

# Lewis on MacDonald

- ▶ “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.”
- ▶ “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.”

# Lewis on MacDonald

- ▶ “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.”

# MacDonald on Writing Fantasy

- ▶ “For my part, I do not write for children, but for the childlike, whether of five, or fifty, or seventy-five.”
- ▶ “A fairytale, like a butterfly or a bee, helps itself on all sides, sips at every wholesome flower, and spoils not one. The true fairytale is, to my mind, very like the sonata.”
- ▶ “... where (a writer’s) object is to move by suggestion, to cause to imagine, then let him assail the soul of his reader as the wind assails an Aeolian harp. If there be music in my reader, I would gladly wake it. Let fairytale of mine go for a firefly that now flashes, now is dark, but may flash again.

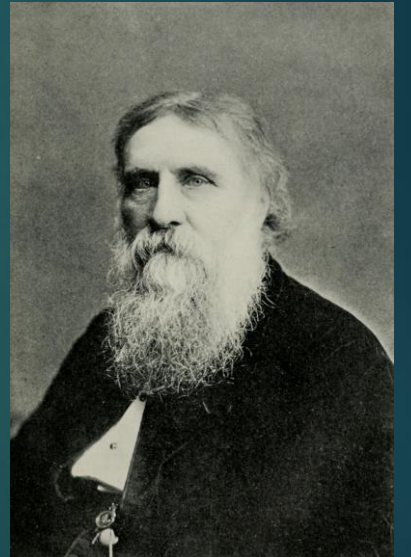
# MacDonald on Writing Fantasy

- ▶ “The best way with music, I imagine, is not to bring the forces of our intellect to bear upon it, but to be still and let work on that part of us for whose sake it exists. We spoil countless precious things by intellectual greed. He who will be a man, and will not be a child, must—he cannot help himself—become a little man, that is a dwarf. He will, however need no consolation, for he is sure to think himself a very large creature indeed.”

# Some brief facts on MacDonald



- ▶ Born 1824, Scotland, son of a farmer, who appears a remarkable man
- ▶ Had an extraordinarily good relationship with his father where, he said, he first learned that Fatherhood must be at the core of the universe.
- ▶ Baby brother died, 1829; Mother died 1832
- ▶ King's College, Aberdeen, 1840
- ▶ "Call" to ministry, 1850
- ▶ Charged with heresy by church deacons and salary reduced, 1852
- ▶ 1853 resigned, began career of lecturing, tutoring, occasional preaching, writing, and "odd jobs"
- ▶ Experienced great poverty, diseased lungs, reiterated failure, and incessant peril, yet rested in what he called "the holy present"
- ▶ Appears to have been a sunny, playful man, deeply appreciative of all really beautiful and delicious things...and no less deeply content without them
- ▶ Died, 1905



# Lewis on encountering MacDonald through Phantastes

In *Surprised by Joy* (1955), Lewis shares the moment of his first encounter with MacDonald which took place in 1916, when he was 18, just before WWI:

*“Turning to the bookstall, I picked out an Everyman in a dirty jacket, Phantastes, a Faerie Romance, George MacDonald. ...That evening I began to read my new book.*

*“The woodland journeyings in that story, the ghostly enemies, the ladies both good and evil, were close enough to my habitual imagery to lure me on without the perception of a change. **It is as if I were carried sleeping across the frontier, or as if I had died in the old country and could never remember how I came alive in the new**” (170-171).*

# Lewis on encountering MacDonald through Phantastes and continuing on with him

“Now *Phantastes* was romantic enough in all conscience; but there was a difference. ...I was only aware that if this new world was strange, it was also homely and humble;...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.” (Preface to *George MacDonald An Anthology*)

## Lewis on continuing encounters with MacDonald

*He writes on Aug. 7, 1918:*

“In my present mood few things have pleased me more than Macdonald’s *‘The Goblin and the Princess.’*”

*On January 11, 1925 he writes:*

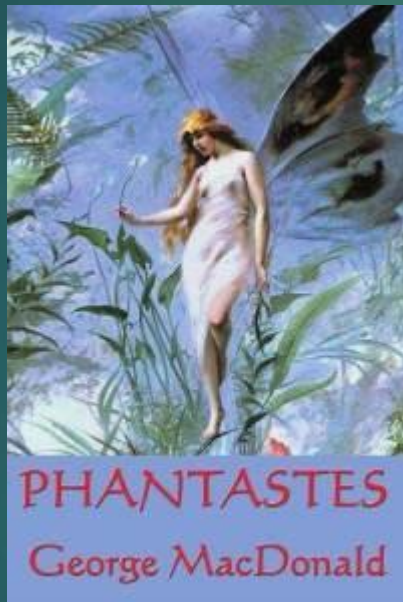
“After this I read MacDonald’s *Phantastes* over my tea, which I have read many times and **which I really believe fills for me the place of a devotional book.** It tuned me up to a higher pitch and delighted me.”

*On Sept. 1, 1933:*

“I have just re-read *Lilith* and am much clearer about the meaning.”



# Walking with Lewis into Fairyland



## What did Lewis encounter as he read *Phantastes* for the first time?

- ▶ A journey into Fairyland, an alternate reality of the imagination, yet dealing with foundational truths and questions especially applicable to a young man's journey in the real world.
- ▶ A 21 year old protagonist, coming into his inheritance, and the discovery of a hidden fantastic secret
- ▶ A world of wonder and discovery and beauty and joy,--yet with risk and malevolent danger. Where one is given life giving gifts, but can also destroy that which is exceedingly beautiful.
- ▶ A land where real evil and real good dwell and choices have dire and seemingly unfixable consequences, yet where rescue and comfort appear when most needed.
- ▶ The pursuit and loss of a beautiful woman, betrayal and deception, .

# What did Lewis encounter as he read *Phantastes* for the first time?

- ▶ An impulsive hero who repeatedly disregards warnings, leading to falls, losses, despair and bondage, yet experiences the repeated return of grace, comfort, rescue and restoration
- ▶ A battle with giants, costly victory, followed by fall, bondage and despair and facing of self
- ▶ More grace, rescue, and transformation
- ▶ A resolution based on humility, leading to service and sacrifice

# Some Underlying Foundational Life Questions to be Wrestled With—Especially for Young Men

- ▶ Is there a reality beyond our senses?
- ▶ Who will I become? A knight in shining armor? Or a miserable failure as a man?
- ▶ Is there anything worth living/fighting for?
- ▶ What does it mean to love a woman?
- ▶ What can I do with my failures and self-loathing?
- ▶ Do I have what it takes to fight and overcome a terrible great enemy?
- ▶ Where is contentment found?
- ▶ Am I willing to give all to rescue the perishing and right a great wrong?
- ▶ Who am I really?

# Entering Fairyland

Does anything about Anodos' conversation with the tiny woman remind you of a conversation we heard in a Lewis' story last week?

Does the transformation of Anodos' bedroom and the entry into Fairyland contain qualities reminiscent of another passage from a Lewis story?

# Inside Fairyland

## Chapter 5

- ▶ The Woman in Marble—application for us?

## Chapter 6

- ▶ The Fallen Knight—do we learn from others?
- ▶ The Aldertree Witch—the question of beauty

## Chapter 7

- ▶ The Sensible Husband—belief and unbelief

## Chapter 8

- ▶ The Ogres House—consequences of the fall?

## Chapter 9

- ▶ The shadows effects—the devastation of our choices

## Chapter 22

- ▶ The Mirror Knight, the Tower, the Rescue—impact on us?