did Ellen White feel uncomfortable about some of her assessments?

writing me so fully on matters that must be very painful for you to write.” Despite the harsh denunciations, he affirmed his faith and, alluding to a reference in the last line of the testimony letter, he stated, “I can say that my feet are on the Rock of Ages and the Lord holds me by my right hand.”³⁶ But was the repeated submission which had at times become subservience really been spiritually healthy?

Andrews had on many occasions endured spiritual struggle over how to receive and respond to harsh testimony rebuke and counsel that had eaten away steadily at his self-confidence and led him to question his relationship with God and what answers to prayer really meant when what seemed to be answers were later condemned in a testimony. See Appendix I for a discussion of this and similar problems.

Andrews had returned to Europe still a widower six months after the death of Mary, but he was not physically strong. He worried that “consumptive difficulties” might be beginning to take hold. Within days of his arrival in England en route to Switzerland he was disabled by severe fevers but after an extended stay in England assisting Loughborough in his tent or often leading bible studies at gatherings of interested people within the house he eventually arrived back in Neuchatel where, with iron discipline he pressed on preaching, writing and editing in order to save his missionary paper *Les Signes de Temps* steadily the subscription list grew. That he could not allow to perish whatever the cost.

The Writing of the Testimony

If the testimony letter Whitney took with him to Europe had been difficult for him to read to Andrews, it had also been difficult for Ellen White to write. Over a period of several weeks, she had made numerous attempts she said and was unhappy with all of them and so didn’t feel free to send them. We have a three-page fragment of one such unsent letter dated March 17. Two weeks later she wrote out the much longer letter Andrews actually received – or rather which was read to him. Why did she find it difficult to write the letter? She explains that she felt unsure of herself. She had not been well for one thing, and for another she felt she did not have enough information or perspective and felt she needed to talk more to people who had visited Andrews more recently before she could write with success. She wasn’t sure about “the

³⁶ J. N. Andrews to E. G. White, September 18, 1883.

particulars” of his health. Nor was she sure, it seems, about the cultural conditions in Europe. She had discussed matters with William and Jennie Ings, not long returned from Britain, but that had not seemed to be enough.

This was not the first time during this particularly troubled period in the denominations’ development that Ellen White had felt uncertain about what counsel she should give. Nor would it be the last. In 1879 as the “long recession” continued to pose increasing economic difficulties, considerable confusion overtook church leaders about the best way forward given the acute financial constraints on the church and limited personnel available. Should they retrench completely or just pull out of Switzerland and concentrate on England? Should they send Willie White and his wife Mary to help Andrews or keep him in California? It was a perplexing period and underneath much of the confusion were wrong assumptions and misunderstandings held about European and English cultural traditions and the surprising difficulty of establishing an American religion in Europe. Ellen White’s advice for twenty-five-year-old Willie changed over a period of several uncertainty-plagued months. His mother advised him he would be needed in Europe and he explored that option in depth, but then she thought it maybe best he go to college for an education before he went to Europe, or should the new publishing house even be in England? But if his father became more disabled, would he be needed to stay in California? In early 1879, Ellen White herself was decidedly uncertain about how best to advise him. Above all, Willie needed to know the call of duty for himself, his mother eventually advised. “We may err and do and say things that may not be all right,” she wrote her son about her own counsel to him, and, it seems, about the priorities of the church in general when she stated: “but we hope that no one will be injured in any way by our sayings or doings.”³⁷ Seven years later in early 1886, Ellen White had again encountered a situation where she had to acknowledge that she had been “perplexed to know what to write” and ended up concluding she had misunderstood things. She had felt “so burdened” about a problem in New York she had written to George Butler severely rebuking him for his leadership there. The letter had stunned Butler who in a thirty-two page response three months later gently and respectfully explained that Ellen White had been

³⁷ Ellen G. White to W. C. White, February 25, 1879

mistaken. Could her letter really be a testimony based on some vision? Ellen White conceded her confusion, acknowledged her mistaken understanding and asked forgiveness.³⁸

In 1879 the suggestion of the Whites to close the Swiss Mission and shift the publishing operation to England did hurt Andrews. It seemed totally misguided to him and provoked a highly defensive response and a suspicion of headquarters which colored and damaged future relationships.³⁹ It may have been those still damaged relationship that Ellen White felt she needed to address in 1883.

Ellen White had “commenced several times” to write to John Andrews, she explained to him on March 17, 1883, in one surviving fragment of one of the letters. Though she seems to have actually finished the letters, she discarded them each time because she did not feel “justly free” to send them. Something was not right. And yet, over several weeks she felt burdened to “state some things” to him. “I shall not feel free until I do write them,” she asserted. The situation in Europe clearly worried and perplexed her and she felt burdened. She tried writing again twelve days later on March 29, and then followed the next day with a very dark letter to Buel Whitney about what approach he should take in the mission in Europe conveying a very negative picture of Andrews. The letter seems to reflect several misunderstandings of Andrews’ situation that had been held by her husband from the early days of the European mission when there had been conflict over whether the American method of church growth should be used in Europe. Andrews had found from experience that it would not work. The letter also reflects misunderstandings later corrected by information provided by Haskell. It seems that Ellen White was worried that she did not fully understand the situation in Europe and hoped to learn more. Stephen Haskell and an associate J. W. Gardner, an experienced European traveler, had in the last half of 1882 spent almost six months in Europe assessing opportunities for mission, auditing the work that had already been done and talking to many people involved in Andrews’ community. Ellen White had greeted Gardiner briefly on his return to California, but they had not had time to visit and talk in a way that she “could learn something in regard to Europe” and she had not seen him since. Neither had she had any opportunity to talk in person to Haskell.

³⁸ See the excellent discussion of this episode and its implications in Denis Fortin, *George Butler: An Honest but Misunderstood Church Leader* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2023) 324-330.

³⁹ According to Vuilleumier, the prospect had “extinguished the last remaining bit of vital strength,” in Andrews. JVD, May 6, 1883.

Still recovering from the loss of James, she had not attended the General Conference session in Rome, NY, in November 1882 where Haskell had given extensive reports on the opportunities in Europe and had corrected some of the wrong impressions about Andrews' work in Switzerland that had been created earlier by James White's criticism. At the session, Haskell had also provided information that corrected other mistaken assumptions about mission finance and about Andrews' work among the Swiss Sabbatarians. Haskell and Butler had produced a special *Supplement* issue of the *Review* which had explained and largely vindicated the strategies Andrews had adopted given the circumstances he had faced and the different culture he had to relate to.⁴⁰ "Bro Andrews has done most noble work there in his weakness," the Supplement acknowledged. "We regard this mission as already a great success. We do not mean by this that all that has been accomplished is all that can be accomplished."⁴¹ But the *Supplement* was not published until six weeks after Ellen White had written her March 29 letter. Ellen White had hoped to see Haskell in California before the end of April, but that appears not to have happened. Instead, she had found herself having to rely on William and Jennie Ings and on her son for counsel about things to say and the Ings' perspective on mission were not without bias. According to a note Ellen White wrote to Willie White on June 11, she had spent Sabbath, June 9 making another attempt to write her letter to Andrews and had been "strengthened" to write thirteen pages.⁴²

Despite the trauma induced by the testimony letter, Buel Whitney reports that Andrews pulled through it. In his last six weeks of life he became "unusually cheerful and calm," resigned

⁴⁰ The Supplement had reported Haskell's findings and a new sympathy for the difficulties faced. Haskell reported on his new awareness of the expense of halls for evangelism (tents were not suitable), the difficulty of getting preaching licenses and oppressive church-state relations that raised barriers to preaching. "It is no small matter to introduce new doctrine so unpopular as ours, and so hard to obey as the seventh-day Sabbath, into old, established communities, where the customs of society are fixed, where there is a prejudice against American ideas, and where the mass of people are so poor as in Europe." "Our Missions in Europe," *RH Supplement*, May 1, 1883, 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 3.

⁴² Whether this thirteen-page letter is another attempt at the letter or simply a copy of her handwritten March 29 letter is not known. There is no extant copy of it. She had also made another attempt to write again to Whitney and the effort "did not seem to injure me," she reported to Willie. In the first part of June, she had apparently not been able to write anything. Her mind had been "a blank, I could not think or act." Attempting to write again to Andrews had gotten her thinking again. What drove her now was an anxiety to get the letters to Whitney before he left for Europe on June 28. Whitney had already reported to her that he had received her correspondence of March 29 and 30.

to his approaching death in spite of severe suffering.⁴³ While Whitney undoubtedly felt he needed to be his own man in shaping the direction of the mission, as Ellen White had strongly advised him, he found himself nevertheless having to spend a good deal of time being informed by Andrews about the state of affairs, asking about insights into the culture and learning about the people and the circumstances of the Swiss churches. Vuilleumier reports long conversations between the two men and he also reports Whitney's early frustrations in not being able to persuade Swiss leaders to accompany him on travels beyond Switzerland. If Jean Vuilleumier's account is to be believed, Andrews' new resigned spirit was not only because of his now cheerful trust in God, or a response to the testimony letter, but a response to the fact that the energetic and polished Whitney had arrived and had taken the load of the leadership of the mission from the shoulders of Andrews and had assured the dying pioneer that *Les Signes des Temps* would surely continue. Not only that, but soon a more substantial publishing house would be established and his French journal would be joined by another German paper and there would be larger financial support and additional workers.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Ellen White concluded her testimony letter to Andrews with the inclusive comment that "we are none of us infallible." This observation needs to be taken seriously as one seeks to understand the complexities surrounding Ellen White's last letter to Andrews. The counseled and the counselor, it suggests, are unavoidably prone to differing and conflicting assessments and perspectives. George Knight's expression, "the ragged edge" which he applies to the interface

⁴³ B. L. Whitney, "Death of Eld. J. N. Andrews," *RH*, November 27, 1883, 730. Vuilleumier reports in his diary on September 5 Andrew's resignation to the inevitable. "If God wouldn't find it good to let him live, he prayed that he would not leave him long to be an embarrassment when it was time. He feels God's blessing in a remarkable way. He left out all worries. All distress. He laid down his heavy burden, he threw himself into the bosom of his Savior."

⁴⁴ In early September Vuilleumier observed, "Brother Andrews now has a mindset that clearly shows the grace of God. Instead of as before, prior to the arrival of Br. Whitney, he felt the overwhelming weight of the whole mission resting on him and having a spirit overburdened with the care, worry and anxiety, enough to pull him down, he is now calm and peaceful. He has given everything back into the hands of Br. Whitney, the burden has been taken from his shoulders, he doesn't feel it anymore, he is free of it. The worries, the anxieties, his profound despair, which have accompanied him up to the most miserable days of his physical health, are followed by the most complete surrender and the most perfect serenity. Oh, grace, ineffable and precious, I praise the strong God!" JVD September 8, 1883. A month later he noted, "This evening he [Andrews] told us he felt God close to him as if He'd hold his hand and he felt his feet resting on the Rock of Ages. Even though he is going down the river his feet do not miss the bottom. They rest on the Rock of Ages. The other day he said to us: 'It seems to me I can't stop saying all day long: The Lord is good.'" JVD October 7, 1883.

between religion and history may be a helpful metaphor here as we seek to understand the dynamics even within a document claiming inspiration.⁴⁵ As this paper has illustrated, where church workers with different temperaments, different skill sets, and different priorities are brought together under less-than-ideal circumstances, conflicting perspectives and interpretations of complex problems are inevitable. The launching of Adventist mission in Europe in 1874 was very much a venture into the unknown. An inadequate policy framework, unexpected difficulties, inadequate information, fractured communication channels (lost and undelivered letters), breakdowns in timely financial support and cross-cultural inexperience both on the part of the missionaries and those who sent them created inevitable frustration and misunderstanding. The inevitable conflicts on occasion created deep trauma. A culture of “plain speaking” and reproof and rebuke, while thought to be desirable and necessary as an attempt to hold each other spiritually accountable, and obviously having some positive spiritual values, nevertheless exacerbated misunderstanding, hurt, trauma and at times lasting spiritual damage.⁴⁶ What might be a helpful take-away from our reflections on this episode of testimony and trauma? Perhaps the ability to listen effectively, to try and be aware of one’s own biases and hidden motivations and engage in dialogue and offer counsel in a sensitive and timely way might lessen the possibility or at least the pain of trauma and help ensure less painful healing. But that, of course, assumes a more ideal world than the one we live in.

⁴⁵ George R. Knight, *Ellen White’s Afterlife: Delightful Fictions, Troubling Facts, Enlightening Research*, (Nampa ID: Pacific Press, 2019) 61.

⁴⁶ When John Andrews had spoken of the Swiss brethren in plain language with reproofs over failing to help him adequately in the early years of the mission (he had used the language of “backsliding”) he learned to his sorrow that the “work of reproof was quite unknown and wholly misunderstood.” The Swiss Sabbath-keepers took personal offense at his reproof and understood his rebukes as “prompted by ill-will” and that they had been “personally ill-used.” See the discussion in Valentine 546, 547.

Appendix I
Reflections on the content of the
Ellen White Testimony Letter to J. N. Andrews, March 29, 1883

Ellen White made several initial attempts to write out her testimony letter to John Andrews which she completed on March 29, 1883. She never sent the early drafts. The only extant copy of one of these early drafts is dated March 17. In that draft she explained that “she wished to state some things” and could not “feel free until I do write.” She mentions no specific dream or vision as the occasion for writing but evidently felt the need to write to release herself from what she described in similar situations as a prophetic “burden” of worry, anxiety and care. The draft letter of March 17 comprised 29 paragraphs and carried one “I have been shown” statement. The expression referred not to any contemporary issue in the letter but to generalized counsel from many years earlier on child-rearing practices. The later version of the letter of March 29 comprised 68 paragraphs and carried three “I was shown” statements (paragraphs, 2, 3 and 10) and one “the work was represented to me as” (paragraph 62). The three formulaic “I was shown” statements occur early in the letter. The first appears to be used to give authority to an observation Ellen White had encountered naturally, that Andrews had a long-term temperamental tendency to want to follow his own judgment and his own ideas “too tenaciously.” The second concerned his choice not to remarry a decade earlier in 1874 before he went to Europe. The third concerns his choice in 1879 of the staff person who served as matron of the household. The “was represented to me” expression towards the end of the letter is a general observation about the status of the work in Switzerland. It was “almost standing still” when it could have been “grandly triumphant.”

Both manuscripts proceed in the familiar circulatory style characteristic of much of Ellen White’s longer letters where she will take up a topic, move on to discuss another topic or digress to make some exhortatory remarks and then return to further discuss the earlier theme or another closely related topic. The table below represents an outline of the contents of the letter by broad paragraph themes. Some paragraphs overlap. Buel Whitney, who read the letter to Andrews, may have adopted a rearrangement of the content in his reading or he may have been reading from a later version of the letter not now extant. Andrews reported that the letter read to him was in “three parts.”

If the content of the letter is clustered into three parts they could include, 1, personal counsel which would include discussion of Andrews' marriage status, his peculiar scholarly and depressive temperament and a failure to educate his son to take over the mission, 2, discussion and criticism of Andrews' work practices and perceived relationships to fellow workers and his approach to finance and 3, general admonition not seemingly intended for Andrews but maybe for a wider readership. This 3rd cluster of ideas included criticism of the Swiss Sabbath-keepers and admonition to them, sharp criticism of three other pioneering missionaries in Europe and advice to Whitney as he takes over leadership.

Table I: Thematic Content by Paragraph

March 17		March 29	
Paragraph	Thematic Content	Paragraph	Thematic Content
1-2	Introduction – circumstances of writer	1	Introduction – circumstances of writer
3, 9	Andrews' failure to remarry.	2-5	Andrews' failure to remarry - martyr
		6-8, 11	Criticism of temperament – grieving spirit
4 - 8	Andrews' failure to educate son	9, 10	Criticism of Matron Anna Oyer
10	Problem of depression – grieving spirit	12-19, 23	Counsel and exhortation about personal grief and affliction
11 - 15	Criticism of work practices & attitudes	20-22, 28	Andrews' failure to educate son
16, 17	Failure to properly educate Swiss believers	24 -37	Criticism of work practices & attitudes to other workers
18	Failure to train others properly	38-41, 57-59	Exhortation re affliction and exposition on New Testament models for mission
19	Criticism of work of J. N. Loughborough and J. G. Matteson	44-45	Criticism of financial problems and non-self-sustaining mission
20	Criticism of financial practices	46	Criticism re Dr Ribton problem in Egypt
21	D. T. Bourdeau's errors but should be given a chance elsewhere	47-50	Criticism of work practices and alleged failure to want others to work with him
		51-65	Admonition and criticism of Swiss believers, errors of Loughborough,

			Matteson and Bourdeau
		66-68	Andrews relationship to Whitney

Bringing up the Past and Differences in Pastoral Style

One of the disconcerting features of the last testimony for John Andrews may have been the way it brought up memories of spiritual crises long in the past. The letter reminds him of failures and conflicts long ago confessed and apologized for. Some things he could simply not now undo. And, seemingly, he could not be allowed to forget. In 1871 during a low point in James White's health and aware of the highly negative effect that James' autocratic style of leadership and critical manner was having on his colleagues, Ellen White had pled with Andrews not to be intimidated by her husband, or perhaps even by herself. "You shrink from running risks," she observed. She knew that he drew back from taking responsibilities for fear that he would make mistakes and then be blamed publicly for them in the *Review* or in public meetings and be made to confess his faults. James White had humiliated Andrews on numerous occasions in this manner. There had been conflict and misunderstanding, for example around the challenge of adopting church organization. Later, Andrews had been misunderstood and criticized in conflicts when White was partially disabled in his post-stroke years. There had been conflict over where Andrews should live and work and concerning the nature of his writing projects. (Andrews wanted to live in Rochester where he could have access to university libraries. James wanted him in Battle Creek.) Ellen White had urged Andrews to overcome the fears arising from these emotional and psychological injuries and not withdraw from public involvement in leadership. He should "move according to your best judgement, trusting the result with God," she urged. Almost in desperation, she appealed to him "someone must do this" i.e. take up responsibility. Ellen White urged this upon Andrews when she felt that her husband was not able to carry his load.⁴⁷ As a result of the repeated conflict and criticism, however, Andrews had lost confidence in himself and knew it. The discipline of spiritual submission in relationship to either of the Whites was not easy to master or even, on occasion, to understand. It seemed, at

⁴⁷ E. G. White, *Testimony* 21, 1872, 18.

times, there was nothing he could do right. He was criticized when he took the initiative in things and criticized for failing to do so or for allegedly making mistakes when he did so.⁴⁸

One of the unfortunate by-products of this culture of severe public rebuke and reproof in early Adventism, at least in Andrews' case, is that when he was publicly rebuked by James White and felt it to be often "unjustly" so, as Ellen White conceded in her letter of March 29, 1883, he was tempted to find refuge in the friendship and sympathy of fellow workers who did not see either his failings or his alleged faults in the same way as James White did. This could tend to factionalism and increased levels of suspicion and jealousy and the withdrawing of support from different sources of patronage in the church which, if unaddressed, posed a risk to church unity. It was also not good for Andrews at a personal level either because, as Ellen White pointed out, it reinforced his latent tendency to retreat into self-pity. The best way was to grin and bear it and find refuge in trusting in God despite the afflictions just as the New Testament apostle Paul often had to do. This was easier said than done.

By nature, Andrews, in his church pastor and conference president role in New York and Pennsylvania, cultivated friendly relationships with his church members and enjoyed casual and informal social interactions and the sharing of humorous episodes. This was perceived by James White as light-hearted and not serious. Both James and Ellen White perceived the contrast in styles as putting both Ellen and James in a bad light when they had to engage in "plain speech" and a ministry of reproof and rebuke in the same churches or at camp meetings. The difference in styles of ministry created jealousies on the part of the Whites and criticism from Ellen.

When in 1871, James tried to bring up the past again as a way of correcting and of diminishing Andrews' influence among church members and with his colleagues, she rebuked her husband: "I greatly tremble for the direction your mind has taken to go back and call up the

⁴⁸ At the end of December 1870 another bout of misunderstanding and criticism broke out between James White Andrews over Andrews' desire to live near a research library in Rochester NY in order to work on his *History of the Sabbath*. The conflict involved conflicting assessments of the needs of scholarship and writing demands for the *Review*. The accusations, many of which Andrews believed were unjust involved Andrews in writing a twelve-page letter to correct misunderstandings, "not in a spirit of self-justification" but nevertheless in an attempt to set the record straight. He sought to set forth his explanation as to "how I have supposed I ought to act." The critical letters from Ellen White are no longer extant perhaps because the corrections and clarifications made them redundant.

Andrews explained, I know it seems to Brother White that I am constantly shunning responsibilities and throwing everything on him. But while it may be true that I am not as willing as I ought to be to do my part, it is also true that I have found myself in so many errors when I have taken responsibility that I dare not act, even when I think I see the right way." J.N. Andrews to E. G. White, December 21, 1870. See the discussion in Valentine, 412-416.

past.” It was not spiritually healthy. She did not understand why her husband wanted “to destroy the confidence of God’s people in Brother Andrews,” by digging up the past. Why was James so “unforgiving” both “to your brethren and your children,” she challenged? It was Satan who was using James to “to injure and destroy Brother Andrews.”⁴⁹ She was distressed that her husband’s repeated criticism of his leadership colleagues in this way and his forcing them “to sacrifice their own judgment to yours” had made them weak men. Submission had become subservience.

In 1874, after another round of such criticism, Andrews wrote to Ellen White, “the thing in which I have found myself weakened,” and “not easy to rise above,” was that “in a considerable number of things in which I supposed I had light from God in answer to prayer I have found” that in the judgment of the Whites he had been “mistaken and in fault.” This had damaged him “with reference to taking hold on God. Also, in losing confidence in myself.” The effect, he felt, had been “deep and agonizing” and had “destroyed my usefulness for some considerable time past.”⁵⁰ One of the puzzling and distressing features of Ellen White’s last letter to Andrews is that she, too, brings up so much of the past, apparently in an attempt to help him see supposed weaknesses in himself in the present but also, it seems, to diminish his potential influence over the incoming leader, B. L. Whitney. Yet, the incidents and attitudes of the past that Ellen White describes in the letter Andrews could no longer change, since those decisions had been made thirty years previously.

Misunderstandings

Several background misunderstandings seem to be reflected in Ellen White’s last letter to Andrews. A careful study of the early years of Andrews’ mission in Europe, for example, indicate that the financial circumstances among the Swiss Sabbath-keepers were radically different to what he had anticipated on arrival in Switzerland and these circumstances impeded the rapid progress to a self-sustaining mission he had hoped for and as expected by the General Conference. Andrews also had to adjust evangelistic methods to the new cultural environment. He also faced the situation where preaching colleagues and bible workers had been expected to

⁴⁹ E. G. White to J. S. White, September 2, 1871. Unusual font here... and next footnote

⁵⁰ J. N. Andrews to E. G. White, January 7, 1874

assist but were no longer or not immediately available. This led to misunderstandings about mission strategy on the part of James White in Battle Creek. Misunderstandings were also generated out of the Whites' misreading of Andrews' correspondence as he related his struggle with culture shock during his first year. Several of these mid-1870s misunderstandings on the part of James appear to underlie some of the perspectives reflected in Ellen White's March 29, 1883 letter.

Some of the criticism expressed in the letter reflects a perhaps unavoidable misunderstanding of the nature of the tuberculosis disease afflicting Andrews. Medical science was still struggling to understand it. For example, it could not be medically cured by the patient developing a better or more hopeful attitude, as both Ellen White and George Butler believed and, in fact, as John Andrews also seemed to believe.

Some of the remarks made about his management of the finances of the mission also seem to reflect criticism based on early misunderstandings that James White had developed concerning mission finance and seem not to take into account explanations that Andrews had made concerning the difficulties. In her letter, Ellen White acknowledges that John Andrews had been "censured many times unjustly." This was largely at the hands of her husband but also at times by others. Other parts of the criticism concerned Andrews' scholarly and introspective temperament, his perceived failure to properly educate his children and his inability to see a way for him to seek a new marriage partner. These matters, rehashed two months before his death, were unable to be changed in any way.

One might perhaps imagine that in a private conversation with the author about a number of the observations and criticisms that she makes in her letter, John Andrews would have been quite justifiably able to offer explanations as to why, given the unique circumstances he faced, he felt he had to make the various decisions he did and perhaps even offer a rationale for some of the attitudes he had conveyed. Some of the observations she makes about the Irish Dr Ribton, for example, and the rather unfair allegations about Andrews' lack of discernment in this case need to be balanced against the careful efforts he had made, the limitations of time and distance, the careful prior counsel he took from the General Conference in the matter and other complicating circumstances arising from Ribton's own decisions in facing uncomfortable circumstances. Misunderstandings abounded about the financial difficulties the Andrews family faced, often

arising from the lack of an effective system of financial support perhaps inevitable in that this was a completely new venture. Confusion arose over what were legitimate expenses and what were not, or from whom they should be reimbursed. The 1883 criticism from Ellen White and previously from her husband on the matter of mission finance stand in clear tension with affirmations about Andrews' handling of mission finances published in his defense and on his behalf in the *Review*, following Stephen Haskell's audit visit through Europe in 1882. The remarks defending Andrews' approach to mission finance were published in a *Review and Herald Supplement* on May 1, 1883, a month after Ellen White had sent her letter to Whitney. Other misunderstandings and conflicting perspectives on developments in Europe as reflected in Ellen White's March 29, 1883 letter are illustrated in the table below.

Table II: Misunderstandings and Differing Perspectives

Ellen White Criticism	J. N. Andrews Explanations
Processing Culture Shock “You felt that you were a martyr missionary, but it was not so. In your letters your words were of that character that the impressions received by your brethren called out their sorrow and their sympathies for you.”	Shortly after his arrival in Switzerland Andrews had shared his experience of culture shock and the discombobulation of encountering new customs, strange ways and strange foods and the challenge of being unable to communicate well. He regretted that his letters explaining and complaining of cultural differences, some of which he had meant to be humorous, had been misunderstood by Ellen White and in future correspondence he ceased to share such impressions. See Valentine 538, 545-549/
On Andrews' Temperament “You follow your own judgement and your own ideas altogether too tenaciously.”	Yes. A problematic characteristic of Andrews temperament.
Swiss Sabbath Keepers Stewardship Problems “Had they [the Swiss brethren] been instructed as they should have been from the first, the cause would today be self-sustaining.” “Your fears, . . . have led you to neglect to present before your brethren the necessity of their doing all that was in their power to do and not rely upon help	When Andrews arrived in Switzerland leaders of the Sabbath-keeping Swiss had recently invested heavily a new watchmaking industry. “Nearly all the money in the hands of our brethren” became tied up in the business. This complicated church relationships, absorbed energies and attention away from evangelism and eventually led to bankruptcies, lawsuits, recriminations, and bad church relationships. (See

from America.”	Valentine 542- 544) Extreme financial constraints faced Andrews in the early days of the mission. Unavoidable circumstances meant the journey to self-sufficiency took longer than expected. See Jean Vuilleumier Diary for numerous accounts of financial distress in his parents’ relationship to business and church and Andrews’ numerous attempts to resolve issues. The expense of undertaking evangelism in Europe were much greater than in the United States. In spite of this, after his audit Haskell reported, “Their [the Swiss brethren’s] financial standing is good. [1882] Their tithe averages about \$10.00 per member. This is more than it averages in many of our conferences in America.” Stephen Haskell in <i>RH</i> 10/10/82, 632 “We consider the money used in this mission well spent and firmly believe the advantages thus gained to the cause are worth far more than their cost. . . .We want all to understand that the amount used was not all paid to the laborers as remuneration. Far from it. [Expenses are explained and justified]. We think there is more danger that too great economy has been used and that our missionaries have suffered than that they have fared too well.” <i>RH Supplement</i> 05/01/83, 3.
Delay in Financial Reimbursement In regard to Andrews’ difficulties with securing steady financial reimbursement of his expenses and complaints against James White about this, Ellen White would respond “There has not been all that prompt attention given to the situation on every occasion that ought to have been, but there has been no design to cripple your efforts for the want of means. God lays no sin to their charge for there has not been willful neglect.” James was sick at this time and W. C. White had to step in and deputize for his father after considerable delay.	There seems to have been systemic failure, inadequate attention paid to the problems and perhaps negligence if not willful neglect. Lost mail, extended travel schedules, long delays in reimbursement and distance complicated the problems and confronted Andrews with painful financial decisions and frequent financial embarrassment.

See Valentine 609.	
Retrospective View of Mission Beginnings “It was a mistake in permitting you to go into the field, the important missionary field, alone. One or two more should have stood with you, engaged in the work, not [to] be under your supervision, not [to] follow your ideas, but for you to counsel together and move harmoniously.”	In 1874 the Church believed it was answering the call of providence in sending Andrews to Europe. There were no others available to send at that time. The church had already procrastinated a year. Andrews took with him Ademar Vuilleumier who soon dropped out of the work because of discouragement. Jakob Erzberger had already dropped out because of discouragement. Albert Vuilleumier, the senior Swiss elder became unavailable because of recent major changes in family business. French-Canadian minister, Daniel Bourdeau joined Andrews and worked separately for a time but his aggressive, anti-Catholic approach to evangelism provoked violent responses in the communities he worked in which led to his wife suffering a nervous breakdown and needing to be repatriated. Bourdeau was not a writer, nor did he have proof-reading skills. The lack of appropriate delegated decision-making authority to the local level caused every decision, even on minor matters, to be referred to the General Conference. This slowed things down and created much frustration in Basel. Andrews and Butler asked specifically several time if Ellen White had any vision or counsel to give at the time Andrews was sent to Switzerland. “Do not suffer me to got to Europe unless you think it is on the whole best,” he wrote. “I shall start for Europe at once if there is no light to the contrary.”⁵¹ Nothing was communicated. See Valentine 514, 515. The retrospective criticism in 1883 seems a decade too late.
Andrews’ Choice not to Remarry “You remember I wrote you from Texas to obtain a wife before you returned to Europe. . . I was shown that you made a mistake in starting to Europe without a companion.”	Andrews experienced what today would be called unresolved grief. “I am still a deep mourner for the wife that sleeps in death and my affection seems incapable of detaching itself from her and taking up some other, however

⁵¹ J. N. Andrews to J. White and E. G. White, April 21, 1874.

Numerous paragraphs of spiritual counsel and exhortation in the March 29, 1883 letter deal with unresolved grief and affliction. This came in 1883 just before his death, and as Ellen White was dealing with her own grief at James' death. Whether it would have been more helpful in 1875 or in 1879 is not now possible to know.	worthy." He had prayed many times asking God's will in the matter and felt he had "unreservedly submitted to God's will in the matter." "One of the greatest evidences to me that God wills the change you propose [that Andrews marry Ellen White's friend, Lucinda Hall] would be that it should cease to be painful to me." Remarriage would give him "extreme pain." Without "changed feelings" he knew he would only make both himself and the other party miserable. In 1878, on the occasion of his 49th birthday, he had written to his children of his precious hope in the Advent when he would be reunited with Angeline and little Carrie his daughter. "We shall live to all eternity in the society of dear mother. And so we have something very precious for our consolation." See Valentine 617, 618, 627-229. Ellen White had been critical of his first marriage. Did this make him nervous of taking such a step again?
Household Arrangements – Anna Oyer "Sister Oyer should have no connection with Elder Andrews. She is self-conceited, full of self-importance, and is no help to Elder Andrews." (EGW to BLW March 30, 1883.) "This is not the person to help you." Anna Oyer of New York state had been recommended to Andrews by B. L. Whitney as a mature capable woman who could serve as matron of the Swiss household with its 12 - 15 residents. Andrews had brought his sixteen-year-old niece, Edith Andrews, and Anna Oyer to assist in the publishing program and in the mission.	Jean Vuilleumier speaks in his diary of some of the petty jealousies that developed among the female staff who lived and worked in the boarding home/publishing office where he also lived and worked as an assistant editor to Andrews. He reports that he himself had misunderstood the role and sometimes bossy ways of Anna Oyer whom Andrews had appointed as overall Matron. She had apparently sought to impose some discipline and there had been complaining talk among the staff of her having "a great influence over Elder Andrews." Vuilleumier had reported the gossip and chitchat to Haskell and Gardiner when they visited on their inspection. He later realized he had badly misjudged Anna Oyer and deeply regretted passing on misinformation in his conversations with the visiting General Conference leaders. "For several days I have it on my mind to ask forgiveness for having talked badly about her. Especially what I've said to Br. Gardner in Locle weighs on my heart." "Since pronouncing it I've never stopped regretting those words. I was going to see Sr. Oyer with the express intention of my confessing it to her. . . I must confess to unload my conscience of doing wrong by talking bad about you. I've always

	regretted of doing so.” I “was extremely ashamed to have spoken badly about the person [Sr Oyer] . . . Although I felt remorse in the depth of my heart more vividly than ever I was at least relieved of having confessed my mistake.” “JVD July 24, 1883 Anna Oyer, a teacher by training, had overworked for many months in Basel and had become run down. At the time Ellen White was expressing her views on Anna Oyer not having a “proper” role in Basel, she was suffering from consumption herself and had been confined to bed. Unable to return home to New York, her non-Adventist sister had travelled to Basel to nurse her until the time of her death in November 1883, one month after Andrews died.
Child Rearing Practice “It has been unfortunate for your children in some respects that they had not a different element brought into their education.” “You have been very anxious that your children should come up free from vicious habits which characterize the youth of this age; in this you have been successful; but you had not the ability to carry them forward and upward to thorough development of the ability God had given them.” It seems that Ellen White thought that Andrews should have educated his son Charles to be able to take over the mission after he had retired, perhaps like W. C. White deputized for his father when he became dysfunctional because of health problems. It seems that W. C. White was the model here, not Edson.	Andrews could not at this age of his life do anything to correct this lack. During his early years he had been away from home much more than he was present because James White pressured him heavily to be involved in evangelism or in church work in Battle Creek. This absence put many extra burdens on his wife Angeline and limited the opportunities Andrews had to be involved in the discipline and nurture of his children. After serving with his father in Basel, Charles became a printer and served as a foreman for many years with the Review and Herald both in Battle Creek and in Washington, D.C.
Mission Associates “You have not wanted men should come to Europe, fearing that they would not do the work just after your plan.” Does this critique of Andrews’s apparent inability to work with others reflect Ellen White’s understanding of the Ing’s side of this episode?	Andrews’ assessment of this episode was quite different. British-born William Ings, and his German-born wife Jennie were a childless couple in their late 30s who arrived in Basel in late 1877 to help Andrews after he had been seriously ill with pneumonia, and it was feared he might not survive. William Ings was a

	shipping clerk at the Review and Herald who had recently been appointed treasurer and was a practical handyman. The couple was sent in a hurry without any consultation with Andrews about personnel needs or skills required in personnel. William had no foreign language skill although Jennie could speak German. The couple was critical of Andrews' domestic patterns and family arrangements and wrote of these confidentially to W. C. White. Jennie Ings did not like to be expected to take up housekeeping duties although she helped organize and train Mary and Edith in this regard. But she refused to go to the aid of Mrs. Bourdeau when she was desperately sick, obliging Andrews to do this himself at the cost of much stress and inconvenience and the Ings assisted some in getting the printing operation more efficient and established new equipment. But they took no initiative in mission outreach. Without language skills, William took no initiative in working as a colporteur or giving bible studies even in the German community, though this would, it seems, have been possible with Jennie working with him as a translator. The Ings eventually realized without any prodding from Andrews, that, without German language skills, William could not contribute to the mission outreach and was a needless drain on the budget. He therefore took himself across to England where he was unsuccessful in literature evangelism, finding it difficult selling in his own language and even among his relatives. He ultimately became engaged in ship literature ministry along the southern coast of England. This involved selling some literature but giving away much free literature. It contributed to a broad evangelistic endeavor but imposed additional cost on the local mission which had to fund the literature, and it did not contribute to increasing local baptisms in the effort to make the local church self-sustaining. Critical perspectives on the Andrews family shared by the Ings during their uncomfortable stay in Basel and reported back to W. C. White seem to have colored the perspective on events in Basel that are reflected in Ellen White's letter. See further details on the Ings' time in Basel see Valentine 606-614.
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Suspicion and Distrust of Colleagues

Ellen White saw Andrews as having a propensity to imagine things about his colleagues or to imagine things that were not true or did not happen. She called this condition “a diseased imagination.” She saw the same trait in her husband.

Andrews did become suspicious of his colleagues in Battle Creek. He believed that the leadership was going to close the French mission. Whether the officers actually decided to or only talked about it is not clear. In this case Ellen White spoke of it in her correspondence and advised it as did James White in the *Review*. It was not implemented, however.

Andrews interpreted the delay in sending him funding as malicious when it seems to have been the result of inefficiency or perhaps negligence.

Andrews thought that he did not have the full confidence of James and Willie White to be able to make decisions locally in Europe rather than having to refer even the most minor and routine of decisions to Battle Creek. In their correspondence with each other, James and W. C. White spoke derisively of Andrews’ ability to make a success of his publishing work.

Andrews was suspicious that one of Ings’ roles was to observe the situation in Basel and to report secretly to church leadership. This was at least partly the result of Andrews’ almost paralyzing fear of making mistakes and being humiliated by James White. Ings reminded W. C. White in his letters to him that they had a secret agreement that he could write confidentially to White who would not divulge where his information was coming from. Andrew suspected this and assumed it was happening but did not formally know about it.