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Tracing the Murray family's footprints during the founding years of the Dutch Reformed Church Free State and the Reformed Church in Zambia

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Abstract

This article traces the footprints of the remarkable Murray family (including the Louw and Hofmeyr branches) in the founding years of the Dutch Reformed Church Free State (DRC FS) and the Reformed Church in Zambia (RCZ). Andrew Murray Jr played a significant role in the early formation of the DRC FS, contributing to its original evangelical character and its inclination towards the DRC of the Cape Colony. Other members of the Murray family also played a vital role in establishing the DRC FS's mission approach. The Hofmeyr branch of this clan was instrumental in laying the foundation for the DRC FS's mission to Northern Rhodesia (today's Zambia) and its historical development in becoming the RCZ. This article endeavours to answer the questions: What was this Murray influence? Why was it so significant?

Keywords

Murray; Hofmeyr; Dutch Reformed Church Free State; Reformed Church of Zambia; church- and mission history

Introduction

During 2022, the 200th anniversary of the arrival of a first group of Scottish ministers in South Africa is celebrated. Amongst this group was Rev. A Murray Sr Several generations of his descendants played a remarkable role in church and society in South Africa, but also across the borders, deep into Africa. It is indeed appropriate to celebrate the extraordinary

contribution of the Murray family.[1] What was so significant about the Murray's influence? Why was it at times also contested? Rediscovering and reflecting on this Murray contribution could be rewarding for dealing with today's challenges in the "DRC Family." The commemoration of the Murray legacy in 2022 provides a welcome opportunity to do just that.

The young Rev. Andrew Murray of Bloemfontein and the founding years of the DRC FS

Preparation – influenced by Celtic and Réveil spiritualities

When Murray became minister in Bloemfontein, he had only recently returned from his studies in Scotland and the Netherlands. From 1838 to 1845, he and his brother John stayed in Aberdeen, Scotland, with their uncle Dr Johan Murray, an evangelical and mission-minded minister of the Free Church of Scotland (Van der Watt 1979:25ff.). Andrew and John attended the excellent Aberdeen Grammar School and later the Marischal College. While in Scotland, they were strongly influenced by regular letters from their father, by the example of their uncle John, but also by a young Revival preacher, William C. Burns, who often stayed with them in Dr John Murray's house. (Van der Watt 1979:29). This influence should also be understood within the broader context of a historic Celtic spirituality, exemplified by famous Celtic missionaries like St Patrick and St Columba of Iona. It entailed a "deeper spirituality," but also simple piety of mind, life, and purpose; venturing out on a mission of faith, often independently and across boundaries; fervent love for the Bible; commitment to social involvement and identifying with the people to whom they were sent; and the importance of education and learning, coupled with the love of books (Kritzinger 2014:4).

1 Five sons of Andrew Murray Sr became ministers, and four of his daughters were married to ministers. The Louw, Hofmeyr and Neethling surnames, as in-laws, were also very much part of this clan. Their influence also stretched to the Free State (or Trans Gariep [Xhariep]) and (Northern-Rhodesia) Zambia. At crucial moments in the founding history of the Dutch Reformed Church Free State (DRC FS) and the Reformed Church in Zambia (RCZ), the names of either a Murray, Louw or a Hofmeyr featured prominently.

In Holland, Andrew and his brother John came under the influence of the Dutch *Réveil*, a movement that, in opposition to the prevailing European rationalism (Brümmer 2013:20 ff.), promoted spiritual enthusiasm and a pious, intimate "friendship with Jesus." They became members of the student organisation *Sechor Dabar*, which promoted a puritan and holy lifestyle, fervent prayer, the longing for the salvation of souls, a consciousness of sin and the need for a powerful conversion experience. They also formed their own student mission organisation named *Eltheto*, which rendered compassionate service to those in need, emphasising the ideals of duty and committed study. In a letter from Utrecht, dated 14 November 1845, Andrew gratefully informed his parents of his recent born-again experience (Brümmer 2013:23–28; Du Plessis 1920:65ff.; Van der Watt 1979:47ff.).

Murray inducted as minister of Bloemfontein and a vast area across the Gariep River

It was three days before he turned 21, on the 6th of May 1849, that Andrew Murray was ordained and inducted in the local school building as minister of the recently founded Bloemfontein congregation of the DRC (Britz 1999:9ff.; Du Plessis, 1920:92ff.; Gerdener 1934:163ff.). At the Sunday morning service, his father, Rev. Andrew Murray Sr from Graaff Reinet, preached from 2 Corinthians 6:1 and then, by solemnly laying his hands on his kneeling son – as has always been the custom in the DRC – he ordained him as minister. Andrew's brother John, who would soon be ordained in the Burgersdorp congregation, was also present. That Sunday afternoon, Andrew Murray Jr preached from 1 Corinthians 1:23: "[…] but we preach Christ crucified …". In a lively sermon to the gathered congregation, Murray explained that Christ Jesus, and an intimate, life-changing relationship with Jesus, would be the centre of his preaching and ministry (Britz 1999:10–11). The Legislative Council of the Orange River Sovereignty would pay his salary, as was also the arrangement in the Cape Colony – there existed no clear separation between colonial government and church.

Murray's immediate congregation in Bloemfontein consisted of migrant farmers who had recently established themselves in the Modder River area and members of the British garrison under Major Warden located in the

"village". But the young minister's responsibilities would actually cover a much wider area. He was the only minister to the settlers (*Trekkers*) in the Trans Gariep, stretching from the Gariep River in the south to the Vaal River in the north (Du Plessis 1920:104). And, for some years, he was also responsible for the whole area beyond the Vaal River, the Transvaal … as well as Natal. The Orange River Sovereignty was proclaimed as such by Cape Governor Harry Smith in 1848. Andries Pretorius, with a strong commando of Transvaal burghers, wanted to violently undo this proclamation, but they were defeated at Boomplaats. It was the beginning of some tense relations between the settlers on both sides of the Vaal (Gerdener 1934:60–62; Oberholster 1964:55ff.).

In the years immediately after the Great Trek (1836–1838), the Trekkers relied on the ministry of missionaries like Erasmus Smit, Daniel Lindley, DJ Döhne and elder Sarel Cilliers. In those years, the Cape DRC sporadically and hesitantly sent ministers, but eventually, the Presbytery of Graaff-Reinet sent official deputations to the Orange River Sovereignty to minister the Word and sacraments to the new immigrants and to establish congregations. The first official deputation consisted of Rev. Andrew Murray Sr, Rev. PK Albertyn and elder Pienaar. In March 1848, they officially established the first congregation in the Orange River Sovereignty at Riet River (today's Fauresmith. In the vicinity of the Modder River (some distance from today's Bloemfontein) they preached and baptised children, and near the Vet River (today's Winburg), they rearranged and officially convened the congregation which had unofficially been formed during the Great Trek. On their return journey, they also paid a visit to Bloemfontein, but it was only during a second deputation towards the end of 1848 (the deputation consisted of Rev. P Faure and Dr W Robertson) that the congregation of Bloemfontein was officially established on 30 November 1848 (Britz 1999:6; Oberholster 1964:44ff.). The second deputation also constituted the congregation at Smithfield. Andrew Murray Jr would be the first minister to minister to the Bloemfontein congregation permanently. All the other congregations, including Harrismith, which also came into being in 1848, were vacant, and he had to serve them all – an impossible task. Adding the white immigrants in Transvaal (for which Murray had initially also been responsible), his congregation counted about 20 000 members, stretching over a very vast area (Du Plessis, 1920:89; Oberholster, 1964:55ff.). Murray

often lamented these migrants' lifestyles as "of the wild type", with moral and religious retrogression, in great need of ministerial care (Du Plessis 1920:108; Gerdener 1935:66; Oberholster 1964:57). In December 1850, Murray ordained Rev. Dirk van Velden in Winburg (Gerdener 1934:151), who served there for a brief period. Only in April 1855 came some relief for the young Andrew Murray when his brother-in-law, Rev. A.A. Louw Sr became the minister of Fauresmith (Gerdener 1929:84ff.).[2] In the following years, Murray and Louw were instrumental in establishing several new congregations in the Free State.

Dedicated ministry in tumultuous times

His early ministry would therefore be characterised by a strong evangelical emphasis and enthusiasm for mission. For example, only days after his induction and precisely on his 21st birthday, Andrew Murray was accompanied by his father and brother in paying a visit to the missionaries in the eastern regions near Lesotho, at Merumetzu and Mekuatling (Du Plessis 1920:93). In him, the French, German and English missionaries working in the Trans Gariep and Lesotho, would find a kindred spirit. From his official position as minister of the state church, he would try to protect them from the unfortunate attacks by the Boer commandos. Murray also embarked on a ministry to the English and Sesotho speaking population in and around Bloemfontein.

In 1856 Andrew Murray married Emma Rutherfoord. Indicative of Murray's ecumenical background, the ceremony was conducted by a Lutheran Minister in the DRC building in Wynberg. Emma's father was a well-known businessman and philanthropist in Cape Town, a dedicated member of the Anglican Church. They were a very popular couple in the Bloemfontein parsonage, opening their hearts to all classes of people. Each Sunday, Emma accompanied the congregation on the "seraphine." She also took responsibility for Sunday School, teaching the children from the *Cape Children's Bible* written by John Murray, Andrew's brother (Britz 1999:18).

Andrew Murray's ministry in Bloemfontein occurred during a tumultuous time, characterised by severe outbursts of violent conflicts along the border

2 Rev. A.A. Louw was married to Jemima Murray and their son, Rev. A.A. Louw Jr, was the founder of the Mashona [Zimbabwe] Mission.

(and specifically about the border) with Basotho Land. However, in many ways, it was also a foundational time. He had to lay several foundations, even literally for the first church building. When the church building of Bloemfontein was officially opened on 5 June 1852, his brother-in-law, Rev. Jan Neethling of Prince Albert, who just returned with Murray from a visit to the Transvaal, and his brother John Murray from Burgersdorp, took part in the historic celebrations. In 1852 he and elder J. van Zijl attended the Cape Synod as the first representatives of the new Presbytery of the Trans Gariep. His recommendation that the Synod officially acknowledges the missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society working in Basotho Land and the eastern parts of the Orange River Sovereignty as a sister organisation to the DRC was accepted (Britz 1999:15, Du Plessis 1920, 157ff.) – the DRC's first official ecumenical ties. At the Synod of 1857, Murray, as representative of the Presbytery of the Trans Gariep, passionately pleaded for a mission awakening in the DRC.

Contribution towards education

With the funds that Sir George Grey, the then Governor of the Cape Colony, made available for the erection of a "seminary" in the Trans Gariep, Andrew Murray was instrumental in establishing Grey College in 1855 as a school for boys (Du Plessis 1920:178; Gerdener 1930:138). Murray served as the first "rector" of this institution. It was originally run by the DRC, but it eventually became the well-known Grey College of today and it gave birth to the Grey University College, the predecessor of today's University of the Free State (Universiteit van die Vrystaat 2006:7ff.). Following the Grey College example, and deliberately in line with the Scottish educational tradition, the DRC FS Synod also established a school for girls in 1875: the *Orange Vrij Staat Dames Institute* (later called Eunice Ladies Institute, named after Timothy's mother – see 2 Timothy 1:5). Some years later, around the time of the Anglo-Boer war, a daughter of Andrew's brother John, Anna Murray, would serve as principal of this school (Marquard 1967:27). In 1892, Miss Catherine (Kitty) Murray, supported by her father Andrew Murray Jr, was appointed the Principal of the re-opened Seminary for Girls in Bethlehem as a branch of the Huguenot Seminary of

Wellington.[3] Until the Anglo-Boer War led to the (temporary) closing of the Seminary Kitty was principal of this institution which, for many years, would make education on a Christian basis accessible for girls from the Eastern Free State region (Murray I 2019).

A new denomination severed ties with the DRC

Despite the great appreciation for his role in building the Bloemfontein congregation (and the whole Free State Church) through the ministry of the Word and sacraments, catechism, house visits, church discipline, and especially maintaining excellent relationships – Murray has indeed been a much-loved minister – there was also resistance to his evangelical approach. Under the leadership of the prominent politician J.J. Venter (who strove for an independent Free State republic), some church members complained about not feeling at home in the congregation anymore. Venter and his followers provided reasons for therefore leaving the church: the evangelical hymns sung at services, the regular prayer meetings (praying for conversion and Revival through the Spirit), the tables arranged in the form of a cross at the Lord's Supper, the lack of proper discipline in allowing participants to the Lord's Table, and the evangelical preaching focussing on the need of conversion and holiness instead of predestination and election (*Notule Kerkraad Bloemfontein* 8 February 1858; Britz 199, 21ff.). Rev. Dirk Postma visited Bloemfontein and vicinity in 1859 to assist these disgruntled members in establishing the first church belonging to the newly formed *Gereformeerde Kerke* in the then Free State Republic, in a village they named Reddersburg (derived from their joy of being saved from the evangelical influence). Despite his sadness about this development, Murray showed no animosity to this group – typically of his generous spirit. Because they could not understand his spiritual language, this breakaway church would perhaps be able to reach those whose hearts he himself would

3 The founders of the Seminary were Mrs Louisa Theron (and alumnus of the Wellington Huguenot Seminary) and her husband, Rev. C.P. Theron. In February 1879 the "Het Dames Instituut" opened in the house adjacent to the Therons' manse – with two Wellington trained teachers, Miss Nader and Miss Horak. By December that year they had 36 students, and passed their first inspection with flying colours. However, the financial burden of the Seminary led to its closure in 1883 – to the Therons' great disappointment. Rev. Theron continued to campaign for the school and in 1893, on the urgent request of the DRC elders Andrew Murray Jr paid 'the Bethlehem DRC a visit. Soon after this visit, the Seminary was re-opened (Murray I. 2019).

not be able to reach, he wrote to his brother John (Moorrees 1937:856ff.). He even allowed Postma to preach from the pulpit in his congregation, very much to the annoyance of the Presbytery of the Trans Gariep (Britz 1999:21–23; Gerdener 1934:171–172; Du Plessis 1920:189ff., see also letters by Van der Walt and Venter in Gerdener 1930:140–141).

Extensive visits to the Transvaal

In the early years of his ministry, Murray paid extensive visits to the Transvaal, each visit taking several weeks, even months. In his biography on Murray, Du Plessis gleaned letters written on these journeys (Du Plessis 1920:106ff.). The first journey was from December 1849 to the end of January 1850, the second in October to December 1850 and again in Mei 1851 and February 1852. He crisscrossed the whole area, travelled hundreds of miles over difficult roads in much inconvenience on horseback or in horse carts, conducting marriages and baptising hundreds, preaching, inducting new members and serving the Lord's Supper. More than once he suffered from severe exhaustion and ill health. He had to engage with the resistance of a fairly strong fundamentalist-nationalist sect called "Jerusalem-gangers" or Pilgrims to Jerusalem (Moorrees 1937:748). Nevertheless, mostly his preaching drew big crowds of people. He was moved by the lack of a proper ministry to those thousands of people; in his many letters and reports he expressed his concerns.

Despite his English background and connections to the colonial government in the Cape, the people in those areas held this serious young minister in high esteem. Towards the end of 1850, he received a call to the congregation at Mooirivier (today's Potchefstroom), with more than 1100 people signing a petition to the Cape Synod Commission to encourage his coming to Transvaal. After much internal struggle and prayer, he decided not to accept the call (Du Plessis 1920:131ff.). Even the anti-British activist, Commandant-General Andries Pretorius, was very fond of this young minister and often sought his advice (see Pretorius' letters in Du Plessis 1920:134ff.). Murray was therefore drawn into the politics of the day, for example when he was requested to play a mediatory role (and that of interpreter) at the Sand River Convention on 17 January 1852, where the independence of the Transvaal from British rule was negotiated. Murray was in favour of the Transvaal's independence. Together with his

brother John and brother-in-law JH Neethling, who accompanied him on his journeys to the Transvaal, Andrew Murray tried to convince the Transvaal congregations to become part of the Cape Synod. However, despite his efforts, he eventually had to accept that they would rather opt to form an independent "Hervormde Kerk" as the official state church under the leadership of Rev. Dirk van der Hoff. The anti-British, anti-colonial sentiment – and Van der Hoff's attitude against Murray – eventually got the upper hand in that region (Moorrees 1937:772ff.).

Political influence in the Orange River Sovereignty

Back in the Orange River Sovereignty, Murray had been much concerned over the repeated wars between the people of King Moshoeshoe and the Boer commandos. The Boer commandos revenged the attacks by Basotho on farmers and even repeatedly attacked mission stations. The colonial garrison under Warden was not capable of maintaining the peace; they even lost the battle at Viervoetberg (near Ladybrand) in 1851. Cathcart's 2 500 soldiers could also not defeat Moshoeshoe at the battle of Berea in 1852. Consequently, the Cape Government considered giving up the rule and abandoning the idea of the Orange River Sovereignty. Although Murray had been sympathetic to the Transvaal's claim to retain independence, he thought that it would be better for the Free State, especially for the sake of the church and the mission endeavours, to remain a colonial sovereignty. Andrew Murray, together with Dr A.J. Frazer, was therefore sent to London to plea the case for retaining the British Sovereignty (Du Plessis 1920:161ff.). However, this deputation did not bear the intended fruits. In February 1854, the Sovereignty had to make way for a Republic of the Orange Free State, with J.P. Hoffman as the first president.

Murray served in Bloemfontein for 11 years until April 1860, when he left to become a minister in Worcester.

A mission approach for the DRC FS

Since its formation in 1850, the Presbytery of the Trans Gariep consisted of congregations of the Free State Republic as well as Natal. Rev. A.A. Louw was often the chairperson of this body. He was also the chairperson when,

in 1864, the 11 Free State congregations gathered to prepare a church order for the official establishment of a Synod on 10 Mei 1865.

Domestic mission approach

Rev. Charles Murray, the Mission Inspector (or Mission Secretary) of the Cape DRC and brother of Andrew Jr, was also present at this historic first synod. He was on his way to the Soutpansberg Mission of the Cape Synod. Charles Murray motivated the Synod for mission work, locally and abroad. This would have a profound influence on how the DRC FS saw its own mission calling and, in today's terms, missional identity. In the first church order, they included an article stipulating that each minister and each local congregation are obliged to do "mission work" in their own context (Crafford 1982:123; Cronje 1948:70; Oberholster 1963:190; Odendaal, 1970:77ff.). Indeed, next to each congregation, a ministry to black people developed, eventually leading to a Free State Mission Church that was, compared to other DRC Mission Churches, very strong. At this first Synod, the Free State DRC also decided to embark on mission projects in other areas like Witsieshoek within the Free State borders, but also abroad. Thanks to Rev. Charles Murray's influence (Van der Merwe, 1934:138), the Synod decided to annually send a substantial amount of money to the Cape Synod for its mission endeavours abroad (*Acta Synodi*, 1865:14) – a practice which continued until the DRC FS could start with its own work in Zambia. It decided to also send money to the French Missionaries in Lesotho, despite the persistent wars between the Boers and the Basotho at the time. Furthermore, this first Synod pertinently made sure that the Reformed in its name would be translated as "Gereformeerd" and not "Hervormd" – the ties with and character of the mother church in the Cape Colony, rather than the Transvaal one, had to be kept as close as possible (Oberholster 1964:61, 76–77).

The Free State Synod appointed a Synod Mission Commission in 1866, whose mandate was to mobilise local congregations for their mission task, locally, but also further apart. In 1871 it started with mission work in Witsieshoek. Much of the work was originally done in a joint effort with the French Missionaries of Lesotho – a relationship Andrew Murray officially established in the very early years. The domestic mission work of the DRC FS grew exponentially – initially, each local minister started

to establish a mission ministry (forming part of the DRC congregations); later on, missionaries (mostly trained at the Mission Institute established by Dr Andrew Murray at Wellington) took over the work from local DRC ministers and those local ministries evolved into "independent" (but in reality very dependent) congregations next to the DRC congregations; and in a subsequent phase black catechumen (teachers) and evangelists took over from the white missionaries.

The need for the training of these catechumen, evangelists and eventually ministers of the DRC mission churches grew, and in 1907 it was decided in Bloemfontein to centralise the different training ventures and establish the Stofberg Gedenkskool for the four Federated Churches of the DRC (Cape, Natal, Free State and Transvaal) on a farm in the Heilbron District (North-East Free State). The DRC FS played a vital role in this undertaking (Maree 1958; Odendaal 1970:386ff.). The pioneer missionary in Natal, Rev. A.M. Hofmeyr, was called to become the first director of this theological training school. Rev. A.M. Hofmeyr was the son of the well-known Rev. J.H. Hofmeyr of Somerset East, who was married to Isabella Murray, sister of Dr Andrew Murray. Rev. A.M. Hofmeyr established this important training centre in 1908 and served as director until 1935. When he retired, he was succeeded by his son, also AM Hofmeyr, who served as director until 1959. This training institute played an invaluable role in the leadership development (ministers and teachers), the indigenisation and eventual independence of the younger churches in the DRC Family (Crafford 1982:503–507).

In 1960 the Stoffberg Gedenkskool was decentralised to form four different institutions, respectively at Witsieshoek (Free State), Dingaanstat (Natal), Turfloop (Transvaal) and Decoligni (Transkei). In 1961 a next-generation Hofmeyr (Dr AM Hofmeyr, later Mission Secretary of the DRC General Synod) became a lecturer at Witsieshoek, where he taught ministers for the Sesotho speaking churches in the DRC family until 1980. Although this training, primarily led by the Hofmeyr family over seven decades, was playing a huge role in developing "racially segregated churches" – as was the mission policy of the time – they nevertheless contributed significantly to developing leaders within the black churches, especially also in the Free State.

Urge for direct involvement in a "foreign" mission field

As the DRC FS domestic work grew rapidly since 1865, the urge to get directly involved in a foreign field, and not only indirectly via the financial contribution to the Cape Synod, became stronger. This became all the more urgent when Rev. A.C. Murray, the leading figure in the Nyasaland (Malawian) Mission, who was on his way back to Malawi after recovering from a leopard attack in the mission field, paid a visit to the Free State in 1897. He visited several congregations in the Eastern Free State, from Bethulie to Bethlehem, creating an awareness of the huge possibilities of entering new mission fields in Northern Rhodesia (today's Zambia). Rev. A.C. Murray also passionately addressed the Free State Synod of 1897 on the open doors to mission fields in the vicinity of Malawi. The Synod reacted enthusiastically: "mission concerns the life of the church" and "God will provide the necessary funds", they resolved (*De Fakkel* 10 Mei 1879, 450, Cronjé 1948, 72). What made this resolve so remarkable was that the dark clouds of conflict with British Imperial forces (that would soon lead to the Anglo-Boer War) had already assembled, and the Free State was still struggling with the devastating consequences of the rinderpest of 1896, which plunged many Free State farmers into desperate poverty. They were thus well aware of the "kommervolle dagen" (worrisome days) they experienced (*De Fakkel* 1897:481) as they embarked on this new mission venture. At the Synod, Murray also established a branch of the Ministers Missionary Union in the Free State, with the same goals as the Cape counterpart. The Synod, therefore, unanimously mandated its Synod Mission Commission to commence with "its own mission work … across its own borders", focussing on the Nyasaland area (*De Fakkel* 1897:480–482).

Commencing with the work in Zambia – the Hofmeyr family's prominent role

Early in 1898, messengers from Mpezeni, chief of the Angoni people – decedents of a Zulu impi who during the Difaqane (tribal wars in the 19th century) fled from King Chaka's reign of terror and eventually settled in the Eastern Province of Zambia – came to Mvera in Malawi to request Rev. AC Murray to send missionaries to their people. This request was preceded

by a visit of an evangelist from Malawi to Mpezeni (Verstraelen-Gilhuis 1982:41). When sending these messengers, Mpezeni had been in jail because of his resistance to the imperial, expansionist endeavours of Cecil John Rhodes. The request was sent through to the Free State Synod Mission Commission. In the meanwhile, Rev. A.C. Murray sent some Malawian evangelists to Mpezeni's people. Towards the end of that same year, in 1898, Reverends A.C. Murray and T.C.B. Vlok paid a visit to the area. When the Free State Synod's Mission Commission received the request to work amongst Mpezeni's people, it was like an answer to prayer. It was the young minister of Zastron, Rev. J. du Plessis, (later on biographer of Dr Andrew Murray), who proposed that the Free State should commence with work in Eastern Zambia, a proposal that was accepted. Du Plessis also played a major role as secretary and treasurer of the Free State's Commission for Foreign Mission.

On 5 July 1899 – whilst the devastating impact of the Boer War was already evident – the first two missionaries sent by the Free State Synod arrived at the place just across the border with Malawi in Eastern Zambia, which they then gave the Chewa name of Magwero, meaning "origins" (Cronjé 1948:77). There they established the first mission station in Zambia. The first two missionaries were Rev. John Murray Hofmeyr and Rev. J.P. Smit.

Rev. J.M. Hofmeyr was the younger brother of Rev. A.M. Hofmeyr, who started the theological training at the Stofberg School – sons of the Rev. J.H. Hofmeyr of Somerset-East (then Moderator of the Synod of the Cape DRC) and his wife Isabella, née Murray (Louw 2012:149). In 1897, the Free State Commission for Foreign Mission called J.M. Hofmeyr as a young proponent, but he first had to go for medical studies at the Livingstone College in London (*De Fakkel* 1998:306). On 18 February 1899, he was ordained in the beautiful, newly completed stone church in Winburg. It was fully packed. His father, Rev. J.H. Hofmeyr of Somerset East, led the ordination service and his uncle Rev. J.H. Neethling, all the way from Stellenbosch, also participated in the proceedings. The young missionary visited several Free State congregations before travelling to Zambia. The congregations were all proud of this first missionary, fondly calling him "our missionary" in reports and the church's magazine, *De Fakkel*. Smit was born and raised in Heilbron, a son of the Free State who went to Nyasaland some months ahead of Hofmeyr to gain experience. Their travel

to and arrival at Magwero was vividly described in a letter by Hofmeyr (*De Fakkel* 1899:621–623). On Sunday, 9 July, the two new missionaries arrived at Magwero and started proclaiming the Word of God under a tree that is still alive today – now with wide branches and a welcoming shade as quiet testimony of the growth of the church from small beginnings to what is today a vibrant church of more than a million members, the Reformed Church in Zambia. They have been pioneers in the real sense of the word, but it is also important to recognise the vital role played by the evangelists from Malawi in preparing their way and accompanying them – only known as Simione, Salomon, Jonathan, and Lukas.

Regarding the approach to the work, the first two missionaries followed the example of the older mission field in Malawi. Apart from proclaiming the Word, they immediately started with educational projects by establishing a school at Magwero. The basic education was aimed at Bible reading and catechism. Adults, and "even women", were trained, which was strange to the patriarchal indigenous culture (Cronjé 1948:84). People were also trained to act as teachers, Sunday school teachers and evangelists. The missionaries were hesitant in baptising converts; they first had to be adequately instructed in the faith. At Magwero, a first group of converts were only baptised and given "Christian" names in 1904 (Verstaelen-Gilhuis 1982:73). Rev. Hofmeyr also began with the treatment of the sick. They built houses, a school and eventually a church – the typical mission station model. They also established several mission outposts. In August 1902, the very capable and dedicated Rev. J.M. Hofmeyr, unfortunately, had to return to South Africa due to a severe third attack of the life-threatening blackwater fever. But the foundations for the DRC Free State's mission were laid. After Rev. J.M. Hofmeyr left, the mission in Malawi sent Rev. AG Murray to assist with the work at Magwero.

In 1903, after the Anglo-Boer War, three new missionaries joined the work in Zambia: Mr F.J. van Eeden (a missionary farmer – trained at the "Boeren Zending School" at Worcester, which was established for the many young men who returned from the Anglo-Boer War with a mission calling), Rev. J.H. van Schalkwyk and Rev. C.M. Hofmeyr, a younger brother of the Rev. J.M. Hofmeyr who had to return from the mission field (Cronjé 1948:95, *De Fakkel* 29 October 1903, 354). C.M. Hofmeyr, J.H. van Schalkwyk and A.G. Murray established the second station, called Madzimoyo, meaning "water

of life". Like all new missionaries, Hofmeyr and Van Schalkwyk first had to learn to speak Nyanja, the local dialect. The same pattern as at Magwero was followed in commencing with the work. In 1905 the third mission station was established at Fort Jameson (today Chipata) by Rev. C.P. Pauw, the first of three generations of missionaries to do exceptional work in the Zambian mission. Rev. C.M. Hofmeyr laboured at Mazimoyo until 1910. At some stage, he was also assisted by Rev. William Murray from Malawi.

The work grew rapidly, and several other mission stations were established, one of which was called Hofmeyr to acknowledge the work done by members of the Hofmeyr family – the Hofmeyr village still exists today. The two Hofmeyr brothers who initially came were succeeded by two other members of the Hofmeyr family (cousins). The one was Miss Issie Hofmeyr, who in 1900 commenced with wonderful and much appreciated work amongst the blind at Magwero. Later on, she married Mr Frikkie van Eden, the missionary farmer at Magwero. However, in 1910 she tragically died of blackwater fever – the first of many missionaries who would bring the highest sacrifice for the mission. Her class of blind learners were devastated, and for days they mourned at her graveside (Cronjé 1948:125).

Dr Jan K.A. Hofmeyr, brother of Issie Hofmeyr, was the first medical doctor of the Zambian mission. Jan and Issie grew up in Hanover, where their father, Rev. A.H. Hofmeyr (brother to Rev. J.H. Hofmeyr of Somerset-East), was the minister. After school in Wellington, Jan went to Gills College in Somerset East and stayed in the Somerset East parsonage for quite some time. Mrs Isabella Hofmeyr (Dr Andrew Murray's sister) was his godmother, and she influenced him greatly (A.M.M. 1914:7). Just after completing his medical studies in Britain, this brilliant young doctor arrived in Zambia in 1908. He erected a hospital at Mazimoyo, did outstanding pioneering medical work, operating on patients, and simultaneously playing the role of a nurse. He even took it upon himself to preach and conduct catechism classes and started a project for Patients having sleeping sickness. He was much loved and respected by all. In 1913 he went to Scotland for a further course in tropical illnesses, but in 1914 tragically died there from liver cancer (Cronjé 1948:118). It was, again, a devastating blow to the mission, but despite the tragic setbacks – or was it maybe because of this vulnerability and willingness to bring sacrifices? – the Zambian mission grew steadily and eventually spread across the whole country.

In the meanwhile, some mission-minded ministers, and especially the *Oranje Vroue Sendingbond* (Orange Women's Mission Union) under the leadership of formidable women like Charlotte Theron, the wife of Rev. C.P. Theron of Bethlehem (the so-called "Father of the Free State Mission"), kept the home front and raised financial support. Despite the Anglo-Boer War, the draughts, the Rebellion and World War 1, the great depression of the 1920s and 1930s and the persisting "white poverty problem", the mission could be sustained. This is a story of miracles and perseverance, a story that deserves to be researched and retold. Mrs Charlotte Theron – the "mother of the Free State mission" – operated in close relationship and regular correspondence with the Murrays in Wellington.

Many, if not most of the missionaries in Zambia – at one stage in the 1960s there were 67 mission personnel in Zambia sent by the Free State – had been trained in Wellington; they were influenced and inspired by the typical evangelical and puritan spirituality of the Murrays. They were driven by a passion to spread the Gospel into Africa, but from their puritan roots they also imposed a certain conduct of life and piety on the new converts, which was often very foreign to the African culture. There was not much accommodation of traditional African customs. But for many Africans, therein also laid the attraction to the church – it meant a complete break with or liberation from the powers in which they were fearfully caught. Moreover, the specific approach to mission meant that people became literate, reading the Bible in their own language – that was maybe the most significant contribution by the Murray clan and other missionaries.

Resistance to the evangelical approach – an unfortunate venture to transform and protect identities

At first, close ties were kept between the work in Zambia and that in Malawi. Until 1908, the work was done under the supervision of the Mission Council of Malawi. For practical reasons, an independent Mission Council was established for Zambia, but still in close cooperation with the work in Malawi. Rev. C.P. Pauw was the first chairperson of this body.

However, in 1926 a sudden resistance became evident. One could even call it hostility against the longstanding loyal cooperation between the

Free State Synod and the Cape Synod, appeared on the scene. It was when the controversial Rev. J.G. Strydom became mission secretary of the Free State Synod. He would occupy this post for 25 years. The Free State political context was that of Gen. J.B.M. Hertzog's separatism, the dawn of a particular Afrikaner nationalism. It was also the era of a bitter church dispute around Prof. Johannes du Plessis, the erstwhile minister of Zastron who played a major role in the commencement of the Free States work in Zambia. An opposite theological stream was consciously developed in those days, namely a new-Calvinist movement based on a particular interpretation of Abraham Kuyper's theology. Strydom found himself squarely in this new-Calvinist stream, and he was very sceptical of the more evangelical approach of the majority of mission-minded persons in the Cape Synod and in Malawi.

After the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian [CCAP] became independent in 1924, with the Nkhoma mission joining it as one of the three presbyteries in 1926, strong voices called on the church in Zambia to also join the CCAP. The missionaries in Zambia unanimously supported this idea. In 1928 the Free State Synod, on a proposal by the then moderator Rev. PS van Heerden who visited Zambia just prior to the synod meeting, indeed decided that the church in Zambia should join the CCAP. Nevertheless, Rev. J.G. Strydom would eventually play a key role in convincing the Synod's mission commission to suspend the Synod's decision. The reason: the new church's confessional basis would not be acceptable, and the Scottish missionaries' spiritual influence was too dangerous. In 1931 the Synod endorsed Rev. Strydom's actions (Cronjé 1948:174–175). (This must also be understood in light of the Du Plessis case in the Cape Synod. Champions of the new-Calvinist stream in the DRC accused Prof. J du Plessis, the well-known missionary statesman in the Murray tradition, of liberal theological tendencies.) The young Christians in Zambia strongly advocated joining the CCAP – they felt close to their Chichewa-speaking brothers and sisters just across the border in Malawi – and in 1939 again requested the Free State mission authorities' permission to join the CCAP. However, Rev. Strydom would have none of it, and in 1943 the *Dutch Reformed Mission Church of the Orange Free State in Rhodesia* was constituted (Cronje 1981:186).

A similar and related situation arose in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). In 1912 Rev. T.C.B. Vlok was sent from Malawi to start work amongst Chichewa-speaking migrants in Zimbabwe. For 16 years he did marvellous work. In 1928 the DRC Free State took over the responsibility for the white DRC congregations in Zimbabwe. Because of the DRC Free State's old ruling that was written into the church order at the very first Synod meeting in 1865, namely that each local congregation and minister should take responsibility for mission work in their own area, Rev. Strydom, in 1928, used this ruling as an excuse to insist that all the mission work amongst the Chichewa-speaking people in Zimbabwe be transferred to the Free State. Obviously, Rev. Vlok and the members of the young church in Zimbabwe objected strongly to severing ties with the Cape Synod and Malawi. Referring to this dispute, Martin Pauw wrote: "This was the prelude to a long and painful and in many ways disastrous, if not scandalous dispute between the two Synods, which was to last for nearly twenty years and was only finally settled in 1954" (Pauw 2016: 72).

Behind all these animosities, the hands of Rev. Strydom are to be seen. He equated "Calvinism" with "separation" and "mission" with "apartheid" and deliberately wanted to cut off all links with the evangelical Murray tradition. To Strydom, the whole mission enterprise became a mere social project of striving for a particular form of development, for instance, Bantu education as separate, lower quality education, in order to safeguard the supremacy and eventual survival of the white Afrikaner race (Elphick 2012:226ff.). Since the 1930s he fervently promoted what he called "our mission policy of apartheid" or "Apartheid a matter of faith" (Strydom, 1938:61). He established his own magazine *Die Basuin*, to promote these ideas, and he played a vital role in formulating the 1935 Mission Policy of the Federal Mission Council of the DRC. Notwithstanding, the Free State Synod supported him in all of this. During 1937 they even sent him on a study tour to the Southern States of America to learn first handily how racial segregation and the separate "onderwys van die Amerikaanse Neger en die naturel van Afrika" (Labuschagne 2011:115; Oberholster, 1964:133) could be successfully applied. After this visit, he wrote his well-known brochure on the Native-Issue (Strydom 1942), which the church freely distributed to all members in the Free State. He made it his mission to counter the Murray (or evangelical) influence in the Free State and Zambia.

However, the missionaries in Zambia consistently resisted his deliberate attempts to infuse them with his new, anti-evangelical spirituality. And so did the young church which the Free State had established in Zambia.

The blessed fruit – attempting to evaluate the immeasurable

It is not possible to measure the impact of the Murray, Louw and Hofmeyr families on the DRC FS and the planting of a church in Zambia. The blessed fruits are there to be seen, even to this day.

It would, however, also be important to critically look at their role and theological impact and their collaboration with the colonial project of their era. They were children of their time; the whole missionary project coincided, if not collaborated, with Colonialization. The mission approach often sought to replace African culture with a Western version of Christianity. However, the Murray's were not merely instruments of colonialism; they should not easily be judged from the context and criteria of our day. Their relationship with colonialism could therefore rather be described as ambivalent. On the one hand, they collaborated with the empire; in the Orange River Sovereignty, Murray himself was, after all, employed by the colonial government. He sided with the Boer immigrants in the Transvaal and Trans Gariep areas. But Andrew Murray and his family often also collided with colonial authorities, identifying with the plight of the people to whom they ministered (and with their fellow missionaries). They learned the indigenous languages and translated the Bible into African languages, and they embarked on aspiring educational and medical projects for the people they served. They were driven, not by colonial motives, but to be of service in building the kingdom of God and transforming societies accordingly. However, in this process they were, like most missionaries of their time, hesitant to relinquish their (patriarchal) trusteeship over the newly planted church; according to them it would take a long time to cultivate the indigenous people's inherent qualities to take ownership.

Their spirituality was often characterised by simplicity of faith; as leaders they persevered despite the obstacles and sacrifices (even stubbornly so) in reaching their goal, because they felt called. They were strong

leaders, pioneers in opening new frontiers for the mission, venturing to transform communities by building hospitals, various educational institutes, and producing Christian literature and Bible translations in indigenous languages (Kritzinger 2014:7, Verstraelen-Gilhuis 1982, 48–50). This spirituality was characterised by an emphasis on prayer, revival, and a puritan striving for holy living (Van der Watt 1979:13ff.). They nurtured evangelical-ecumenical ties. Andrew Murray Jr once said: "We are Christians first, and Dutch Reformed afterwards" (Van der Merwe 1934:155). They were acutely aware of their calling. The Murray clan's spirituality profoundly influenced the establishment of the DRC FS, the RCZ and other churches in Southern Africa.

Part of the secret of their remarkable contribution as "clan" was the way in which they kept contact with each other, always seeking opportunities to get together (often travelling long distances, for instance, to be present at an ordination), regularly praying for each other, growing up with a sense of being "exceptional" by carrying the name Murray (mostly also as first name), as a family being destined by God's will, called in successive generations to render sacrificial service to the kingdom of God. During the 2022 commemoration of the contribution of the remarkable Murray family it is of great importance to revisit their stories and celebrate their contribution, while keeping in mind that stories have the ability to form, reform and transform identities. Stories (history) can, however, never be told from a neutral point of departure; revisiting and retrieving the past remains a humbling and tentative endeavour.

Perhaps the most profound Murray story connected to the Free State, a story of reconciliation that needs to be retold today, is that of Dr Andrew Murray in his old age once more returning to the Free State. During the Anglo-Boer War, he was very concerned about the plight of people in the two Boer Republics – the whole parochial area of his early ministry. Some of Dr Murray's close relatives played a pivotal role in the wartime Free State. For instance, Margaret, the daughter of his brother John, was married to the young and dynamic Rev. J.J.T. Marquard of Winburg, the then moderator of the DRC FS. Her brother Andrew Murray was the minister at Jacobsdal, the area of several decisive battles. Through extensive correspondence, the Murray siblings kept the family in Stellenbosch and Wellington informed about developments (Marquard 1967). Amongst other actions, Dr Murray,

therefore, wrote a lengthy, open letter to the British people, which was indeed widely published in their media. As the oldest minister in the DRC, he pleaded to them for peace. He appealed to the British's generosity as "the most Christian nation in the world", to awaken and realise the futility and disastrous consequences of the war; he called on them and everybody else to pray instead (Du Plessis 1920:435ff.).

After the war, in December 1913, the Women's Memorial commemorating the suffering and death of women and children (more than 40 000, black and white) was unveiled in Bloemfontein. Murray attended this ceremony – he was then 85 years of age. Before the procession moved to the monument, Murray once again, with clarity and force, preached in the Bloemfontein Tweetoring Church building. He pleaded for reconciliation, not separation and division: "We are gathered here to celebrate a feast of love – the suffering, praying, blessing, conquering love. It is a monument of love that we are now going to unveil … Let us go to the monument with the prayer: I sacrifice myself to God, I seek not my own interest; let us go with a banner of God's love!" (Du Plessis 1920:441ff.). And, at the monument itself, a small scene was engraved on the minds of thousands in the crowd, a moment caught in rich symbolism. It was the sight of the frail Dr Andrew Murray, who once travelled to Britain to plead against independence for the Free State, leaning on the arm of Sir John Frazer.[4] When the sun suddenly broke through the clouds on that hot summer day at the memorial site, it was none other than the Boer leader who fought to the bitter end for the independence of the Free State Republic, General Christiaan de Wet, who humbly and respectfully held an umbrella over the two aged men.

4 Frazer was the son of the Rev. Colin Frazer of Philippolis. He trained in Scotland as lawyer, and for many years, he had been a leading figure in the DRC Bloemfontein congregation and the Free State politics. On 15 March 1900 it was John Fraser, accompanied by two officials, who had to approach the British and solemnly surrender the town of Bloemfontein to Lord Roberts.

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