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## Rethinking the Dark Side: MacDonald's Subversive Challenges to "Enlightened" Theories of Social Darwinism

Kerry Dearborn

"I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings from of old, glorious deeds of the Lord and his might and the wonders he has done."  
Psalm 78:2

**I**t is fairly routine to understand the context in which MacDonald lived as heavily shaped by the Enlightenment. His was an era when many bowed to reason as the supreme good. Rationality, scientific discovery, and empirical methodology were associated with light, and darkness was aligned with ignorance, evil, and ominous mystery. "Dark Ages" was a phrase applied to periods of history considered less rational and educationally oriented, and more captive to mythological beliefs than scientific ones. Dark skin was associated with mental and moral inferiority. Dark imaginings were associated with artists, people of color, and women. And dark curses and malevolence were attributed to the disabled.

Discriminatory anthropological theories virulently grew in the 19th century. Such theories had already grown in the soil of prejudice for generations and even centuries, but during MacDonald's lifetime they were given the strengthening fertilizer of pseudo-scientific rationalism and methodology. Prejudicial theories were useful to a ravenous empire seeking to swallow up other nations and extend its reach and control to the far ends of the world—particularly since people in desirable lands were primarily dark-skinned. To be able to discredit dark-skinned people through scientific, so-called empirical, methodologies, was to create powerful rationales for conquering their lands and bringing Western forms of civilization, education, and even salvation to so-called "dark savages." Thus, Alfred Russel Wallace presented his ideas to the Anthropological Society in 1864, stating that "more mentally and morally advanced and socially cohesive races would overtake, conquer, and ultimately exterminate the less advanced, just as in the animal and plant world, more fit varieties eliminated inferior varieties" ("Race and Evolution," 68).

It was during this period that, according to social scientists Jackson and Weidman, "All the resources of the new evolutionary science were now brought to bear as organizing concepts, models, and metaphors on the pre-evolutionary goal of explaining and justifying the inferiority of Asian,

African, and American Indian peoples” (“Race and Evolution,” 63).

Such theories were also effective in justifying the use of British resources for only certain members of the population and denying them to others. If science could document the idea that people of color, immigrants, women, and those who are disabled are less human, less rational, and less able to be educated, why bother with allocating money for educating and training them?

George MacDonald employed his own theological insight and imaginative gifts to resist such discrimination and dehumanization of women, people of color, and those with disabilities throughout his works. Much has been written of MacDonald’s advocacy for women, even the fact that he taught at a women’s college, and that often his heroines, and even a Christ figure in his books were female. In this article I would like to focus also on MacDonald’s radical challenges to the theories of his day that ascribed full humanity and normalcy to white aristocratic British males, and tended to view other people as outside the norm, or as part of those considered less fit for society and for life.

Based in his biblically-informed and Celtic worldview, MacDonald offered a number of paradigm shifts in his work that challenged and disrupted dominant ways of thinking. First, he challenged the very binary kind of thinking that attributed what is good to the light, and what is bad to the darkness.

Second, he challenged the negatively weighted associations of darkness and depravity with women, people of color, those who are poor, disabled, struggling with addiction, and/or with violations of the law. And he challenged the implications drawn from such negative associations, which justified eugenics, prejudiced allocation of resources, and limited access to education.

Third, he sought to bring out old and new treasure from the kingdom of God, the teaching of Jesus, and the values of the Celts to portray his belief that values of the kingdom of God are the inverse of those of the kingdoms of this world.<sup>1</sup>

### ***I. Challenging Binary Judgments about Light and Darkness***

First, MacDonald challenged the tendency to disparage aspects of our world that are linked with darkness. Certainly he wrote about the problems of moral darkness where a person would resist the light of God’s truth and love. He did not romanticize the notion of darkness or try to claim that it was superior to the light. Thus, Thomas Wingfold “looked for light in his darkness” (*Wingfold Curate*, 147). He yearned for wisdom and insight in the midst of his doubts and lack of faith. Wingfold was concerned that the “world had grown dark in its thinking” (159). Of the handsome, well-

educated, finely evolved, but morally weak George Bascombe, MacDonald wrote, he “had come out of darkness and would return to darkness” (32). MacDonald acknowledged associations of chaos and a return to non-being with darkness as well. MacDonald expressed his firm conviction through Mr. Polwarth to the dying Leopold, that God “will not forget you, for that would be ceasing to be God” (438). “If God were to forget for one moment, the universe would grow black—vanish—rush out again from the realm of law and order into chaos of night” (438). MacDonald did not idealize darkness, for he recognized the goal of becoming a people who walk in the light of God’s loving presence, associating his beloved Lord with the “Father of Lights.” But he also saw redemptive purposes and value to darkness that will be discussed later in this paper, and he was unwilling to associate God’s redemptive purposes with the light alone.

Throughout his work MacDonald both included and challenged a number of negative views of darkness that have been fairly pervasive throughout history. He agreed with biblical descriptions such as: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” “If the light within you is darkness how great is that darkness” (Isaiah 9:2; Matthew 6:23). But he was willing to challenge views that categorically identified darkness as bad, and then extended and exploited those views to justify dehumanizing approaches to others who were correlated with darkness. As Willie Jennings has carefully described in *The Christian Imagination*, colonializing endeavors took advantage of some biblical and archetypal categories related to darkness and light to build a foundation upon which greed, territorial growth, and ethnocentrism would appear noble and good. If one could develop a framework in which anything linked with darkness would be associated with depravity and destructiveness, and anything related to light would be associated with goodness and illumination, it could serve well the purposes of those who were lighter skinned and had the power of determining who and what fit into each category. As Brian Bantum elucidates, “The story of race is the story of painting guilt upon the dark bodies of the world” (Bantum, 62).

Before describing MacDonald’s debunking of typical correlations of various types of people with the light or the darkness, this article will explore his challenges to the framework itself, the binary thinking that affirmed the light as good and darkness or night as bad. Because he was grounded in the biblical narrative he considered both night and day, darkness and light, as part of God’s very good creation. The darkness of moral depravity was not to be equated with God’s good creation of night and the gifts that can arise from times, seasons, and creatures connected in any way with darkness.

In fact, the day as described in the creation story of Genesis begins with the evening, “and there was evening, and there was morning the first day...the second day...” (Gen. 1:5). Biblically, the day begins when the light

is fading and the darkness appears. Humans were created to embrace the reality of evening darkness in their day before ever awakening to the morning light. That means that the first job each day is to quit our activity and go to sleep. As Eugene Peterson writes, “The Hebrew evening/morning sequence conditions us to the rhythms of grace. We go to sleep, and God begins his work. As we sleep, he develops his covenant. We wake and are called out to participate in God’s creative action. We respond in faith, in work. But always grace is previous. Grace is primary. We wake into a world we did not make, into a salvation we did not earn” (Peterson, 34).

MacDonald may have been revealing the importance of such a rhythm in “The Shadows,” where the Shadows always went to church before going to work and in *Lilith*, in which Eve encourages Vane to sleep before he acts (“Shadows,” 91; *Lilith*, 36).

In *Lilith*, Vane’s first encounter with his “mentor,” Mr. Raven, happens “in the evening of a gloomy day in August” (6).<sup>2</sup> The process of transformation for Vane begins in the evening and moves into a dream-like experience. MacDonald surfaces typical concerns about darkness. There are numerous and fairly stereotypical suspicions raised about Mr. Raven, who is misperceived as “probably the devil himself” by an ancient woman of the village, (9) and who appears initially as a “shadow.” Can anything good come from such a dark shadowy creature, the reader wonders? We soon learn that he is a sexton at a certain “graveyard—cemetery, more properly” (20). Once Vane has crossed over into the other world, his “mentor” has become an “ancient raven,” “purply black” but “here and there softened with gray” (11). Vane correlates the experience of this other world with a kind of sleep in which its images and realities are like a dream, which to try to describe becomes elusive as when awakening from a dream (13). Early in their conversation, Vane tries to assert evolutionary and categorical valuations, “Am I wrong in presuming that a man is superior to a bird?” Raven’s response is quintessential MacDonald, “We do not waste our intellects in generalizing, but take man or bird as we find him” (14). The Raven “saw through accident into entity” (14). In his way, MacDonald is challenging essentializing ways of judging creatures according to the inherent, biological characteristics of their “group.”

The challenge for Vane in entering this dream-like world is to discover himself a relative “nobody,” to face the reality of death, and to rise to the challenge of finding himself at home, interconnected with all who originate from the one great heart (15). Yet, Vane is continually concerned with acting to “justify his existence” (23) to earn his food and his rest. Raven takes him to the cemetery by the church ruins on Vane’s actual property—a place where people still come to pray, but which Vane prefers to make a wilderness. He learns that people still come to pray to join their hearts with

the “one great heart,” the “one great Thinker” to send aloft prayers that become exquisite prayer-flowers, or soaring pigeons. All live things find their origin initially in this one great Source (25-26). “All live things were thoughts to begin with, and are fit therefore to be used by those who think,” he writes. This is the central basis from which all creatures are worthy and to be valued, that they were thoughts, dreams of the one Great heart and thinker.

Mr. Raven has led Vane into a secondary world to meet Raven’s wife in the midst of the “burial-ground of the universe” (27). Light and dark are used in interconnected and mutually enhancing ways throughout this selection. While dressed all in white,

The life of her face and her whole person was gathered and concentrated in her eyes, where it became light. It might have been coming death that made her face luminous, but the eyes had life in them for a nation—large, and dark with a darkness ever deepening as I gazed. A whole night-heaven lay condensed in each pupil, all the stars were in its blackness, and flashed, while round it for a horizon lay coiled an iris of the eternal twilight. What any eye is, God only knows: her eyes must have been coming direct out of his own!

The still face might be a primeval perfection; the live eyes were a continuous creation. (28)

Here we see darkness linked with the darkness from which creation emerged, with the very eyes of God, with primeval perfection, and with a “night-heaven” in whose blackness all the stars dwelt (28). This is darkness linked with death, and also with beauty, glory, and new creation.

Raven’s wife’s initial questions and comments draw out the parallels with the Hebrew concept of day, and express MacDonald’s work to denote the promises latent in welcoming aspects of the darkness. She asks, “Will he sleep?” Raven responds, “I fear not . . . he is neither weary nor heavy laden” (28). Here is an allusion to Jesus’ invitation to all who are weary and heavy laden to come to him (Matt 11:28). Somehow a willingness to sleep connects for MacDonald with awareness of need and coming with that need to Jesus. Vane’s response to this is, “surely a man must do a day’s work first!” “Let me first go home . . . and come again after I have found or made; invented, or at least discovered something!” Raven’s wife responds by speaking to her husband, “He has not yet learned that the day begins with sleep! . . . Tell him he must rest before he can do anything” (29).

Even after being given the great feast pointing to death and new life, bread and wine, and though he is tired and ready to sleep, when Vane realizes that sleep is somehow linked with dying and relinquishment of control, he plots his escape. Raven urges him, “Do not be a coward, Mr. Vane. Turn your back on fear, and your face to whatever may come. Give yourself up to the

night, and you will rest indeed. Harm will not come to you, but a good you cannot foreknow” (36). Allowing fear rather than faith to guide his response he rushes out of the cold sleep/death chamber and into a context where his self-assertiveness and autonomy can find expression. Throughout the book, MacDonald reveals that Vane’s rejection of darkness and dying has grave consequences for him and for others. He will remain both vane (as vacillating as a weather vane) and vain (self-absorbed) as long as he is unwilling to wrestle with truths that emerge in the darkness and new life that flows from death.

Throughout *Lilith*, Raven (or Adam), repeatedly urges Vane to sleep before he acts. Vane resists again and again, desperate to launch into his heroic activities, to be the savior, the victor, the center. But Raven knows that wise action must come from another source than oneself. It must come from the great heart, the great Thinker. One must sleep, even die to one’s own self-centeredness and temptation to make oneself God.

Vane desperately needs to come to terms with his own limitations, and to see that he is not the source, the center, the hero. Raven explains, “They cannot empty an egg but they turn into the shell, and lie down!” (29). Vane needs to sleep first, to admit his own dependency before he can emerge into the life for which he had been created, and awaken to the reality of which he is only a small part. He has to learn that he will cause a lot more harm than good when he insists on doing things his way, according to the rhythm of self-centered action rather than grace. This requires embracing the darkness, acknowledging his own limitations, and trusting in something greater than himself.

For MacDonald, throughout his books, night and darkness offer liminal space in which one can experience and accept one’s weaknesses, one’s need for others, and ultimately one’s need for God. In his short story, “The Shadows,” MacDonald portrays darkness and shadows as encouraging times of reflection, repentance and transformation (103). The shadows are “gentle and respectful” (92). The question is raised, “Can that be true that loves the night?” and the response of the Shadow is, “The darkness is the nurse of light” (97). Furthermore, he reveals that until one comes to terms with one’s limitations, it remains possible to live in the illusion of inflated self-importance and to inflict great damage on others. For Vane it was possible to travel around the strange new world in noble conquest mode, convinced of his good intentions, while leaving devastation in his wake (including ultimately the death of his beloved, Lona).

Similarly, Anodos in *Phantastes* is an aristocratic young white male come of age at the beginning of the book. Though he is given many guides—mostly female sources of wisdom, and though he repeatedly hurts the ones he loves because he trusts no wisdom outside of his own, he remains



largely a dangerous and clueless presence wherever he goes. MacDonald offers a complex view of darkness in this book. Anodos allows darkness and his shadow to play a damaging role in his life; however, darkness and nighttime are also the places of his deepest reckoning and preparation for transformation. Negatively, he acquires a shadow by entering into the church of darkness, a shadow that influences him to demystify the world and the others in it, to see them from merely an empirical, analytic mind-set. Rather than questioning and resisting the shadow, he becomes completely identified with it, and eventually allows it to imprison him in a windowless but roofless tower.

In contrast, it is what he experiences in the nighttime within that tower that helps him to grow and learn, to see the people whom he loves and his own past more clearly. Moonlit nights become the time of nurturing new wisdom and life in him, a womb in which he can grow to accept his limitations, his humanity, and his need for others. Ultimately he learns to acknowledge that he not self-sufficient, but rather weary and heavy-laden from all his efforts at self-generated grand deeds. He becomes capable of receiving the gift of forgiveness from the one he has most damaged, the girl whose musical globe he has shattered, whose greatest treasure he has violated. Unlike Anodos who sang the maidens free from imprisonment in marble in order to grasp and hold them, this maiden sings him free in order to liberate him from his shadow, from the prison tower, from his grasping form of love, and from the illusions of his own grandeur and nobility.

In these ways, MacDonald expressed depths of the human psyche that correlate with lived experience. For example, Anodos' nighttime experiences bear consistency with Jürgen Moltmann's (German theologian) own prison experiences as a German prisoner in Scotland during World War II. "When I lie awake at night and descend into the deep wells of memory, then suddenly everything is present again . . . the pains and the blessing are still in us, for they go with us wherever we turn" (*Source of Life*, 2). Nighttime for Moltmann was also a time of deep reckoning as MacDonald had conveyed in "The Shadows." "In the labor camps, the night of cold despair fell on us, and in that night we were visited, each in his own way, by tormenting, gnawing thoughts, but when we emerged, we saw 'that the sun had risen'. As a lasting reminder, as it were, each of us had somewhere or other 'his lame hip'—the scars of that time in body and soul. . . ." (2).

Even so, it is not difficult to think of numerous MacDonald stories in which he demonstrates the critical need to move beyond the devaluation of darkness and exultation of only the light. The "Light Princess" is shallow, insensitive, and even heartless until she can learn to cope with darkness, suffering, and pain. It is during the nighttime that Diamond encounters the North Wind in *At the Back of the North Wind*, grows in his active compassion



for others, and is empowered to face the ultimate trials of sickness and death. It is the nighttime in which he develops connections with others who are poor and suffering, and becomes available to assist even those more aristocratic who have fallen in status. Nighttime for MacDonald is often when “strength of soul” (Ps 138:3) is fostered in his characters.

In *Thomas Wingfold*, Curate MacDonald offers numerous descriptions that demonstrate his deep appreciation for God’s gift of darkness and night. MacDonald saw the potential of night being a nurturing space. Thus, he described “night on her nest, brooding on the egg of tomorrow” (136). For MacDonald, maturity was equated with being at “home with twilight” (160). Places described as dark spaces, such as Polwarth’s “dark parlor smelling of last year’s roses,” could be places of profound relational and spiritual encounter and wisdom (67). For those who were suffering and afraid, like Helen Lingard, the “covering wings of the darkness had protection in them” (109). And for MacDonald, “deepest midnights” are part of life’s welcome rhythms (417). Rachel, who was discriminated against because of her physical disability, thanked God for giving her the “health and riches of the night to strengthen me for the pain and poverties of the day” (206).

MacDonald offered praise for even the darker shades of things, proclaiming that, “the brown feathers of twilight were as beautiful as the wings of the silver dove sprung heavenwards (217). There is possibility in the darkness such that Helen hunts “around in the dark forest of her thoughts for some herb of comfort” (245). Night is a time when one can give one’s gifts and minister in anonymity (302).

Similar themes are evident in *Sir Gibbie*. Nighttime was when Gibbie went into action whether leading his drunken father home or cleaning a farm kitchen. MacDonald wrote of Robert and Janet’s cottage, “Night is as sacred as the day in that dear house” (274).

My favorite story of MacDonald’s in which he overcomes the binary view of darkness as bad and light as good is “Photogen and Nycteris.” Roger Lancelyn Green refers to this story as “one perfect short tale” reflecting MacDonald’s “highest peak” of writing.<sup>3</sup> Since much in that story correlates with my second main point I will continue to describe how MacDonald challenges negative views of night and darkness, while also exploring how through this story he challenges negatively-weighted correlations of darkness to women, people of color, those who are disabled, poor, and uneducated.

## ***II. Challenging pervasive tendencies to correlate darkness and depravity with those who are considered “other.”***

MacDonald challenged derogatory associations of darkness and depravity with women, people of color, people who are poor, strangers, and

struggling with disabilities, addiction, and violations of the law. And he challenged the implications drawn from such negative associations, which justified eugenics, lack of resources and unequal access to education.

I aim to show how in “Photogen and Nycteris” MacDonald begins with those constructed and commonly accepted correlations and then proceeds to deconstruct many of them.

In order to see how remarkably subversive MacDonald was, it is worth exploring more fully the nature and extent of these negative associations in his context. As described in Willie Jennings’s award winning book, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and Origins of Race*, “Christianity in the Western world lives and moves within a diseased social imagination” (Jennings 6). As he argues, this diseased social imagination did not just arise from the Enlightenment, but it did receive substantial fertilizer there (7). Prior to the Enlightenment, “Christian theological imagination was woven into process of colonial dominance” (8). Part of western Christianity’s ethos was to assert its superiority and priority wherever colonial efforts extended. “It claimed to be the host, the owner of the spaces it entered, and demanded native peoples enter its cultural logics, its ways of being in the world, and its conceptualities” (8).

A strong component of colonial conceptualities was the correlation of moral darkness with certain types of human beings, including and especially those defined as having dark skin, but it also included those seen as deficient according to western standards in any way. The convenience of these attributions is that they could be altered for various people groups over time for utilitarian purposes. During certain eras, people in Japan were described as being “white” according to the colonial logic, since they were seen as civilized and reasonable like the colonizers. East Indians were described as “black” and “therefore very difficult to improve and turn into good Christians” (32). At other times, the Japanese were described as “Niggers and their customs barbarous” (32). This was also true for the Chinese and for indigenous peoples in the Americas. When they cooperated with the colonial powers, they were considered light-skinned. When they refused to cede their land to the colonizers and co-operate with them, they were categorized as dark savages.

White rulers and power brokers ascribed to themselves the role of supreme Judge of other human beings and developed scales of value correlating their own whiteness with the top of the scale aligned with both intelligence and morality. Then they correlated whiteness with their determination of people’s capacity to be fully converted to Christian faith and to minister to others. The Jesuit Valignano (1539-1606) identified Africans with Jewish and Muslim converts (Christian Moors) in this way: “They are a very untalented race . . . incapable of grasping our holy religion or practicing

it; because of their naturally low intelligence they cannot rise above the level of the senses . . . they lack any culture and are given to savage ways and vices, and as a consequence they live like brute beasts . . . In fine, they are a race born to serve, with no natural aptitude for governing . . . like a sterile reprobate land which gives no hope of yielding fruit for a long time to come” (34).

As Jennings documents through a letter written by Zurara, the royal chronicler of Prince Henry of Portugal, he invokes in his writing “a scale of existence, with white at one end and black at the other end and all others placed in between” (23) Only those at or near the top were considered full human beings. Those below the highest attribution of whiteness were considered less and less human as the scale descended. Ultimately, “whiteness emerges not simply as a marker of the European but as the rarely spoken but always understood organizing conceptual frame. And blackness appears as the fundamental tool of that organizing conceptuality. Black bodies are the ever-visible counterweight of a unusually *invisible* white identity” which has become normative (25).

MacDonald was willing to defy such attributions of value based on skin color and claims of normativity. He offered a helpful contrast to these fairly pervasive theories, so deeply rooted in racial prejudice and in the self-aggrandizement of those who claimed the power to attribute normalcy to themselves.

To see a window into MacDonald’s response we now turn to the more specific contexts in which “The History of Photogen and Nycteris” was written. This short story was published in 1882, but began as a series in *Harper’s Young People* in 1879. It came out shortly after the British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, had proclaimed Queen Victoria as the Empress of India in 1877. Furthermore, MacDonald published it after his 1872 tour to the United States, which included Boston, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington DC, and Detroit. At that time racial segregation was common in these cities.<sup>4</sup>

The MacDonalds were largely based in Boston, where they met Harriet Beecher Stowe and were exposed to circumstances from which the “separate but equal doctrine” had already emerged. This “doctrine” would become known as “Jim Crow” laws,<sup>5</sup> which formalized practices already in place and which prevented contact between white and black peoples in all public facilities.<sup>6</sup> Boston, the only city in Massachusetts to segregate blacks and whites in school, had been segregating children according to skin color since 1798. The one school in which Negro children were allowed was greatly inferior to schools for those deemed white. “The school for the black children was rooms that were too small, paint much defaced, and with manifest evidence of shameful negligence and abuse. The yards were about

15 feet square and only accessible through a ‘dark, damp cellar.’<sup>77</sup> Segregation was justified theologically according to a theory of creation: “The real reason, according to the report, was ‘one of races, not of colors, merely.’ Having been established by the ‘All-wise Creator,’ the difference between whites and blacks existed in ‘the physical, mental and moral natures of the two races. No legislation, no social customs, can efface this distinction.’”<sup>78</sup>

Though school segregation in Boston was outlawed in 1855, Judge Lemuel Shaw’s opinion on the Massachusetts Supreme Court in 1849 became the leading precedent for Jim Crow laws, which would be established nationally by the US Supreme Court in 1896. Shaw’s opinion was “that Negroes are not denied equal protection of the law when provided with separate facilities that are substantially the same as those for white.”<sup>79</sup> MacDonald’s story depicts and deconstructs the notion of “separate but equal” and the theological rationales on which it was based.

The story begins by describing Watho,<sup>10</sup> who is something of a scientist conducting an empirical study of the affects of light and darkness on two different individuals. Watho is described as having white skin and as someone with a wolf in her mind and the desire to know everything: “She was not naturally cruel but the wolf had made her cruel” (241). MacDonald raises questions about her early on by calling her a witch, who cared “for nothing in itself, only for knowing it” (241). Her way of knowing is to separate, to divide, and to study not according to relations between things but for mastery over those things.

One of Watho’s guests (actually research subjects) is Lady Aurora, who is fair-skinned, though not white like Watho, according to MacDonald. Lady Aurora has golden hair, and heavenly blue eyes, and is housed in bright spacious apartments with southern exposure and plentiful sunlight. She is also given abundant resources of “musical instruments, books, pictures, curiosities” and Watho’s own charming company (241). Her food consists of venison and feathered game and her drink of pale sunny sparkling wine. Here we see a woman of privilege who is exceptionally well resourced.

Vesper, on the other hand, though beautiful, is a widow and without the status of being a lady like Aurora. Additionally, she has a disability, having lost her sight after her husband’s death. She has dark skin, black hair and black eyes with long black lashes. And she is given lodging in a tomb-like space carved out of rock that MacDonald describes as constructed after the tomb of an Egyptian King, and with a sarcophagus at the center of one of the chambers. Because she is blind she doesn’t know she’s lodged in a tomb, but is given rich carpets, silk lined couches, dark wine, pomegranates, marshy birds and purple grapes. Everything associated with her is “dark.” She is attended by wailful violins and sad tales. Both women are expecting the births of their first child.

In MacDonald's context, Aurora would be among those considered highly evolved who should continue to bear children. And for those who ascribed to theories of natural selection and/or eugenics, Vesper would be viewed by some as unfit to live or to propagate. In fact, Francis Galton, a cousin of Darwin's, published an article six years before this story came out in which he made such a claim. If the "non-gifted class" "continued to procreate children, inferior in moral, intellectual and physical qualities, it is easy to believe the time may come when such persons would be considered as enemies to the State, and to have forfeited all claims to kindness" (Galton, 129).

Even so in MacDonald's story Vesper, "the dark lady," dies after giving birth "in the dead of night" to a baby girl, whom Watho names "Nycteris" (244).<sup>11</sup> She also has dark skin and dark hair, but mysteriously has blue eyes. And she is raised in a way that reflects deprivations and discrimination often inflicted on those considered less worthy. She is never allowed to see the daylight, but is kept in the tombs where her mother had been lodged, and kept to a schedule where she is allowed to be awake only during the nighttime. The only education she is granted is by word of mouth (247). Watho intends that she will not have enough light to read and denies her access to books and to any light except that of a dull lamp. However, like many enslaved people in the US who were denied access to education, Nycteris is very eager to learn and coaxes Falca, her caregiver, to teach her to read. And she loves the one thing she is trained to do and that is to play her musical instrument. Her curiosity, intelligence, and hunger for more space, more room, and more light ultimately guide her out of her tomb and into her first experiences of nature and nighttime outside.

The fair Lady Aurora gives birth to a splendid baby boy as the sun is rising, but is falsely told that he died immediately after birth, which prompts her departure. The boy is named "Photogen" and is prevented from ever seeing any darkness.<sup>12</sup> Watho never allows him to "see anything black" or even "dull colours" (244). She tries to keep even the shadows from falling on him. She desires to so acclimate him to the sunlight that he can bear more than "any dark-blooded African" (244). This itself is a fascinating move for MacDonald to make in this story. The aristocracy was meant to be so white their superficial veins would be evident through their white skin—thus the term "blue-blooded." Sun-darkened skin was associated with the lower classes, and the peasants who had to work out in the fields. African flesh was considered "damaged flesh" and at the bottom of the scale, while white flesh was thought to be "unharmful flesh" at the highest end of the spectrum.<sup>13</sup> Here is a privileged young tanned man who is more like a 21st century traveler than a 19th century aristocrat. Photogen's "hair was of the red gold, but his eyes grew darker as he grew, until they were black as Vesper's" (244).

MacDonald is already deconstructing the idea of racial purity and revealing something of the fluidity of identities even within these rigidly fixed states.

In contrast to Nycteris, Photogen is given every resource necessary for a vibrant education and for growth. He is given wide open spaces to explore, multitudes of animals to hunt, the best training he could receive, and “pony after pony, larger and larger as he grew, every one less manageable than that which had preceded it, and [they would] advance him from pony to horse, and from horse to horse, until he was equal to anything in that kind which the country produced” (246). He is carefully protected from any darkness at all, so he grows up not knowing what fear is. “For the boy had been so steeped in the sun, from childhood so saturated with his influence, that he looked upon every danger from a sovereign height of courage” (247). When Watho commanded him never to be out when the rim of the sun should touch the horizon, “Photogen listened respectfully, but, knowing neither the taste of fear nor the temptation of the night, her words were but sounds to him” (247). Perhaps MacDonald is gesturing here toward male attitudes of women at the time.

The way in which MacDonald sets the story up connects with much of social Darwinian thought in his era and the adoption of “survival of the fittest” ideas from biology to sociology. Further description of the context will clarify the remarkable nature of MacDonald’s own approach. The English sociologist, Herbert Spencer, who is credited with developing the phrase “survival of the fittest,” was prominent in the efforts to adapt biological evolutionary ideas to sociological theories. In 1842 he argued that the government should not be responsible for education, building roads or administering charity (Spencer 76). People should be responsible to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, with no allowance for systemic injustice as a factor. In fact, if people were unable to provide for themselves and to compete, they should be deemed unfit and unworthy to survive.

Writing in 1851, Spencer argued that as with biological organisms, society also should “excret[e] its unhealthy, imbecile, slow, vacillating, faithless members” (78). And he attributed such social dynamics to providence. The suffering of the weak might seem unkind for the moment, but it was all for the greater good. “The poverty of the incapable, the distresses that come upon the imprudent, the starvation of the idle, and those shoulderings aside of the weak by the strong, which leave so many ‘in shallows and in miseries,’ are the decrees of a larger, far-seeing benevolence” (78). People were encouraged to take up their different stations in life and to attend to their own division of labor. It has been argued that people called social Darwinists should actually be named social Spencerians, since so many of these ideas came from Herbert Spencer rather than Darwin.

The theory was that “members of all the races lower than the



Caucasian had minds that were rigid and unadaptable, automatic or reflex in character, impulsive and uncontrolled” (“Race and Evolution,” 81). In fact, the so-called lower races had smaller and less evolved brains than those of the so-called higher races who had inherited a “larger brain mass” (80). “And the higher the race, according to Spencer, the greater the contrast between men and women in physical appearance and social role” (82). Such correlations of status with assigned gender roles and appearance were a convenient way to intensify binary gender polarities, largely to the advantage of the males and the disadvantage of females.

Though the “savage” and the Caucasian child were equated at times, Caucasian men were the only ones who were seen as full adults. “Women, the lower classes, and criminals were also childlike or savage, in certain ways. All were subordinate in different realms of life, all lacked the ability to look after or control themselves, and all represented lower positions on the unilinear scale” (83). “Victorian philosophers, scientists, and social thinkers equated and spoke in similar terms about women, children, peasants, laborers, criminals, madmen, Irishmen, and savages.” And there were warnings about the dangers of educating such primitive lower orders of humanity, especially “Negroes and women” (83).

In MacDonald’s story, Watho seems to be of a similar mindset, giving all the educational and training resources to the Caucasian male in this story. Photogen epitomizes white male privilege. He is led to believe that he is the master of all he sees. In contrast, MacDonald depicts Nycteris as very much falling into the restrictive life allotted to women and people of color: confined, domesticated, protected, and virtually entombed. Nycteris, like the women of her day, was expected to remain within the private sphere, and not to concern herself with other matters. Women were seen as more emotional and less rational, and prone to mental and physical illness (*Her Story*, 160). Thus the ideal woman was considered passive, weak, dependent, and in a state of perpetual childhood. As Barbara MacHaffie writes in *Her Story*, “In many nineteenth-century novels, the qualities of willfulness and independence belong to the world of white men, while white women, children, and black people are celebrated for their submission and the moral power that comes from this” (162).

MacDonald’s story initially reflects these presuppositions and then moves to deconstruct such binary categories and demeaning ideas about people of color and women. Nycteris has a very inquisitive mind and a rich imagination. She eventually finds her way out of the tomb and is utterly enthralled by all that she sees and experiences. MacDonald writes, “It was a resurrection—nay a birth itself, to Nycteris” (253). She had known darkness, and a form of death (such as MacDonald’s Vane had resisted), and now was able to emerge from them very much alive: “She saw with the eyes made



for seeing, and saw indeed what many men are too wise to see” (253). The wind of the night was like “spiritual wine” to her “filling her whole being with an intoxication of purest joy.” “Possessed by the power of the gorgeous night, she seemed at one and the same moment annihilated and glorified” (253). “Losing one’s life” could be a means by which to gain a much richer and more profound life. Nycteris now understands that her caregivers have actually been her “gaolers” [sic] to keep her in ignorance. “Life was a mighty bliss, and they had scraped hers to the bare bone” (254). And now similar to many women and people of color, she realizes she “must hide her knowledge” (254).

Ultimately Photogen defies Watho’s prohibition and seeks to hunt an animal that he has learned prefers to stay out past the sunset. Darkness is an overpowering liminal experience for him, in which “fear inexplicable laid hold of the youth . . . the very fear itself terrified him” such that his “horror seemed to blossom into very madness.” He has to confront an entirely new self-perception, “He was no longer the man he had known, or rather thought himself” (260). He falls into self-loathing and thinking it is the “night itself! the darkness alive” that is after him, “He gave a sob,” fled, and “fell senseless on the grass” (261).

In a resonating way, Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann also reflects on the humbling and clarifying capacity of the night, in terms of its impact on King Nebuchadnezzar from the book of Daniel, “In the night, by contrast, the king is vulnerable, even defenseless. Voices other than his own get a chance to speak. It turns out in such times of vulnerability, that the world is not ordered as well or as regally as he had imagined. The other voices, of God, of spirit, of the night, of darkness, penetrate the empire’s Strategic Defense Initiatives” (127). It is difficult to hold the illusion of control and mastery when faced with one’s human vulnerability in darkness.

MacDonald challenges the stereotype of women as the weak, ignorant, and the emotional ones, and conveys the truth that all people must confront their limitations and weakness at some point in their lives. He reveals through Photogen that fixing the odds in favor of white males, only makes it all the more difficult when disruption hits and their privilege can no longer keep at bay the challenges others have had to face their entire lives. Photogen’s response is a clear expression of what today is referred to as “white fragility.”<sup>14</sup>

When Nycteris encounters Photogen in this collapsed state, she feels immediate compassion for him and identification with him. “Her heart—like every heart, if only its fallen sides were cleared away—was an inexhaustible fountain of love: she loved everything she saw” (XIII/264). She thinks he is a girl like her, having never seen a boy, and seeks to comfort this one of whom she says, “How sensitive you must be!” Photogen classifies and objectifies

her as a “creature of the darkness,” who loves the night, and thus he fears her (265).

MacDonald humorously reverses common gender stereotypes related to courage, emotionalism, and rationality. When Nycteris tries to strengthen his courage, saying, “You must be a brave girl . . .” he erupts in fury, “If you were a man, I should kill you.” Whereas she has approached him with a sense of courage and solidarity, he quickly acts in fear and pride to distinguish himself from this other, this one he judges as inferior to him. Nycteris’ response reflects MacDonald’s humor and conviction, “No, of course! You can’t be a girl; girls are not afraid—without reason. I understand now: it is because you are not a girl that you are so frightened” (267). Forgetting danger to herself, she pledges to take care of him throughout the night. And MacDonald describes them as “two Pharaohs in one pyramid” resting in “the heart of the great-cone shadow of the earth” (269). For MacDonald, both are regal, both are empowered, and both are created to be God’s image bearers, whether in a non-European-like domain, or in darkness. As soon as the sun has risen, and when it is Nycteris’ great time of fear and testing, Photogen rushes off, utterly insensitive to her own human frailty and fear. She is now confronted for the first time with what for her is excruciating sunlight, because she has put aside her own safety and norms to care for him. MacDonald notes Photogen’s indifference, ““What is the matter with you, girl?” said Photogen, with the arrogance of all male creatures until they have been taught by the other kind” (271).

After much suffering they both learn that they must find strength together against their true enemy the white witch, Watho, who has become more and more wolf-like each day. They both must learn to value that which is other for each of them, day and night, male and female, light and dark. Evil is not in the darkness, or in the other. Evil resides in those who will use knowledge for power over the other, to divide and conquer, to objectify and control. And in this story, as in *Lilith*, the controlling and destructive power is someone who is very white, not dark-skinned. MacDonald in fact emphasized Watho’s extremely white skin, and similarly that Lilith’s paleness was not a pallor, but a pure whiteness” (*Lilith*, 109).

He has exposed and challenged deeply embedded social biases that have severe social and personal consequences. These biases continue to fester in our own context. Thus, for example, though mass shooters in the US are predominantly white males, the negative bias against dark skinned males runs so deep that black males are more often profiled, shot and killed by police, and incarcerated at much higher rates proportionate to their percentage population.<sup>15</sup>

MacDonald may have felt the pain of the eugenics movement personally, and directed at his own cultural origins. In 1868, a German

biologist, Ernst Haeckel, had published his own adaptation of Darwin's thought in a book entitled, *History of Creation*.<sup>16</sup> He "divided human beings into ten races, of which the Caucasian was the highest and the primitives were doomed to extinction" ("Race and Evolution," 87). One result of these racial theories were efforts to determine, measure and define that which separates the races—Watho-type efforts. One scientist, Broca, "developed over forty measurements, including various kinds of calipers, pelvimeters, craniostats, and torsiometers, to make the increasingly precise cranial and body measurements that his science demanded . . . 25 million Europeans were measured throughout the late nineteenth century" ("Race and Evolution," 72). The principle means of dividing European populations became the cephalic index, which had been developed in 1844. Among Europeans, three major delineations were developed, the Teutonic, the Alpine and the Mediterranean. Aryan, or Nordic was envisioned as the superior race, and the Aryans were divided into the superior Saxon and the inferior Celt. "The Celtic type was represented by the Irish, who were commonly portrayed as monkeys in newspapers and popular journals" ("Race and Evolution," 75). MacDonald very clearly saw himself as a Celt and would have experienced the challenge of living as a Scot in the midst of the English class system.

This was not only personal for MacDonald, but also intensely theological. MacDonald worked diligently to challenge the prevailing social hierarchies established by those who exploited scientific strategies to advance their own power and strength. His belief was that the true origin of all people was the one great heart, the one Great Thinker—the very love and creating power of God. Thus, it is the very people thought to be least of all that MacDonald raised up as his heroes and heroines throughout his books. It is the poor, mute, Gibbie, son of an alcoholic, that is shown to be the most Christ-like of all, and who rises to the highest position of any character in that novel—a position of power he uses with great love. It is Sambo, the black African sailor in *Sir Gibbie*, who is one of the most compassionate people of the narrative, who loves Gibbie like a mother would and who reappears in Gibbie's memory throughout the book as his hero.

Curdie, in the *Princess and Goblin* and the *Princess and Curdie* is a poor miner who works in dark places yet has greater vision and insight than those who are well-placed and more privileged. He helps to save the rural kingdom from the goblins, and the city kingdom from the crooked nobility. Curdie is one who has learned to find treasure in the darkness, and who is able to see the self-revelation of the Great-Grandmother in the deepest caverns. It is there, in the midst of deepest darkness, that she reveals herself: "All he knew of the whole creation, seemed gathered in one centre of harmony and loveliness in the person of the ancient lady who stood before him in the very summer of beauty and strength" (*Princess and Curdie*, 49).

Though some judge her as decrepit, devious, and power-hungry—more like a witch—MacDonald reveals her to be a Christ-figure in these books.<sup>17</sup>

Because of their disabilities, Joseph Polwarth and his niece Rachel are deemed unfit to live by the handsome and aristocratic Bascombe. MacDonald however portrays them as sources of spiritual wisdom, love, and beauty throughout *Thomas Wingfold, Curate*. They guide Wingfold through his journey from ignorance and doubt to faith and trusting obedience. And the Polwarths guide Leopold, a man convicted of murder and struggling with addiction, from fleeing to facing and confessing his own deed, dying with the gift of dignity. Polwarth and his niece are called “temples of the Holy Ghost” (207). In one more stroke against the illusion of white supremacy, MacDonald depicts Leopold as the dark-skinned son of an East Indian Hindu woman and an English father. Even this dark man, addicted to a drug he’d been given in India, and who, under the influence of that drug, had murdered his beloved is conveyed as a gentle soul “of a lovely nature” (460). Wingfold says of Leopold, “I never saw a lovelier disposition” (285).

The very people who were seen as threats to British civilization and progress, MacDonald reveals as those who can offer the source of greatest compassion, wisdom, and insight. Those who judged them as unfit and as “others” to be feared were actually only exposing something of their own inner realities. Helen Lingard’s aunt exposes her own shallowness and warped nature when she expresses the cultural attitudes of the day: “People who are crooked in body, are always crooked in mind too” (438). MacDonald offers the alternative that Polwarth (who also has Jewish ancestry) has “a soul . . . as grand and beautiful and patient as his body is insignificant and troubled” (286), “the wisest and best man I have ever known” (286).

In another reversal, MacDonald depicts so-called “progress” actually leading to devolution, as with the hardheaded and weak-soled goblins who thought their creations underground were superior to anything in nature.<sup>18</sup> Certain types of “development” could mean losing one’s joy, laughter, wisdom, and love of the other, like the Giants who though they developed from Little Ones, were greedy, selfish, and gluttonous in *Lilith*. The more admirable Little Ones remain very wary of such growth and development rather than enamored by it. And rather than creating a society that was more loving, caring, and inclusive of strangers, children, those who are poor and needy, such “progress” could actually result in hardened hearts as in Gwyntystorm and Bulika where like-mindedness meant selfish closed-heartedness.

For example, Vane questions a woman whom he has helped after first entering Bulika, “Is there no place in the city for the taking in of strangers?” Her response reflects something akin to certain types of responses in our own contexts, “How is purity to be preserved except by keeping low people at a

proper distance? Dignity is such a delicate thing” (*Lilith*, 121). This woman expresses nationalist pride declaring, “we are more ancient and noble than any other nation—Therefore . . . we always turn strangers out before night” (121). Though she is terrified of the Princess (a devious force who seeks absolute control of the city, of children, of water, etc.) and her white leopard, she seems to relish the thought that “She it is who keeps us safe and free and rich” (121). Personal security and affluence are more highly valued than compassion, connection, and the common good.

Similarly Vane is told that there is no room in Bulika for children or the poor. “When one goes poor,” explains the woman, “we forget him. That is how we keep rich. We mean to be rich always” (120).

### ***III. Treasures from the Kingdom of God, Jesus’ teaching, and Celtic wisdom***

Third, MacDonald sought to bring out “old and new treasure” from the teaching of Jesus<sup>19</sup> and the values of the Celts to portray his belief that values of the kingdom of God are the inverse of those of the kingdoms of this world.

From his own Celtic background, MacDonald learned to value the third way, the creative alternative rather than to be locked into binary modes of thought. Echoing MacDonald’s sense of the value of both night and darkness, for example, Celtic writer John O’Donohue wrote:

The world rests in the night. Trees, mountains, fields, and faces are released from the prison of shape and the burden of exposure. Each thing creeps back into its own nature within the shelter of the dark. Darkness is the ancient womb. Nighttime is womb-time. Our souls come out to play. The darkness absolves everything; the struggle for identity and impression falls away. We rest in the night.

The following Celtic prayer reflects the gift that night and darkness can bring.

Lord,  
 you bring down the curtain of night on a weary world.  
 Help us to commit our unfinished tasks into your hands  
 and lay our burdens at your feet.  
 Grant us refreshing sleep  
 that we may rise in the power of Christ,  
 to greet another day.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to his affinity for Celtic thought, MacDonald was convinced that Jesus’ life and teaching were the fount of wisdom and truth. Thus it is no surprise that he challenged prevailing theories and presented the alternatives in ways that correlated with Jesus’ own life of welcoming those who are poor, blind, mute, treated as unclean, outsiders, or criminals. A sure sign of a city or culture’s decadence for MacDonald was its hard-heartedness

toward those in need. Vane reflects moral and spiritual development when he realizes his need for diverse others, the idea that it is the “development of the differences which make a large and lofty unity possible, and which alone can make millions into a church . . .” (102).

Thomas Wingfold’s growth in faith required not conceptual awareness of doctrine, but rather increased Christlikeness of being. Wingfold in his evolving faith would become more like the one who reached out to the marginalized of his day, to care for those most socially distained, those who were uneducated, dark skinned, struggling with disabilities, the law, addictions, or considered to be cultural outsiders. He too would become a person of mercy, rather than of eugenically-motivated disdain or fear. In Christlikeness, he would link his reputation with those most questionable to his parishioners, to join in solidarity with them and to learn from them, and grow with them. Truly MacDonald conveys that the last shall be the first, whether Gibbie a homeless and mute street urchin, whom most thought was mentally challenged, or Curdie, a child laborer in the mines who enters the sophisticated city of Gwintystorm, ultimately to become its king.

The least shall be the greatest of all, whether Nycteris entombed and restricted, or the great-grandmother, looking old and withered at the spinning wheel. MacDonald depicted cities that shut their doors to strangers and children as cities that were shutting out life, for the Author of life told the children, “Come unto me,” and said, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matt 25:35). For a British commonwealth that was increasingly fearful “of paupers and lower classes,” and believed such people to be more “inclined to criminal lifestyles,” MacDonald offered different visions to challenge their moral imaginations in ways that reflected the kingdom of God rather than the kingdoms of this world. Thus, for example, Anodos maturation process leads him to become a servant rather than a knight in shining armor. In God’s kingdom the least will be the greatest of all, and to welcome the least of these is to welcome the king himself.

There is a reason why MacDonald’s novels and writing were so popular in his own time, as popular as Charles Dickens at one point, and that they are read internationally today. Many people then and now hunger for truth that challenges their fears and offers a vision of the Kingdom of God where love is stronger than fear, our common humanity is a deeper bond than our ethnicity, ability, or gender, and where death is no longer a threat to bully us into submission, but a doorway into bold newness of life. The invitation is to join with MacDonald in praise:

Nothing is alien in thy world immense—

No look of sky or earth or man or beast;

“In the great hand of God I stand, and thence”

Look out on life, his endless, holy feast. (*Diary of an Old Soul*, July

31, 155)

MacDonald's radical challenges to the prejudices of his day have enduring relevance. He found ways to reach deeply-rooted biases that derive from warped imaginations and fearful hearts. He offered stories that can reshape and heal our moral imagination, deepen trust in the One Great Heart, and help us to face our fears of darkness and death, freeing us see our solidarity with and need for all people.

“There is radiance and glory in the darkness, could we but see; and to see, we have only to look. I beseech you to look. Life is so generous a giver, but we, judging its gifts by their covering, cast them away as ugly, or heavy, or hard. Remove the covering, and you will find beneath it a living splendor, woven of love, by wisdom, with power.” Fra Giovanni<sup>21</sup>

#### Endnotes

1. Jesus taught, “. . . every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” MacDonald evokes this idea in his poem, “To Aurelio Saffi;” “To God and man be simply true; Do as thou hast been wont to do; Bring out thy treasures, old and new . . .” Examples of inverse values include, “the last shall be first, and the first will be last” (Matt 20:16); “the greatest among you will be your servant” (Matt 23:11); “the meek shall inherit the earth . . .” (Matt 5:7).
2. Raven says his business as a sexton is to “have the air full of worms,” that is taking worms from the dark ground and flinging them into the air to become butterflies. He says, “If only the rest of the clergy understood it [that to be their business as well.” Vane is worried lest creatures forget their origins, whereas Raven says “it is well, surely, if it be to rise higher and grow larger” (20).
3. Roger Lancelyn Green, Introduction to *The Light Princess and Other Tales*, Canongate, Kelpies, 1961, p. 10.
4. For a helpful window, for example, on the racism against dark-skinned people in the Philadelphia that MacDonald would have witnessed, see, “A Tale of Three Cities: Blacks and Immigrants in Philadelphia: 1850-1880, 1930 and 1970,” by Theodore Hershberg, Alan N. Burstein, Eugene P. Ericksen, Stephanie Greenberg and William L. Yancey in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 441, Race and Residence in American Cities (Jan., 1979), pp. 55-81 (27 pages) Published by: Sage Publications, Inc. in association with the American Academy of Political and Social Science. “The ecological ‘rules’ that explain important elements of the white immigrant experience



do not explain, for most of Philadelphia's history, what happened to blacks. Where blacks were concerned the rules were inoperative, suspending as it were by the force of racism. Racism, particularly its manifestation in discriminatory hiring and housing practices, is the final dimension in the explanatory framework." 57 "Opportunities for upward mobility created by an expanding economy—which provided the bootstraps for the Irish and German immigrants—were so limited for blacks that they were virtually nonexistent."(65)

5. *Jim Crow in Boston: The Origin of the Separate but Equal Doctrine* Eds Leonard W. Levy and Douglas L Jones, Da Capo Press, New York, NY, 1974.
6. Jim Crow laws emerged in the 1870s and 1880s in the former confederate states, but were also practiced in the north.
7. xxiv, from *Reports of the Annual Visiting Committees of the Public Schools of the City of Boston, Documents of the City of Boston for the Year 1846* (Boston, 1846), p. 206[ 227]
8. xiii-xvi from *ibid*, p. 10, 11 [12,13]
9. vii-viii from *ibid*.
10. It's fascinating to discover that "watho" is a Kikuyu word meaning "law, rule," which may have come to MacDonald via British incursions into Kenya at the time.
11. The word "Nycteris" derives from a genus of African and Asiatic bats.
12. The word "Photogen" was first recorded in 1855-1860, combining the word photo (meaning "light"), with gen (meaning "that which produces").
13. Jennings, *Christian Imagination*, 24.
14. For more information on "white fragility" see Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, Beacon Press, 2018.
15. Cf, Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*; Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy*.
16. *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* (1868); in English *The History of Creation* (1876; 6th ed.: New York, D. Appleton and Co., 1914, 2 volumes).
17. For more on The Great-grandmother in *The Princess* books as a Christ-figure see Dearborn, *Baptized Imagination*, p. 69. See for example, *Princess and Goblin*, 45-55.
18. Matthew 13:52. MacDonald wrote a poem in which he included the words from Matthew 13:52: "To God and man be simply true; Do as thou hast been wont to do; Bring out thy treasures, old and new . . ." To Aurelio Saffi, by George MacDonald.
19. Jenny Child, *Celtic Prayers & Reflections*, <https://www.catholicireland>.

net/celtic-prayers-a-reflections/

20. Fra Giovanni, A Letter to the Most Illustrious the Contessina Allagia Dela Aldobrandeschi, Written Christmas Eve Anno Domini 1513 (193?). “This was published, probably in the 1930s, “with Christmas Greetings” from Greville MacDonald, son of novelist George MacDonald, and Mary MacDonald.” <https://www.bartleby.com/73/1467.html>. Evidently, MacDonald’s transformative vision impacted his son, Greville, as well.

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