

THROUGH THE YEAR
WITH
GEORGE MACDONALD



366 DAILY READINGS
ROLLAND HEIN, EDITOR

**Through The Year With George MacDonald:
366 Daily Readings**

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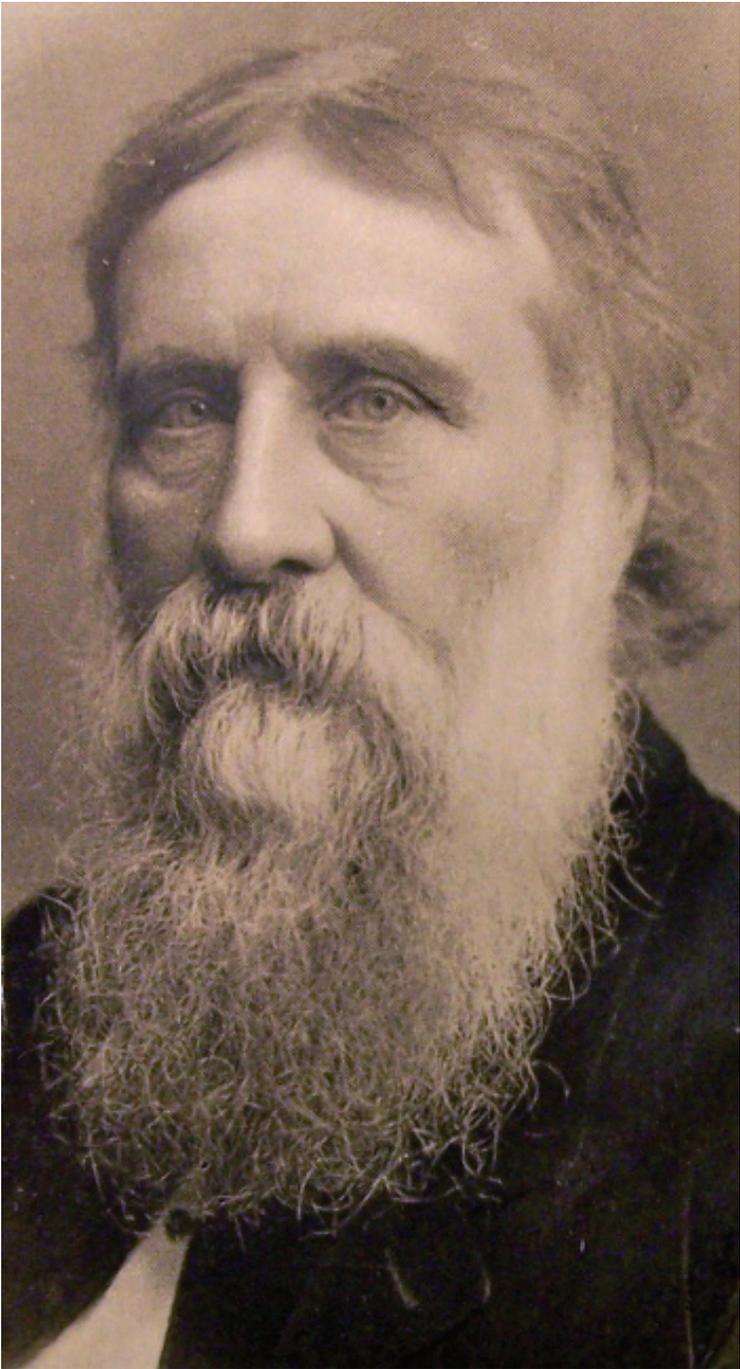
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“TRAVELER, WHAT LIES OVER THE HILL?”

“My child, a valley green lies there,
Lovely with trees, and sky;
And a tiny brook that says, ‘Take care,
Or I’ll drown you by and by!’

“Is it far away?”– “I do not know:
You must fix your eyes thereon,
And travel, travel through thunder and snow,
Till the weary way is gone.”

“But, oh! I have not told you the best,
I have not told you the end;
If you want to escape, away in the west
You will see a stair ascend,

“Built of all colors of lovely stones,
A stair up into the sky
Where no one is weary, and no one moans,
Or wishes to be laid by.”

“Is the stair right up? is it very steep?”
“Too steep for you to climb;
You must lie at the foot of the glorious heap
And patient wait your time.”

“Pilgrims from near and from distant lands
Will step on you lying there;
But a wayfaring man with wounded hands
Will carry you up the stair.”

– George MacDonald

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THIS CARICATURE BY FREDERICK WADDY APPEARED IN "ONCE A WEEK" MAGAZINE APROPO OF GEORGE MACDONALD'S EDITORSHIP (1869-1872) OF "GOOD WORKS FOR THE YOUNG."

FOREWORD

George MacDonald's writings have fascinated me ever since my stepfather (C.S. Lewis) introduced me to them in the early 1950s. Possibly one of the greatest writers of instructional fiction of all time, MacDonald's works are often overlooked in today's strange world of superficial immediacy, despite the huge influence this Scottish author had on the culture of his own time and the years that followed it. We need his wisdom and the beauty of his words now more than ever before.

At the very least, I hope this book will whet your appetite for MacDonald's amazingly beautiful stories and perhaps even stimulate a deep longing to read more of his work. The list of George MacDonald's friends and acquaintances reads almost like a "Who's Who" of the literary luminaries of the 19th century. The list of 20th century writers he has influenced includes many of the greatest, my stepfather among them. Jack (C.S. Lewis) wrote that he had never written anything that was not strongly influenced by MacDonald, adding that reading his book *Phantastes*, "baptised my imagination".

MacDonald writes from a depth of wisdom and of joy that is rare among men and is only found in perhaps one man in each century. Short selected daily readings from the work of this astonishingly loving author must be one of the very best ways to begin each day. If we spend our first few minutes of the day with George MacDonald, we will find love, joy, comfort, excitement, beauty and delight.

Most importantly, we will find ourselves, for that is what MacDonald's works show us best. In reading MacDonald at length, we discover who we are and are enabled to compare that which we find with whom we wish to be and whom we ought to be, making realisations which allow us to correct our lives and to begin to attain our deepest longings.

There have been many books of daily readings from many writers, but I can think of none that I would prefer than those of C.S. Lewis or George MacDonald. For anyone who respects C.S. Lewis' works, we must pay an equal tribute to George MacDonald, for he was the forerunner and tutor of Jack as he himself openly and gladly admitted.

Douglas Gresham



INTRODUCTION

The fuller thought of this godly nineteenth century Scotsman is only slightly known to many who have become fascinated with his fairy tales, or who have seen statements as to how highly influential he was both in precipitating C. S. Lewis's conversion and also in shaping his Christian thought. The purpose of this collection is first to provide a handy tool for furthering knowledge of his thinking and his character, and, second, to offer a devotional calendar for people who may desire a guide for daily meditation.

George MacDonald wrote in his novel *The Marquis of Lossie*: "Life and religion are one, or neither is anything. . . . Religion is no way of life, no show of life, no observance of any sort It is life essential. The man to whom virtue is but the ornament of character, something over and above, not essential to it, is not yet a man." One cannot read far in his writings without realizing how thoroughly he held this conviction. He had a disdain for any abstract theological thought that was not integrally related to the everyday dimensions of life. The omnipresent Spirit of God works relentlessly, if needs be through suffering and adversity, to perfect the image of Christ in everyone, though the task require eons of time for its fulfillment.

A profound student of Scripture with a careful knowledge of the Greek text, MacDonald from an early age became enamored of the person of Christ as the gospels present him. He saw in the intimacy of Christ's relation with the Father and in the range of Christ's attitudes toward life the model for each individual's success in this lifetime and for their eternal joy in the life to come. Any life consumed simply with the quest for satisfaction of its self-centered ambitions and sensual desires results in the diminishment of one's very being here, and the unspeakable agonies of unsatiated desires in the next, as the soul must face the full consequences of its moral turpitude.

MacDonald's thinking was shaped in the main by several elements. First, losing his mother as a child of eight, he developed a close relationship with his stern but loving father, a godly man who undertook to be both father and mother to his children, instilling within them both a love for the stories of the Bible and the rich tradition of Celtic and Gaelic fairy lore. This model father impressed upon his son the beauty of ideal fatherhood that affected all of MacDonald's future thinking. Second, his religious upbringing was shaped by the tenets of an abstract and atrophied Calvinist theology, from which as a mature thinker he retained what was biblically sound and vehemently rejected all that he felt offered insult to the nature of God and to humanity. All people are created by, and in the image of, the God of love, and God will do his best for each one. Third, as an aspiring student at King's College, Aberdeen,

he encountered the writing of then rather recent German poets and authors of fantasy, writers who fired his fertile imagination and gave him a vision of the ideal life as a quest for fullness of being. Fourth, during his years of seminary training he was deeply affected by the theological lectures of A. J. Scott, who later became president of Owens College, Manchester. Fifth, the character and deportment of F. D. Maurice, vicar of the Chapel of St. Peter's in London where the MacDonald's worshiped, was to MacDonald the highest embodiment of the Christian ideal.

His creative efforts are at their best in his fairy tales, his fantasies for youth, and his fantasies for adults. *The Golden Key*, *The Light Princess*, and *The Carasoy* illustrate well the first category; *The Princess and the Goblin*, *The Princess and Curdie*, and *At the Back of the North Wind* the second; and *Phantastes* and *Lilith* the third. Because these texts, fine as they are, do not lend themselves well to the approach of this anthology, only a handful of selections are taken from them.

His novels compose the great proportion of his creative work, and excerpts from several are here included. Immensely popular in his own day, his stories compare well with such contemporary efforts as George Eliot's *Scenes from Clerical Life* and *Adam Bede*, or with Anthony Trollope's Barchester novels. Although lapsing occasionally into Gothic conventions, he tells a good story, convincingly portraying commonplace life and human psychology. This collection includes several of his running commentaries on character and action. They illustrate with what penetrating insights he understood the spiritual psychology of different character types, and how astutely he applied Christian thought to everyday situations.

The largest number of selections here presented are chosen from his expository efforts: the three volumes of *Unspoken Sermons*, *The Hope of the Gospel*, and *Miracles*. It is principally in them that the reader encounters his provocative handling of spiritual truths, enabling one to see the consistency and depth of his thought, and the pattern of the whole. The Scripture passages listed at the conclusion of each selection are intended to suggest how thoroughly MacDonald's thought is in harmony with the spirit of the biblical text.

Rolland Hein



These excerpts are from Henry W. Bellow's paraphrase of a sermon George MacDonald gave in New York at the Church of all Souls on May 11, 1873.

We are here in this world isolated and displaced, having come we know not whence and going we know not whither. We did not place ourselves here and were not consulted about our existence. Besides, we are full of the inheritance of transmitted unruly appetites and bad passions. Yet we have also a sense of truth and goodness that makes us pant for an excellence we find ourselves unable to attain. We look about for help, and find only other souls and lives spotted and stained like our own. . . .

Now, long ago there came a man into the world who, in the most solemn and searching way, declared that he understood the whole situation and had found the key to the whole problem of human existence. We have the tradition and record of his words and life. But, alas! He lived nearly two thousand years ago, and men dispute the authority and authenticity of the books that record His life and words, and nothing can be demonstrated as to their genuineness any more than God's existence can be proved. But he said: "If any man shall do his will he shall know of the doctrine." And thousands, nay, millions, have accepted this invitation, and from moral and spiritual sympathy trusted His words, and have gone to Him as he appears in the New Testament, and have found everything he said to be true, so far as to discover that active and thorough obedience to His precepts has brought them into right relations with themselves, with each other and with God. . . .

Let a man, then stir himself up to know Christ, and God through Christ. Nobody can do this work but him. All the pulpits and creeds and churches cannot help him if he does not help himself. It is only by the exercise of his own spiritual faculties, the strain of his own *will* that he can achieve emancipation and put himself into harmonious relations with Christ and God. When a man says "I will" he becomes ten times a man. He changes from an impulse into a free chooser of a divine way. And once in the right way, once in the obedience and right with God through it, all things in the soul and in the universe tend to right themselves—the jargon tends to significant speech, the discord to music, life into order and harmony. . . .

"George MacDonald in the Pulpit,"
Spoken Sermons, Barbara Amell, ed.
Matt. 11:25-30



This is an excerpt from a speech delivered in the Union Park Congregational Church in Chicago on Sunday evening, April 13, 1873. MacDonald's text was Rev. 3:20: "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me."

Friends, I have done as many of you have done. I have pored upon and pondered this old tale, and every year I live the conviction keeps gathering that here is the life of the world. The mists and the fog recede from before me. I know what it is to question. I know what it is to be troubled. But it seems to me more and more, that there, in the very heart of this Man, did lie, and still lies, the secret—a secret which is there to be revealed, for God must know secrets. His whose effort since that Man existed has been to unfold and reveal the energy of His nature which comes out in the revelation He wants us to know. And I say in the Man Jesus Christ is the revelation of the mystery. He has lived and died and loved, and has left the story behind Him of His three-and-thirty years. Some times we are tempted to long for more; and when we come to hear some little glimmer of a legend about Him, we grasp eagerly after it, as if, perhaps, here might be some little additional tale about Him that would add to the wealth of our knowledge, now small, but rich as it is.

But friends, if we knew the whole story, if we had every moment of His life mapped out for us, if we knew every single hour in every day he spent on earth, we might have it and be no better for it; yet, every moment we have the offer of the whole self of Him if we will but take it. Is He received up into heaven? Is He sitting with His Father on the throne? Did He arise again on Easter day, as we say, and ascend afterwards, up whence He came? Has He gone from sight? Did He not say, "Behold I am with you always"? And in His vision of His apostle who ought to have known whether it was He or not, for he reclined with his head on His bosom, did He not say, "I am a messenger on earth"? So He speaks always to us, and to every human being, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

"The Unexpected Guest," *The Chicago Pulpit*
Rev. 3:14-22



This is an excerpt from a speech delivered in the Union Park Congregational Church in Chicago on Sunday evening, April 13, 1873. MacDonald's text was Rev. 3:20: "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me."

The friend says, "I have come to sup with you." And he whose voice the disciples heard as they went to Him, you hear, though it is a stranger, deeper, and a more tender voice still; and he will sit with you and talk with you as if there were not another soul in the universe that wanted Him. How it is you can not tell; but if that be not true, it ought to be true before our hearts can be quiet. But do not wait until He ceases knocking. Let Him in. Let Him in and hearken to Him. What is the best thing in this world? What is the best thing we have got? Jesus, some human heart that can love ours and be honest to it, some heart that loves our heart so well that it would die rather than there should be a blot upon it, or a speck of defilement upon it.

But, for a moment, imagine such a friend as you would like. Imagine the perfection of the ideal of your soul. I do not care, for a moment, how low you are. I know that a creature that God made must imagine an ideal. I say if you are the lowest, and most sensual creature in the world, imagine honestly, what you think your ideal man to be. Then I say to the loftiest of you, dream your highest dream, your highest ideal, your loftiest dream, your most glorious fancy, if you will, of what a friend, a man, a hero, and a perfect human being might be, and he is standing at your door, and knocking to get into your heart, only he is a thousand times grander than it is possible for you to think. He is always knocking and always wanting to get in.

It seems to me, that we are surrounded on all sides by an infinite sea of truth and love, pressing on all sides of us, in order that we might be benefited thereby. It stands to the law of truth that man made like God can not be satisfied with less than God. And at every heart of the poorest man, and the richest man, God is standing knocking and asking to be taken in, that it may be well with them, so that the child of the Divine shall be made glorious by the presence of the Divine, that the child of the Father may become, throughout the world, the sharer of the glory of the Most High. What a scheme of salvation!

*"The Unexpected Guest," The Chicago Pulpit
Psalms 91:1-4*



This birthday letter, written on January 4, 1891 from Brodighera, Italy, is to his oldest daughter, Lilia visiting her brother Ronald in America. She dies of tuberculosis the following November.

Dearest Child

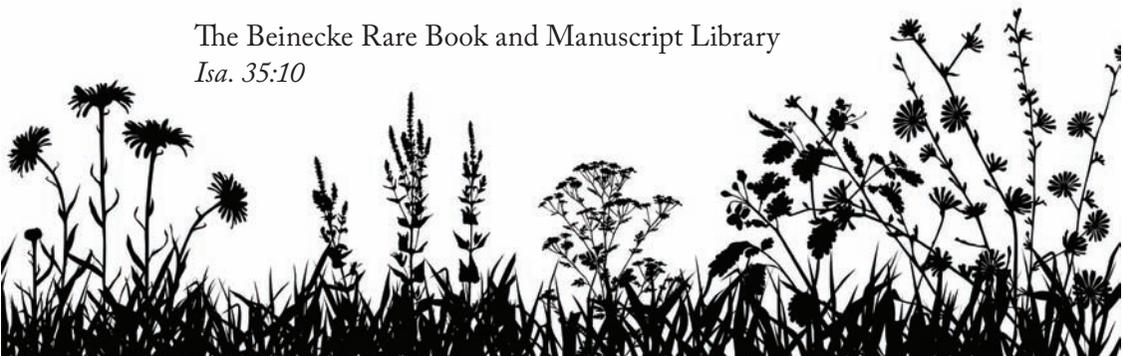
I could say so much to you, and yet I am constantly surrounded by a sort of cactus-hedge that seems to make adequate utterance impossible. It is so much easier to write romance, where you cannot easily lie, than to say the commonest things where you may go wrong any moment. Even this is not the kind of way I meant to write to you. It is all wrong. I can only tell you I love you with true heart fervently, and love you far more because you are God's child than because you are mine.

I don't thank you for coming to us, for you could not help it, but the whole universe is "tented" with love, and you hold one of the corners of the great love-canopy for your mother and me. I don't think I am very ambitious, except the strong desire "to go where I am" be ambition; and I know I take small satisfaction in looking on my past, but I do live expecting great things in the life that is ripening for me and all mine—when we shall all have the universe for our own, and be good merry helpful children in the great house of our father. I think then we shall be able to pass into and through each others very soul's as we please, knowing each other's thought and being, along with our own, and so being *like* God. When we are all just as loving and unselfish as Jesus; when like him, our one thought of delight is that God is, and is what he is; when the fact that a being is just another person from ourselves, is enough to make that being precious—then, darling, you and I and all will have the grand liberty wherewith Christ makes free—opening his hand to send us out like white doves to range the universe.

Have I not shown that the attempt to speak what you mean is the same kind of failure that walking is—a mere, constantly recurring, recovery from falling. . . ? Tell Ronald from me that Novalis says: "This world is not a dream, but it may, and perhaps ought to become one." Anyhow, it will pass—to make way for the world God has hidden in our hearts. Darling, I wish you life eternal. I daresay the birthdays will still be sparks in its glory. May I one day see the mould in God out of which you came.

Your loving Father.

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Isa. 35:10



The following excerpts are from MacDonald's extended essay on the imagination, published in 1867. It presents the guiding principles which shape all his creative work.

As the thoughts move in the mind of man, so move the worlds of men and women in the mind of God, and make no confusion there, for there they had their birth, the offspring of his imagination. Man is but a thought of God.

If we now consider the so-called creative faculty in man, we shall find that in no *primary* sense is this faculty creative. Indeed, a man is rather *being thought* than *thinking*, when a new thought arises in his mind. He knew it not till he found it there, therefore he could not even have sent for it. He did not create it, else how could it be the surprise that it was when it arose? He may, indeed, in rare instances foresee that something is coming. . . but that is the utmost relation of consciousness and will he can bear to the dawning idea. Leaving this aside, however, and turning to the *embodiment* or revelation of thought, we shall find that a man no more *creates* the forms by which he would reveal his thoughts, than he creates those thoughts themselves.

For what are the forms by means of which a man may reveal his thoughts? Are they not those of nature? But although he is created in the closest sympathy with these forms, yet even these forms are not born in his mind. What springs there is the perception that this or that form is already an expression of this or that phase of thought or of feeling. For the world around him is an outward figuration of the condition of his mind; an inexhaustible storehouse of forms whence he may choose exponents. . . . the world is—allow us the homely figure—the human being turned inside out. All that moves in the mind is symbolized in Nature. . . .

In very truth, a wise imagination, which is the presence of the spirit of God, is the best guide that man or woman can have; for it is not the things we see the most clearly that influence us the most powerfully; undefined, yet vivid visions of something beyond, something which eye has not seen nor ear heard, have far more influence than any logical sequences whereby the same sequences may be demonstrated to the intellect.

“The Imagination: Its Function and Its Culture,” *Orts*.
Psalms 33:14-15



*In the mythopoeic novel The Princess and Curdie
the great-great-grandmother Princess Irene, who is a symbol for the
Divine Presence, is here preparing Curdie for his mission:*

“Have you ever heard what some philosophers say—that men were all animals once?”

“No, ma’am.”

“It is of no consequence. But there is another thing that is of the greatest consequence —this: that all men, if they do not take care, go down the hill to the animal’s country; that many men are actually, all their lives, going to the beasts. People knew it once, but it is long since they forgot it.”

“I am not surprised to hear it, ma’am, when I think of some of our miners.”

“Ah! But you must beware, Curdie, how you say of this man or that man that he is traveling beastward. There are not nearly so many going that way as at first sight you might think. When you met you father on the hill tonight, you stood and spoke together on the same spot. And although one of you was going up and the other coming down, at a little distance no one could have told which was bound in the one direction and which in the other. Just so two people may be at the same spot in manners and behavior, and yet one may be getting better and the other worse, which is just the greatest of all differences that could possibly exist between them.

“But, ma’am, where is the good of knowing that there is such a difference, if you can never know where it is?”

Now, Curdie, you must mind exactly what words I use. . . . I did not say *you can never know*. . . . Since it is always what they *do*, whether in their minds or bodies, that makes men go down to be less than men, that is, beasts, the change always comes first in their hands—and first of all in the inside hands, to which the outside ones are but as gloves.”

*The Princess and Curdie, Chapter 8
Eph. 3:14-19*



*In the mythopoeic novel *The Princess and Curdie*
the great-great-grandmother Princess Irene, who is a symbol for the
Divine Presence, is here preparing Curdie for his mission:*

“Then would you mind telling me now, ma’am, for I feel very confused about it—are you the Lady of the Silver Moon? . . . And now I see you dark, and clothed in green, and the mother of all the light that dwells in the stones of the earth! And up there they call you Old Mother Wotherwop! And the Princess Irene told me you were her great-great-grandmother! And you spin the spider threads, and take care of a whole people of pigeons; and you are worn to a pale shadow with old age; and are as young as anybody can be, not to be too young; and as strong, I do believe, as I am. . . . I don’t know what to make of it.”

“I could give you twenty names more to call me, Curdie, and not one of them would be a false one. What does it matter how many names if the person is one? . . . Shapes are only dresses, Curdie, and dresses are only names. That which is inside is the same all the time.”

“But then how can all the shapes speak the truth?”

“It would want thousands more to speak the truth, Curdie—and then they could not. But there is a point I must not let you mistake about. It is one thing the shape I choose to put on, and quite another the shape that foolish talk and nursery tale may please to put upon me. Also, it is one thing what you or your father may think about me, and quite another what a foolish of bad man may see in me. For instance, if a thief were to come in here just now, he would think he saw the demon of the mine, all in green flames, come to protect her treasure, and would run like a hunted wild goat. I should be all the same, but his evil eyes would see me as I was not.”

*The Princess and Curdie, Chapter 7
Psalms 18:20-28*



JANUARY 8

“OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE.”

Our God is a consuming fire. Heb. 12:29

Nothing is inexorable but love. Love which will yield to prayer is imperfect and poor. It is not love that grants a boon unwillingly; still less is it love that answers a prayer to the wrong and hurt of him who prays. Love is one, and love is changeless.

For love loves unto purity. Love has ever in view the absolute loveliness of that which it beholds. Where loveliness is incomplete, and love cannot love its fill of loving, it spends itself to make more lovely, that it may love more; it strives for perfection, even that itself may be perfected—not in itself, but in the object. . . . Therefore all that is not beautiful in the beloved, all that comes between and is not of love’s kind, must be destroyed.

And our God is a consuming fire.

It is the nature of God, so terribly pure that it destroys all that is not pure as fire, which demands like purity in our worship. He will have purity. It is not that the fire will burn us if we do not worship thus; but that the fire will burn us until we worship thus; yea, will go on burning within us after all that is foreign to it has yielded to its force, no longer with pain and consuming, but as the highest consciousness of life, the presence of God. When evil, which alone is consumable, shall have passed away in his fire from the dwellers in the immovable kingdom, the nature of man shall look the nature of God in the face, and his fear shall then be pure; for an eternal, that is a holy fear, must spring from a knowledge of [His] nature, not from a sense of power.

“The Consuming Fire,” *Unspoken Sermons: Series One.*
Heb. 12:18-29



Our God is a consuming fire. Heb. 12:29

The man whose deeds are evil, fears the burning. But the burning will not come the less that he fears it or denies it. Escape is hopeless. For Love is inexorable. Our God is a consuming fire. He shall not come out till he has paid the uttermost farthing.

If the man resist the burning of God, the consuming fire of Love, a terrible doom awaits him, and its day will come. He shall be cast into the outer darkness who hates the fire of God. What sick dismay will then seize upon him! For let a man think and care ever so little about God, he does not therefore exist without God. God is here with him, upholding, warming, delighting, teaching him—making life a good thing to him. God gives him himself, though he knows it not. But when God withdraws from a man as far as that can be without the man's ceasing to be; when the man feels himself abandoned, hanging in a ceaseless vertigo of existence upon the verge of the gulf of his being, without support, without refuge, without aim, without end Imagination cannot mislead us into too much horror of being without God—that one living death

But at length, O God, wilt thou not cast Death and Hell into the lake of Fire—even into thine own consuming self? Death shall then die everlastingly,

*And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.*

Then indeed wilt thou be all in all. For then our poor brothers and sisters, every one—O God, we trust in thee, the Consuming Fire—shall have been burnt clean and brought home. For it their moans, myriads of ages away, would turn heaven for us into hell—shall a man be more merciful than God? Shall a brother love a brother more than The Father loves a son?—more than The Brother Christ loves his brother? Would he not die yet again to save one brother more?

“The Consuming Fire,” *Unspoken Sermons, Series One*
Isa. 45:20-25



“Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.” Mark 9:37

In this, then, is God like the child: that he is simply and altogether our friend, our father—our more than friend, father, and mother—our infinite love-perfect God. Grand and strong beyond all that human imagination can conceive of poet-thinking and kingly action, he is delicate beyond all that human tenderness can conceive of husband or wife, homely beyond all that human heart can conceive of father or mother. He has not two thoughts about us. With him all is simplicity of purpose and meaning and effort and end—namely, that we should be as he is, think the same thoughts, mean the same things, possess the same blessedness. It is so plain that any one may see it, every one ought to see it, every one shall see it. It must be so. He is utterly true and good to us, nor shall anything withstand his will.

For it is his childlikeness that makes him our God and Father. The perfection of his relation to us swallows up all our imperfections, all our defects, all our evils; for our childhood is born of his fatherhood. That man is perfect in faith who can come to God in the utter dearth of his feelings, and his desire, without a glow or an aspiration, with the weight of low thoughts failures, neglects, and wandering forgetfulness, and say to him, “Thou art my refuge, because thou art my home.”

Such faith will not lead to presumption. The man who can pray such a prayer will know better than another, that God is not mocked; that he is not a man that he should repent; that tears and entreaties will not work on him to the breach of one of his laws; that for God to give a man because he asked for it that which was not in harmony with his laws of truth and right, would be to damn him—to cast him into the outer darkness. And he knows that out of that prison the childlike, imperturbable God will let no man come till he has paid the uttermost farthing.

*“The Child in the Midst,” Unspoken Sermons: Series One
Mark 9:33-37*



“Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.” Mark 9:37

How terribly, then, have the theologians misrepresented God in the measures of the low and showy, not the lofty and simple humanities! Nearly all of them represent him as a great King on a grand throne, thinking how grand he is, and making it the business of his being and the end of his universe to keep up his glory, wielding the bolts of a Jupiter against them that take his name in vain. They would not allow this, but follow out what they say, and it comes to much of this.

Brothers, have you found our king? There he is, kissing little children and saying they are like God. There he is at table with head of a fisherman lying on his bosom, and somewhat heavy at heart that even he, the beloved disciple, cannot yet understand him well. The simplest peasant who loves his children and his sheep were—no, not a truer, for the other is false, but—a true type of our God beside the monstrosity of a monarch.

The God who is ever uttering himself in the changeful profusions of nature; who takes millions of years to form a soul that shall understand him and be blessed; who never needs to be, and never is, in haste; who welcomes the simplest thought of truth or beauty as the return for seed he has sown upon the old fallows of eternity; who rejoices in the response of a faltering moment to the age-long cry of his wisdom in the streets; the God of music, of painting, of building, the Lord of Hosts, the God of mountains and oceans; whose laws go forth from one unseen point of wisdom, and thither return without an atom of loss; the God of history working in time unto Christianity; this God is the God of little children, and he alone can be perfectly, abandonedly simple and devoted.

*“A Child in the Midst,” Unspoken Sermons: Series One.
Acts 17:22-28*

On this day in 1882: MacDonald family as an acting troupe present a public performance of Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night in Cannes on the French Riviera.



JANUARY 12

WHAT SEEMS VS WHAT IS

MacDonald wrote many moving letters of condolence, of which this is an example. It was written at Bordighera on this day in 1888 to Susan Scott, daughter of A. J. Scott, a teacher and friend whom MacDonald greatly admired.

My dear Susan,

You will be missing your mother more now than when first she went away! As the days go on and the common look gathers again upon the things round you, and the Kingdom of heaven seems no nearer, we are apt to feel more of a separation. There seems sometimes to be nowhere beyond, because no voice comes back from the beloved. This parting seems so complete at times. Why is all so dumb? Why no personal revelation of the world to which they are gone?

God knows and cares, and uses for us a means of education for our hearts and spirits which we do not ourselves understand. It is not needful that we understand the motive power in the processes that go on within us. It is enough to him who believes it that the Lord *did* rise again, although after that he was hidden from their sight. Yes, I will believe that I shall hold my own in my arms again, their hearts nearer to mine than ever before.

It is a blessed thing to be children and to be parents of children. So God binds us all together. You and I have much to thank God for that we came of such parents. And we shall see them again and our hearts shall rejoice. For what is true of the Lord is true of all his, for they are one with him.

I need not say to you that I owe your father and mother more than I can tell. I looked up to your father more than to any man except my own father, who did not know half so much, but who was worthy of knowing whatever God taught him. We *shall* see them all and love them more and more in all eternity

Yours affectionately,
George MacDonald

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
Eph. 6:1-4



To everyone who conquers I will give . . . a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.” Rev. 2:17

I say in brief, the giving of the white stone with the new name is the communication of what God thinks about the man to the man. It is the divine judgment, the solemn holy doom of the righteous man, the “Come thou blessed,” spoken to the individual.

The true name is one which expresses the character, the nature, the being, the *meaning* of the person who bears it. It is the man’s own symbol—his soul’s picture, in a word—the sign which belongs to him and to no one else. Who can give a man this, his own name? God alone. For no one but God sees what the man is, or even, seeing what he is, could express in a name-word the sum and harmony of what he sees. To whom is the name given? To him that overcomes. When is it given? When he has overcome. Does God then not know what a man is going to become? As surely as he sees the oak which he put there lying in the heart of the acorn. Why then does he wait till the man has become by overcoming ere he settles what his name shall be? He does not wait; he knows his name from the first. But as—although repentance comes because God pardons—yet the man becomes aware of the pardon only in the repentance; so it is only when the man has become his name that God gives him the stone with the name upon it, for then first can he understand what his name signifies.

God’s name for a man must be the expression in a mystical word—a word of that language which all who have overcome understand—of his own idea of the man, that being whom he had in his thought when he began to make the child, and whom he kept in his thought through the long process of creation that went to realize the idea. To tell the name is to seal the success—to say, “In thee also I am well pleased.”

“The New Name,” *Unspoken Sermons: Series One*
Rev. 2:12-17

*On this day in 1902: Louisa MacDonald dies at Casa Corragio,
the family home in Bordighera, Italy.*



To everyone who conquers I will give . . . a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.” Rev. 2:17

“But is there not the worst of all dangers involved in such teaching—the danger of spiritual pride?” If there be, are we to refuse the spirit for fear of the pride? Or is there any other deliverance from pride except the spirit? Pride springs from supposed success in the high aim: with attainment itself comes humility. But here there is no room for ambition. Ambition is the desire to be above one’s neighbor; and here there is no possibility of comparison with one’s neighbor: no one knows what the white stone contains except the man who receives it. Here is room for endless aspiration towards the unseen ideal; none for ambition. Ambition would only be higher than others; aspiration would be high. Relative worth is not only unknown—to the children of the kingdom it is unknowable. Each esteems the other better than himself.

“God has cared to make me for himself,” says the victor with the white stone, “and has called me that which I like best; for my own name must be what I should have it, seeing it is myself. What matter whether I be called a grass of the field, or an eagle of the air? A stone to build into his temple, or a Boanerges to wield his thunder? I am his; his idea, his making; perfect in my kind, yea, perfect in his sight; full of him, revealing him, alone with him. Let him call me what he will. The name shall be precious as my life. I seek no more.”

Neither will he thus be isolated from his fellows. For that we say of one, we say of all. It is as *one* that the man has claims among his fellows. Each will feel the sacredness and awe of his neighbor’s dark and silent speech with his God. Each will behold in the other a marvel of revelation, a present son or daughter of the Most High, come forth from him to reveal him afresh. In God each will draw nigh to each.

“The New Name,” *Unspoken Sermons: Series One*
Psalms 91:9-16



But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matt. 4:4.

The Bible is *a* word of God, the chief of his written words, because it tells us of The Word, the Christ; but everything God has done and given man to know is a word of his, a will of his; and inasmuch as it is a will of his, it is a necessity to man, without which he cannot live: the reception of it is man's life.

For inasmuch as God's utterances are a whole, every smallest is essential: he speaks no foolishness—there are with him no vain repetitions. But by *the word* of the God and not Maker only, who is God just because he *speaks* to men, I must understand, in the deepest sense, every revelation of Himself in the heart and consciousness of man, so that the man knows that God is there, nay, rather, that he is here.

Even Christ himself is not the Word of God in the deepest sense *to a man*, until the Spirit that is the meaning in the Word has come to him—until the speech is not a sound as of thunder, but the voice of words; for a word is more than an utterance—it is a sound to be understood. No word, I say, is fully a Word *of* God until it is a Word *to* the man, until the man therein recognizes God. This is that for which the word is spoken.

The words of God are as the sands and the stars—they cannot be numbered; but the end of all and each is this—to reveal God. Nor, moreover, can the man know that any one of them is the word of God, save as it comes thus to him, is a revelation of God in him. It is *to* him that it may be *in* him; but till it is *in* him he cannot *know* that it was *to* him. God must be God *in* man before man can know that he is God, or that he has received aright, and for that for which it was spoken, any one of his words.

*"The Temptation in the Wilderness," Unspoken Sermons, Series One
Psalms 19:7-11*



“And when the tempter came to him, he said, If you be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread..” Matt. 4:3

“If ye have faith and doubt not, if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done.” Good people, among them John Bunyan, have been tempted to tempt the Lord their God upon the strength of this saying, just as Satan sought to tempt our Lord on the strength of the passage he quoted from the Psalms. Happily for such, the assurance to which they would give the name of faith generally fails them in time.

Faith is that which, knowing the Lord’s will, goes and does it; for, not knowing it, stands and waits, content in ignorance as in knowledge, because God wills; neither pressing into the hidden future, nor careless of the knowledge which opens the path of action. It is its noblest exercise to act with uncertainty of the result, when the duty itself is certain, or even when a course seems with strong probability to be duty. But to put God to the question in any other way than by saying, What wilt thou have me to do? Is an attempt to compel God to declare himself, or to hasten his work.

This probably was the sin of Judas. It is presumption of a kind similar to the making of a stone into bread. It is, as it were, either a forcing of God to act where he has created no need for action, or the making of a case wherein he shall seem to have forfeited his word if he does not act. The man is therein dissociating himself from God so far that, instead of acting by the divine will from within, he acts in God’s face, as it were, to see what he will do. Man’s first business is, “what does God want me to do?” not “What will God do if I do so and so?”

The faith that will remove mountains is that confidence in God which comes from seeking nothing but his will. A man who was thus faithful would die of hunger sooner than say to the stone, *Be bread*; would meet the scoffs of the unbelieving without reply and with apparent defeat, sooner than say to the mountain, *Be thou cast into the sea*, even if he knew that it would be torn from its foundations at the word, except he knew first that God would have it so.

*“The Temptation in the Wilderness,” Unspoken Sermons, Series One
Psalms 119:9-16*



"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. 27:46

I do not know that I should dare to approach this, of all utterances into which human breath has ever been molded, most awful in import, did I not feel that, containing both germ and blossom of the final devotion, it contains therefore the deepest practical lesson the human heart has to learn. The Lord, the Revealer, hides nothing that can be revealed, and will not warn away the foot that treads in naked humility even upon the ground of that terrible conflict between him and Evil, when the smoke of the battle that was fought not only with garments rolled in blood but with burning and fuel of fire, rose up between him and his Father, and for the one terrible moment ere he broke the bonds of life, and walked weary and triumphant into his arms, hid God from the eyes of his Son.

He will give us even to meditate the one thought that slew him at last, when he could bear no more, and fled to the Father to know that he loved him, and was well-pleased with him. For Satan had come at length yet again, to urge him with his last temptation; to tell him that although he had done his part, God had forgotten him; that although he had lived by the word of his mouth, that mouth had no word more to speak to him; that although he had refused to tempt him, God had left him to be tempted more than he could bear; that although he had worshiped none other, for that worship God did not care.

The Lord hides not his sacred sufferings, for truth is light, and would be light in the minds of men. The Holy Child, the Son of the Father, has nothing to conceal, but the Godhead to reveal. Let us put off our shoes, and draw near, and bow the head, and kiss those feet that bear for ever the scars of our victory.

*"The Elooi," Unspoken Sermons: Series One
Psalms 22:1-11*



"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. 27:46.

It is with the holiest fear that we should approach the terrible fact of the sufferings of our Lord. Let no one think that those were less because he was more. The more delicate the nature, the more alive to all that is lovely and true, lawful and right, the more does it feel the antagonism of pain, the inroad of death upon life; the more dreadful is that breach of the harmony of things whose sound is torture. He felt more than man could feel, because he had a larger feeling.

He was even therefore worn out sooner than another man would have been. These sufferings were awful indeed when they began to invade the region about the will; when the struggle to keep consciously trusting in God began to sink in darkness; when the Will of The Man put forth its last determined effort in that cry after the vanishing vision of the Father: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Never had it been so with him before. Never before had he been unable to see God beside him. Yet never was God nearer him than now. For never was Jesus more divine. He could not see, could not feel him near; and yet it is "My God" that he cries.

"The Eloi," Unspoken Sermons: Series One
Isa. 53:1-6



“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Matt. 27:46

It is easy in pain, so long as it does not pass certain undefinable bounds, to hope in God for deliverance, or pray for strength to endure. But what is to be done when all feeling is gone? When a man does not know whether he believes or not, whether he loves or not? When art, poetry, religion are nothing to him, so swallowed up is he in pain, or mental depression, or disappointment, or temptation, or he knows not what? It seems to him then that God does not care for him, and certainly he does not care for God.

If he is still humble, he thinks that he is so bad that God cannot care for him. And he then believes for the time that God loves us only because and when and while we love him; instead of believing that God loves us always because he is our God, and that we live only by his love. Or he does not believe in a God at all, which is better.

God does not, by the instant gift of his Spirit, make us always feel right, desire good, love purity, aspire after him and his will. Therefore either he will not, or he cannot. If he will not, it must be because it would not be well to do so. If he cannot, then he would not if he could; else a better condition than God's is conceivable to the mind of God—a condition in which he could save the creatures whom he has made, better than he can save them.

The truth is this: He wants to make us in his own image, *choosing* the good, *refusing* the evil. How should he effect this if he were *always* moving us from within, as he does at divine intervals, towards the beauty of holiness? God gives us room *to be*; does not oppress us with his will; “stands away from us,” that we may act from ourselves, that we may exercise the pure will for good.

*“The Eloï,” Unspoken Sermons: Series One
Psalms 42:5-11*



JANUARY 20

HIS OWN BEST MAKING

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. 27:46

Do not imagine me to mean that we can do anything of ourselves without God. If we choose the right at last, it is all God's doing, and only the more his that it is ours, only in a far more marvelous way his than if he had kept us filled with all holy impulses precluding the need of choice. For up to this very point, for this very point, he has been educating us, leading us, pushing us, driving us, enticing us, that we may choose him and his will, and so be tenfold more his children, of his own best making. . . .

For God made our individuality as well as, and a greater marvel than, our dependence; make our *apartness* from himself, that freedom should bind us divinely dearer to himself, with a new and inscrutable marvel of love; for the Godhead is still at the root, is the making root of our individuality, and the freer the man, the stronger the bond that binds him to him who made his freedom. He made our wills, and is striving to make them free; for only in the perfection of our individuality and the freedom of our wills can we be altogether his children. This is full of mystery, but can we not see enough in it to make us very glad and very peaceful?

*"The Eloï," Unspoken Sermons: Series One.
Heb. 12:1-3*

On this day in 1856: Greville, George and Louisa's first son is born.



"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. 27:46

See, then, what lies within our reach every time that we are thus lapped in the folds of night. The highest condition of the human will is in sight, is attainable. I say not the highest condition of the Human Being; that surely lies in the Beatific Vision, in the sight of God. But the highest condition of the Human Will – as distinct, not as separated from God – is when, not seeing God, not seeming to itself to grasp him at all, it yet holds him fast. It cannot continue in this condition, for, not finding, not seeing God, the man would die; but the will thus asserting itself, the man has passed from death into life, and the vision is nigh at hand.

Then first, thus free, in thus asserting its freedom, is the individual will one with the Will of God; the child is finally restored to the father; the childhood and the fatherhood meet in one; the brotherhood of the race arises from the dust; and the prayer of our Lord is answered, "I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

Let us then arise in God-born strength every time that we feel the darkness closing, or become aware that it has closed around us, and say, "I am of the Light and not of the Darkness."

Then, if ever the time should come, as perhaps it must come to each of us, when all consciousness of well-being shall have vanished, when . . . man nor woman shall delight us more, nay, when God himself shall be but a name, and Jesus an old story, then, even then, when Death . . . is griping at our hearts. . . then we shall be able to cry out with our Lord, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Nor shall we die then, I think, without being able to take up his last words as well, and say, "*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*"

*"The Eloi," Unspoken Sermons: Series One
Phil. 3:12-16*



"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Luke 23:46

Will the Lord ever tell us why he cried so? Was it the cry of relief at the touch of death? Was it the cry of victory? Was it the cry of gladness that he had endured to the end? Or did the Father look out upon him in answer to his *My God*, and the blessedness of it make him cry aloud because he could not smile? Was such his condition now that the greatest gladness of the universe could express itself only in a loud cry? Or was it but the last wrench of pain ere the final repose began?

It may have been all in one. But never surely in all books, in all words of thinking men, can there be so much expressed as lay unarticulated in that cry of the Son of God. Now had he made his Father Lord no longer in the might of making and loving alone, but Lord of right of devotion and deed of love. Now should inward sonship and the spirit of glad sacrifice be born in the hearts of men; for the divine obedience was perfected by suffering.

He had been among his brethren what he would have his brethren be. He had done for them what he would have them do for God and for each other. God was henceforth inside and beneath them, as well as around and above them, suffering with them and for them, giving them all he had, his very life-being, his essence of existence, what best he loved, what best he was. He had been among them, their God-brother. And the mighty story ends with a cry.

*"The Hands of the Father," Unspoken Sermons: Series One
Isa. 55:1-7*



"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Luke 23:46

Every highest human act is just a giving back to God of that which he first gave to us. "Thou God hast given me: here again is thy gift. I send my spirit home."

Every act of worship is a holding up to God of what God has made us. "Here, Lord, look what I have got": feel with me in what thou hast made me, in this thy own bounty, my being. I am thy child, and know not how to thank thee save by uplifting the heave-offering of the overflowing of thy life, and calling aloud, 'It is thine: it is mine. I am thine, and therefore I am mine.'" The vast operations of the spiritual as of the physical world, are simply a turning again to the source.

The last act of our Lord, in thus commending his spirit at the close of his life, was only a summing up of what he had been doing all his life. He had been offering this sacrifice, the sacrifice of himself, all the years, and in thus sacrificing he had lived the divine life. Every morning when he went out ere it was day, every evening when he lingered on the night-lapt mountain after his friends were gone, he was offering himself to his Father in the communion of loving words, of high thoughts, of speechless feelings; and, between, he turned to do the same thing in deed, namely, in loving word, in helping thought, in healing action towards his fellows; for the way to worship God while the daylight lasts is to work; the service of God, the only "divine service," is the helping of our fellows.

*"The Hands of the Father," Unspoken Sermons: Series One
Rom. 12:1-2*

*On this day in 1867: George MacKay,
George and Louisa's eleventh and last child, is born.*



"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. Luke 23:46

Am I going out into the business and turmoil of the day, where so may temptations may come to do less honorably, less faithfully, less kindly, less diligently than the Ideal Man would have me do? Father, into thy hands. Am I going to do a good deed? Then, of all times—Father, into thy hands; lest the enemy should have me now.

Am I going to do a hard duty, from which I would gladly be turned aside—to refuse a friend's request, to urge a neighbor's conscience—Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. Am I in pain? Is illness coming upon me to shut out the glad visions of a healthy brain, and bring me such as are troubled and untrue?—Take my spirit, Lord, and see that it has no more to bear than it can bear.

Am I going to die? Thou knowest, if only from the cry of thy Son, how terrible that is; and if it comes not to me in so terrible a shape as that in which it came to him, think how poor to bear I am beside him. I do not know what the struggle means; for, of the thousands who pass through it every day, not one enlightens his neighbor left behind. I will question no more: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

For it is thy business, not mine. Thou wilt know every shade of my suffering; thou wilt care for me with thy perfect fatherhood; for that makes my sonship, and enwraps and infolds it. As a child I could bear great pain when my father was leaning over me, or had his arm about me: how much nearer my soul cannot thy hands come!—yea, with a comfort, father of me, that I have never yet even imagined. . . . I care not for the pain, so long as my spirit is strong, and into thy hands I commend that spirit. If thy love, which is better than life, receive it, then surely thy tenderness will make it great.

*"The Hands of the Father," Unspoken Sermons: Series One
Psalms 23*



“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Luke 23:46

Every uplifting of the heart is a looking up to The Father. Graciousness and truth are around, above, beneath us, yea, *in* us. When we are least worthy, then, most tempted, hardest, unkindest, let us yet commend our spirits into his hands. Whither else dare we send them?

How the earthly father would love a child who would creep into his room with angry, troubled face, and sit down at his feet, saying when asked what he wanted: “I feel so naughty, papa, and I want to get good”! Would he say to his child: “How dare you! Go away, and be good, and then come to me?” And shall we dare to think God would send us away if we came thus, and would not be pleased that we came, even if we were angry as Jonah?

Would we not let all the tenderness of our nature flow forth upon such a child? And shall we dare to think that if we being evil know how to give good gifts to our children, God will not give us his own spirit when we come to ask him? Bread, at least, will be given, and not a stone; water, at least, will be sure, and not vinegar mingled with gall.

Nor is there anything we can ask for ourselves that we may not ask for another. We may commend any brother, any sister, to the common fatherhood. And there will be moments when, filled with that spirit which is the Lord, nothing will ease our hearts of their love but the commending of all men, all our brothers, all our sisters, to the one Father.

For he cannot be our father save as he is their father; and if we do not see him and feel him as their father, we cannot know him as ours. Never shall we know him aright until we rejoice and exult for our race that he is *the* Father.

*“The Hands of the Father,” Unspoken Sermons: Series One
Heb. 4:14-16*



“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.” Matt. 5:44, 45

“There is the person. Can you deny that that person is unlovely? How then can you love him?” I answer, *that* person, with the evil thing cast out of him, will be yet more the *person*, for he will be his real self. The thing that now makes you dislike him is separable from him, is therefore not he, makes himself so much less himself, for it is working death in him. Now he is in danger of ceasing to be a person at all.

When he is clothed and in his right mind, he will be a person indeed. You *could* not then go on hating him. Begin to love him now, and help him into the loveliness which is his. Do not hate him although you can. The personality, I say, though clouded, besmeared, defiled with the wrong, lies deeper than the wrong, and indeed, so far as the wrong has reached it, is by the wrong injured, yea, so far, it may be, destroyed.

Am I not refusing to acknowledge the child of the kingdom within his bosom, so killing the child of the kingdom within my own? Let us claim for ourselves no more indulgence than we give to him. Such honesty will end in severity at home and clemency abroad. For we are accountable for the ill in ourselves, and have to kill it; for the good in our neighbor, and have to cherish it.

He only, in the name and power of God, can kill the bad in him; we can cherish the good in him by being good to it across all the evil fog that comes between our love and his good.

“Love Thine Enemy,” *Unspoken Sermons; Series One*
Matt. 5:43-48

*This day in 1873: George, Louisa, and Greville are
guests at Mark Twain's home in Elmira, New York.*



*“Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living;
for to him all of them are alive.” Luke 20:38*

What God-like relation can the ever-living, life-giving, changeless God hold to creatures [if they] . . . partake not of his life, who have death at the very core of their being, are not worth their Maker’s keeping alive? To let his creatures die would be to change, to abjure his Godhood, to cease to be that which he had made himself. If they are not worth keeping alive, then his creating is a poor thing, and he is not so great, nor so divine as even the poor thoughts of those his dying creatures have been able to imagine him. But our Lord says, “All live unto him.”

With Him death is not. Thy life sees our life, O Lord. All of whom *all* can be said, are present to thee. Thou thinkest about us, eternally more than we think about thee. The little life that burns within the body of this death, glows unquenchable in thy true-seeing eyes. If you didst forget us for a moment then indeed death would be. But unto thee we live.

The beloved pass from our sight, but they pass not from thine. This that we call death, is but a form in the eyes of men. It looks something final, an awful cessation, an utter change. It seems not probable that there is anything beyond. But if God could see us before we were, and make us after his ideal, that we shall have passed from the eyes of our friends can be no argument that he beholds us no longer. “All live unto Him.”

He takes to himself the name of *Their God*. The Living One cannot name himself after the dead, when the very Godhead lies in the giving of life. Therefore they must be alive. If he speaks of them, remembers his own loving thoughts of them, would he not have kept them alive if he could; and if he could not, how could he create them? Can it be an easier thing to call into life than to keep alive?

*“The God of the Living,” Unspoken Sermons: Series One.
Luke 20:27-40*



*“Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living;
for to him all of them are alive.”* Matt. 20:38

“But if they live to God, they are aware of God. And if they are aware of God, they are conscious of their own being: Whence then the necessity of a resurrection?” For their relation to others of God’s children in mutual revelation; and for fresh revelation of God to all. But let us inquire what is meant by the resurrection of the body. “With what body do they come?” A man’s material body will be to his consciousness at death no more than the old garment he throws aside at night, intending to put on a new and a better one in the morning.

Let us first ask what is the use of this body of ours. It is the means of Revelation to us, the *camera* in which God’s eternal shows are set forth. It is by the body that we come into contact with Nature, with our fellow-men, with all their revelations of God to us. It is through the body that we receive all the lessons of passion, of suffering, of love, of beauty, of science. It is through the body that we are both trained outwards from our selves, and driven inwards into our deepest selves to find God.

We cannot yet have learned all that we are meant to learn through the body. How much of the teaching even of this world can the most diligent and most favored man have exhausted before he is called to leave it! Is all that remains to be lost? Who that has loved this earth can but believe that the spiritual body of which St. Paul speaks will be a yet higher channel of such revelation?

We need not only a body to convey revelation to us, but a body to reveal us to others. The thoughts, feelings, imaginations which arise in us, must have their garments of revelation whereby shall be made manifest the unseen world within us to our brothers and sisters. Now, if this be one of the uses my body served on earth before, the new body must be like the old. Nay, it must be the same body, glorified as we are glorified, with all that was distinctive of each from his fellows more visible than before.

*“The God of the Living,” Unspoken Sermons: Series One
I Cor. 15:35-49*



*Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living;
for to him all of them are alive.” Matt. 20:38*

Ah, my friends! What will resurrection or life be to me, how shall I continue to love God as I have learned to love him through you, if I find he cares so little for this human heart of mine, as to take from me the gracious visitings of your faces and forms? True, I might have a gaze at Jesus, now and then; but he would not be so good as I had thought him. And how should I see him if I could not see you?

No, our God is an unveiling, a revealing God. He will raise you from the dead, that I may behold you; that that which vanished from the earth may again stand forth, looking out of the same eyes of eternal love and truth, holding out the same mighty hand of brotherhood, the same delicate and gentle, yet strong hand of sisterhood, to me, this me that knew you and loved you in the days gone by.

And in the changes which, thank God, must take place when the mortal puts on immortality, shall we not feel that the nobler our friends are, the more they are themselves; that the more the idea of each is carried out in the perfection of beauty, the more like they are to what we thought them in our most exalted moods, to that which we saw in them in the rarest moments of profoundest communion, to that which we beheld through the veil of all their imperfections when we loved them the truest?

Lord, evermore give us the Resurrection, like thine own in the body of thy Transfiguration. Let us see and hear, and know, and be seen, and heard, and known, as thou seest, hearest, and knowest. Give us glorified bodies through which to reveal the glorified thoughts which shall then inhabit us, when not only shalt thou reveal God, but each of us shall reveal thee.

*“The God of the Living,” Unspoken Sermons: Series One
Dan. 12:1-4*



*This letter, penned from Bordighera on January 31, 1886,
is as precise a summary of MacDonald's attitudes as exists in his writings.*

Dear W_____

When I had the pleasure of being your guest I entered with you into a conversation such as I am in general far from favorable to, believing it not at all conducive to profit. Had you been a stranger, I should have avoided or declined the argument. But in answer to your letter, I reply thus far, that your presentation of your opinions, which are the same as from childhood I was familiar with, I refuse entirely as the truth, holding them as the merest invention of the human intellect in the attempt to explain things which the spirit of the Son of Man alone can make any man to understand for his salvation.

If however any man ask me, as you do in your letter, to give in its stead the attempt of my intellect to explain the same things, I answer, far be it from me to do so! I am not going to replace in the same kind in dried and petrified form, what I see of the truth, favoring thus the idea that anything else whatever than a vital union with Christ, as of the members with the body, as of the branches of the vine, is of any avail to the well-being of a man. It is in no sense what we believe about Christ, or what way we would explain his work, that constitutes or can be the object of faith.

No belief in the atonement, for instance, whether that atonement be explained or understood right or wrong, no belief in what the theologians call the merits of Christ, is in the smallest degree or approximation what the Lord or his apostles meant by faith in him. It is to take him as our Lord and Master, obey his words, be prepared to die for him; it is to take on us the yoke his father laid on him and regard the will of God as the one thing worthy of a man's care and endeavor—as indeed our very life—that, and nothing less than that, is faith in the Son of God. (*Continued in next entry*)

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Gal. 1:6-10



(continued from prior entry)

Then as to all things that are necessary for our growth in the Divine life, that is, for growing like to him in whose image we are made, he promises to teach us by his spirit everything. Nor even if a man could, which is impossible, know with his understanding the deepest mysteries, would these avail him the least, that would not constitute the knowledge of them after the true fashion: they must be spiritually discerned—in a way that no man can by any possibility teach his neighbor, but which only the Spirit of God can teach. I think and believe that the mischief done to the kingdom of Christ by teaching of what is called doctrine by theologians, and calling that teaching the Gospel, instead of presenting Christ as he presented himself, and took a whole life of labor to present himself, is enormous, and the cause of a huge part of the infidelity in the world. Let us follow the Lord, studying the mind of him, and not what the scribes and the elders teach about him.

If any man come to me with theological questions, if I find that they are troubling him, and keeping him from giving himself to God, I do my best to remove any such obstructions as are the result of man's handling of the eternal things: what I count false, I will not spare. But if the man come to me only for the sake of conference on the matter, I will hold none. Let him get what teaching he is capable of receiving from his knowledge of Christ, and the spirit given him. If he is satisfied with the theology he has learned, I should give myself no trouble to alter his opinion. I should do him no good either by success or failure in the attempt. I have other things altogether to do. I have to take up my cross and follow the master first, and then persuade him who will be persuaded to come with me. He is the atonement, and through him, through knowing him and being every day, every hour, every moment taught by him, I shall become pure in heart, and shall at length see God. No doctrine shall come between me and him. Nor will he come between anyone and God save to lead him home to the Father. The whole mischief has come of people setting themselves to understand rather than to do, to arrange God's business for him, and tell other people what the Father meant, instead of doing what the Father tells them, and then teaching others to do the same.

(Continued in next entry)

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John 8:31-47



(continued from prior entry)

If I am told that I am not definite—that something more definite is needed, I say your definiteness is one that God does not care about, for he has given no such system as you desire. But, I ask, is not the living man, the human God, after his 3 and 30 years on earth, poor and scanty as are the records of him, a definite enough object of faith for your turn? He is not, I grant you, for the kind of definiteness you would have, which is to reduce the infinite within the bounds of a legal document; but for life, for the joy of deliverance, for the glory of real creation, for the partakings of the divine nature, for the gaining of a faith that shall remove mountains, and for deliverance from all the crushing commonplaces of would-be teachers of religion, who present us with a God so poor and small that to believe in him is an insult to him who created the human heart—the story of the eternal Son of God, who knew and loved his father so that he delighted to die in the manifestation of him to his brothers and sisters, is enough, triumphantly enough. To have to believe in the God of the Calvinist would drive me to madness or atheism; to believe in the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, is to feel that, if such God there be, all is well, he may do with me as he please. I am blest.

Thus, or somehow thus, I would answer any man who pressed me to be more definite. Not that I could not give what seemed to me the best of reasons why the Lord should die, but if I set them out, it shall be in a vital fashion, and not in a *hortus siccus* [a dry garden] of heavenly flowers.

So far, my dear sir, I have answered, so far I have declined to answer your letter. I have other reasons also, the result of a long life's experience in these regions, for doing as I have done. But the day will come for saying anything. May we be of those who walking the streets of the New Jerusalem hold sweet counsel together without danger of being misunderstood.

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Gal.3:1 -9

