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Rooted in Christ. Rooted in Wellington. Reflections on the contextual character of spirituality

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Abstract

The opening of the Andrew Murray Centre for Christian Spirituality in Wellington creates a space for potential research on the legacy of Andrew Murray in South Africa. In retrieving his spiritual legacy, it is important to understand the contextual character of spirituality. In this article, the importance of methodology in studying history and spirituality as part of such an enterprise is motivated, and possible avenues of research will be proposed.

Keywords

spirituality; Andrew Murray; Wellington; historiography; mission training

> "To the readers of his books, as to the present generation of South Africans, he has never been otherwise known than as 'Andrew Murray of Wellington'"[1]

Introduction

The opening of the Andrew Murray Centre for Christian Spirituality in Wellington invites further reflection on the role played by Andrew Murray in the history of the South African religious environment. The

1 Johannes du Plessis, *The Life of Andrew Murray of South Africa* (London: Marshall Brothers, Limited, 1919), 484.

Andrew Murray Centre, situated in Wellington, highlights the specificity of the Murray tradition in South Africa. One cannot retrieve this specific tradition of spirituality without being well and intensely aware of context.

Andrew Murray embodied a certain kind of spirituality, namely a spirituality with a legacy that can be traced to mission work in Africa and beyond, educational endeavours especially for girls and women as well becoming a source for the inner life of many Christians all over the world.

The main focus of this article is, however, not a detailed discussion of the life and work of Andrew Murray and his contemporaries but rather a reflection on a fitting methodology that can be used in writing a history of spirituality and then, more precisely, the spirituality that inspired the work of Andrew Murray. This reflection on methodology in retrieving a specific tradition is crucial if the Andrew Murray Centre for Christian Spirituality sees itself as a place from where more critical research on the legacy of Andrew Murray will be initiated in the future. The inauguration of this Centre can therefore be seen as the start of revisiting – or retrieving – a tradition that was an integral part of the South African religious and educational landscape for a long time. This article aims to present and motivate some pivotal methodological concerns and to identify possible avenues of further research.

Retrieving a tradition

In writing about retrieving a tradition, we are indebted to the thoughts and work of the well-known South African scholar, John de Gruchy, who initiated research together with students and peers on "retrieving and transforming traditions."[2] De Gruchy reminds us that: "The history of Christianity demonstrates the diversity of reception and interpretation of its authoritative and classic texts over many centuries and in a vast number of contexts."[3]

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2 One outcome of this research project is the March 2011 (139) edition of the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*.

3 John W. de Gruchy, "Transforming Traditions. Doing Theology in South Africa Today." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 139 (March 2011), 8.

Critically retrieving a theological tradition is a hermeneutical exercise that balances a continuity with the past but in a creative tension also brings something "new, fresh and vibrant" to the fore and that it is in the dynamic of contested interpretations that new growth and pathways in theology appear.[4] The retrieval of a tradition is, therefore, a clear focused theological endeavour that is not to be taken lightly. In this process, questions emerge which help the theologian to identify the transformative meaning for his or her present context. In retrieving the tradition of Andrew Murray, one can be more specific and ask how can it be heard afresh in the context of the 21st century South African Reformed context?

Therefore, in retrieving a spirituality connected to a specific historical person, it is essential to ask a few critical questions: What methodology are we using? How do we understand the discipline of history and spirituality? What implications does this understanding have for future research projects?

The reason that these methodological questions must be asked is motivated by contextual awareness. The danger is always present that in visiting the past in light of the present context, a person or traditions can be divorced from his or her context. Philip Sheldrake[5] gives some examples of this phenomenon: He writes about the renowned Roman Catholic scholar Karl Rahner who wanted to understand Ignatius of Loyola apart from his context by writing the following: "Ignatius has something almost of the archaic and the archetypal about him […] He has nothing that really belongs to the Baroque or the Renaissance about him."[6] As Sheldrake rightly notes, the danger is to radically detach somebody from the assumptions of his or her age and spiritual horizons and then to place the person beyond criticism or real contextual analysis.

Another helpful image that Sheldrake uses is that of a stained-glass figure.[7] In some Christian traditions, the saints of the ages (e.g., Francis of Assisi

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4 De Gruchy, "Transforming Traditions," 9.

5 Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History. Questions of Interpretation and Method* (rev 2nd ed., New York: Orbis Books, 1998).

6 Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*, 92.

7 Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology, Christian Living, and the Doctrine of God* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1998).

or Benedict of Nursia) can be found in cathedrals eternalised in glass and suspended above time and place. The potential danger is that the theological reflection on the lives of these persons will follow the pattern of the windows and that these persons become the same for all ages, without nuance. The community of faithful then easily forget that they were products of specific circumstances and not set in stone (or glass, for that matter).

Even if the Protestant tradition does not have official saints, it does not mean that the Protestant theologians have not sometimes fallen into the same trap. Calvin, Luther, and Murray have and can easily become supra-historical figures who take on a halo of their own. Protestants also write and speak hagiographies, even if we are not always ready to admit it.

Therefore, the following paragraphs will be a reflection on historiography and the discipline of spirituality in order to stress the importance of the contextual character of spirituality and to root the legacy of Andrew Murray and his peers in a time and place. This is done to resist that this specific history becomes either a mere hazy recollection of the past or a supra-historical fixed entity. Only from a clear understanding of the contextual nature of this spirituality can a responsible reinterpreting for a new context happen in the hope of also transforming the present context.

Some reflections on the writing of history

In past decades new trends in historical theory have been noticed. Historical theory as a discipline is a rich and vibrant tradition of reflection on how human beings relate to the past.[8] Herman Paul, in his accessible introduction to historical theory, writes that in the 19th century, German scholars started to distinguish between "two types of reflection on the study of the past"[9] because of the double meaning of the word history, namely *historae res gestae*, namely the course of events and *historae rerum gestarum* or the stories that people tell of the course of events.[10]

8 Herman Paul, *Key Issues in Historical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

9 Paul, *Key Issues in Historical Theory,* 3.

10 Ibid., 3.

These new thoughts on history moved away from history as an account of "what happened" because more and more historians and philosophers concluded that an epistemic absolute objectivity is not possible. Historians are *people* who recognise that, even with the best intentions towards objectivity, they still choose how to write and about whom to write. The well-known wordplay of "his"-tory and "her"-story shows the growing insight that history is often written from the perspective of the powers that be. According to Sheldrake,[11] in the "new history", the focus is on the minutiae of life as context. Sources are read more critically and, the primacy of elite structures and privileged groups are confronted and exposed. Ordinary people are drawn in on their own terms and, unwritten evidence (e.g., oral history) is given its rightful place.

Paul[12] illustrates this by referring to the well-known novel of Herman Hesse, namely *The Glass Bead Game*, where the protagonist learns to look differently at history through the eyes of the Benedictine monk, Father Jacobus.

The protagonist Knecht learned at his elite school that history is a matter of blood and testosterone, of the power-mad and despotic who bring misery and calamity on humankind, and he imagined that everything of true value, like Bach, must transcend all this. Father Jacobus, however, teaches him that the good, true, and beautiful are born in history amid plague and tedium and that the meaning of history is within everyday reality.[13]

As Sheldrake[14] noted, in recorded history only some people are active participants. In the new history, or "history from below", more people are recognised as active participants and, therefore, more voices are taking part in the reconstruction of the past.

Historiography also has a clear hermeneutical approach. Sheldrake[15] identifies two moments in the retelling or rewriting of history, namely recreation and interpretation. Both of them can never be fully objective.

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11 Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*, 26.

12 Paul, *Introduction to Historical Theory*, 2.

13 Ibid., 2.

14 Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*, 65.

15 Ibid., 27.

Recreation usually happens in narrative form – as if in a story – setting the scene or evoking the spirit of the age. In the retelling, the danger is always to make simplistic cause and effect connections and therefore needs to keep the complexities of life in mind. The historian either focuses on a specific event that entails using primary sources, or writes broad overviews of long periods, usually from a specific perspective.

In retrieving the life, legacy, and spirituality of somebody like Andrew Murray, the methodology of doing history and retrieving a tradition of spirituality overlaps. Andrew Murray is a nuanced figure and not a glass-stained image we can genuflect to. The historian must be aware of the sources available, the "place" from where these sources were written and the motivation for writing this history. If it is to focus on a type of spirituality, some methodological questions on spirituality also need to be asked.

Before we discuss the concept of spirituality, it will be good to admit that this era of South African church history surrounding Murray, the mission movement and educational programs has not been told in full. Many primary sources have still gone unnoticed and are waiting in the Archives of the Dutch Reformed Church as well as in other spaces to be disclosed. As Robert Vosloo in his article "On the archive: Archiving otherwise"[16] writes: "[…] the processes of remembering, archiving and historiography cannot be separated from questions about ethical responsibility underlying the historical task."[17] The stories are there to be told, especially those of the people who were part of the greater narrative surrounding Murray and Wellington but were up to now not deemed important enough.[18]

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16 Robert Vosloo "On the Archive: Archiving otherwise" in *Reforming Memory: Essays on South African and Theological History* (Stellenbosch: AFRICAN SUN MEDIA, 2017), 38.

17 Vosloo, *Reforming Memory*, 44 also writes: "Together with memory, or as part thereof, archives and archiving, are important sources and practises to challenge oblivion and death. This seems especially important in times when our historical consciousness is threatened by totalising forces that thrive on abstraction and mythologizing. Often this mindset is accompanied by the strategy of either romanticising or demonising the past. Both these strategies, ironically, serve to enhance a climate of amnesia. Historical complexity and ambiguity are ignored in favour of simplistic schemes…"

18 In *Die hart van God. Verhale van vroue in sending* (Wellington: CLF, 2017) edited by Isabel Murray and Lisel Joubert aimed to share some of these stories.

Another possible reason that the story of Wellington and Andrew Murray has not been told in full, can be the wariness of Reformed theologians of the work and spirituality of Murray. Andrew Murray was seen as being not Reformed enough within the perimeters of Reformed Orthodoxy and seen as being "too Methodist".[19] Pieter de Villiers[20] describes it as part of a Reformed opposition to mysticism, which we again refer to later in this article. The "Methodist" slant and "mystical" character of his writings can be seen as a reason for the Reformed wariness and lack of real interaction with his work through the years.

Some reflections on the retrieval of a tradition of spirituality

Retelling the story of Andrew Murray is the retelling of a story with religious implications. In celebrating and retrieving his spirituality, a complex world opens up. The discipline of "spirituality" within the broader theological scholarship does not have a long history. The study of "spirituality" is a product of the modern world after the Aufklärung, a period that led to a dichotomy between theology and spirituality, the rational and the experiential.

The reasons and implications of this dichotomy are not the focus of this article but need to be considered. When do I write theology, and when do I write about spirituality? When does the intellectual history overlap with the history of passion and initiative? Can one distinguish? The work of Vincent Brummer[21] is important to understand these questions within the broader South African theological history and identify the paths within a Reformed church.

In this article, spirituality is defined as the way a person/community understood God, his/her position in that understanding and how this

19 CF Ben Conradie, *Andrew Murray na 100 jaar* (Stellenbosch:CSV-Boekhandel, 1951).

20 Pieter de Villiers, "Die nugtere mistiek van Andrew Murray." Litnet Akademies 12, no. 3 (litnet.co.za, posted 2015-12-29).

21 Vincent Brummer in *Vroom of Regsinnig. Teologie in die NG Kerk* (Wellington: Bybel-Media, 2013) gives an in-depth discussion of the theological strands and spiritualities within the South African theological arena over a period of about 150 years.

understanding/experience shapes their words and actions as well as the community around them.

In a sense, spirituality is the place from where I engage with the world and how I perceive the world, e.g., a broken world that needs to be healed or maybe a heathen world that needs to be saved. Spirituality is not: "[…] spirituality is neither disincarnate nor on some ideal plane beyond the limitations of history but rather reflects both theological and social or cultural values."[22] As Sheldrake[23] remarks: "To suggest that a particular spirituality, like a good wine, may in some sense travel across centuries is not the same as to seek to place it in a realm beyond or above history."

In *Spirituality and Theology*, Sheldrake gives important parameters for discussion on spirituality. He reminds us that "spirituality operates on the frontier between religious experience and inherited tradition"[24]. Also, that "spiritual traditions are embodied first of all in people rather than in doctrine and begin with experiences rather than abstract ideas"[25].

In this article, an argument is made that the contextual character of the spirituality of Murray must be understood before we retrieve and transform his spirituality for a new time. I further want to argue that space and location, more specifically the town of Wellington, also played a role in forming this spirituality. That the spiritual legacy of Andrew Murray is in the first place extremely contextual and that this contextuality must be considered to give him his due and not to have him become opaque.

To take a step backwards, one must first ask: How does a spiritual tradition become well established in history? Sheldrake [26] identifies the main moments in such a process. Firstly, a need is felt in the society, which is interpreted in light of the gospel. This tradition expands when society sees that it answers their needs. The historian must recognise the constraints that influenced these initiators. These are both internal and external[27].

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22 Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*, 92.

23 Ibid., 92.

24 Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology,* 35.

25 Ibid., 36.

26 Ibid., 83.

27 Ibid., 84.

Internal refers to the theological, spiritual tradition in which they work and external, namely, surrounding cultural and social realities with questions dealing with values and worldviews.

In the case of Murray and his context, it would therefore be necessary to look at the bigger theological movements of the late 19th century, which influenced his spirituality as well as his dialogue with the Reformed tradition in South Africa.

With time, throughout history, these traditions usually go into maintenance mode, which makes it more rigid and less fluid.[28] This also can become a time of decline with two options remaining. Firstly, the possibility that the tradition recovers its meaning and renews itself. Maybe this is what is happening now with this initiative? Or secondly, that the tradition is just tinkered with but with no real retrieval, transformation, or renewal.[29] This is an important perspective that one needs to contemplate in envisioning the role of the Andrew Murray Centre for Spirituality for the future. Again, this recovery asks for a hermeneutic because we live in a different age. Therefore, within a contextual paradigm, the following possible avenues of research were opens up.

Spirituality and context: possible avenues of research

With the inauguration of the Goodnow Hall in Wellington the following hymn was sung which reflected an understanding of God and the world which led the believers into action:

> Miljoenen heidnen roepen uit:
> Kom brengen ons't evangelie woord
> Hoort gij dan niet hun noodgeschrei
> *O gaat en helpt hen toch*[30]

28 Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*, 84.

29 Ibid., 86.

30 First verse in English translation: "Millions of heathens are calling out; Come and bring us the Gospel word, Don't you hear their cry; Go and help them (refrain)".

Some of the other verses contain words like: "they are dying in sin and darkness"; "they know nothing of Jesus' blood"; and with the constant refrain to go and help them.

And that is what happened in Wellington. Hundreds of young men and women went out into the world to "go and help". What contextual forces lay behind this? What follows are some proposed possible avenues of research on spirituality and contextuality for the future.

Part of a greater world paradigm

Future researchers would do well if they decide to trace the bigger spiritual landscape that influenced Andrew Murray and his contemporaries. His time was a time of a worldwide zeal for mission work, where various mission conventions were held right across the globe.

Research on the influence of the two "outsiders", namely Dr Abbie P. Ferguson and Dr Anna E. Bliss and the spirituality they brought with them to Wellington, is crucial in understanding the spirituality of Murray and the movement in Wellington. They were the connection between the Mount Holyoke educational system in Massachusetts, America, a brainchild of Mary Lyon (1797–1849), and Wellington. Lyon worked with educational philosophy to "[…] study and teach nothing that cannot be made to help in the great work of converting the world to Christ."[31] A lot of research still has to be done to reconstruct the legacy of these two formidable women and the institutions they helped to set about.

The work at Wellington was not only inspired by work done in America but also other European spiritual paradigms. Andrew Murray himself was also inspired by the Moravian tradition, which already had a strong presence in the South African context as part of a greater Pietist movement in reaction to the Reformed Orthodoxy, which appeared in Europe. Murray himself mentions this deep influence in the following letter written from Clairvaux on 4 August 1901 to Rev AF Louw:

> […] When you get my new book *The Key to the Missionary Problem* you will see how deeply I have been impressed with the story of

31 Nina Müller van Velden, "Abbie P Ferguson & Anna E Bliss: Vroue wat voor loop" in *Die hart van God. Verhale van vroue in sending.* (Wellington: CLF, 2017), 22.

> Zinzendorff and the Moravians. So much has this been the case, that I have set to and am preparing the whole story for A Dutch Book. And one of the chief lessons that I want to bring out has reference to this. The Moravian church 60 years before the Reformation, established what was called their Discipline, of which Luther and Calvin both said that they want to have something like it, but were not able to introduce it. It consisted in them having offices in the Church for watching over the conduct of every individual member, instructing, and helping them, and so aiming at getting every believer, young and old, really trained into the life of following Jesus Christ. It was this principle that was brought into the Moravian church at Hernnhut, and the village really became like a big boarding school, in which the training of everyone in true godliness was considered the all-important thing […] The lessons that I want God to teach us are these: The need of such a Discipline, by which every believer shall receive systematic training; the wonderful influence that one man can exert in transmitting, a true life of intense devotion to Jesus to others, if he understands this secret of patient, useful work, and the certainty that if such a discipline and training were aimed at and secured in the church ones should have missionaries, both in number and in power such as are needed for the evangelisation of the world.

In this letter, a spirituality of training people for true godliness that will lead to mission work which would lead to the evangelising of the whole world, can be seen as the pivotal understanding of Murray's life and the "his" turning Wellington into, maybe, a new Hernnhut?

A much older influence on the spirituality of Andrew Murray and his environment is the mystical tradition that has always been part of the Christian Church but was especially embodied in the Middle Ages by well-known figures. Murray alludes to that and places himself in conversation with this tradition of spirituality by naming his last home in Wellington Clairvaux after the Medieval mystic Bernard of Clairvaux.

Two types of mysticism can be identified through the ages, namely a more intellectual mysticism (e.g., Meister Eckhardt) and then an affective mysticism (e.g., Bernard of Clairvaux) using intimate language in

describing the love of God and the believer. Pieter de Villiers argues that the influence of the spirituality of mysticism cannot be ignored in the study of the life and work of Andrew Murray.[32]

> A closer look at his writings confirms the decisive role of mystical thought in Murray's life and work. Extraordinary mystical and ecstatic events took place in his ministry […] It is, however, his relationship with two of the more controversial, but widely read, mystics of his time, that reveals the extent of his mysticism. He edited three books by William Law, the English mystic […] He also explicitly mentions his admiration for the German mystic Jacob Böhme, from whom Law had learned much.

In tracing all these links and influences, a more grounded picture of the thought and spirituality of Andrew Murray can be traced by researchers.

Focus on space/spatiality

History, however, did not only happen in time but also in space. Considering space (spatiality) in the discipline of historiography is a growing phenomenon.[33] Space has a geographical, architectural, and structural role, it has to do with the "where" of the historical narrative but also of how the "where" influenced the narrative or in a critical reading engendered differences and polarities.

According to Rau[34], one needs to differentiate between various spatial notions, e.g., physical, astronomical, theological, psychological, and cultural, which then would also open up the richness of interdisciplinary research.

From an analytical perspective, the single term "space" thus reflects a broad heuristic spectrum and a multitude of possibilities for investigation.[35]

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32 De Villiers, "Die nugtere mistiek van Andrew Murray"; See also: Pieter de Villiers "Mysticism in a Melting Pot: Andrew Murray, a Mystic from Africa on the World Stage." *Spiritus. A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 16, no. 2A (Fall 2016): 94-111.

33 A good introduction to this can be found in Susanne Rau, *History, Space and Place* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

34 Rau, History, *Space and Place*, eBook version, "Introduction, Why historical Research into space is in fact new," paragraph 4.

35 Rau, History, *Space and Place*, second-to-last paragraph.

We have already seen that Andrew Murray was synonymous with the town and environment of Wellington. Glimpses of this interaction can be identified but, it is especially in this possible avenue of research that visual sources become important. Sources like photos, maps, building plans, et cetera, opens up a new perspective for seeing and understanding.

We read in the diary of his daughter Annie Murray the following entry on 8 July 1908:

> Before breakfast stood gazing earnestly out of dining room to see just where the sun rose above Groenberg. "Now I know exactly the spot". Usually at breakfast before the sun rose. At family prayers: "We have just seen the sun rise. It is Thy Almighty Power. It is Thy Omnipotence. In all nature around us Thy power is working patiently and persistently. May it work power fully in our hearts, taking away all sin and self-sufficiency all pride and self-exaltation."[36]

Wellington was and is a beautiful place, surrounded by vineyards and mountains that are pleasing to the eye. This attention to spatial detail and the prominence of the town of Wellington was also reflected upon by Johannes du Plessis[37] as he writes as follows: "Wellington was for forty-six years the scene of Mr. Murray's labours. To the readers of his books, as to the present generation of South Africans, he has never been otherwise known as 'Andrew Murray of Wellington'."

Du Plessis further describes, in beautiful detail, the homes in which Murray stayed (the Parsonage where he stayed 21 years which had no view of the mountains, and then Clairvaux where he spent the remaining years) as well as the surrounding buildings and nature. Du Plessis[38] describes Clairvaux as follows:

> Clairvaux cannot boast such spacious grounds as the Parsonage, being flanked on one side by the Institute buildings, and on the other side by Sunnyside, a hostel originally intended for students of the Training School. But its site is nevertheless greatly superior.

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36 Dutch Reformed Archives: PPV 1447.

37 Du Plessis, *The Life of Andrew Murray*, 484.

38 Ibid., 484.

> Situated on a ridge above a little valley, it overlooks smiling gardens and broad green vineyards, with a background of low hills bedecked with waving cornfields and dotted with old oak embowered? Dutch homesteads. The house is girted about on the sunny north with a broad *stoep*, and on his *stoep*, when the weather was kind, Mr Murray used to receive his visitors, transact his business, and write his books. He never wearied of the outlook – to the right, the lofty Drakenstein mountains, snow-capped in winter, on which the westering sun would cast the most marvellous colours, from pale blue to rich purple and flaming red; before, the view which has just been described; to the left, the long hillslopes reaching down to the Berg River.

In a touching manner, Du Plessis[39] described the tactile and sensory manner in which Murray went about with his environment, referring to the Souvenir de Malmaison rose bush that reminded Murray of Bloemfontein, the smell of the purple lilac that reminded him of Scotland. Murray found pleasure in bright colours and the smells of his garden.

Surprisingly, the influence of space and architecture can be seen in photographs of mission stations in Nyasaland, which duplicated some of the shapes and architecture of the buildings in Wellington. (See Attached Addendum with photos A, B: Clairvaux and surroundings; C, D: Mvera Mission Manse, Nyasaland and the missionary, his wife and baby in their garden; E: Mkhoma station, Nyasaland surroundings; G & F: Tennis in Wellington and Nyasaland.)

Wellington as a metaphorical womb

Wellington did not just form the geographical environment of a mission movement but also the metaphorical or symbolic environment. The image that we want to use is that of an umbilical cord that kept all the missionaries in faraway places bounded in heart, body, and spirit to this one place. Wellington was a place that presented safety and love – a womb. This image can be motivated by the content of hundreds of letters written

39 Ibid., 501.

to Dr Ferguson, Dr Bliss and Andrew Murray and his wife Emma[40] from all over the world; letters they would also reply to. Letters that would thank, confide, ask for prayers and help or just tell stories. Wellington was home, a place that fed into a spiritual life and especially these women became the mothers of many.

Here are some examples of such letters:

> My dear Miss Ferguson, I have so much and such glorious news to tell you which would interest you and the many, many dear friends in the South who have been labouring in prayer these past seven years for our dear Nyasa Mission […] (16 September 1897, from Mvera).[41]
>
> Lieve Vader in X, Ben pas terug van den O.V.S waarheen ik gegaan was om mijn moeder te zien, schoon te vergeefs; want toen ik arriverente was sy reeds heengegaan en ter aarde bestelt.[42]
>
> My dear Miss Bliss: – Our hearty appreciation and thanks for your last written in January […] I really became much attached to Wellington as well as to many of the friends there. You speak of new buildings continually [still see it as her home] … everything will have changed – but I know dear Miss Bliss you will remain the same – dear, lovable, wise, strong Miss Bliss, I'm better for having loved you (written from Kongwe Nyasaland by Mary Liebenberg, 10 March 1904).[43]
>
> My dear Miss Ferguson, I only want to send you a few lines to tell of our safe arrival. We had a pleasant journey. We were surrounded by

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40 The important role of Emma Murray in her husband's life is traced by Pascal Pienaar in her MTh-Thesis *Emma Murray: an investigation into her person as well as her contributions to mission education in South Africa* (MTh. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2019).

41 *Mission News Letter*, January 1898.

42 C R Ferreira writes to Andrew Murray on 30 June 1911, calling him "Dear Father in Christ" and telling him about the death of his mother (Dutch Reformed Archives PPV 1455).

43 Dutch Reformed Archives K-DIV 620.

> our Father's kindnesses and are happy over the memory of it and our visit to our homes […] (Miss Neethling, Mochuli, March 29, 1898).[44]

From Saulspoort ME Murray wrote a letter on the 13 July 1898 under the heading "An overburdened Missionary" – asking Miss Ferguson to continue to pray for their work.[45]

These letters show the constant communication to and from Wellington, holding fast the strings of attachment and belonging. In such a sense, Wellington becomes a metaphorical context. Letters were written from this space, and letters were written in remembrance of this space.

The inhabitants of the town

The inhabitants of Wellington also took responsibility for this college. In the notes of the Dutch Reformed Church in Wellington, one reads that Andrew Murray and his colleague Ds Albertijn organised that the Mother Church in Wellington make a huge contribution to the upkeep of the *Meisjes Arbeidsschool* (Girls Industrial School, 1898), which later became the Andrew Murray Kinderhuis (1923). Congregants gave food, vegetables, fruit, and wood monthly, which the trustees (Andrew Murray and ds Albertijn) managed.[46] The congregation was responsible for the upkeep of this Children's Home even after 1937, when the institution started to receive a small subsidy from the government.[47]

The town of Wellington did not only form the geographical space of the work of Andrew Murray; the inhabitants also made a great deal of the work possible through monthly contributions and the participation of the Dutch Reformed congregation.

Concluding remarks

Theologians from the earliest ages were engaged with what they called the "scandal of particularity", especially with regards to the incarnation

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44 *Mission News Letter*, May 1898.

45 *Mission News Letter*, September 1898.

46 *De Kerkbode*, 13 January 1898, 222.

47 "Kerkraadsnotule," 7 March 1963.

of Christ. The "scandal of particularity" highlights the fact that God has always worked through the specific. A contextual focus on spirituality takes this specificity seriously.

In this article, we wanted to argue that in retrieving the legacy of Andrew Murray, certain methodological considerations must be deliberated. We propose a methodology that will honour the context within which a spirituality was lived in order to prevent a supra-historical understanding and use. As Sheldrake writes: "[spirituality] is rooted in experiences of God that are framed by the always *specific*, and therefore contingent, histories of individuals and communities".[48]

The tradition that is remembered at the Andrew Murray Centre for Christian Spirituality is many-faceted and multi-layered. It is rooted and contextual and can be found in the buildings, the letters, the people, the hymns of Wellington and the mission fields beyond. Andrew Murray was deeply aware of his rootedness in Christ, but in the possibilities of retrieving his legacy, one realises he was deeply rooted in the town of Wellington as well.

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48 Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 36.

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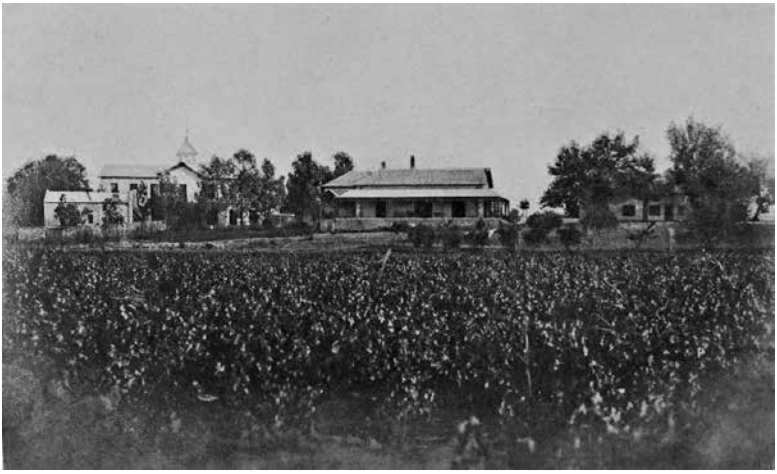
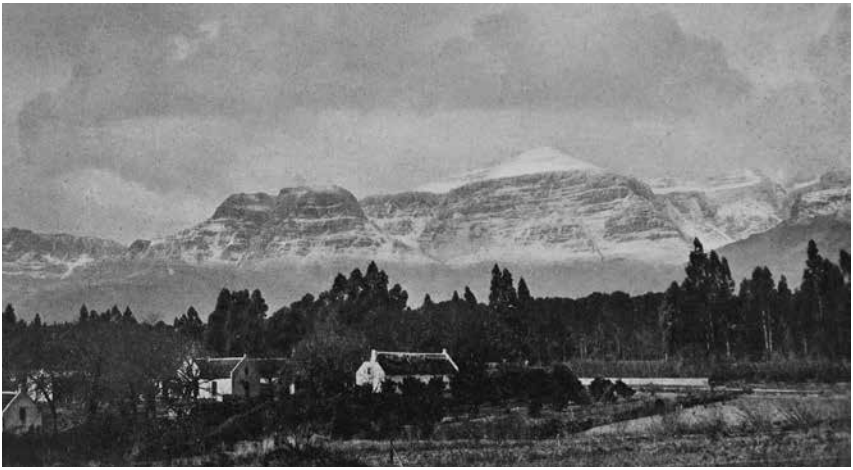
Addendum



A & B: (Top) Clairvaux, flanked by the Mission Institute on the left and "Sunnyside" residence on the right. (Bottom) A view across Wellington and the surrounding mountains.



C & D: (Top) Mvera Mission Manse and (bottom) the missionary Rev AC Murray, his wife and baby in their garden,

E: (Above) Mkhoma Mission station, Nyasaland and the surrounding mountains.

G & F: (Top) Tennis at the Huguenot Seminary, about 1890, with 2nd from the left, Elizabeth Duckitt (the future missionary, Mrs William Murray). (Bottom) A group of missionary tennis players, Mkhoma station, about 1950.