Chapter 2
Student Days
(1903-1911)

Andrew was, as a student, in the shadow of a brilliant elder brother, not always a comfortable place to be; and on his own admission, he did not stand out as in any way exceptional in his own right. He still lived at home at 2 Morningside Park, and was therefore still both financially dependent on, and subject to, his father's authority.

The range of his studies was a wide and inclusive arts degree, incorporating: Latin, Greek, English literature (with the famous Professor George Saintsbury, whom he admired), logic and metaphysics (with Professor Pringle-Pattison, whom he liked), and fine art. The course was normally a three-year one, but Andrew managed to extend it to four (he erroneously said later, five)[1] by winning a fine art prize of £15 ('a substantial sum in those days', he remarked later), which, supplemented by an allowance from his father, enabled him to spend several summers in Paris, 'lodging in the Latin quarter' and continuing his fine art studies at the Louvre and elsewhere, in the company of a male French art student, to whom he had been introduced. Andrew's father seems to have been fairly indulgent when it came to educational expenses.

Andrew was keen, as Milton had been, to organise his own extracurricular studies (or what he called 'my own education'), which included wide reading (from Lao Tze to Baudelaire to Scottish ballads), writing poetry, studying Christian mysticism (particularly John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila), and sorting out his allegiance, or otherwise, to various philosophers. He declared himself 'a Berkeleian', adhering to Berkeley's form of *idealism* which maintains the essential individuality of entities created by the infinite mind, not the absolute idealism of Hegel, in which all finite persons are absorbed into an *Absolute*, which transcends personality. (This clearly links to aspects of Buddhism.) This was Andrew's first real freedom of mind and action; along with his studies, he made time for many excursions into the Border Country, which he grew to love.

1. *My Life,* unpublished.

His studies were divided into upper and lower divisions, with some lectures common to both, such as those on constitutional history, antiquities or literary history. In his first year, he studied Virgil, Martial, the *Ars Poetica* and undertook Latin prose composition. There was a fortnightly verse composition, metre, 'or some other special subject', and, twice yearly, in December and March, 'written examinations on the work done in the class'. In the summer, he began readings in the Greek authors: Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Plato and so on. 'Greek Verse Composition' was voluntary, unlike translation of 'unseen passages'. During the winter of 1904, he studied Aristotle's *Poetics* and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, passing his Latin and Greek exams that year. He passed logic and natural philosophy in 1905; English and fine art in 1906, and moral philosophy in 1907.

Recalling this time 60 years later, Andrew observed wryly: 'I look back on examinations as I look back on mountain mists, wondering how I came through them all'.[1] but in April 1907 he finally graduated with an 'Ordinary Degree of MA' in arts.

Little detail is known of his two summers in Paris, presumably in 1906 and 1907 (although his daughter Alison thought it was 1907 and 1908), as he had won the prize money which helped to finance it, in 1905. Internal evidence, however, suggests that as well as soaking up painting, sculpture and architecture, he also visited theatres and other places of amusement but strove to maintain his moral purity and chastity ('starved myself'), living as 'a St John the Baptist in the Latin Quarter'.

That the art, beauty and freedom of Paris impacted positively on Andrew is clear: it was a formative, perhaps transformative, period in his life. He wrote; he thought; he walked and explored; he became almost obsessed with Strauss' *Salome* (based on Oscar Wilde's play), in which sadomasochism raises its head, linking desire with death. In the summer of 1907, when it was performed in Paris, he saw five of its six performances.

His future was still undecided during this 'timeout' period between graduation and taking up a place at New College in 1908. Poetry was an ambition but not a means of livelihood. *City of Night* was probably written at this time:

> Each light is like a flashing gem
> Within her guilty diadem;
> The night is shed on her like hair
> That hides a face's dark despair.

1. *My Life,* unpublished.

The deadly river, too, glides by
Like some swift tiger, stealthily,
Its sinuous back all painted bright
With quivering bars of golden light.

And far above the city's jars
The ancient army of the stars,
That in a quiet, reproachful mood
Keep watch from God's own solitude.

Strongly visual, it personifies Paris as a woman wearing a 'guilty diadem' of lights, hiding her 'face's dark despair' behind her hair. Even the river Seine is 'deadly', its reflected lights likened to a tiger's bright yellow stripes. The stars are keeping a 'reproachful' watch over the city's activities, on God's behalf. Despite its conventional AABB verse structure, the poem's imagery is a graphic promise of things to come, as is the solemn mood. Here we see a young poet experimenting with imagery and tone, but also detect the moral distance he wishes to keep between himself and the city's vices.

Although he appears to have wanted to enjoy the moment and delay any decisions about his future as long as possible, circumstances were to force his hand: 'I hesitated a long time before deciding to enter the Church; the idea of the law was still in my mind; it was this hesitation that kept me five [*sic*, four] years at the university. What helped me to decide in the end was the case of my father. He had *somehow assumed* I would become a minister' (my italics).[1]

There was more to it than that, which Andrew omitted in his autobiographical writings, merely mentioning that: 'my brother had gone as a doctor to Singapore; he wrote home each week, till suddenly the letters ceased'.[2]

It was one of the skeletons in the family cupboard which remained there until his daughter Alison revealed it in 1997. It seems that David had left Scotland in 1905 to become a medical partner to a Dr T. Murray Robertson, in Singapore. All went well until 1907, after Andrew's graduation and second trip to Paris. When David's letters home stopped so abruptly, he was reported 'missing', but there was more to the story: in December 1907 he was mentioned in a court case involving the illegal dispensing of large amounts of morphine and forged prescriptions; then he was sacked by his employer, Dr Robertson, who put a dissociation notice to that effect in *The Singapore Free Press* in January 1908, five days

1. *My Life,* unpublished.
2. Ibid.

running. He obviously wished to publicly cut all connections with Dr David Young. In addition, it transpired that he was also wanted by the police about share transactions and 'other serious matters', according to the *Penang Gazette* of 8 January 1907.

Whatever the truth was, no one ever heard of or from David again. It seems unlikely that he committed suicide, since no body was ever found; but more likely that he escaped from Singapore, adopted a new identity and lived a new life somewhere else.

The effect of his disappearance on his mother was profound, and it was said that she never fully recovered from it; but his father apparently hoped that he might turn up in Paris, a city he loved. The Youngs had now effectively 'lost' two of their three sons, which put subtle pressure on Andrew to fulfil his father's wish for him to enter the Presbyterian ministry. It would also extend his student years by another four, giving him some extended freedom. In addition, he had been previously influenced by the preaching of Dr Alexander Whyte, of Free St George's, on Sunday evenings, and Whyte had a close association with New College, Edinburgh, which had been founded in 1850 as 'the Free Church's theological showpiece'.[1] Dr Whyte became its principal from 1909 to 1916, during three of Andrew's four years there.

Whyte was a remarkable man: very widely read amongst theologians of all persuasions, the poets and philosophers, and with an exceptionally ecumenical mind. His correspondents included Cardinal Newman and General Booth. He enjoyed close relations with his students, which included retreats, evenings in his study, and the foundation of the 'Alexander Whyte Theological Literature Prize' in 1897, to encourage the reading of theological literature by students, and essay writing. In his inaugural address as principal of New College, on 13 October 1909, which it is likely that Andrew attended, he chose to speak about his five predecessors as principal: Messrs. Chalmers, Cunningham, Candlish, Rainy and Dods.

Marcus Dods had been appointed Professor of the New Testament in 1889, and Whyte had been involved in the resulting controversy about the divine inspiration of scriptures and their 'sacred' nature. A generation earlier, Dods, a Professor Bruce of Glasgow, and Robertson Smith had been tried for 'heresy' in the General Assembly. Whyte had put up a spirited defence: 'Speaking broadly, we have on the one side . . . the conservative caution and sensitive reverence of the Church, and on the other, the keen, restless, insatiable spirit of modern critical

1. A.C. Cheyne, *The Transforming of the Kirk: Victorian Scotland's Religious Revolution*, St Andrew's Press, Edinburgh, 1982.

inquiry . . . the world of mind does not stand still. And *the theological mind will stand still at its peril*' (my italics).[1] Whyte was deeply concerned with the principle that inquiry should be free, and that 'the authority of scripture should find a more secure basis than the old, rigid theory of literal inspiration'.[2]

This had led, by the time that Andrew entered New College, to a more liberal theology, concentrating on the 'historical Jesus' and His teaching about the Kingdom of God. The arguments had hung on whether the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch), traditionally ascribed to Moses, were historical, supernatural or poetic. By 1908-09, it was widely accepted that Moses had *not* written the Pentateuch, nor David most of the Psalms, nor the Apostles most of the Gospels. Much of this new thinking and 'de-Puritanisation' of Presbyterianism had led to a revival of Christian philanthropy as well: between 1901 and 1914, the Scottish Christian Social Union was formed, partly as a result of crofters' grievances, unrest and agitation, and partly out of social conscience about slum housing, child welfare and unemployment. These concerns were indirectly political: a statement on 'The Social Teaching of Our Lord', put out by the Church Life and Work Committee in 1908-09, concluded: 'the mind of Jesus condemns all oppressive, unjust and alienating conditions of life and labour, and favours the more equal distribution of happiness and opportunity'.[3] This was quite radical thinking for the time.

Other movements were also afoot as Andrew entered New College: liturgical reform, an emphasis on sacraments and ministry, a new breed of Scottish biblical theologians, such as A.B. Bruce and James Denney. It is not stated what Andrew thought of any of this, but he must have discussed it with some of the lifelong friends he first met at New College, principally John and Donald Baillie, who both became professors of theology later; John Laird, who became a professor of philosophy; and Cecil Simpson, with whom Andrew spent a holiday in Germany. They were all keen talkers and walkers, who discussed theological issues, mysticism, poetry, and presumably much else besides.

Andrew perhaps learned his love of Dante, Thomas Browne and St Teresa from Dr Whyte, who lectured them and of whom Andrew remarked later: 'His sermons were powerful, but he was the best sermon himself.'[4] His wife, Jane Whyte, was an educated woman with an interest

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. A.C. Cheyne (as previously).
4. *My Life*, unpublished.

in literature, including poetry, and met Andrew at New College, inviting him several times to 'the Sabbath Supper'. On one of these occasions, Andrew remembered meeting the sister of W.B. Yeats (spelt 'Yates' in his manuscript), a poet he never liked.

More importantly, on another of these Sundays, he was invited at the same time as Miss Janet Green from Glasgow, who was staying with the Whytes for the weekend, and to whom Andrew was, by this time, engaged. Andrew had first met her through her brother, Harry Green, a friend of a friend, to whom he was introduced some time in 1909, in his first year at New College.

Andrew's pursuit and courtship of Janet seems to have been both rapid and unconventional. She was in her middle twenties, described as being tall, with a graceful figure, brown eyes, who wore her hair in a bun. She still lived at home, at 36 Princes Street, Regent Park, Glasgow, with her widowed mother, four sisters (Elizabeth, Alice, May and Margaret) and two brothers (Harry and Gresley). She occupied a semi-basement room in which she studied and slept. Andrew, being less than sociable, soon discarded the niceties of ringing the front doorbell and being shown down, for simply tapping her window and being let in that way! She had been courting a John Scott until Andrew's appearance. Scott eventually married Janet's sister Margaret, so the former rivals became brothers-in-law.

Janet's background was far more cosmopolitan than Andrew's: she had been born near Cape Town in 1883, the daughter of an architect and builder, Robert Green, originally from Belfast. Before moving to Glasgow in 1889, the family had also lived for a time in Cheltenham. According to her daughter Alison, Janet's had been 'an exceptionally lively and intellectually stimulating household',[1] so it is perhaps strange that Andrew took steps *not* to be part of it! Unusually for the time, Janet had entered Glasgow University in 1900, taking an honours degree in French and German language and literature in 1903. She then took an MA in Literature, Moral Philosophy and History in 1906, so she was better qualified than Andrew. The university calendar for 1903-04 shows her listed twice as a prize winner: in French Language and Literature, honours class, third prize, and in German Language and Literature, equal first prize, with two others. She was clearly a woman of some intelligence.

By the time that Andrew met her, she had just become a lecturer in English at Jordanhill College of Education in Glasgow. Writing about this period of his life over 60 years later, Andrew conceded that Janet's mother

1. Edward Lowbury and Alison Young, *To Shirk No Idleness* (Salzburg: University of Salzburg Press, 1997).

'may not *altogether* have approved of my entering the house in such a way; *perhaps* her father would have disapproved' (my italics, showing Andrew's poor perception of his effects on other people).[1] Robert Green had died in 1904 but had been very strict about his daughters' male visitors! But Andrew, characteristically, was not to be deterred.

They talked about literature and in the summer, when there were no classes at New College, or presumably at Jordanhill, they 'took a train or bus somewhere',[2] to beauty spots, or went hillwalking, or perhaps sailing. Their shared interests were mainly literature, outdoor life and sports. During term time, Andrew was granted the special concession of leaving the class of Dr Mackintosh, Professor of Dogmatics, fifteen minutes early, at 12.45pm on Fridays, in order to be able to catch the one o'clock train to Glasgow.

Whilst at New College, Andrew became (but did not remain) a vegetarian, presumably on some principle of animals' right to life. Other than that, he had two main problems at New College: one was an initial inability to learn Hebrew; the other, with trying to overcome his 'nervousness in the pulpit',[3] on 'preaching practice' in various churches. This is rather surprising in a man who had previously contemplated a career as a barrister! However, sermons at this time often lasted thirty to forty-five minutes. His first service was in a village in Fife; and in his final year at New College, he spent the whole summer in charge of a village church on the island of Mull – apart from a few visits to Glasgow – whose wildlife and fauna he greatly enjoyed. Along with the poet and the churchman, the naturalist in Andrew Young was a developing aspect of his psyche, as it had been from his Dalmeny days.

During his time at New College, his first book of thirty-one poems, *Songs of Night* (dedicated to his mother), was privately published, paid for by his father at the cost of £16, a goodly sum in those days. Although Andrew later said that they had been written whilst he was at university (i.e. between 1903 and 1907), several of them were probably written in 1909, the year he met Janet Green. For example:

> Her Hair.
> Believe me, Love, that I am tired
> Of flowers that blossom on a grave:
> All that I thought too sweet to have,
> And all that once I most desired.

1. *My Life,* unpublished.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

As one that in dim water dips
His hands, so I would feel the strands
Of thy hair rippling through my hands
And cool the fever of my lips;

And cease from all the strife and care
And interchange of song and sin,
And hide my hands and lips within
The sweet oblivion of thy hair.

Janet's was dark and abundant, though usually fixed up in a bun, but perhaps she took it down for Andrew?

Or perhaps this:

Merchandise.

I would not give thy coloured lips
That Love has crimsoned with his dyes,
For all the pomp of merchandise
That purpled seas in Tyrian ships;

Nor those deep eyes that overflow
With love, for all the lights that gem
And weave for Death a diadem
About his pale, imperious brow,

No gold dust out of distant lands
Nor all their wealth of woven ware,
Could buy this weight of lavish hair,
I hold like water in my hands.

But not thy lips nor languid eyes
I love, nor yet thy loosened hair,
But that sweet soul that dwelleth where
Stars slumber in wide azure skies.

One of the night-themed poems in the collection shows a clear link between the two 'loves', human and divine, especially in the second line of the third verse:

At Night.

This living darkness is to me
As thy dim-shadowed hair,
And in my heart the thought of thee
Is holy as a prayer.

For but to gaze into thine eyes
Or but to touch thy hand,
Stirs in me deeper mysteries
Than I can understand.

The sanctity of love is such
At thy lips' eucharist,
That other Love I seem to touch,
That filled the heart of Christ.

The word 'eucharist' is doubly unexpected here, given his churchmanship where the 'Lord's Supper' was a rare event, and the clear linking of *eros* and *agape*. A similar linking occurs in *Night Thought*:

O gracious Lips that I have kissed
And tasted in the Eucharist,
With you alone an answer is,
And yet no answer but a kiss.

This may also perhaps hint at his decision to be ordained, since the 'Spirit of God's Love', like his father's, was 'more a falcon than a dove', from which there was 'no hiding place'. This poem also reveals unconscious literary echoes from his reading:

A little while, and I shall be
At one with earth and air and sea

is reminiscent of one of Wordsworth's 'Lucy' poems:

rolled round on earth's diurnal course
with rocks and stones and trees

As a collection, *Songs of Night* is in some ways typically 'Georgian': mainly descriptive, especially of flowers (snowdrops, roses and daisies), landscapes and seasons. He uses conventional rhyme schemes, archaisms such as thee, thy, thine, O, art, thyself, fain, givest, and so on; along with some clichés: 'dizzying height', 'monstrous birth' (with its unconscious echo of *Othello*); and the sentiments can be bland and predictable. However, there are some arresting images, such as:

like a wound the sunset bleeds ('Landscape');

the scentless flowers of frost ('Winter');

and the use of pathetic fallacy (here, almost erotic):

And in the night an amorous moon
Sings to the sea a tender tune,
And all the star-encrusted sky
Shivers with silent ecstasy.

Personification and paradox are also apparent, as they were to be later:

Twilight folds her hands ('Nocturne')

The Leaf.
Sometimes an autumn leaf
That falls upon the ground,
Gives the heart a wound
And wakes an ancient grief.

But I weep not that all
The leaves of autumn die,
I only weep that I
Should live to see them fall.

Andrew clearly saw this himself – keeping only nine of the thirty-one poems to be reprinted in the *Collected Poems* during his lifetime, and also adhered to by his editors in the posthumous edition of 1985. The rest, he must have discarded as 'juvenilia' or apprentice pieces for the master craftsman he later became. Of the twenty-two poems later discarded, a number were on religious themes: *The Star in the East, The Passion, Prayer, The Sea,* amongst others. One of the simplest of these echoes George Herbert, a poet he admired, and is worth quoting in its entirety:

Vision.
Say not my Lord is dead;
Last night I saw Him in the flesh,
His wounds were red and fresh
The thorns about His head.

'These limbs of ivory,
And precious drops of sacrifice,
Rubies and pearls of price,
My Son, I paid for thee.'

I saw His pale lips move,
And His bright eyes were like a sword;
I cried, 'Have pity, Lord,
Thou woundest me with love.'

Other influences were clearly at work too: in *Song*, Andrew adopts a world-weary pose reminiscent of the Romantics:

> Wild grass and flowers that fall
> And winds and rains that weep,
> For I am tired of all
> Sweet things save only sleep.

A review in *The Gambolier*, in Edinburgh, dated 12 May 1910, notes that:

> *Songs of Night* is commendable not only as the work of an undergraduate, it is a book whose appeal is to everyone of refined taste in verse, whose ear is trained to the more hidden subtleties of melody and metre. Artistically conceived, artistically fashioned, soft with delicate half-tones, strong with the lustre of passion, Mr Young's is difficult to characterise.

Characterising Andrew's work was certainly to remain 'difficult'. Yet despite the 'rills/hills' rhymes, the vocabulary of death and constant references to things 'oppressive' and 'desolate', the collection shows a good sense of rhythm, repetition, and some experimentalism with literary devices and imagery. It is possible to sense, in the best lines, the poet to come.