

Charles Freer Andrews

Priest & "Friend of the Poor" in India. 1871-1940, Feast Day: February 12

Charles Freer Andrews was an English priest, educator and Indian freedom fighter who is best known as an associate of Mahatma Gandhi. Andrews greatly admired the philosophy of the young Mohandas Gandhi and was instrumental in convincing him to return to India from South Africa, where Gandhi was a leading light in the Indian civil rights struggle there. He was affectionately known as Christ's Faithful Apostle, and also, for his contributions to the Indian Independence Movement the Mahatma and his students at St. Stephen's College, Delhi named him, Deenabandhu, or 'Friend of the Poor'.

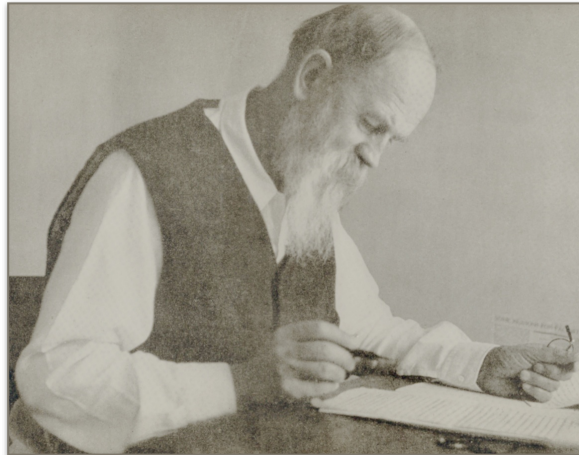
Andrews had been involved in the Christian Social Union since college, and was interested in exploring the relationship between a commitment to the gospel and a commitment to justice, through which he was attracted to struggles for justice throughout the British Empire, especially in India.

In 1904 he joined the Cambridge Brotherhood in Delhi and arrived there to teach philosophy at St. Stephen's College, where he famously grew close to many of his Indian colleagues and students. Increasingly dismayed by the racist behavior and treatment of Indians by British officials and civilians, he supported Indian political aspirations, and soon became involved in the activities of the Indian National Congress.

Well known for his persuasive ways, intellect and keen sense of moral firmness, he was asked by senior Indian political leader Gopal Krishna Gokhale to visit South Africa and help the Indian community there resolve their political disputes with the Government. He met there a young Gujarati lawyer, Mohandas Gandhi who was attempting to organize the Natal Indian Congress and the Indian community to protest the racial discrimination and police

legislation that infringed upon their civil liberties. Andrews was deeply impressed with Gandhi's knowledge of Christian values, and his espousal of the concept of ahimsa, non-violence. He helped Gandhi organize an Ashram in Natal and publish his famous magazine, *The Indian Opinion*. Andrews was instrumental in persuading Gandhi to return to India with him in 1915.

When news reached India of the mistreatment of Indian indentured laborers in Fiji, the Indian Government, in September 1915, sent Andrews and W.W. Pearson to make inquiries. In their report, Andrews and Pearson highlighted the ills of the indenture system which led to a stop of further transportation of Indian labour to the British colonies.



Andrews made a second visit to Fiji in 1917 and was still appalled at the moral degradation of the indentured laborers. He called for an

immediate end to indenture and the system of Indian indentured labor was formally abolished in 1920.

About this time, Gandhi reasoned to Andrews that it was probably best for sympathetic Britons like himself to leave the freedom struggle to Indians. So, from 1935 onwards, Andrews began to spend more time back in Britain, teaching young people all over the country about Christ's call to radical discipleship. Gandhi's affectionate nickname for Andrews was Christ's Faithful Apostle, based on the initials of his name, "C.F.A". He was widely known as Gandhi's closest friend and was perhaps the only major figure to address Gandhi by his first name, Mohan.

Charlie Andrews died on April 5, 1940 during a visit to Calcutta, and is buried there. He is widely commemorated and respected in India.

Gracious God, you called Charles Freer Andrews to empty himself, after the example of our Savior, so that he might proclaim your salvation to the peoples of India and the Pacific Islands: By your Holy Spirit inspire us with like zeal to bring together people of every race and class, that there may be one Body and one Spirit in Jesus Christ, our Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your needy neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought, thinking, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near', and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt. Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.'

Psalms 113

- 1 Hallelujah! Give praise, you servants of the LORD; praise the Name of the LORD.
- 2 Let the Name of the LORD be blessed, from this time forth for evermore.
- 3 From the rising of the sun to its going down let the Name of the LORD be praised.
- 4 The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.
- 5 Who is like the LORD our God, who sits enthroned on high, but stoops to behold the heavens and the earth?
- 6 He takes up the weak out of the dust and lifts up the poor from the ashes.
- 7 He sets them with the princes, with the princes of his people.
- 8 He makes the woman of a childless house to be a joyful mother of children.

Matthew 23:8-12

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

