

C. S. Lewis and George MacDonald

“He who seeks the Father more than anything He can give, is likely to have what he asks, for he is not likely to ask amiss.”

Pre Reading for Sunday, October 15: Phantastes—Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (pp. 29-58) and 22 (pp. 145-152)

Selected quotes from Lewis in his preface to *George MacDonald: An Anthology*:

“In making this collection I was discharging a debt of justice. I have never concealed the fact that I regarded him (MacDonald) as my master; indeed I fancy I have never written a book in which I did not quote from him.”

“...Most of my extracts are taken from the three volumes of *Unspoken Sermons*. My own debt to this book is almost as great as one man can owe to another: and nearly all serious inquirers to whom I have introduced it acknowledge that it has given them great help—sometimes indispensable help toward the very acceptance of the Christian faith.”

“...The Divine Sonship is the key-conception which unites all the different elements of his thought. I dare not say that he is never in error; but to speak plainly I know hardly any other writer who seems to be closer, or more continually close, to the Spirit of Christ Himself. Hence his Christ-like union of tenderness and severity. Nowhere else outside the New Testament have I found terror and comfort so intertwined.”

“... What he does best is fantasy—fantasy that hovers between the allegorical and the mythopoeic. And this, in my opinion, he does better than any man.”

“...It (the genius of mythopoeic story telling) arouses in us sensations we have never had before, never anticipated having, as though we had broken out of our normal mode of consciousness and “possessed joys not promised to our birth.” It gets under our skin, hits us at a level deeper than our thoughts or even our passions, troubles oldest certainties till all questions are reopened, and in general shocks us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives. It was in this mythopoeic art that MacDonald excelled. ...The great works are *Phantastes*, the *Curdie* books, *The Golden Key*, *The Wise Woman*, and *Lilith*.”

“...It must be more than thirty years ago that I bought—almost unwillingly, for I had looked at the volume on that bookstall and rejected it on a dozen previous occasions—the Everyman edition of *Phantastes*. A few hours later I knew that I had crossed a great frontier. I had already been waist-deep in Romanticism; and likely enough, at any moment, to flounder into its darker and more evil forms, ... “

“Now *Phantastes* was romantic enough in all conscience; but there was a difference. Nothing was at that time further from my thoughts than Christianity and I therefore had no notion what this difference really was. I was only aware that if this new world was strange, it was also homely and humble; that if this was a dream, it was a dream in which one at least felt strangely vigilant; that the whole book had about it a sort of cool, morning innocence, and also, quite unmistakably, a certain quality of Death, good Death. What it actually did to me was to convert, even to baptize (that was where the Death came in) my imagination. It did nothing to my intellect nor (at that time) to my conscience. Their turn came far later and with the help of many other clerics and men. But when the process was complete—by which, of course, I mean ‘when it had *really* begun’—I found that I was still with MacDonald and that he had accompanied me all the way and that I was now at least ready to hear from him much that he could not have told me at that first meeting.”

“...The quality which had enchanted me in his imaginative works turned out to be the quality of the real universe, the divine, magical, terrifying, and ecstatic reality in which we all live. I should have been shocked in my teens if anyone had told me that what I learned to love in *Phantastes* was goodness. But now that I know, I see there was no deception.”