

# Andrew Murray

Contributed by David Smithers

Soon after coming to Christ, I was given two small paperbacks written by Andrew Murray, "The Prayer Life" and "Waiting on God". It seemed with each new chapter came fresh insights and new experiences in prayer. As a young believer, these writings greatly helped me to define and establish my personal prayer life. The principles conveyed in those little dog-eared books still continue to have a significant influence upon my prayer life and ministry. Almost twenty years later, I am only now beginning to feel that I truly understand the depth of what Andrew Murray was writing about! Most works on prayer direct you to a process of prayer, but Mr. Murray's writings direct you to the person of prayer - JESUS CHRIST.

## Birthplace & Home

Andrew Murray was born on May 9th, 1828 in a Dutch Reformed parsonage in Graaff Reinet, South Africa. It was here that his father, the Rev. Andrew Murray, Sr. was ministering to the Dutch settlers. The Murray home was a vibrant and active place filled with the lively sounds of joy, prayer, and worship. Every Friday evening Andrew Murray's father would gather his family together and read them moving accounts of past revivals. He would then retire to his study and pour out his heart in prayer for revival to come to South Africa. This had been his weekly habit since 1822. Young Murray also benefited from several other fine examples of Christian zeal and devotion. Such men as David Livingstone and Robert Moffat frequently passed through their home on their way to the coast.

## William C. Burns

In 1838, at the age of ten, Andrew left home with his brother John to study in Scotland. They stayed with their uncle, the Rev. John Murray. In the spring of 1840 the uncle introduced the boys to the revival ministry of William C. Burns. This renowned Scottish revivalist left a deep and lasting impression on the youthful Andrew Murray. The twelve-year-old Murray must have been thrilled when Mr. Burns invited him to carry his Bible and cloak as they walked together to the revival meetings in Aberdeen. Years later, Murray could still vividly recall the power of Burns' godly influence upon his life. His sincerity, fervent praying, and penetrating preaching all helped Andrew Murray define his own personal ministry and calling. The influence of one generation's Spirit-filled ministry often waters the seeds of another generation's harvest.

## Pastor Blumhardt

After graduating from Marischal College in 1844, the two brothers went to Utrecht, Holland, for the purpose of further study in theology and the Dutch language. Religious life at this time in the Netherlands was at a low ebb and rationalism had crippled many of the pulpits and seminaries. Much like the Wesley brothers and the Holy Club at Oxford, John and Andrew joined a zealous group at the college called "Sechor Dabar" (Remember the Word). Here they found like-minded brethren, warm fellowship, and true missionary zeal. During a vacation from their classes, the brothers visited Germany, where they had the opportunity to meet Pastor Blumhardt. This remarkable man had been used to bring revival to the Renish province in Germany. This revival was marked by extraordinary manifestations of deliverance and healing the sick through prayer. "Andrew saw firsthand the ongoing work of God's power in his own time."

## The Boy Preacher

The two brothers were ordained at The Hague on Andrew's twentieth birthday, leaving soon afterwards to begin their work in South Africa. Andrew appeared to be barely more than a child when he first returned to Africa. At twenty years old, he looked much younger than his age. An Old Dutch farmer was once heard to say, "Why, they have lent us a girl to preach to us." Nevertheless, in spite of Murray's fragile appearance, there was no end to his endurance and zeal. He would often go out for weeks at a time on horseback to hold meetings for the Boers, (Dutch-speaking South African farmers). These spiritually hungry farmers would come from literally hundreds of miles to listen to this "boy preacher". A temporary church of reeds would be quickly erected and then surrounded by hundreds of big Dutch farm wagons. It was during such ministry ventures, that the young Mr. Murray began to give expression to the fire and fervency so often associated with his classic writings on prayer and the Deeper Life.

## Preparation for Revival

In 1860 Andrew Murray accepted a call to pastor the church at Worcester. His induction to the church coincided with a revival and missions conference made up of 374 South African ministers. The conference was planned for the specific purpose of encouraging spiritual revival and recruiting new workers and missionaries for the Dutch Reformed churches of South Africa. At the beginning of the conference a paper was handed out which traced the news of the recent revival in America and Britain. The attending ministers were strongly encouraged to expect and pray for a similar move of God in South Africa. A Dr. Robertson spoke on their great need for revival, followed by a Dr. Adamson who then gave a detailed report on the recent awakening in America. Andrew Murray, Sr. attempted to address the gathering, but was unable, being overcome with brokenness and tears. Overall, the conference was a great success, encouraging fresh hope and prayer among the attending ministers.

Shortly after the conference, a meeting of young people was held at the church on a Sunday evening. It was at this meeting that the Spirit of revival unexpectedly broke out. The meeting moved along as expected, until an unassuming 15-year-old black girl stood up to pray. Mr. Murray's associate, J. C. deVries, was overseeing the prayer meeting and gives us an eyewitness account of these extraordinary events. "On a certain Sunday evening there were gathered in a little hall some sixty young people. I was the leader of the meeting, which began with a hymn and a lesson from God's Word, after which I prayed. Three or four others gave out a verse of a hymn and prayed, as was the custom. Then a colored girl of about fifteen years of age, in service with a nearby farmer, rose at the back of the hall and asked if she too might propose a hymn. At first I hesitated, not knowing what the meeting would think, but better thoughts prevailed, and I replied, 'Yes.' She gave out her hymn-verse and prayed in moving tones. While she was praying, we heard, as it were, a sound in the distance, which came nearer and nearer, until the hall seemed to be shaken; with one or two exceptions, the whole meeting began to pray, the majority in audible voice, but some in whispers. Nevertheless, the noise made by the concourse was deafening. A feeling, which I cannot describe, took possession of me&hellip;"

## Offended by Revival

While this meeting was going on, Andrew Murray was preaching in another section of the church. He was not present during the beginning of these events. When his own service was over, an elder passed the door of the prayer meeting, heard the noise, peeked in, and then ran back to get Mr. Murray. J. C. deVries vividly recalls Murray's surprising reaction to the young people's meeting, "Mr. Murray came forward to the table where I knelt praying, touched me, and made me understand that he wanted me to rise. He then asked me what had happened. I related everything to him. Then he walked down the room for some distance and called out as loudly as he could, 'People, silence!&hellip;'"

But the praying continued. In the meantime, I kneeled down again. It seemed to me that if the Lord was coming to bless us, I should not be upon my feet but on my knees. Mr. Murray then called loudly again, "People, I am your minister, sent from God! Silence!" But there was no stopping the noise. No one heard him, but all continued praying and calling on God for mercy and pardon. Mr. Murray then returned to me and told me to start the hymn-verse commencing "Aid the soul that helpless cries"; I did so. But the emotions were not quieted and the meeting went right on praying. Mr. Murray then prepared to depart, saying, "God is a God of order, and here everything is confusion!" With that he left the hall."

## Revival Praying & Power

Prayer meetings were spontaneously organized every evening after that. The order of these meetings was usually the same each time, although no one set it. At the beginning there was generally great silence; no efforts were made to stir up emotions, but after the second or third prayer the gathering would suddenly begin to simultaneously cry out in prayer. This was definitely not the custom of the Dutch Reformed churches at that time, nor did anyone ever teach them to do this. Sometimes the gathering would continue until three in the morning; even then, many wished to stay longer. As the people returned to their homes in the middle of the night they went singing joyously through the streets. The prayer meeting quickly grew and had to be moved to a nearby school building. Eventually, this facility also proved to be far too small for the crowds of God-hungry seekers. "In places where prayer meetings were unknown a year before, now the people complained because meetings ended an hour too soon! Not only weekly but daily prayer meetings were demanded by the people, even three times a day — and even among children." The revival shook the entire countryside. The young and old, rich and poor, blacks and whites were all equally affected by the revival. "It was quite amazing that the awakening was not confined to the towns and villages, but felt in totally isolated places without outside contacts, even on remote farms, where men and women were suddenly seized with emotions to which they had been utter strangers a few weeks or even days before." People were frequently gripped with intense conviction. Strong men cried out in anguish while others fell to the ground unconscious and had to be carried out of the meetings.

## Learning about Revival

J. C. deVries gives us a further account of Mr. Murray's difficulty in accepting these manifestations as from God. J. C. deVries writes, "On the first Saturday evening in the larger meeting-house, Mr. Murray was the leader. He read a portion of Scripture, made a few observations on it, engaged in prayer, and then gave others the opportunity to pray. During the prayer, which followed his, we heard again the same sound in the distance. It drew nearer and nearer and then suddenly the whole gathering was praying. That evening a stranger had been standing at the door from the beginning of the meeting, watching the proceedings. Mr. Murray descended from the platform and again moved up and down among the people, trying to quiet them. The stranger then tiptoed forward from the door, touched Mr. Murray gently, and said in English, "I think you are the minister of this congregation. Be careful what you do, for it is the Spirit of God that is at work here. I have just come from America, and this is precisely what I witnessed there."

Andrew Murray had been offended by the intense outbursts of emotional praying, and sought unsuccessfully to control and calm the meetings. However, after this incident he apparently stopped trying to manhandle the Holy Spirit. He learned to accept these sudden outbursts of prayer and strong emotions as the work of God. His father, Andrew Murray, Sr. also confirmed that these stirrings were genuine, stating, "he blessed God that he lived to witness such a work of the Spirit". Mr. Murray's strong reaction seems to stem from the fact that these particular revival manifestations exceeded his own personal experience and sense of propriety. Though he had earnestly prayed for revival, studied reports about revival and even witnessed a measure of revival himself, he still failed to anticipate his own response to the supernatural nature of a revival in his own church.

## Revival & Broken Expectations

Mr. Murray's expectations about proper church order and that of the Holy Spirit's were obviously quite different. Broken expectations, if left unchecked, can lead to confusion, frustration and even harsh criticism. When the

crowd in Jerusalem rushed to observe the miracle of Pentecost, Acts 2: 6 notes that many of the onlookers were "CONFUSED". These feelings of confusion obviously caused some to become offended, resulting later in them openly ridiculing the work of the Holy Spirit. -(Acts 2:6-13). Mr. Murray's new revival experiences eventually taught him not to judge every seemingly confusing situation as the result of a lack of proper order. Often we experience strong feelings of confusion or even frustration when we are suddenly placed in an unexpected or unfamiliar situation. All of us have surely struggled with feelings of confusion or anxiety while trying to find our bearings in an unfamiliar city or country. The source of our confusion was not a lack of proper order, but our own unfamiliarity with our new surroundings and circumstances.

Acts 2:6 is not suggesting that God is the author of disorder and confusion! On the contrary, this verse serves to remind us that our natural sense of protocol and order is sometimes quite different than the divine order of Heaven come down to earth. When we are suddenly surprised or confused by unfamiliar events, we must guard against thoughtlessly rejecting them simply because they are new to our personal experience. Only a PROUD heart rushes in to condemn what it does not understand! We must carefully examine all things according to the Scriptures, rather than by our personal preferences and traditions. Then and only then will we be prepared to hold fast to what is good in the coming days. -(1Thes 5:21).

### Revival & the Keswick Convention

The lessons learned during this revival helped prepare Andrew Murray for his future role in the influential Keswick movement. Mr. Murray attended the Keswick Convention for the first time in 1882. In 1895, he was asked to speak at both the Keswick and Northfield Conventions. Murray was warmly received at these conferences and was later responsible for bringing the Keswick movement to South Africa. The Keswick Convention was itself, the indirect fruit of this wonderful season of awakening. The revival touched at least four different continents, bringing with it a renewed faith and vision for personal holiness and the Spirit-filled life. It was this liberating message that soon became synonymous with Andrew Murray's personal ministry.

The birth of the Keswick Convention united the emerging European Holiness Movement and thereby helped to channel the fire and energy of what became known as the "Third Great Awakening". However, the Keswick Convention did much more than merely unify and preserve the remaining fruit of this great revival. With a clear call to personal holiness through faith in Christ, the Keswick movement helped to prepare a new generation for the next move of God.

Those attending the conventions were always strongly encouraged to embrace a lifestyle of holiness, unity and prayer. In the 1902 Keswick Convention, five thousand Christians agreed to form home prayer circles for a worldwide outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of these Keswick praying bands was no doubt realized through the Welsh Revival of 1904. R. B. Jones, Jessie Penn-Lewis, and F. B. Myer all considered the Keswick Convention as one of the hidden springs of the Welsh revival. Through the biblical teaching of men like Andrew Murray, J. Elder Cumming, Evan Hopkins, F. B. Myer and many others, thousands of Christian workers and missionaries were empowered and purified to enter a new millennium of global harvest. James Hudson Taylor, A. T. Pierson, Samuel Zwemer and many other missionary mobilizers regarded the Keswick Convention as one of the finest "hunting grounds" for the best missionary recruits. Here again we find it to be true, that the influence of one generation's Spirit-filled ministry often waters the seeds of another generation's harvest.

### Andrew Murray's Closing Days

On January 18th, 1917, Andrew Murray crossed over into Glory. He entered into Heaven the same way he lived on earth, praying and urging others to pray. Few men have ever impacted more souls for the cause of the Spirit-filled life than Andrew Murray. He was arguably the Church's most prolific writer on the subject of prayer and the Deeper Life, publishing some 240 books between 1858 and 1917. Several of these books have been translated into as many as fifteen different languages. Soon after the Christian Literature Society for China translated Mr. Murray's book, "The Spirit of Christ" into Chinese, revival reportedly broke out in Inland China. Even today his writings are still shaping

the way multitudes of hungry Christians think about prayer and the Spirit-filled life.

### Learning from our Forefathers!

Andrew Murray unquestionably was a man of rare gifts and deep spiritual insight, yet he almost quenched a genuine revival. He was raised in a home where his father had faithfully prayed for more than 30 years for revival. Nevertheless, for a time he stubbornly opposed the long-awaited answer to his father's prayers. As a boy he had delighted in the revival ministry of William C. Burns and while in Germany he witnessed the miraculous ministry of Pastor Blumhardt. Yet, when personally confronted with revival manifestations in his own church, he opposed them. I do not write these things to dishonor the memory of one of our respected fathers of the faith, but rather to pose an important and timely question. If such a gifted man as Andrew Murray could fail to recognize the Spirit of revival, while in the midst of preparing for revival, how much more are we capable of making the same mistake? This generation of Christians must be willing to learn from the experiences, insights, and errors of our spiritual forefathers if we are to be prepared for the next move of God. Are you willing to LEARN?

Resources: The Life of Andrew Murray of South Africa by J. Du Plessis, Andrew Murray and His Message by W. M. Douglas, Andrew Murray: Apostle of Abiding Love by Leona Choy, "THE LIFE OF FAITH, JANUARY 26, 1967" St. Andrew of South Africa by N. L. Cliff, Andrew Murray by Dr. William Linder, Jr. Northfield Echoes Vol. 6 Northfield Conference Addresses for 1899 Edited by Delavan L. Pierson, Evangelical Awakenings in Africa by J. Edwin Orr, The Fervent Prayer: The Worldwide Impact of the Great Awakening of 1858 by J. Edwin Orr, The Holiness Revival of the 19th Century by Melvin Easterday Dieter, The Keswick Convention: Its Message, Its Method and Its Men by C. F. Harford, Keswick from Within by J. B. Figgis, These Sixty Years: The Story of the Keswick Convention by Walter B. Sloan, So Great Salvation: The History & Message of the Keswick Convention by Steven Barabas, Scotland's Keswick by Norman C. Macfarlane, The Forward Movement of the Last Half Century by A. T. Pierson, Revive Us Again by Herbert Lockyer, Rent Heavens: The Revival of 1904 by R. B. Jones, The Awakening in Wales by Jessie Penn-Lewis.