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Yesterday, today, and tomorrow: Grey College in Bloemfontein as living legacy of Andrew Murray as educationalist

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Abstract

Rev. Dr Andrew Murray Jr became a well-known theologian in the history of South Africa. He wrote many books and played a founding role in establishing the Huguenot College in Wellington in the Cape Colony. A lesser-known fact is the important role that he played in the founding of one of South Africa's top schools - Grey College in Bloemfontein. Hy did not only play a founding role but was also the first rector of the school. When looking back at the role that Andrew Murray played as an educationalist, Grey College serves as an important part of his living legacy, which did not only contribute to the history of the country but will also do so in the future. The focus of this article is to describe how Andrew Murray contributed to the founding of Grey College and how he became the first rector. To do justice to his legacy, the article will also explore how the roots of education in South Africa go back to the Reformation and how that influenced Murray while he was educated in Scotland and the Netherlands. Cooperation between church and state to serve the purpose of education was therefore nothing new to Murray. It was his collaboration as Dutch Reformed minister with Sir George Grey, governor of the Cape Colony, that made the founding of Grey College possible.

Keywords

Dr Andrew Murray Jr; Grey College Bloemfontein; founder; rector; legacy; educationalist

Introduction

The legacy of Dr Andrew Murray as an educationalist is 45 Springbok rugby players. This tongue in the cheek remark refers to the fact that Grey College

Secondary School produced 45 Springbok rugby players in its glorious history – more than any other school in South Africa. The question may be asked how this is part of Andrew Murray's legacy as an educationalist. The answer is to be found in the fact that Andrew Murray played a cardinal role in the foundation of the school. That is the focus of this article. The article will describe the role that Murray played in founding the school to celebrate his contribution as educationalist in the history of education in South Africa.

Grey College is recognised as one of the top secondary schools in South Africa. In 2021 the school has 1 177 learners and 71 teaching staff. They are supported by a large support staff consisting of administrative staff, hostel staff, caretakers, museum staff, sports coaches, physiotherapists, security, and cleaning personnel (Rossouw 2021).

Where did it all start?

At the end of 1855, Sir George Grey, governor of the Cape Colony, decided to visit the Orange Free State. One of the shortcomings which became evident during his visit was the lack of education. After a visit to Bloemfontein, he continued his journey to Winburg, where the presbytery of Trans Gariep convened. It was during this meeting on 17 October 1855, that Sir George Grey pledged £2 000 for the opening of a Seminary (Kweekschool) in Bloemfontein (Grey College 1955:4). Grey decided to leave the project in the hands of the Church because it was the least subject to the political turmoil of the small republic. The presbytery appointed a commission of three, namely Pres. J.N. Boshoff, Rev. Andrew Murray and Mr J.D. Griesel to oversee the founding of the seminary. The £2 000 was deposited in the name of Andrew Murray, who was the secretary of the "Commissie".

In his opening address to the "Volksraad" in February 1856, President Boshoff mentioned that three stands had been purchased for £320. The land purchased, was stands no 13, 14 and 15 Douglas Street, which belonged to W.W. Collins and A. Bain. The Commission of three who was appointed by the presbytery namely J.N. Boshoff, Andrew Murray and J.D. Griesel acted as trustees and signed the necessary documents. FJ Joubert and JW Spruyt acted as witnesses (Grey College, 1955:6). The Act consisted of twelve

Clauses. In the document the trustees accepted the responsibility for Grey entrusted to them. It also stated that Greek, Latin, Dutch and English would be taught at the seminary. Grey donated a further £3 000, and a building plan was drawn up, which was approved by the Office for Public works in Cape Town. In August 1856 the Commission ordered 100 000 bricks and 100 loads of stone for the first buildings. The cornerstone was laid on Monday 13 October 1856, after Murray preached on the importance of the seminary on Sunday 12 October 1856. The next day most of the inhabitants of Bloemfontein walked in a procession to the stand where the cornerstone was laid by President Boshoff.

The construction of the building was a long and expensive undertaking. Most of the building material had to be transported from Port Elizabeth by ox wagon. The roof of the building was designed and built in Cape Town and shipped to Port Elizabeth before being transported to Bloemfontein. After the building was completed, the school officially opened its doors on 17 January 1859 (Grey College 1955:7).

Initial challenges

Together with the construction of buildings for the school, a process was also started to find a headteacher for the school (*Grey College School Magazine* 1916:202). In August 1856 the Commission decided to ask the government for financial assistance. The Volksraad was asked for a sum of £180 per year as well as the interest on the sum of the £3 000 which was donated by Sir Grey as salary for a headteacher. The approval of this request was an important indicator that the church and state were serious about cooperation in establishing a school in Bloemfontein.

The first person who was approached for this important position was Rev. G.W. Stegmann from Cape Town. He had experience as a teacher and was well known to Sir George Grey. The fact that he declined the calling was "een slag voor de nieuwe school" (*Grey College School Magazine* 1916:202). It was only two years later, on the meeting of the Commission on 7 October 1858, that Rev. Andrew Murray volunteered to act as temporary headmaster of the school. This was accepted by the Commission and approved by the presbytery of Trans Gariep. This decision meant that Rev. Andrew Murray became the first headmaster of the school. The importance of this development was reported as follows:

Het grootste voordeel van zijn belangeloze toewijding lag hierin dat een man als Andrew Murray bij de aanvang van het bestaan van onzer school als hoofd is opgetreden, om daardoor het vertrouwen van het publiek voor de jonge inrichting te winnen en haar stempel van zijn gees ten karakter op te drukken. Het is daardoor dat hij verdient naast Sir George Grey als een grondlegger van onze School beschouwd te blijven, en dat een van de kostinrichtigen van het Nieuwe Kollege terecht de naam heeft ontvangen van "Andrew Murray Huis" (*Grey College School Magazine* 1916:203).

The important role that Murray played can only be understood within the context of his own early history and his reformed roots.

The reformed schooling system in the Cape of Good Hope

Murray's reformed roots can be traced back to the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652 (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994:11). Although Van Riebeeck was sent to start a refreshment post for ships from Europe en route to India, the refreshment post quickly grew into a Dutch colony where the Dutch school system was introduced. The Netherlands was one of the countries in Europe where major development of school systems took place and compulsory education was adopted on a nationwide scale (Zabilka 1989:88). The important Synod of the Hague in 1586 provided for the establishment of schools in the cities. This decision was followed by the Synod of Dordt in 1618, which decided that provision had to be made to establish schools in all villages under the control of the civil magistrates to give free instruction to the poor (Butts 1955:208).

The Dutch education system was strengthened by the arrival of the Huguenots in the Cape in 1688 (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:13). With the proclamation of the Edict of Nantes in 1598 religious freedom was given to the Protestants, leading to the implementation of the Genevan form of education¹. Following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, these schools were closed, and the Huguenots fled France. A group of these Huguenots arrived in the Cape of Good Hope in 1688, bringing with them their own Protestant model for education. This confirmed the foundation of the

¹ This was implemented in more than 200 towns all over France. This meant that schools were developed on the lowest level in every village and town.

model of reformed education in the Cape, which was the fertile ground from which Grey College was founded. It was based on strong cooperation between Church and State. The cooperation between Sir George Grey, governor of the Cape Colony as representative of the state, and the presbytery of the Trans Gariep as representative of the church, confirms this. This was also the model to which Andrew Murray became accustomed in his own education. It is therefore important to give a short overview of the Reformation and education.

The Reformation and education

Luther on education

When looking at the topic of the Reformation and education, it is important to start with the work of Martin Luther. According to Hill (2007:1), Luther's first formal treatment of the topic of education is found in his treatise of 1520, *To the Christian Nobility*, where Luther also proposed a list of reforms throughout the German states, including proposals on education. According to Luther, the education system of his youth served the devil by leading the youth away from God's word and the pure Gospel. The complete rejection of education would, however, serve the devil's evil purposes even better. He, therefore, proposed not only a church reformation but also the reformation of the educational system (Hill 20017:4).

Luther proposed truly Christian schools, emphasising that the freedom to provide sound Christian schooling was the very freedom of the Gospel itself. This is confirmed by his treatise of 1524 To the Councilmen of All cities in Germany that they establish and Maintain Christian Schools (Martin Luther's works [American Edition], Vol. 45:347-378). After a brief introduction, Luther described the condition in schools as follows: "First of all, we are today experiencing in all the German lands how schools are everywhere being left to go to wrack and ruin." He then continues: "The universities are growing weak, and monasteries are declining ..." (Martin Luther's works [American Edition] Vol. 45:348).

Luther then emphasised the importance of the schools for the welfare of the church and home and world (Hill, 2007:4). Councilmen, as the keepers

of the public purse, were urged to make the funding of schools a great priority. He stated:

For it is a grave and important matter, and one which is of vital concern both to Christ and the world at large, that we take steps to help our youth [...] My dear sirs, if we have to spend such large sums every year on guns, roads, bridges, dams and countless similar items to ensure the temporal peace and prosperity of a city, why should not much more be devoted to the poor neglected youth – at least enough to engage one or two competent men to teach?" (*Martin Luther's works* [American Edition] Vol. 45:350).

He further believed that the German cities had to seize the opportunity while they still had it: "We have today the finest and most learned group of men, adorned with languages and all the arts, who could also render real service if only we would make use of them as instructors of young people" (*Martin Luther's works* [American Edition] Vol. 45:351).

Luther stated further that it was the responsibility of the government of the day to provide decent schools because "Christian schools cannot be focused solely upon the spiritual realm but must provide education that serves the world." He furthermore understood the need for children of the day to be home, do chores and learn a trade, and consequently proposed that study and work will go hand in hand while the boys are young and able to do both (*Martin Luther's works* [American Edition] Vol. 45:370). According to Hill (2007:15), Luther's stance on education is further illustrated in a letter to the elector, John of Saxony, dated May 20, 1530 in which Luther pointed to Christian schools and well-indoctrinated children as the first and brightest evidence of the blessing of the pure Gospel.

In 1530 Luther addressed the problem of parents taking their students out of school in favour of "trade and commerce". According to Hill (2007:17), in the tract entitled *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School (Martin Luther's works* [American Edition] Vol. 46:213-258), Luther condemned materialism that led parents to focus only on the economic success of their children instead of providing for the needs of church and state. Luther urged pastors and preachers to take a leadership role in exhorting parents to keep their children in school, lest the devil "have his own way with our offspring" and "the Scriptures and learning disappear" (Hill, 2007:17). On the importance

of teachers, Luther wrote (*Martin Luther's works* [American Edition] Vol. 46:252-253):

I will simply say briefly that a diligent and upright schoolmaster or teacher, or anyone who faithfully trains and teaches boys, can never be adequately rewarded, or repaid with any amount of money, as even the heathen Aristotle said ... I know that the next to that of preaching, this is the best, greatest, and most useful office there is.

He again emphasised the gravity of the need for sound education:

For here there is a worse war on, a war with the evil devil, who is out to secretly sap the strength of the cities and principalities, emptying them of their able persons until he has bored out the pith and left only an empty shell of useless people who he can manipulate and toy with as he will (Hill 2007:19).

In his treatise *On the Councils and the Church* of 1541, Luther referred to the work of pastors and teachers as people "who plant and cultivate young trees and useful shrubs in the garden". He observed that education had originally been the primary task of the monasteries. He summarised:

The schools must be second in importance only to the church, for in them young preachers and pastors are trained, and from them emerge those who replace the ones who die. Next, then, to the schools comes the burgher's house, for it supplies the pupils; then the city hall and the castle, which must protect the schools so that they may train children to become pastors (Hill 2007:22).

It is clear from the above where cooperation between the state and church started as happened with the founding of Grey College. The cooperation between Sir George Grey, governor of the Cape of Good Hope and the Dutch Reformed Church presbytery of Trans Gariep, as well as the fact that Rev. Andrew Murray as minister of the DRC congregation in Bloemfontein availed himself as the first headmaster, all stemmed from the educational system that developed from the Reformation. Although Luther laid the foundation, other important role players also call for our attention.

John Calvin and other important role players

Another influential reformer who led the way in the formation of schools, was John Calvin. He was an important organiser of schools in Geneva and was primarily concerned with a method of organising schools to accomplish the goal of training a Bible reading laity and an effective clergy (Zabilka 1989:83). Calvin recognised that the success in developing a strong church was difficult with an uneducated laity. The core of Calvin's contribution to education in Geneva was, therefore, to make sure that the state promotes literacy by providing schools. One of Calvin's most important contributions to reformed education was the recruitment of good teachers. In his Ordinances of 1514, he therefore included teachers under the same discipline as ministers. According to Calvin, they had to be good pedagogues and theologically trained (Zabilka 1989:86). McNeill (1949:167) stressed that Calvin also emphasised that all children should have equal educational opportunities regardless of birth or wealth.

Hanko (2016:20) describes Calvin's practical contribution to education as follows:

Calvin himself put a great deal of effort into the founding of the Genevan Academy; he campaigned for funds, established the curriculum, set the regulations and was one of the lecturers. Under Calvinist auspices the University of Heidelberg was formed, and new universities were founded in Edinburgh, Cambridge, Leiden, Franeker, Groningen, Amsterdam, Utrecht, Nimes, Montpelier, Montauban, Saumur and Sedan.

The last reformer who calls for our attention is John Knox – the reformer of Scotland. Knox attended the "most perfect school of Christ on earth" in Geneva and took back to Scotland what he had learned. Greaves (1980:202) confirms this when he writes: "Knox's proposals for educational reform, developed in conjunction with his Scottish colleagues, surely stand in comparison with the educational views of other Protestant leaders and had a direct influence on Andrew Murray who received his education in Scotland." The Church of Scotland's *Book of Discipline* (1560), of which Knox was one of the authors, speaks clearly and in detail of the need for Christian schools, Christian schoolmasters, compulsory education, of a

curriculum of different grades of education and even of salaries of school staff (Hanko 2016:22).

According to Hanko (2016:23) the Reformers agreed on the importance of the following basic principles of Christian education. They were:

- The education of children must be religious education. This was confirmed by Luther when he wrote: "I would advise no one to send his child where the Holy Scriptures are not supreme. ... I greatly fear that universities, unless they teach the Holy Scriptures diligently and impress them on the young students, are wide gates to hell" (Jacobs 1931:207).
- The reformers believed in the education of the "Christian Man", that is, in a broad liberal arts education that would fit each believer for his place in the church and in society, as one is able to glorify God in every calling. They believed in an education that was neither merely catechetical nor vocational.
- The Reformation saw the church and its wellbeing and the sanctified life of God's people, which is part of their salvation, as the primary goal of education. They did not look for the establishment of a Christian society, or even fundamental changes for better in society as the goal of education, though most of them believed that the civil state as well as the church would be served through education (Hanko 2016:24).

The Reformation did not only change the church forever, it also changed education. Hanko (2016:1) is correct when he states:

The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century was not only a reformation of the church and of doctrine but also of education. [...] The principles of the Reformation, especially the doctrinal principles, demanded and brought about a new emphasis on education and far-reaching changes in education.

Hanko (2016:2-3) continues: "[...] before the Reformation, education was neither widely available, nor of much value. The Middle Ages are also in the history of education the 'dark ages' of education. It was the Reformation that promoted compulsory education for all children". [Luther and Calvin, at least, thought that girls as well as boys should go to school.]

It is clear from the above that the Reformation had a vast influence on education in Europe. It was this European model that was transferred to the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. It was also the model which Andrew Murray came to know when he was sent to Scotland for his education.

Andrew Murray, the Reformation, and education

As part of Lord Charles Somerset's plan to promote English as the official language after the Cape Colony was ceded to Britain in 1815, he introduced ministers from Scotland. One of the important ministers who came from Scotland on the invitation of Rev. George Thom was Andrew Murray Sr (Du Plessis 1920:15). He arrived from Scotland in 1822 and was placed in the congregation of Graaff-Reinet (Van der Watt 1976:27) Rev. Murray Sr married Maria Stegman. Dr Andrew Murray Jr was the second child born from their marriage, which meant that he was of Scottish descent through his father and from Afrikaans-German descent through his mother (Pass 2016:356). As already stated, Scotland was one of the places where a national system of education was developed under the influence of one man, John Knox (Zabilka, 1989:91). Knox studied under Calvin in Geneva and took Calvin's ideas and model for education back with him to his native land. Zabilka is correct when he writes: "The catalyst for Scotland was the time John Knox spent with Calvin in Geneva around 1556" (Zabilka 1989:86).

Although schools did not have to be started in Scotland, Knox transformed the Scottish educational system. He observed the relation between Church and State and the power of the school system capped by the academy. Knox advocated educating girls in the same schools and the right of every child of talent to any level in the system. It was especially Rev. Andrew Murray Jr who strengthened the ideas of Knox in South Africa. Grey College would become one of the important examples of this point of view.

Andrew was born on 9 May 1828 (Du Plessis 1920:31). Due to the poor state of education in the Cape Colony in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, Rev. Andrew Murray Sr of Graaff-Reinet decided to send both his eldest sons, John, and Andrew, to Aberdeen, Scotland, where they were placed under the charge of their uncle, Rev. John Murray (Du Plessis 1920:41).

According to Du Plessis (1920:41) the decision was reached with heavy hearts, "for the voyage from South Africa to Europe in those days was protracted and dangerous. And the severance from their beloved boys must needs be, at best, for a long period of years." Andrew and his elder brother John departed for Scotland from Port Elizabeth in July 1838. After their arrival in Aberdeen in the autumn of 1838, they were enrolled in the Old Grammar School, where both excelled academically.

One of Andrews' first experiences of the role of the church in education is described in a letter to his parents dated 11 April 1844 in which he wrote:

The Rev. Mr. MacDonald of Blairgowrie has been here lately, collecting for a scheme for building five hundred Schools, giving £100 to each, which, however, will not in all places wholly build the school. At a public meeting he held here £1,942 was subscribed, and at a second public meeting the amount announced as having been collected in three days was £3,533, to be paid in five years by instalments. He requires £50,000, and wants yet about £10,000, which will soon be raised, however, as he is a very good beggar. Great efforts are also making in England for education, the Independents having agreed to collect £100,000 to build schools in connection with their Churches, and the Wesleyans are to raise the same (Du Plessis 1920:48).

This letter to his parents clearly illustrates how the Reformation influenced church and education in Scotland. That Andrew wrote in so much detail about the events to his parents also indicates his keen interest in the developments. This is confirmed by Rev. Andrew Murray's response to the letter of his son. In a letter dated 1 August 1844, he wrote: "I was much gratified by the news it contained respecting church schools in Scotland. I should, however, have liked that it had contained something more about yourselves, especially regarding your views as to what line of life you think of following after" (Du Plessis 1920:51). At the end of 1844, Andrew Murray decided to become a minister. After completing their M.A.'s at Marischal College in 1845, the following note was published in *South African Commercial Advertiser* of 30 July 1845:

Marischal College and University, Aberdeen

On Friday, the 4th of April, the degree of A.M. was conferred on several candidates after examination in the Evidences of Christianity, Latin, Greek, Natural History, Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Moral Philosophy and Logic, for seven days, among whom were Andrew Murray, Cape of Good Hope. John Murray, Cape of Good Hope. Of these candidates among the following were found entitled to honourable distinction, and in the following order of merit: William Henderson, Aberdeen. John Murray, Cape of Good Hope (Du Plessis 1920:55).

After completing their studies, it was decided that both brothers would further their theological studies at the University of Utrecht in Holland. This important decision brought them into contact with the Dutch educational system (Du Plessis, 1920:53). Andrew Murray Jr spent three years in the Netherlands before returning to South Africa in 1849 as a minister in Bloemfontein (Du Plessis 1920:85). In Bloemfontein, in the founding of Grey College, Murray played his first important role in education. When the College was formally opened on 17 January 1859, Murray was appointed as the first rector (Du Plessis 1920:167).

Murray was not only the first rector of the school. Brill further describes how Murray was also responsible for establishing the first home for boarders at Grey College. He wrote:

But a line is necessary to show how he and Mrs. Murray were led to undertake the onerous duty of providing a home for the first boarders who came to attend the College. On one occasion Mr. Murray heard his old friend Mrs. Allison, wife of one of the Wesleyan missionaries, tell of her experiences in providing a boarding-school for native girls. All the girls whom she and her husband had received into their home for Christian training had in course of time come to conversion. This simple narration suggested quite new possibilities to Mr. Murray. Hitherto he had looked upon boarding-schools in the nature of necessary evils. They might be needful, he thought, in some cases, but for the vast majority of children it was far better if they could receive their education without leaving their parents' home. He now realized that a boarding-school, under Christian influence, might become a

nursery of Christian character. It was this consideration that led him to offer the services of himself and Mrs. Murray to the Committee of the Grey College, and that led to his appointment as first rector of that Institution. They had their reward in the knowledge that, despite their brief tenure of the position, several of the lads entrusted to their care took a decided stand for Christ (Grey College Magazine 1917).

Dr Brill, for many years the highly respected rector of the College, has given us an appreciative account of Andrew Murray's connection with the Free State and Grey College. He concludes his account with the following words:

It is not the intention of the writer of these lines to follow Mr. Murray in his lengthy labours as pastor and minister in the Church of the Cape Colony. Most people will find the centre of gravity of his beneficent lifework in his achievements there. But for Free-staters, and above all for those who are connected in any way with Grey College, as directors, teachers, past or present students, the eleven years, from the commencement in 1849 to the end of 1859, will always be his most interesting period. For during those years, and as a consequence in no small degree of his faith and his consecration, the foundations were laid of the Dutch Reformed Church in this country, and those of Grey College likewise. That is why Andrew Murray's name, together with that of Sir George Grey, will be held in honour by our College as long as it exists. To have had two such men at the head of the history of our school will, we hope, always be looked upon, not only as a great privilege, but as an inspiration for the future.

These words of Brill became prophetic 80 years later when Mr Nelson Mandela visited Grey College on 28 November 1997. In his address he said: "Die vaardighede wat ons deur onderwys bekom, stel ons tot vele dinge instaat. Dit geld veral vir diegene wat bevoorreg is om skole en inrigtings wat goed toegerus is by te woon. Soos, byvoorbeeld hierdie skool, Grey Kollege."

He continued

We are saying that the challenges of reconstruction and development which we face today are even greater than those of the liberation struggle; that we need as much as ever the courage, patriotism, and commitment to justice above narrow self – interest which shone so strongly in Bram Fischer²; and that education brings an opportunity, and a duty, to contribute to the realisation of the ideals which his name represents. And we are affirming that education has an important part to play in nurturing the leaders of tomorrow. We count on the pupils of this school, present and future, to live up to these ideals. Together we can build the country of our dreams (Mandela, 28 November 1997).

Conclusion

When we look back at the role that Andrew Murray played in the founding of Grey College and the importance of the school in the history of South Africa, it mirrors what happened in Scotland. It was under the influence of Reformed ministers that education was transformed. Estep (1989:314) describes it in the following way: "The transformation of Scotland – from a barbaric land of lawless tribes and a decadent Catholicism marked by immorality and ignorance to one of the most enlightened, moral and devout lands on earth - was miraculous". This was largely due to the educational system implemented by the church and state. The founding of Grey College saw the same cooperation between church and state. History confirms that the principles of education, as identified by the reformers, also had a significant impact on society in South Africa. It was Sir George Grey and Rev. Andrew Murray who had the vision of a school for boys in Bloemfontein. Grey provided the funding and Murray the leadership to start a school that influenced the history of South Africa. It is, however, not only about the history.

In 2021 Grey College is ranked amongst the top schools in South Africa. This will continue and will therefore always be part of the legacy of Rev.

² Abram Louis Fischer (Bram) was an old boy from Grey College who became famous for his representation of Mr Nelson Mandela during the infamous Rivonia trial. Following the trial, he was himself put on trial and sentenced to life imprisonment

Andrew Murray. This statement is emphasised and symbolised by the coat of arms of Grey College.



The three orange circles represent three cannonballs which represent the values of faith, hope and love. Separately these three values are excellent characteristic attributes, but when they are combined, they are invincible. Each Grey boy should strive to embed each of these attributes deep in the heart.

The knight's head symbolises courage. This characteristic is essential in order to succeed in life and to overcome future difficulties. Many years ago, the knights head appeared on the emblems of untitled gentlemen. This is rather appropriate because even today, Grey boys are referred to as Grey gentlemen.

The white unicorn represents vigour and virility, and the white colour denotes peace. As indicated by the unicorn, every Grey boy must be ready to enter the world with peaceful intent yet vigour.

The sun symbolises the dawning of a new generation. A Grey education empowers boys to rise – ready to build on the legacy of past generations. Grey College is indeed part of the living legacy of the work of Andrew Murray.

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