ABSTRACT

MacDonald's Antiphon:
Literary Traditions and the "Lost Church" of English Worship

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This dissertation examines the ways in which Victorian novelist and fantasist George MacDonald re-imagines Samuel Taylor Coleridge's ideas about the religious function of literary traditions. Each chapter of this project argues that Coleridge and MacDonald confront the problems of post-Kantian subjectivity with visions of literary tradition that, in turn, revitalize the idea of a universal Church in English life and letters. Chapter One begins with a study of Coleridge's participation in the "reinvention of tradition" in the nineteenth century. Chapter Two argues that Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* (1825) is predicated upon the idea that literary recreations of the past can resolve many of the philosophical, historical, and moral challenges to the authority of the Bible. Thirty years after the publication of *Aids to Reflection*, MacDonald developed Coleridge's ideas into a vision of literary traditions as "chapels" through which readers might enter the Church Invisible. In *Phantastes* (1858), MacDonald imagines reading as a form of baptism that can reconcile interpretive freedom and spiritual communion. Likewise, in *England's Antiphon* (1868), MacDonald argues that England's lyric tradition can restore unity among England's divided Christians. Chapter Three considers why

MacDonald writes fairy-tale "parables" in response to those who would reduce the Bible's meaning either to the empiricism of textual criticism or to the "single plain sense" of plenary-verbal inspiration. Similarly, in *Antiphon,* MacDonald responds to Coleridge's problematic theories of allegory with his own narrative of allegory's importance in the English literary tradition. Chapter Four concludes this study by examining why both Coleridge and MacDonald believe the writers of the seventeenth century--an era of violent religious division in England--hold the key to nineteenth-century religious unity and to the revitalization of English literature. In *St. George and St. Michael* (1876), MacDonald modifies Coleridge's elevation of natural symbols in order to demonstrate that the highest forms of poetry lead to the transformation of conscience and history.

Throughout this study, it becomes clear that MacDonald offers a resounding and creative challenge to other nineteenth-century readings of Coleridge, particularly Matthew Arnold's notions of literary culture. Arguably, it is MacDonald who comes nearest to fulfilling Coleridge's own hopes for his philosophical labors, namely, providing a theory of literature that could sustain the Church in the face of division and doubt.

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by

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A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of English

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

(Full bibliographic details for each text are available in the list of *Works Cited,* below. For the works of Coleridge, I have followed the conventions used by the editors of the Bollingen editions of Coleridge's *Collected Works.*)

Works by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

AR	*Aids to Reflection*
BL	*Biographia Literaria*
C&S	*On the Constitution of the Church and State*
CN	*The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
Confessions	*Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*
Essays	*Essays on His Times*
Friend	*The Friend*
Lects 1795	*Lectures 1795: on Politics and Religion*
LS	*Lay Sermons*
PW	*Poetical Works* (Variorum ed.)

Works by George MacDonald

Adela	*Adela Cathcart*
Antiphon	*England's Antiphon*
Falconer	*Robert Falconer*
Orts	*A Dish of Orts*
St. George	*St. George and St. Michael*
Unspoken	*Unspoken Sermons*

Other Works

FQ	*The Faerie Queene*
DNB	*The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
OED	*The Oxford English Dictionary*

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

"The status and purpose of the study of literature have never been more uncertain" (*State* 6). With this bleak assertion, the National Humanities Center (NHC) opened its 2010 conference on *The State and Stakes of Literary Study*. However, the uncertainty expressed by the NHC may be salutary. The conference organizers observe that changes in the academy "have shaken the traditional rationales for literary study without leaving anything definite in their place" (6), and the same language might be used to describe the status of religion in nineteenth-century England. This resonance is more than coincidental. Many of the "traditional rationales" for literary study developed in response to the increasingly uncertain status of religion in the academy and in society. For disciples of Matthew Arnold, the status and purpose of literary study once depended, at least in part, upon the ability of literature to sustain the social and moral formation once entrusted to religion. The statements of the NHC raise doubts not only about this substitution, but about the ability of literary studies to establish its value by appealing only to itself. The future of literary studies cannot be settled in a single conference or act of analysis, but for those who would reserve a place for moral formation in the academy--and recent studies suggest that most faculty do--the NHC's comments should provoke a reexamination of the relationship between literature and religion in the nineteenth

century, when the "traditional rationales" for literary study were being shaped and debated.[1]

Over the past two centuries, professional literary research has developed in response to a number of questions about language, history, and personhood, but these questions, central to the humanities, have been largely separated from the study of theology.[2] Even as this separation grew during the nineteenth century, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was crafting theories that model the reintegration of ecclesiastical and imaginative solutions to these questions. In philosophical texts such as the *Lay Sermons* (1816-17)*, Aids to Reflection* (1825), *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829), and *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* (1840), Coleridge interrogates not only the operations of poetic language, but the possibility that literature could address the growing isolation and spiritual acedia of nineteenth-century readers.

Among readers concerned about the present stakes of literary study, there are those who wonder, with Anthony Harding, "whether our society has resolved the conflicts with which Coleridge concerned himself, or whether it has merely made us

[1] Publications from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) have identified a widespread tension in faculty attitudes toward, on the one hand, students' "spiritual development," and, on the other, the academy's role in encouraging "moral" development. Their results, first published in *Spirituality and the Professoriate,* note that "when asked whether 'colleges should be concerned with facilitating students' spiritual development,' only a minority of faculty (30%) agree. … However, many faculty also believe that the following educational goals for undergraduate students are 'essential' or 'very important': enhancing self-understanding (60%), developing moral character (59%), and helping students develop personal value (53%)" (Astin et al. 9). The HERI, based at UCLA and funded by the John Templeton Foundation, conducted this survey as part of major research project that aims to learn "how college students conceive of spirituality … and how colleges and universities can be more effective in facilitating students' spiritual development" (2). The survey included more than 40,000 faculty from over 400 colleges and universities.

[2] Stephen Prickett traces the history of this division in *Words and* The Word. He notes that German universities, specifically the University of Berlin, established in 1809, were the first to formally separate theology from the humanities (1). By the end of the nineteenth century, "the same wall that divided German scholarship had been successfully transplanted into English institutions and thought" (2). The tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth provided "distinguished and honourable exceptions" to this division (2), and it is this tradition that MacDonald attempts to preserve.

forget about them" (267). In this study, I intend to demonstrate the urgency of Coleridge's ideas by examining their expression in the works of Victorian novelist, preacher, and fantasist George MacDonald. As MacDonald recreates many of Coleridge's ideas and methods in his own fiction and criticism, he both sustains and modifies his Coleridgean inheritance. To counter the solipsistic tendencies of both Protestantism and Romanticism, MacDonald upholds a theory of literary tradition that enables the renewal of poetic representation and criticism by reasserting the need for a universal Church.[3] While MacDonald's hope for the unity of the Church might seem to be the province of specialists in religious history, his work has significant, and perhaps prophetic, wisdom for literary scholars in the twenty-first century. At a time when the status of literary study is uncertain, MacDonald, like Coleridge before him, demonstrates how a creative appropriation of the past, including the history of the discipline itself, might facilitate both the renewal of literary studies and the formation of its students.

The Lost Churches of English Worship

One of the most important conflicts Coleridge addresses in his prose works is the failure of the England's religious institutions to provide the kind of spiritual and intellectual guidance that sustains hope for the individual and the state. By no reckoning, however, was Victorian England short on churches. Dickens's 1888 *Dictionary of London*, for example, lists more than 200 Anglican churches, 163 Wesleyan chapels, 134 Baptist congregations, and 188 Congregationalist churches, as well as numerous

[3] I use "the Church" to refer to the spiritual body of Christ, whether in reference to the Church Militant (or Visible Church) or the Invisible Church. For local or particular congregations or sects in a generic sense, I use "church." When a specific denomination or organized body has a proper name, such as the Church of England or the Roman Catholic Church, I will capitalize these names according to convention.

Presbyterian, Primitive Methodist, and Roman Catholic houses of worship. While such a proliferation signals the nineteenth century's extraordinary religious activity, it also suggests the profound divisions within Victorian Christianity. Even with so many visible congregations of the faithful, Eric Ericson, a tutor in George MacDonald's *Robert Falconer* (1868), could claim, "I've never seen Jesus Christ. It's all in an old book, over which the people that say they believe in it the most, fight like dogs and cats" (291). Earlier in the century, Coleridge had probed the complicated role of this "old book" in national education and ecclesiastical unity. He notes that many Protestants believe "that the Bible is the only religious bond of union and ground of unity among Protestants and the like," yet asks, "Would not the contrary statement be nearer to the fact?" (*Confessions* 1136). Given the historical, scientific, and even moral difficulties presented by the Bible--difficulties which would only grow more pronounced as the nineteenth century progressed--Coleridge insists upon some "rule, help, or guide, spiritual or historical, to teach us what parts are and what are not articles of Faith" (1164). At the same time, Coleridge recognized that many members of the Anglican clergy lacked the training or desire to deal with the problems facing the English public. His response to this problem, however, involves far more than sharpening the clergy's theological credentials. Instead, throughout his mature philosophical works, Coleridge argues that the clergy should play a leading role in the work of the "clerisy" of the national church. This learned class would be custodians and interpreters of the arts and sciences, and under their leadership, the Church of England would preserve English culture from materialism and moral decline.[4] Although Coleridge insists that the national church and the visible or historical

[4] As Coleridge explains in *On the Constitution of the Church and State,* the "clerisy" and the "clergy" are not identical. The clerisy includes all members of a nation's learned and philosophic classes,

Church of Christ (that is, the Visible Church or Church Militant) must never be "confounded," he nevertheless implies that in England they are providentially grafted together (*C&S* 127). He also maintains that education will become utilitarian and irreligious if the national church is relegated to one among many sects (61-62). Thus, while Coleridge theoretically distinguishes between the Church of England, the Visible Church of Christ, and the Church Invisible, his vision of the clerisy as England's guides toward spiritual and intellectual civilization implies that the perfection of the national church can lead to the "gradual advancement" of the "spiritual and invisible church, known only to the Father of all Spirits" (127).

The idea that the Church of England could provide spiritual as well an intellectual guidance, while at the same time advancing the revelation of the Church Invisible, was central to men such as F.D. Maurice, one of the most significant Anglican churchmen of the nineteenth century. Maurice dedicates his major work, *The Kingdom of Christ* (1838), to Coleridge, and in *Kingdom* he surveys all the Christian "sects," from the Quakers to the Church of Rome, in the hopes of establishing "the principles, constitution, and ordinances of the catholic church" (iii). Following Coleridge, Maurice argues that the true Kingdom of Christ, the universal Church, finds its most coherent historical expression in England within the established Church of England.[5]

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entrusted with the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of the nation. The clerisy thus includes, but is not limited to, the theological and spiritual guidance provided by the clergy. Coleridge outlines his somewhat confusing relationships between the visible Church of Christ as "localized in any country" with the national or established church of that country throughout *C&S* (198). While his idea of a "National Church" does not necessarily refer to Christian institutions, Coleridge writes that by a "blessed accident," the national Church of England is also the visible Church of Christ in England, and as such, it should be the primary source for spiritual guidance (*C&S* 55).

[5] Religious historians continue to debate the implications of Maurice's discussion of the true Church of Christ as a "universal society." In *Kingdom,* Maurice is able to examine the various sects and traditions of Christendom sympathetically, yet he insists upon the importance of the external signs of the

George MacDonald, a protégé of Maurice and an avid reader of Coleridge, expresses far less certainty than his mentors regarding the relationship between the Church of England and the universal Church. As historian Bernard Reardon has observed, Coleridge and Maurice's vision of the national church providing education to its citizens only works if most of the population actually belongs to the national church, (147), and MacDonald, trained as a Congregationalist minister, recognized the low probability that England's many Dissenting sects, for example, would ever formally return to the established Church of England. Additionally, in letters from the 1850s, the decade in which he began publishing, MacDonald writes of his doubts about the suitability of the Anglican clergy for providing religious training. MacDonald asserts that his "great objection to [the Church of England] was the kind of ministers the system admitted" ("To Miss" 27 Dec. 42–43). His criticisms extend to the Free Churches, as well. In a letter from 1851, MacDonald writes that while he is "glad to hear the free church improves in doctrine," he regrets that it will be some time "before the hard lifeless Calvinism is out of it" ("To His Father" 15 Apr., 51–52). These frustrations with both established and independent churches fill his letters. In 1852, he writes of one minister, "People think he has gone down, because he taken to teaching in his own house instead of preaching on Sundays. He thinks he has risen, and I agree with him" ("To His Father,"

Church as it is manifest in a particular time and place. Without these signs, the Church ceases to be the Church, and Jeremy Morris sees this argument as evidence that "Maurice's ecclesiology, for all its blurred edges and paradoxes, inhabited the same sacramental understanding of reality as that of his contemporaries in High Church Anglicanism" (79). Bernard Reardon, on the other hand, takes pains to distinguish Maurice's understanding of baptism from High-Church groups such as the Tractarians. Reardon argues that to Maurice, the High Church tended to describe baptism as an instant act of transformation, rather than as "a witness to the abiding truth of God's communion with man, the spiritual fact of the living presence of Christ in the life of humanity" (124).

27 Jul., 55).[6] Here, MacDonald suggests that the true Church may be most active outside of organized churches, be they established or free. In his fiction, too, MacDonald often betrays doubt not only about the viability of a national church, but about the ability of *any* external guide to faith and conduct. In *Adela Cathcart* (1864), for example, an Anglican curate describes the true "Church of God" as a "lost church" that each person must find "in his own heart" (2:275). Moreover, it has become a commonplace among scholars of MacDonald's fiction to observe that his narratives of spiritual transformation--always MacDonald's chief theme--occur primarily in libraries, rather than churches.[7] By relocating the site of spiritual renewal, MacDonald might seem to be participating in the secularization of Coleridge's ideas by undermining the relationship between England's visible churches and the universal Church that, he hopes, all created beings will eventually enter.[8]

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[6] This minister, Caleb Morris, is not listed in the *DNB*. However, it seems likely that MacDonald refers to the Welsh minister of the Fetter Lane Congregational Chapel, a man "who was not in sympathy with the organised Churches of his time" (Nicoll 406). In his "out of the way chapel," Morris attracted "students, ministers, teachers, men of science, men of letters, philosophers"--a company in which the young MacDonald would have found himself at home (Francis 82). MacDonald writes that Morris "is almost the only minister of standing whom I respect intellectually, morally and spiritually" ("To His Father" 27 Jul. 55).

[7] For example, C.S. Lewis, following MacDonald's son and biographer, Greville MacDonald, ascribes great importance to the months MacDonald spent in 1842 "cataloguing the library of a great house in the North of Scotland which has never been identified" (*George* xxvi). Lewis goes on to note that "[t]he image of a great house seen principally from the library … haunts his books to the end" (xxvi). See also Reis, pp. 21–22.

[8] For a thorough introduction to the question of MacDonald's belief in the doctrine of universal redemption, see Neuhouseer, "MacDonald and Universalism" in McGillis, pp. 82-97. Neuhouseer traces MacDonald's friendship and sympathy with many clergymen, including John MacCleod Campbell and Alexander John Scott, who were expelled from the ministry for preaching universalism (85). Many of MacDonald's sermons and works of fiction explore the possibility of universal redemption, but Neuhouseer also argues that *Lilith* (1895), which suggests that Satan himself could be redeemed, actually challenges many of the "easy tendencies" of late-century universalists, who not only believed in the doctrine of universal redemption, but dismissed the traditional Christian belief in the reality of hell and other forms of divine punishment (93).

Initially, MacDonald's pictures of how men and women are to enter the universal Church seem to advance a radically subjective position, exalting individual, mystical experience above and beyond any external communion or authority. His curate's confidence in the internal apprehension of God seems to offer a theological analogue to MacDonald's willingness to extend apparently unlimited interpretive freedom to his own readers. When asked what his fairy tales mean, MacDonald writes in "The Fantastic Imagination" that readers should not look to him for the answer, but rather trust that their meanings may be better than his own (*Orts* 316). Taken out of context, both Mr. Armstrong's words and MacDonald's own critical dictum seem to authorize a church of one, in which each reader is governed only by his or her imagination. However, the total witness of MacDonald's fiction and criticism suggest that he hopes to challenge the individualistic tendencies he inherits both from his dissenting forebears and his Romantic predecessors. For example, even in "The Fantastic Imagination," while MacDonald offers such extreme interpretive freedom to readers, he affirms clear moral, external laws governing writers. Upholding laws for writers but not readers seems at first inconsistent, but MacDonald blurs the lines between writers and readers, ultimately subjecting readers' interpretations to the same moral laws that govern the meaning an author may create. MacDonald's repeated insistence that poets are creative readers of others' works, for example, implies that the inverse is also true: any careful reader of a story of a poem participates in the creation of the work's meaning.

Moreover, all of MacDonald's writings, both fiction and non-fiction, seek to challenge the tyranny of "Self." If many of MacDonald's characters are alienated from institutional churches, they are equally compelled to establish spiritual societies through

gathered testimonies, renewed households, and shared readings of both biblical and literary texts. In "The Hands of the Father," from the first series of his *Unspoken Sermons* (1867), MacDonald insists that "finding God in [one's] own heart" is, paradoxically, impossible in isolation. We cannot "rest in the bosom of the Father," MacDonald writes, "till the fatherhood is fully revealed to us in the love of the brothers …; and if we do not see Him and feel Him as their Father, we cannot know Him as ours" (*Unspoken* 127). Here, MacDonald echoes Coleridge's belief that recognition and love of another person is the necessary ground of selfhood, indeed, of consciousness itself.[9] If MacDonald is a universalist, it is because he believes--*contra* his Calvinist upbringing--that the loving relation between self and other is the natural state for all mankind, and the Church consists of all in whom this nature has been restored.[10]

Thus, the fact that MacDonald implies that the true Church is "lost" does not mean he is unwilling to send his readers in search of it. He provides the key to this search in a work published only four years after *Adela*. In this anthology of English religious verse, *England's Antiphon* (1868), MacDonald claims that the true Church becomes visible in England through the nation's literary traditions. He reasserts this claim by using an architectural and ecclesiastical metaphor for his collection:

> My object is to erect, as it were, in this book, a little auricle, or spot of concentrated hearing, where the hearts of my readers may listen, and join

[9] As Anthony Harding explains in *Coleridge and the Idea of Love*, Coleridge insists that "the sense of self must depend on something other than an isolated act of introspection" (185). More recently (2005), Jeffrey Barbeau has suggested that readers will find "in Coleridge's sustained reflections on the person a wealth of largely untapped theological literature" that anticipates the insights of Martin Buber's *I and Thou* ("Rev. of *Coleridge*" 680). For more on how Coleridge's sense of self and love might anticipate Buber, see below, p. 186n17.

[10] In an early letter to Louisa Powell, who would later become his wife, MacDonald writes that "The religion of Jesus Christ is intended to bring us back to our real natural condition: for all the world is in an unnatural state" ("To Miss" [1848?] 21).

> in the song of their country's singing men and singing women. I will build it, if I may, like a chapel in the great church of England's worship. (*Antiphon* 2)

At first, MacDonald's application of cathedral imagery to poetry seems to follow Matthew Arnold's desire to preserve the established Church of England, and even a form of Christianity, while yet accepting the death of "the old anthropomorphic and miraculous religion" ("Preface" 500). In *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877), Arnold argues that the forms of Christian worship will "survive as poetry," a claim consistent with, though somewhat less bold, than his later claims, in "The Study of Poetry" (1880) that poetry, which attaches emotion to "ideas" rather than vulnerable material "fact," will provide "an ever surer and surer stay" as creeds, dogma, and "received tradition" continue to falter (306). If "the strongest part of our religion to-day" is its "unconscious poetry," then a carefully constructed tradition of poetic "culture" can take the place of supernatural religion for both individuals and societies ("Study" 306). Arnold, in other words, would see many of the ideas of the Church invisible not as the "mighty and faithful friend" of the national church (*C&S* 55), but as an unverifiable and unnecessary fairy tale that endangers the Church of England's valuable role as an agent of culture. The growth of the academy in the twentieth century revealed the influence of Arnold's ideas in a number of ways. One might turn, for example, to Yale's Sterling Memorial Library (completed in 1931) for an emblem of the confused legacy of nineteenth-century ideas about the locus of spiritual formation. While some of the Sterling Library founders wished to preserve the centrality of religion at Yale, the library represents "a new kind of sacred space for the modern … university--a cathedral library

laden with quasi-religious iconography," including a mural of *Alma Mater* in the place of the Virgin Mary, and a circulation desk where the altar would be (Grubiak 171).[11]

MacDonald's "chapel" does not displace Christian worship, but rather reimagines how the Church--both universal and historical--might be housed. By resisting Arnold's attempt to reduce the Church of England to the study of poetry and other "civilizing" agents, MacDonald is able to sustain Coleridgean ideas that Arnold, by rejecting orthodox theology, must abandon. MacDonald does not wish to turn England's cathedrals into libraries, but he does suggest that certain libraries--emblems of carefully arranged literary traditions--might serve as chapels within the "great church" of English worship and the "cathedral-church of the universe" of which, the curate in *Adela* hopes, the Church of England is a little Jesus-chapel" (2:275). By emphasizing literature's instrumental, rather than intrinsic value, MacDonald may suggest a solution to one of problems facing literary studies today. Without demanding that all readers practice Christian devotion, MacDonald would ask that they approach literary works not for the sake of their own beauty, but with the hope that these works might represent something greater than themselves. Thus, while MacDonald upholds an instrumental view of poetic language in its relation to religion, he would also insist that poetic utterances are a necessary instrumental in worship, for they bring writers and readers into communion with God and with one another in a way other language cannot. Arnold, on the other

[11] The Yale Libraries' webpage describes the Sterling as a "beautiful, detailed, all-pervading, and symbolic of the history and universality of the libraries of the world" ("Sterling" 9), suggesting an interesting extension of nineteenth-century hopes for revealing the "universality" of the Church of Christ. Grubiak provides a thorough history and interpretation of the Sterling Library, detailing many of its "curious substitutions," such as telephone booths in the place of confessionals (174). Even upon its completion, reception of the library was mixed. One visitor compared the library to a picture from "an old illustrated Bible for children" but wondered, "[w]as it the Tower of Babel, or a Babylonian palace?" (Grubiak 183).

hand, who nearly makes poetry itself an object of worship (or, at the very least, authority) in his early writings, comes in works such as *Literature and Dogma* to see poetic language as both instrumental and obsolete. Speaking of the poetic language of the Bible, Arnold looks forward to the day when such language will no longer be necessary, and humans can use a clear, scientific language to direct individual and social righteousness.

By reading *Antiphon* as a key to MacDonald's entire body of work, I intend not only to examine a largely-unexplored aspect of George MacDonald's work--his literary ecclesiology--but to argue that MacDonald is a more important reader and interpreter of Coleridge than is commonly recognized. Largely due to the influence of Coleridge's disciple Maurice, MacDonald became a member of the Church of England during the 1860s, and, more importantly, he develops many of Coleridge's ideas about tradition, biblical language, and the imagination in ways that revitalize the idea of literature's service to a spiritual society of mankind.[12]

In *Antiphon* and in his fiction, MacDonald is concerned with the same question that haunts much of Coleridge's philosophy: how can literature and literary studies counter the solipsistic and isolating tendencies of Protestantism, which were visible not only in religion, but in all areas of art, philosophy, and culture? In many ways, MacDonald's works are stereotypically "Romantic" in their focus on the formation of the individual artist/reader, their elevation of poetic language, their veneration of the natural world, and their fascination with the past. However, MacDonald also inherits from his

[12] Even after his entry into the Church of England, MacDonald was primarily interested in the possibility of a Church that unifies all Christians and, ultimately, all people. In a letter from the mid-1860s, MacDonald says as much in response to an invitation to preach at a Congregational church: "I am a member of the Church of England, but care neither for that nor for any other denomination as dividing or separating" ("To the Secretary" 151).

predecessors an interest in restoring unity to a fissured faith, and gathering isolated readers into some sort of community with one another. As Coleridge's own editors have observed, for Victorian readers, Coleridge's religious writings had "a special importance that is often overlooked anachronistically by twentieth-century readers" (Jackson 8). MacDonald shares this Victorian interest in Coleridge's religious questions, but he serves as a valuable translator of Coleridge's ideas when he attempts to answer these questions in ways that build upon Coleridge's own literary practices of intertextuality and symbolism. Like Coleridge, MacDonald uses diverse literary voices to challenge the sufficiency of solitary creation and interpretation. In the same way, his theory and practice of representation warns against reading poetic symbols as objects of veneration rather than as fragments and signals of hidden truths.

Above all, MacDonald sustains Coleridge's desire to identify the Church according to its function as the "guide, spiritual or historical" to reading the Bible. Only with such guidance, Coleridge believes, will religious unity (among Protestants, at least) be possible. Like Coleridge, MacDonald recognizes that one of the most important spiritual crises of his age involved questions about biblical hermeneutics, and the role of religion (either personal or organized) in answering these uncertainties. In his 1848 application letter to Highbury College, the Congregationalist seminary he attended in his twenties, MacDonald explains his calling to the ministry in terms of these difficulties. Just as Coleridge address readers' questions about the authority of the Bible in *Confessions*, MacDonald hopes that, as a pastor, he might help others realize that the "evil things" obstructing spiritual growth, especially difficulties with the Bible, are "phantoms and no realities in themselves" ("George MacDonald's Testimonial" 23).

MacDonald was disappointed in his first pastoral attempt to provide such help, but even after he left the formal ministry, he continued to publish sermons, fairy tales, novels, and essays examining questions related the ways imaginative literature could be involved in right readings of the Bible. Arnold, too, would take up these questions in *Literature and Dogma* (1873), but while Arnold argues that readers can only perceive the Bible's natural truth by looking past "fairy tale" elements such as miracles, MacDonald, suggests that reading good fairy tales will prepare readers to accept the marvelous truths of the Gospels.

For both Coleridge and MacDonald, the role of the Church in matters of biblical interpretation is significant and problematic: the witness of Christ, narrated in the Bible, is the ground not only for individual faith and action, but for unity among Christians. Religion should offer guidance for readers who will invariably find some biblical texts confusing or even repulsive, but Coleridge believed that his "idea" of the Church challenged the state of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century religion, which he characterized as sinking into cold rationalism or swelling into wild enthusiasm. For example, Coleridge describes the Methodists of his day as a stove, giving warmth but no light, while the rational Unitarians, lacking a complete Christology, are like the moon, providing some reflected light, but no warmth (*LS* 48). Christianity in England, in other words, lacked the unity of intellect and affection that Coleridge demands throughout his work. In order to rediscover this unity, Coleridge, and MacDonald after him, explore the ways living traditions might strengthen the hearts and heads of readers. Both Coleridge and MacDonald believed that the dissociation of head and heart endangers all forms of individual and social health, including moral development, scientific advancement,

artistic exploration, economic stability, domestic affection, and more. Each would argue, therefore, that their strategies for upholding the authority of the Bible and for discerning the true Church could enrich a reader's participation with any text or community.

Critical Questions and Traditions

Examining MacDonald's work opens a door to one of the most interesting and important thinkers of the nineteenth century. Coleridge's desire to unify and revitalize England's intellectual, spiritual, and moral formation within a national church was the culmination of his long and varied career as a poet, critic, and philosopher. His relentlessly "esemplastic" instincts drew questions of art, ecclesiology, philosophy, political science, and history into the philosophical prose which occupied most of this attention from 1806 onward. However, while scholars over the last decade have stimulated considerable interest in Coleridge's philosophical works (particularly his late works, written between 1819 and his death in 1834), Elinor Shaffer argues that we still "have no accurate or adequate conception of the late Coleridge" (2).[13] Shaffer's claim identifies the need for work on Coleridge's late prose, and it also suggests the value of studying how Coleridge's heirs and readers shaped twenty- and twenty-first century conceptions of his life and work. Many of Coleridge's first generation of readers used ideas from works such as *Aids to Reflection* to institute important changes in art, religion, and education. Dr. Arnold followed Coleridgean principles in his famous reforms at Rugby, and we have already noted the debt Maurice owes to Coleridge in his own search for the signs of a universal Church. The next generation, which included both Matthew

[13] More recently, Jeffrey Hippolito has echoed Shaffer's call for more work on the legacy of Coleridge's mature writings in "'Conscience the Ground of Consciousness': The Moral Epistemology of Coleridge's 'Aids to Reflection.'"

Arnold and MacDonald, continued this tradition by applying Coleridge's ideas to the problems of their own day.

MacDonald knew Coleridge's poetry and prose well, citing the elder writer's work in both his fiction and non-fiction.[14] He also knew that many of the writers he admired had been inspired by Coleridge. He wrote of his sympathy with Dr. Arnold's ideas, for example, and, as suggested above, he considered F.D. Maurice a close friend and mentor.[15] However, unlike these men, MacDonald looks not to institutions but to traditions to sustain the possibility of religious and literary renewal. MacDonald's desire to uphold the facts of Christianity immediately sets him apart from Matthew Arnold, whom he nevertheless knew and admired, and his methods for exploring Coleridge's ideas also reveal that MacDonald uses Coleridge's ideas to create a very different vision of the true English Church and the value of literary traditions than either Maurice or Arnold.

Coleridge frequently turns to the past in his efforts to identify and revitalize the Church of England. *Aids to Reflection,* intended to guide young readers through various ethical and philosophical obstacles to the Christian faith, began as an anthology of passages from Bishop Leighton and other churchmen of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Coleridge's methods of selection, arrangement, redaction, and commentary provide a literary and philosophical model which MacDonald extends and adapts in works such as *England's Antiphon.* In *Antiphon*, MacDonald reveals that for all his

[14] Prickett writes of Coleridge's influence grounding "almost every part of [MacDonald's] essays" (*Romanticism and Religion* 229), while Raeper goes so far as to say MacDonald was "obsessed" with "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (112). The links were also personal; MacDonald's son Greville notes that his maternal grandfather was a friend of Coleridge (MacDonald 137). See also Dearborn, pp. 29-35.

[15] In a letter from 1850, MacDonald wrote that he found "so many of my notions in Dr. [Thomas] Arnold's letters -- only much enlarged and verified beyond my shelled-chicken peepings…I wish the Church were better. I think I should almost go into it" ("To Miss" 27 Dec. 42-43).

doubts about institutional religion, he remains deeply committed to the idea of England's religious traditions, and consequently, exploring MacDonald's work as an active reader of Coleridge also advances recent scholarship on the evolving ideas of "tradition" in the nineteenth century. In *Modernity and the Reinvention of Tradition: Backing into the Future* (2009), Stephen Prickett has examined how nineteenth-century thinkers revived the word "tradition," and developed new meanings for this idea in response the "epistemological crises" affecting religion, nationalism, and literature. Prickett argues that traditions are always, to some degree, self-conscious creations, attempts to "appropriate" a problematic past and to confront the concerns of the present (Prickett, *Modernity* 15). In England, the nineteenth-century "reinvention" of tradition was a startling reversal. For over a century, the word "tradition" was usually used pejoratively, particularly by English Protestants, who linked tradition to "primitive beliefs, corruption, and superstition associated with Romanism" (42). Even philosophers who might now be described as essentially "traditional," such as Burke, avoided the word itself (55). Similarly, Coleridge, especially in his early works, does not use "tradition" to refer to current questions about the relationship between past and present, but reserves the term for ideas of no immediate relevance and doubtful truth (66). However, Prickett traces a change in the use and idea of tradition, through the works of Herder, the German Romantics, Coleridge, Keble, Newman, Arnold, and T.S. Eliot. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the word "tradition" could express at least four overlapping (and at times, competing) ideas:

1) tradition as "essentially unreliable oral transmission"

2) following Herder, tradition as "creative, aesthetic, and even performative readings of the past"

3) following Keble, tradition as a "precious and unalterable inheritance"

4) following Newman, a "developmental conception of tradition" became a way to comprehend change over time in a body such as the Catholic Church. (189)

MacDonald engages these ideas about the nature and purpose of tradition in nearly all of his published works. Whether heading chapters of a romance or novel with literary epigraphs, discussing the relationship between history and poetry in a critical essay, recreating the conventions of narrative allegory, or anthologizing the religious poetry of England's past, MacDonald explores multiple ways the literature of the past can provide much-needed ways of addressing the ecclesiological challenges of the present. MacDonald presents England's literary tradition as both liturgical and national: his collection is an "antiphon," carefully arranged so that the "song" of English religious experience can be rightly heard (*Antiphon* 3). This idea of a distinctively English lineage suggests promising links to Herder and Coleridge's ideas about national tradition, while the chronological arrangement of the anthology suggests MacDonald's sympathies with what Prickett calls a "developmental" concept of tradition, especially given MacDonald's image of the English writers of the past as choristers "in the great church of England's worship" (2). His hope that the artful arrangement of England's poetic inheritance can reveal an obscured "song" is one way in which MacDonald attempts to find England's "lost church"--a national and historical body that also advances the revelation of the universal Church of Christ.

In order to uphold a tradition of diverse poets in the service of a Church whose full extent remains hidden, MacDonald relies on strategies of arrangement that are ambitious and remarkable. Rather than attempting to harmonize so many poets into uniformity, MacDonald presents his anthology as a choral form in which two choirs sing in response to one another. By presenting his anthology as an antiphon, MacDonald implies that despite differences in style, history, and doctrine, the songs of these poets can only be understood through dialogue with one another and with modern readers. In his fiction, MacDonald continues to explore how interactions between reader and writer, artist and ancestor, individual and community enable the production of meaning. Just as Coleridge's most acute readers would maintain that "a living faith seeks unity, which implies diversity, and manifests itself therein," MacDonald's understanding of literary tradition depends upon the possibility of difference resolved through worship.[16] If a tradition-building anthology can serve as the setting for this resolution, then other literary works might serve as "chapels" in which faithful readers glimpse the Church Invisible. Scholars and readers need not share MacDonald's emphasis on worship to perceive that his works preserve an aspect of Coleridge's thought that is divorced from its theological foundation in Arnold. Thus, while MacDonald's readings of Coleridge do not represent the mainstream of Coleridge's critical and literary lineage, they do constitute a faithful and creative extension of Coleridge's chief concerns.

The contents of *Antiphon* range from medieval miracle plays to the works of Arnold, Clough, and Tennyson. While MacDonald asserts that these works are part of a

[16] In a sermon on the "Office and Province of Faith," Julius Hare contrasts this "living faith" with "a notional Faith [that] imposes and exacts uniformity, without which it has no ground to stand on" (Hare 74). Julius and his brother Augustus Hare were admirers of Coleridge, and Julius was the tutor and friend of many of the Cambridge Apostles, including Maurice (Lubenow 110). Raeper notes that the Hare brothers knew many of the churchmen MacDonald admired, such as Thomas Erksine (241).

unified, developing tradition of English religious poetry, the fact that a work such as this anthology is needed to allow the "song" of this tradition to be "truly heard" suggests the difficulty of MacDonald's project and the religious uncertainties of the age in which he published it. The 1868 edition of *Antiphon* depicts these poets gathered into a single choir, but in truth, a seventeenth-century Puritan might be quite shocked to find himself included in a collection with a "reverent doubter" such as Arnold, or, for that matter, with a Jesuit writer of his own century. Indeed, the tradition of religious verse MacDonald hopes to reveal responds directly to the crisis of unity that catalyzed its creation. *Antiphon* reveals MacDonald's hope that a creative vision of England's artistic and religious traditions can establish a ground for unity where doctrinal and theological arguments have failed, drawing Christians back into an antiphon which God will receive as "the song that ascends from the twilighted hearts of his children" (332).

Literature Review

Considering MacDonald's literary theories and practices in conversation with Coleridge not only enriches our understanding of Coleridge's lineage, but contextualizes and extends scholarship on MacDonald's own work. The last twenty years have witnessed renewed interest in MacDonald's work, and the development of MacDonald scholarship has been welcomed by Victorian scholars such as G.B. Tennyson, who, in the foreword to the first edition of MacDonald's published letters (1994), exclaims, "What a fascinating and impressive man George MacDonald was! And how much he deserves this further rehabilitation" (xii).

This rehabilitation has been grounded both in MacDonald's distinctive religious vision, and in his fervent questioning of the value and methods of reading. No reader of

MacDonald can miss his constant attention to other literary texts, which appear in his own work through epigraphs, allusions, and thematic concerns.[17] For years, the MacDonald journal *North Wind* has published accounts of MacDonald's connections to specific authors, such as John Bunyan and Jacob Boehme. However, these articles usually focus on direct lines of influence or adaptation, rather than on a comprehensive theory of MacDonald's work with other writers.

Recent scholars, therefore, have argued that much remains to be said about MacDonald's work with texts and traditions. Jennifer Koopman's 2006 study of MacDonald and Percy Shelley, for example, rightly notes that while many critics have characterized MacDonald as an "ahistorical" myth-maker, he should receive both credit and critical attention for the ways in which "mythologizes literary history, offering fables about the transmission of the literary spirit down through the generations" (Koopman ii). Koopman's thesis--that MacDonald intends to "redeem Romanticism" through fictional recreations of Shelley--anticipates Prickett's analysis of tradition as a reappropriation of a troubling past, and her explications of Shelley's importance to MacDonald are thorough and convincing. Unfortunately, her larger claims about "Romanticism" occasionally lack nuance and context (ii). She argues, for example, that MacDonald's "redemption" of his literary ancestry entails "detaching it from demonic influences, which are generally associated with Byron, and promoting a more Wordsworthian, nature-focused Romanticism" (13). However, there is evidence (discussed in Chapter Four), that it is Coleridge, rather than Wordsworth, who provides MacDonald with his most important ideas about the relationship between nature and literary history.

[17] Kristin Jeffrey Johnston, for example, notes that the abundant use of quotations and allusions is "a MacDonald trademark" (162).

Also from 2006, Kerry Dearborn, in a monograph on MacDonald's theory of imagination, examines MacDonald's friendship with many of the eminent--and, in some cases, controversial--churchmen of his day, including Maurice, Alexander John Scott, Thomas Erskine, and John MacLeod Campbell. Dearborn's work offers a lucid account of MacDonald's theological friendship, but she does not deal in detail with MacDonald's own ecclesiology, nor with how his understanding of the Church guides his theory of the imagination. Moreover, while both Koopman and Dearborn acknowledge the literary influence of Coleridge on MacDonald, neither considers how this influence might shape MacDonald's conception of either literary or ecclesiastical traditions.

In the past five years, the number of collections and monographs on MacDonald has increased steadily, and many of these new works attempt to answer Koopman's call for more historically-grounded studies of MacDonald's practices of intertextuality. For example, *George MacDonald: Literary Heritage and Heirs* (2008), includes many excellent studies of MacDonald's interaction with other writers and texts. *Lilith in a New Light: Essays on George MacDonald and the Fantasy Novel* (2008) affirms MacDonald's significance as a founder of modern fantasy literature, and one essay from this collection looks closely at MacDonald's methods of intertextuality. Michael Mendelson, in "*Lilith*, Textuality, and the Rhetoric of Romance," argues that *Lilith* uses the conventions of prose romances as rhetorical *topoi.* Mendelson's argument, like those from *Literary Heritage and Heirs*, offers a number of insightful links between MacDonald and earlier writers, but he does not trace MacDonald's method of intertextuality to its philosophical, theological, and literary roots.

In the same way, evidence of growing interest in MacDonald's use of literary traditions came with the 2009 publication of Nick Page's annotated edition of *Phantastes.* However, while Page offers very helpful source information for the many epigraphs and allusions in *Phantastes*, his edition provides fairly basic annotations, without a critical apparatus to help make sense of MacDonald's wide, and often eccentric, use of other texts. While most of MacDonald's major works have remained in print, there are no critical editions to speak of, and it is my hope that this study will establish both the need and the foundation for critical texts that demonstrate MacDonald's contributions to nineteenth-century literary and intellectual history.

MacDonald's understanding of the status and purpose of literary study differs from that of many twenty-first century readers, just as it differed from many of his contemporaries. In his critical essays and sermons, MacDonald preaches, as Coleridge preaches, by providing his readers with extraordinary freedom that could, if ungoverned, lead to solipsism and anarchy. MacDonald turns in his own works to determining how this freedom can enrich, rather than enervate, relationships that exist both within and beyond a work of literature. By raising questions about the historical, social, and, certainly, spiritual value of literature, MacDonald refuses to allow his readers to forget the religious concerns that grounded all of Coleridge's work over the course of his long and varied literary career.

Chapter Summaries

In each of the chapters that follow, I explore how MacDonald sustains, recreates, and, at times, challenges the ideas about the relationship between literature and religion that he receives from Coleridge. Each chapter examines both a work of fiction (including

a "faerie romance," a "realistic" novel containing many interpolated fairy tales, and a historical romance) and a portion of *Antiphon.* From these studies, two recurrent ideas emerge. First, while I examine Coleridge's influence wherever it appears, I am particularly interested in how MacDonald creatively responds to Coleridge's structural and symbolic methods of constructing literary traditions. Second, MacDonald inherits Coleridge's reverence for the writers of the British Renaissance and seventeenth century, and, as I argue in my final chapter, MacDonald's readings of the seventeenth-century poets are at the heart of his final challenge to literary and religious subjectivity.

In each chapter, I argue that as MacDonald sends his characters in search of traditions that reconcile interpretive freedom with spiritual communion, he guides them with distinctively Coleridgean questions and strategies. Throughout this study, then, I hope to address the following central questions:

What do Coleridge and MacDonald see as the dangers of radical subjectivity in art and religion?

In response to these dangers, how do Coleridge and MacDonald attempt to revitalize the idea of a universal Church, and how do these efforts depend upon the nineteenth-century "reinvention of tradition"?

What literary methods and theories of symbolism do Coleridge and MacDonald use to undertake their literary quests for the "lost church" of English worship?

In order to counter the isolation of modern philosophy, Coleridge uses his philosophical prose to suggest and to model the ways literary traditions might inspire participation in the Church Invisible. MacDonald, too, believes the end of literature is the growth of a spiritual society, and he both follows and adapts Coleridge's ideas in

order to argue that poetic symbols are heralds of, not replacements for, truths that cannot be verified by propositional language. Foundational to both Coleridge's and MacDonald's arguments is the idea that literature brings readers into the presence of a person. These imaginative encounters demand a response from the reader, and the formation of a literary tradition, therefore, does not merely narrate a history, but reveals a community.

Chapter Two begins with a study of Coleridge's participation in the "reinvention of tradition" in the nineteenth century. Particularly in *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge demonstrates that actively recreating the past can resolve many of the philosophical, historical, and moral challenges to the authority of the Bible. Moreover, Coleridge suggests that this recreation requires methods that are in some sense "literary," whether in their careful arrangement and attention to words, in their attempt to develop images and analogies for theological truths, or in their concern with multiple levels of meaning in a given text. His call for a tradition that could guide readers into spiritual reflection were particularly timely during a century when England's Anglican and Dissenting churches often failed to counter skepticism and schism. Thirty years after the publication of *Aids to Reflection*, MacDonald enlarged Coleridge's vision of literary traditions as "chapels" through which readers can enter the Church Invisible. In *Phantastes* (1858), a "faerie romance" replete with literary epigraphs, allusions, and images of reading, MacDonald imagines immersion within literary traditions as a form of baptism that can reconcile interpretive freedom and spiritual communion. Likewise, in *Antiphon*, MacDonald argues that England's lyric tradition can restore unity among England's divided

Christians by establishing sympathy among readers and writers separated by time and doctrine.[18]

Chapter Three looks more specifically at the ways Coleridge and MacDonald use ideas about the "ecclesiastical" functions of literary traditions in order to address nineteenth-century problems with hermeneutics. In *Adela Cathcart* (1864), MacDonald responds to those who would reduce the Bible's meaning either to the empiricism of textual criticism or to the "single plain sense" of plenary-verbal inspiration. MacDonald believes that renewing the tradition of narrative allegory can teach more fruitful ways of reading the Bible. To this end, he writes literary "parables" and fairy tales that establish new forms for exploring the intersections of literature and religion. The parables of *Adela*, together with MacDonald's commentary on allegory from *Antiphon*, offer an important counterpoint to Coleridge's important, albeit incomplete, understanding of allegorical and symbolic representation.

Chapter Four concludes this study by examining why both Coleridge and MacDonald believe the writers of the seventeenth century--an era of violent religious division--hold the key to religious unity and literary renewal. In *St. George and St. Michael* (1876), a historical romance set during the English civil wars, MacDonald modifies Coleridge's elevation of natural symbols in order to demonstrate that the highest forms of poetry lead to the transformation of conscience and history. MacDonald argues that such works, particularly those by Herbert, Vaughan, and Coleridge himself, could bring an end to religious schism and spiritual isolation.

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[18] It is interesting that MacDonald, whose Scottish heritage shapes so many of his works, focuses on "England's" antiphonal tradition in his anthology. While he does include at least one other Scottish writer, James Thomson, on the whole MacDonald seems to conflate "England" and "Britain" in his collection.

Throughout this study, it becomes clear that MacDonald offers a resounding and creative challenge to other nineteenth-century readings of Coleridge, particularly Matthew Arnold's notions of literary culture. Arnold would have the English Church use a unified, authoritative literary tradition to cultivate both intellectual and moral development without its vulnerable attachment to eschatology and other supernatural doctrines. MacDonald, on the other hand, reveals his Coleridgean inheritance by seeking the true Church as it both reveals and hides itself in English history. MacDonald recognizes that no single voice or tradition can claim to represent the "true Church" in English history. He asserts, moreover, that while poetic language can attach emotion to ideas, its higher work comes in bringing both the heart and the intellect to recognize that the ultimate fact of human experience is love for one another, and that only within the context of this love can one interpret facts--be they personal, religious, or "natural"--correctly. Arguably, it is MacDonald, not Arnold, who comes nearest to fulfilling Coleridge's own hopes for his philosophical labors, namely, providing a theory of literature that could build new houses for English worship in the face of division and doubt.

CHAPTER TWO

Shadow-Chasing and Ideal Objects: Coleridge, MacDonald, and the Challenge of Subjectivity

Rejoicing in Shadows Lost

In "Constancy to an Ideal Object," Samuel Taylor Coleridge's speaker expresses the anguish of a subject who realizes that his "ideal object" is only the projected shadow of his own desire, magnified and glorified by the imagination. Looking to the image of his ideal, the speaker wonders if his ideal is anything more than a product of his desire:

> And art thou nothing? Such thou art, as when
> The woodman winding westward up the glen
> At wintry dawn, where o'er the sheep-track's maze
> The viewless snow-mist weaves a glist'ning haze,
> Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
> An image with a glory round its head;
> The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
> Nor knows he makes the shadow, he pursues! (25–32)[19]

Three decades after "Constancy" first appeared in print, George MacDonald used his own images of shadows and pursuit to explore both the liberating powers of art and the dangers of solipsistic creation in his "faerie romance" *Phantastes* (1858).[20] MacDonald's protagonist, Anodos, journeys through "Fairy Land" in search of his own ideal, the White Lady, but his monstrous shadow disrupts this quest at nearly every turn. By the end of the romance, Anodos's victory is not that he has gained the White Lady, but that *"*I, who set out to find my Ideal, came back rejoicing that I had lost my Shadow" (321). The

[19] Unless otherwise noted, all poems by Coleridge are taken from the Variorum edition of the *Poetical Works.*

[20] "Constancy" was first published in *PW* (1828). The date of composition, however, is unclear. J.C.C. Mays notes that themes and phrasing link the poem to works from 1804-7, but there are no definite references to the poem itself until at least a decade later (987).

similarity between these images signals an important but largely untraced relationship between Coleridge and MacDonald, a relationship that challenges common conceptions about MacDonald's supposedly ahistorical myth-making, and that illuminates new aspects of Coleridge's legacy in the nineteenth century and, in turn, in the field of literary studies. In this chapter, I hope to demonstrate that both Coleridge and MacDonald confront the problems of post-Kantian subjectivity with visions of literary tradition that, in turn, revitalize the idea of a universal Church in English life and letters.

Coleridge, whose work as a philosopher of religion has received significant attention in the last decade, articulates many of the most compelling questions of nineteenth-century thought and art in his writings on the nature of biblical language, the interpretive powers of the individual imagination, and the function of religion in society.[21] *Phantastes* is representative of MacDonald's work with Coleridgean ideas. In "Constancy," Coleridge dramatizes the subject pursuing a shadow that represents both imaginative power and solipsistic delusion, and MacDonald intensifies the selfish potential of such delusions, using shadows as images of self-satisfying perception and intellectual greed. Early in his journey, Anodos is terrorized by the shadow of an Ash tree, and the Ash's "gnawing voracity, which … seemed to be the indwelling and propelling power of the whole ghastly apparition," anticipates Anodos's own shadow, which first appears when he opens a door he has been warned to leave shut (*Phantastes* 44). At the same time, even as MacDonald emphasizes the shadow's relationship to imagination turned to the service of delusion and desire, he also separates the shadow

[21] In *Coleridge, Philosophy, and Religion*, Douglas Hedley makes a strong case not only for Coleridge's cogency as a philosopher, but for the enduring value of his ideas.

from Anodos's glimpses of the White Lady, suggesting that the imaginative perception of an ideal object is not necessarily delusion.

By splitting the shadow from the ideal, MacDonald accomplishes something Coleridge attempts in much of his poetry and philosophy. In "Constancy," Coleridge appropriately haunts his speaker with a *Brockengespenst,* and while the speaker's ideal is "an English home, and thee!" (line 18), the questions that provoke his agony reveal that Coleridge and his speaker have been wandering through the fog-enshrouded mountains of German philosophy.[22] The poem suggests Coleridge's complex debt to both idealist and Romantic philosophies in many ways, for however alluring his imagined object may be, however inspiring the pursuit, no union of subject and object rescues the speaker from his despair. As Andrew Bowie explains, the German idealists and Romantics, responding to Kant's sundering of subject and object, attempted to transcend or repair this division: the former hoping to reveal "how the process of thinking and the process of reality are ultimately one" (Bowie 116), while the latter doubted such attempts, and argued instead that the Absolute could only be known negatively (84). "Constancy" seems to dramatize a failure of idealism, and a turn to the Romantic response to such a failure, as Coleridge transmutes the inaccessibility of the "Ideal Object" into art.

However, the image of the subject pursuing his own shadow is not Coleridge's final response to the uncertainties of idealism. Throughout his poetic and philosophical works, Coleridge strives to demonstrate the reunion of subject and object in a post-Kantian world. Douglas Hedley has argued that in his mature philosophical work,

[22] The *OED* defines a "*Brocken*" as the "magnified shadow of the spectator thrown on a bank of cloud in high mountains when the sun is low and often encircled by rainbow-like bands" ("Brocken"). First observed in the Harz Mountains of Germany by Johann Silberschlag in 1780, "*Brocken*" first appeared in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1801 ("Brocken").

Coleridge looks toward this reunion by attempting "to employ ideas from German Idealism in order to revive an anthropology and theology of the Cambridge Platonists and other philosophical mystics" (12). Even so, one of Coleridge's greatest challenges comes in showing the positive possibilities of self-reflection in religion, art, and society while confronting the solipsistic, even anarchic trajectory of radical subjectivity. This trajectory gained speed in the decades following Kant, but its direction was established in both Germany and England by the currents surrounding the Reformation. Coleridge attempts, particularly in works such as the *Lay Sermons* (1816-17) and *Aids to Reflection* (1825), to establish a foundation of aesthetic, hermeneutical, and ecclesiastical ideas that might resolve the agony of the speaker in "Constancy." Coleridge deals with many of the problems of subjectivity--particularly those bearing on the relationship between aesthetics and the idea of the Church--by modeling ways of reading that, while essentially subjective, demand the reader's sympathetic participation in literary-religious traditions.

While Coleridge undermines the illusion that "Constancy's" speaker has obtained his desire, MacDonald portrays his own protagonist's largely futile efforts to gain his ideal object during his season in Fairy Land. Early in his journey, the protagonist Anodos creates a song with the power to free a beautiful woman from her enchanted sleep. Upon waking, however, she flees, and Anodos, like Coleridge's speaker, spends much of the romance pursuing this ideal figure. It is here, however, that MacDonald divides the ideal from the shadow; Anodos's singing does not create the lady, but rather frees her from an "evil enchantment" that has made her invisible (*Phantastes* 240). This separation of the ideal from the shadow affirms the reality of the ideal, but it also enhances the danger posed by the ungoverned power of the self, for as he seeks his lady,

Anodos's shadow poisons his perception of the marvelous world around him. This "Fairy Land" is a realm in which Anodos must learn to differentiate between solipsistic illusion and imaginative vision, which can reveal truths inaccessible to the intellect. Anodos believes his shadow "does away with all appearances, and shows me things in their true form" (104). However, by disenchanting the world, his shadow actually empties everything Anodos sees of meaning. When gazing upon a "glorious prospect," for example, the shadow comes between Anodos and this view, and where its darkness falls, "that part of earth, or sea, or sky, became void, and desert, and sad to my heart" (101). Fittingly, the epigraph preceding this episode is from Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode." MacDonald heads the ninth chapter of *Phantastes* with several lines from the 1802 version of the poem:

> O lady! we receive but what we give,
> And in our life alone does nature live:
> Ours is her wedding garments ours her shroud!
> . . . . .
> Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth,
> A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud,
> Enveloping the Earth—
> And from the soul itself must there be sent
> A sweet and potent voice of its own birth,
> Of all sweet sounds the life and element! (qtd. in 99)[23]

Like the speaker of "Dejection," Anodos loses his ability to feel how beautiful the world is because the "shaping spirit of Imagination" has ceased to clothe nature with beauty (line 86). This epigraph suggests that MacDonald identifies the imagination not only with self-serving illusions, but with a creative faculty that enables true vision and sympathy with others. This hopeful possibility follows the spirit of the ode's final stanza, in which Coleridge's speaker turns from preoccupations with his own depression to a

[23] MacDonald's primary redaction is to move "O Lady!" (line 25) to this excerpt from the fourth stanza of Coleridge's published text (*PW* lines 48-49, 53-58).

prayer for his "Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice."[24] Coleridge turns to the thought of another person, the true source of his ideal vision, to rouse himself from anxieties about the ingrown powers of private vision. MacDonald's juxtaposition of "Dejection" with the destructive presence of Anodos's shadow recasts "Constancy's" fear--that dear ladies and other ideal objects are merely illusions--with a possibility that is both more hopeful and more terrible: the longed-for friends and homes may actually exist, but the skewed vision of the modern subject renders these ideals inaccessible. With his own vision of shadows and pursuit, MacDonald attempts to clarify some of the unresolved tensions in Coleridge's ideas about the role of the self in art and interpretation.

After his harrowing trek through Fairy Land, Anodos returns home rejoicing that while he has not gained his ideal, he has lost his shadow. By separating the ideal from the shadow, MacDonald qualifies "Constancy's" anguished idealism, suggesting that art may indeed provide a vision of the ideal, but that something other than the desires of the magnified self must provide the ground for the union of a subject and his ideal object. As he would later write in "The Imagination: Its Function and Culture," the imagination must be fostered if it is to become capable of "realizing the lives of the true-hearted, the self-forgetting" (*Orts* 29–30). Without such cultivation, the imagination degenerates into selfish ambition and illusion, for "that which goes not out to worship, will remain at home to be sensual" (30).

[24] This "Dear Lady" is Sara Hutchinson, Coleridge's sister-in-law, sometime-amanuensis, and the object of much affection and longing. In the original version of "Dejection," entitled "A Letter to [Asra]," Coleridge's explicitly names Sara and his prayers for her. For more on the history of this text, see J.C.C. Mays's notes in *PW,* pp. 884-897.

MacDonald sends the imagination "out to worship" in the spirit of Coleridge's own philosophical writings, which influenced some of the most important figures in nineteenth-century literature, education, and religion. Like Arnold, MacDonald recognizes the strength of Coleridge's ideas about the ways in which the Church of England is a "poetic" edifice, inspiring moral action by giving form and expression to spiritual ideas. However, MacDonald rejects the notion that literature can serve as a religion unto itself, and looks instead to the ways that writers can, by creating and upholding traditions, recreate the symbolism of baptism and renew the forms of Christian worship within literary "chapels" of the universal Church.

The Beauties of Coleridge: Aids to Reflection and the English Church

While much of Coleridge's poetry articulates the visions, terrors, and consolations of an individual striving for an ideal object, his philosophy tends to probe the place of this individual within a nation, class, family, and religion. As he investigates these relations, his philosophical prose seems marvelously (or perhaps maddeningly) varied: lectures on the history of philosophy, essays on political theory, editorials against Catholic Emancipation, ruminations on symbolism, and reflections on biblical criticism constitute just a portion of his range. However, Coleridge's apparently eclectic topics develop from a remarkably consistent core of ideas. His perennial concern with the relationship between subject and object--manifest in questions about the individual and society, the spiritual and the material, freedom and law--leads him to pose important questions, for example, about methods of education, the nature of literature, the ethics of the slave trade, and the purpose of religion, and much more. Even if he does not always

propose answers that satisfy his philosophical and literary heirs, Coleridge sets the terms for many Victorian debates.

Many of these debates, as "Constancy" suggests, arise from the dilemmas raised by the modern turn to the subject. This shift, one of the hallmarks of modernity, refers to the movement to locate the grounds of knowledge and authority within the thinking subject. In his attempts to come to terms with this shift, Coleridge consciously positions himself as a reader of Kant, while his preoccupation with questions about hermeneutics and the English church reveal that Coleridge is dealing with a problem that precedes Kant, a problem concerning the relationships between subjective and communal authority inherent in Protestantism. As Victorian churchman and earnest Coleridgean F.D. Maurice argues in *The Kingdom of Christ* (1838), the Reformation offered a vital reaffirmation of the individual lives of men (89–90), but the sectarian divisions following this affirmation of the individual threatens the idea of "a Universal Society for man as man," that is, of a universal church governing the relations among all men as beings with "spiritual existence" (xxiv, 194). Maurice credits Coleridge with providing the foundation for this quest for a universal spiritual society, seeing him as "one who passed through the struggles of the age to which we are succeeding, and who was able, after great effort and much sorrow, to discover a resting-place" (viii–ix). For Maurice and later nineteenth-century thinkers, the literary and philosophical methods Coleridge uses to find this resting-place are a complex inheritance.

As he tests the possibility of a universal Church that might reveal itself through nineteenth-century English Christianity, Coleridge recognizes that Protestantism offers both problems and possibilities. For example, in *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*

(1840), Coleridge suggests that positing subjective grounds for the authority of Scripture might protect the Bible from historical and factual problems with biblical texts. These problems became more pronounced later in the century, as the principles of the Higher Criticism were disseminated through works such as Eliot's translations of Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1846) and Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* (1854), as well as *Essays and Reviews* (1860). At the same time, Coleridge recognizes that these subjective grounds could easily degenerate into radical individualism, causing both personal dejection (as in "Constancy") and further divisions among English Christians. The history of English Protestantism had already revealed a tendency toward division during the Renaissance and seventeenth century, when factions within and outside of the Established Church disputed the nature and extent of an individual's spiritual authority. Coleridge addresses these concerns by examining the poetic aspects of England's religious traditions, particularly tradition's ability to inspire literary forms for communicating spiritual truth, to enable a comprehensive vision of history, and to allow sympathetic participation in the experiences of others.[25]

Coleridge's interest in meeting the problems of subjectivity with aesthetics bears witness to his critical engagement with German thinkers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As Bowie observes, for many of these German thinkers, Kant's critique of traditional metaphysics entailed a loss of faith in dogmatic theology. Later philosophers, such as Schelling, came to believe that no conceptual form of thinking, including theology, could adequately provide a solution to the division between subject

[25] In the last twenty years, poets' longstanding confidence in the ability of literature to cultivate empathy has received confirmation from the empirical studies of psychologists such as Raymond Mar, Maja Djikic, and Keith Oatley. In their recent work, they offer "empirical studies of how the reading of fiction can improve empathy and other social abilities, and prompt changes in personality" (127).

and object (Bowie 95). Thus, when the early Idealists sought to reunify what Kant had divided, including the dogmas that once explained the subject's place in the world, they were forced to do so without shared theological and mythological systems. A thinker or artist might create a new mythology to explain his relationship to the external social and natural world, but the ways in which a private mythology could be shared with others remained problematic. Indeed, as Bowie notes, the most successful "new mythology" to arise in the wake of German Idealism and Romanticism was Nazism (57). Many of the Idealists and Romantics recognized the problems inherent in their attempts to create new systems and mythologies. Especially among the German Romantics, the void left by the old mythologies often precipitated a complete reaction and return to the past. Most memorably, Friedrich von Schlegel, a founding member of the Jena Romantics, eventually abandoned the radical individualism of his early philosophy, becoming a conservative defender "of the Catholic Church and the old social hierarchy" (Beiser 7). In defense of their conversion, his wife, Dorothea Schlegel, trenchantly expressed the weariness and disorientation of many modern men and women: "Nothing new is of any use" (Gottfried 95). In Victorian England, the attraction of Catholicism for men such as Newman, Hopkins, and, in less orthodox ways, Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, provided one channel of escape from the problems of Protestantism.

Coleridge, however, is just as unwilling to abandon Protestantism as he is unable to ignore the problems of the present for the illusory comfort of past. In this way, Coleridge follows thinkers such as Herder, one of the few non-Catholics in the eighteenth century to argue for the value of tradition, which he saw not as a reactionary flight to the past, but as "an act of historical imagination" (Prickett, *Modernity* 141). Similarly, Schelling

attempted to create a system that could respond to Kant's critique of metaphysics without abandoning religion altogether. Believing that consciousness and conceptual knowledge perpetuate the split between subject and object, Schelling explored aesthetic activity as another mode of access to realities that are "conceptually unknowable" (Bowie 94). However, Bowie argues that Schelling's Idealism eventually began to sound like ideology, that is "the reconciliation of contradictions in an illusory form" rather than the actual transcendence of the subject-object division (99). Perhaps for this reason, art became less and less important as Schelling's system evolved (Hedley 130). However, Schelling's ideas, particularly his Neoplatonic interest in symbolic expression, contributed an important thread to Coleridge's own attempts to face the problems of modern subjectivity (Hedley 132).

As both a poet and a philosopher of religion, Coleridge finds that these German ideas of tradition and aesthetics resonate with his desire to show that Christianity (specifically Protestant Christianity) can speak to the political, philosophical, educational, and religious crises of his day. In his philosophical works, Coleridge states outright that the solution to the subject-object division is religion, which he defines in *Confessions* as "the unity, that is, the identity or co-inherence, of Subjective and Objective" (*Confessions* 1168). At the same time, Coleridge was well aware of the ethical, historical, and, increasingly, scientific challenges to the Bible and, in turn, Protestant Christianity.

Faced with these challenges, Coleridge cannot indulge in a reactionary turn to the religious principles or practices of the past. While he wishes to uphold the authority of both the Bible and the national Church, Coleridge does not seek new formulations of doctrine, but new language and methods of arrangement, adaptation, and even redaction

that make religious ideas viable to his contemporaries. It is this "creative appropriation" of the past that Prickett calls "tradition," when he argues that Coleridge contributes to the "reinvention" of tradition in the nineteenth century.[26] As part of this reinvention, Coleridge assigns to the clerisy the task of binding the past and present together in a way that brings the resources of history to bear on present needs (*Modernity* 68). In order to accomplish this, Coleridge must demonstrate that the foundational text of the Christian religion--the Bible--achieves the "co-inherence of Subjective and Objective" by speaking at once to individuals and spiritual bodies, particular moments and eternity, through its inspired language.

For Coleridge it is most useful to understand tradition not primarily as an inherited body of facts or ideas, but as a method of synthesizing past and present. Cultivating this method, Coleridge, believes, is an important task of the English church, guided by the clerisy. Furthermore, as Prickett's description of tradition as creative appropriation suggests, tradition as it functions in modernity is a poetic idea. Like a poem, tradition can provide forms and images for grasping truths and patterns that may not otherwise be visible. Thus, when Coleridge writes about understanding the past, he borrows terms from art to emphasize the difference between mere "histories" recording events, and "History" itself, which views the past as the "drama of an ever unfolding Providence" and provides hope to the present (*C&S* 32). It is no coincidence that the nineteenth-century revival of tradition corresponded with the development of the modern idea of "literature" as writing "charged with an aesthetic value over and above its ostensible subject" (Prickett, *Modernity* 142), and Coleridge derives his understanding of "History" and poetic language from the Bible. Believing that the prophetic language of the Bible is

[26] See above, pp. 16-17.

essentially poetic in form and effect, Coleridge looks to the Bible for solutions to both personal and political crises, and sees the Protestant church (specifically the Church of England), as the body capable of teaching the kind of reading required to find these solutions.[27]

The full title of Coleridge's first "lay sermon, "*The Statesman's Manual; or The Bible the Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight,"* announces Coleridge's rather surprising thesis about the Bible's ability to reconcile the limited vision of individuals with the need to build a society upon certain universal principles. Coleridge upholds the Bible as the manual for a wise political leader not only because it remains the "main Lever" of European moral and intellectual development (*LS* 31), but because it teaches one to read history for recurrent patterns and principles. The Bible's ability to reveal these patterns, Coleridge writes, testifies that the biblical writers articulate "reason itself" (17). "Reason," a term adapted from Kant's *Vernuft*, Coleridge defines here as "knowledge of the laws of the WHOLE considered as One" (59). As further evidence of the Bible's ability to cultivate reason among its readers, Coleridge argues that the histories and economies of the Bible are "educts of the imagination," producing systems of symbols with perennial significance (28). He contrasts these with the products "of the unenlivened generalising understanding," such as metaphors that exhibit only a partial or arbitrary resemblance to their referents (29). Although Coleridge's idea of a symbol (and how it differs, for example, from allegory) evolves throughout his writing, he

[27] Many of these ideas have their origin in one of the most remarkable works of eighteenth-century biblical scholarship, Robert Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (Prickett, *Words* 41-43). First delivered at Oxford in 1741, the lectures were published in their original Latin in 1753, and translated into English in 1787 (41). In the "Preliminary Dissertation" to his translation of Isaiah (1778), Lowth summarizes the conclusions of his earlier lectures "that the poetical and the prophetical character of style and composition, though generally supposed to be different, yet are really one and the same" (Lowth 3). Lowth's discovery led many thinkers--including Coleridge--to consider the implications of reading the language of the Bible as essentially "poetic" (Prickett, *Words* 41-43).

consistently presents the symbol as the trope proper to reason, a "tautegorical" image expressing different aspects or degrees of the same reality (30). This theory of symbolism is not only Schellengian but Neoplatonic at its root (Hedley 132), and as such, it connects Coleridge to a tradition of Christian mysticism in which the visible world, including all nature and history, is, as Dietrich Mahnke explains, "a mark of the self revelation" of the Divine reality (qtd. in Hedley 133). Understanding the Bible as a work in which, for example, a historical record can be read as a symbol of God's ongoing involvement with humanity affirms the Bible's relevance to the needs of the present.

From this dense description of the Bible in *The Statesman's Manual,* Coleridge's understanding of the Bible can be described as "traditional" in two ways. First, by reminding readers of the historical role of the Bible in European political science, Coleridge presents the Bible as a body of ideas, having its genesis in the past, that has been handed down, for better or worse, through European political history. More importantly, however, by emphasizing the Bible as the embodiment of reason, which endows the Imagination with the power to generate and interpret symbols, Coleridge shifts the value of the Bible from its potentially problematic content to its poetic method. In other words, Coleridge does not argue that the Bible is the best guide to statecraft by suggesting a revival of Levitical laws, but he demonstrates that the sins of the Israelites, as declaimed by the prophet Isaiah, are also at the root of the French Revolution (*LS* 33–35). Human arts and institutions, in turn, should attempt to replicate the Bible's presentation of universal spiritual principles through particular narratives and images.

Coleridge's defense of biblical authority in *The Statesman's Manual* is not without its problems, not least of which is a kind of chicken-and-egg conundrum

regarding Coleridge's idea of biblical tradition: is the authority of the Bible located in the past, as a witness to historical events and a document canonized by churches throughout Christian history, or is its value confirmed primarily in its value to present concerns? In *Confessions*, this uncertainty becomes more explicitly a question of whether Coleridge will uphold objective or subjective grounds for the authority of the Bible. In this series of letters, Coleridge challenges the doctrine of plenary inspiration by asserting that "whatever [in the Bible] *finds* me, bears witness for itself that it has proceeded from a Holy Spirit" (*Confessions* 1121). However resonant this argument may be with the experiences of many Christians, it is difficult to see how this pledge for the authority of Scripture provides any more certainty than the impassioned longing of "Constancy's" speaker for his ideal object. Perceiving this, David Lyle Jeffrey calls *Confessions* a "sincere apology … based upon a solipsism" in which the individual reader takes on "God's own powers in its creativity" (302). In Jeffrey's account, Coleridge fails to resist the more dangerous tendencies of Protestantism. He writes, "In [Coleridge's] romantic confidence in the self as interpreter … he is acting in accordance with that least fortunate impulse of the logic of the Reformation by which in the search for authenticity one is likely to find oneself at last in a church of one" (306). Other critics, however, see *Confessions* as a work that reveals Coleridge's mature turn to a less subjective philosophical position. David Jasper believes *Confessions* reveals Coleridge's growth from the radical youth of the 1790s, who abandoned history for the "facts of Mind," into a man who has "come to appreciate more deeply the living and historical nature of Christianity and its tradition" ("S.T. Coleridge" 22). Jeffrey rightly grasps Coleridge's attraction to a fairly extreme Protestant position, but Jasper points to the importance of

considering the place of *Confessions* in Coleridge's total oeuvre. *Confessions* was not published until 1840, six years after Coleridge's death, but the letters were originally slated to be published as part of Coleridge's major work of the 1820s, *Aids to Reflection*. They were omitted due to the length of the proposed work, and to the potentially controversial nature of *Confessions* (3). The link between these two works is important, for it is in *Aids to Reflection* that Coleridge explores more objective strategies for balancing subjective freedom with traditional and ecclesiastical authority.

In *Aids to Reflection* Coleridge hopes to demonstrate that the reconciliation of subject and object happens not through a purely private religion, but within ecclesiastical traditions that can train the individual to read and reflect according to reason. *Aids to Reflection* was one of the few prose works in which Coleridge managed to please both himself and the reading public, and Hedley notes that with *Aids to Reflection*, unlike the earlier *Biographia Literaria,* "Coleridge was quite satisfied with the book as an expression of his spiritual philosophy" (8). Widely read in both England and America, the work went into twelve editions during the nineteenth century, establishing Coleridge as the "founding spirit" of the Victorian Broad Church movement (2). The work's full title indicates Coleridge's interest in the formation of a rising generation of churchmen and intellectuals, as well as his conviction that this formation requires the creative presentation of the past: *Aids to reflection in the formation of a manly character: on the several grounds of prudence, morality, and religion: illustrated by select passages from our elder divines, especially from Archbishop Leighton*. Coleridge intends his work for young men who are completing their education and preparing for the responsibilities of self-governance, and he is particularly interested in those who will enter the service of the

Church of England (*AR* 6).[28] He hopes that by providing new objects for reflection and increasing the "power of thinking connectedly," he can help his readers resolve the obstacles to belief in Christianity (3). These obstacles include both moral and intellectual difficulties, and they arise from many quarters, particularly the neglect of reason and the abuse of language (6–8). Although reason is an innate human faculty, one must be trained to use it, and it is to this end that Coleridge assembles the *Aids to Reflection*. Over the course of the extensive work, Coleridge traces the formation of religious faith as it builds on worldly morality and prudence (which can only provide negative guidance to the human will) and moves into religious faith (which offers positive guidance to the will). At the same time, he argues not only that worldly prudence and morality are ultimately insufficient, but also that obstacles to the Christian faith are not insurmountable if one studies the language of the Bible carefully, attending to its symbolic and poetic levels of meaning.

Although Coleridge is concerned with nineteenth-century threats to the faith of young men and women, the Church of England in the early decades of the nineteenth century seemed unlikely to supply the training Coleridge envisions for his readers. Parish life was hardly vibrant, and Cambridge, where Coleridge's son Derwent was a student, was dominated by the tradition (via Paley) of Locke (Hedley 1). Particularly for thoughtful young Englishmen--Coleridge's ideal readers--the "uninterrupted Tradition" of faith might have seemed obscure, to say the least. While it is not surprising, therefore, that Coleridge does not construct his church tradition from the theologians of his own day, it is interesting that he looks to writers of the turbulent sixteenth and seventeenth

[28] Although Coleridge opens *Aids to Reflection* by addressing male readers who might enter the clergy, he later notes that he hopes his work will reach "Lay Readers of both sexes" (*AR* 332).

centuries, when English Protestants warred over questions about imagination, conscience, authority, interpretation, and ecclesiology. Coleridge maintains in *Aids to Reflection*, as in *Confessions*, that Christianity carries its own, self-authorizing evidence, but he builds his argument on the testimony of "our elder divines" (*AR* 1). Originally conceiving of the project as a selection of passages from the works of Leighton under the conventional title "The Beauties of Archbishop Leighton," Coleridge eventually decided to include other writers, as well as often-extensive comments on the selections (liv). In addition to passages from Leighton, Archbishop of Glasgow and Principal of the University of Edinburgh, Coleridge eventually included aphorisms and ideas from Richard Baxter, Jeremy Taylor, Richard Field, Richard Hooker, Martin Luther, John Donne, George Herbert, and others. By assembling these venerable churchmen and poets, Coleridge supplies some of what *Confessions* lacks, namely, affirmation of Christianity's objective aspect, its "historic and ecclesiastical pole" (*Confessions* 1168). Coleridge could have selected many periods of Christian history to provide this objective pole, but by turning to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, he finds Protestant voices addressing problems inherent in the subjective trajectory of *Confessions* and in the tendency of both German and English Romanticism to imbue imaginative vision with religious fervor.

During the seventeenth century, the Church of England was assailed from within and without by questions about whether spiritual authority rested primarily in the hands of the Established Church, or in the hearts and minds of individual believers. Although Protestants of all persuasions would argue that the Bible was the foundation for faith and practice, there were (and remain) considerable questions regarding biblical interpretation, liturgy, clerical authority, and church-state relations. Frequently, those who upheld

greater authority for individuals and independent congregations were accused of trusting "fancy," which in that century was still used synonymously with "imagination." The Quakers were frequently the targets for such charges, and Coleridge affirms Henry More's derision of "boasters of the light within," such as the Quakers, who, rejecting the need for a learned clergy, mistake "their own fancies" for the guidance of the Holy Spirit (*AR* 150). Although Coleridge famously desynonymized "fancy" and "imagination" in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), he recognizes that More's charge against the Quakers speaks directly to his own age, when, in part through the influence of German philosophy and Romantic poetics, the subjective imagination stood poised to receive even greater powers than those the Quakers claimed.[29] Indeed, while both *Confessions* and *Aids to Reflection* posit subjective grounds for the truth of the Bible, in the latter Coleridge makes it clear that the interpretation of Scripture must be guided by the learned clerisy, and this class includes historical leaders of the Church, particularly the established Church of England. In an allegory from the second of the *Lay Sermons,* Coleridge personifies "Religion" as a gracious woman who gives a pilgrim the "optic glass of Reason" and leads him to "an eminence" from whence he is able to see "the relation of the different parts, of each to the other, and of each to the whole, and of all to each," as well as the light and glory beyond the borders of life (*LS* 136). This is precisely the kind of guidance Coleridge believes is lacking in his day. Only from this height, and with this lens, is the pilgrim able to see reality correctly, and in *Aids to Reflection*, it becomes clear that the guidance of the true Church enables the reflection Coleridge expects from his readers.

[29] See *BL* Chapter 4.

Coleridge seeks not to authorize private, isolated opinions about the meaning of Scripture, but to enable personal access to universal spiritual truths and, in turn, participation in a universal spiritual society. Consequently, even in his vision of subjective interpretation, Coleridge links isolated interpretation to the fallen human condition, observing that where "Private interpretation is everything and the Church nothing — there the Mystery of Original Sin will be either rejected, or evaded" (*AR* 297–98). In his footnote to the word "private," Coleridge explicitly appeals to tradition as a counter to entirely personal opinions about the spiritual meaning of the Bible:

> Nevertheless, it may not be superfluous to declare, that in thus protesting against the license of private interpretation, the Editor does not mean to condemn the exercise or deny the right of individual judgment. He condemns only the pretended right of every Individual, competent and incompetent, to interpret Scripture in a sense of his own in opposition to the judgment of the Church, without knowledge of the Originals or of the Languages, the History, Customs, Opinions, and Controversies of the Age and Country in which they were written; and where the interpreter judges in ignorance or in contempt of uninterrupted Tradition, the unanimous Consent of Fathers and Councils, and the universal Faith of the Church in all ages (298n).[30]

Part of Coleridge's criticism depends on the training of the individual reader. Those versed in languages, history, and theology would have greater authority to speak about the meaning of the text than a reader without these resources. At the same time, this passage suggests that even a competent reader dare not judge "in contempt" of Church tradition, an argument that sounds remarkably Catholic for a writer who publicly opposed Catholic Emancipation in England. This note points to Coleridge's perennial

[30] In this strongly-worded challenge to "private interpretation," Coleridge seems to appeal to the Vincentian Canon, which maintains that one should believe in accordance with what has been believed "everywhere, always, and by all." However, Jeffrey Barbeau notes that Coleridge does not assume that this "universal Faith of the Church in all ages" is always apparent. Rather, Coleridge's "judicious criticism" of "the diverse and contentious nature of early Christian history" distinguishes his confidence in "Tradition" form "the popular English reliance on the Vincentian Canon" (*Coleridge* 124).

concern with the understanding and the reason. The understanding, the faculty that deals with particular facts and histories, might achieve mastery in ancient Hebrew, for example, yet fail to see how the particular history of the Israelites should be interpreted for readers in 1825. Only one whose reading is enabled by reason could interpret the particular fact in light of the universal truth. Such a reader would also, therefore, be able to place his or her interpretation within "the universal Faith of the Church in all ages."

Turning to the past is a crucial part of Coleridge's method for resolving the tension between the interpretive freedom of *Confessions* and the insistence on a universal faith in *Aids to Reflection*. However, his method of selecting, arranging, and commenting on these texts from the past suggests that literary works can, like the church itself, present individuals with the gathered witness of a tradition. Indeed, this prolix anthology-cum-commentary suggests that aesthetic works, such as poetry or collections of a writer's "beauties," are capable of sustaining traditions and cultivating reason even when the church itself is not. In his preliminary letters to his publisher, Coleridge suggests the importance of literary forms of witness by identifying a "quality peculiar to Leighton--unless we add Shakespear" of presenting ideas that communicate both "a sense on the very surface, which the simplest may understand," with "a rich vein from the surface downward" (*AR* liii).[31] This quality characterizes not only Leighton's ideas, but his "Eloquence" as well (liii). By emphasizing Leighton's literary pedigree, Coleridge suggests that these literary forms of tradition will become increasingly necessary if the

[31] From the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, editors often assembled anthologies of the "beauties" of a certain author or region. Most often applied to passages from "the English Stage," "Shakespeare," or English poesy," there were also collections of "The Beauties of the British Senate" ("Beauty," def. 6b). In all these works, "beauties" refers to "collections of the beautiful or choice passages of a writer or speaker, or examples of art" ("Beauty," def. 6b). Thus, while Leighton was primarily a theologian and scholar, Coleridge's original title indicates his attention to the literary value of the Archbishop's writing.

idea of the Church (both universal and local) is to remain viable in English life and letters.

The balance Coleridge envisions between subjectivity and objectivity involves not only the reception of truth, but its communication to others. In his commentary on an aphorism from More, Coleridge maintains that Christian faith and practice is far more than inward enthusiasm and personal piety, but that which enlightens the reason and enables believers to make their doctrines "intelligible" to others (*AR* 148). Using the forms and methods of the Bible to communicate spiritual truth, therefore, is one mark of true faith and reason. Coleridge insists that by inspiring the biblical writers, God allows "men of like faculties and passions with myself" to speak in a way that "thrids [*sic*] the flesh-and-blood of our common humanity" (*Confessions* 1135–36). The idea of plenary-verbal inspiration, however, fails as a method for understanding the composition and interpretation of the Bible because, by substituting these "men of like faculties" with a divine "Ventriloquist," such a reading destroys the reader's "sympathy" with the biblical writers (*Confessions* 1135–36). A philosopher who wishes to cultivate the reason and guide readers toward faith, therefore, must develop a method that establishes some kind of sympathy between his readers and the concerns of his text. Coleridge, who desires that his readers learn to reconcile individual judgment with the traditions of the Church, uses *Aids to Reflection* to explore how aphorisms can follow the example of Scripture and bring his readers into sympathy with this "universal Faith."

Coleridge's practice of combining aphorisms with his own commentary depends on a synthesis of seventeenth-century sensibilities and nineteenth-century poetics. Coleridge hopes that this method of illumination will confront intellectual obstacles to

faith, challenging the prevailing philosophies of Cambridge, but that is will also model a way of reading in which self-reflection passes to self-transcendence. While Coleridge eventually diverged from his original plan--to make *Aids* an anthology of several hundred "beauties"--his use of aphorisms reveals that even in a work focusing on religious questions, Coleridge relies on literary questions about method, arrangement, and representation as he explores how self-reflection can serve the Church.

"Exclusive of the abstract sciences," Coleridge writes, "the largest and worthiest portion of knowledge consists of aphorisms: and the greatest and the best of men is but an aphorism" (*AR* 34). "Aphorism" entered English in the sixteenth century as a term for a concise definition or pithy articulation of a general principle ("Aphorism"). In their self-contained form, aphorisms might seem to carry the authority of a maxim or proverb. In his study of Coleridge's aphoristic plan for *Aids to Reflection*, Hedley notes that aphorisms were common in the seventeenth century, an age which encouraged "acute but unsystematic wisdom" (90), and that works dealing with aphorism and recorded dialogues remained popular during the "age of sensibility," when "conversation with an author, friendship, and salon culture" dominated literary fashions (88). Coleridge sustains this idea of conversation and friendship with the authors he includes, and the way in which he affirms, challenges, and changes their aphorisms suggests that Coleridge reads in the spirit of Sir Francis Bacon, who writes that "knowledge, while it is in aphorisms and observations, it is in growth" (1.5.4).[32] From this perspective, aphorisms are not maxims summarizing complete bodies of knowledge, but methods of discovery.

[32] Julius and Augustus Hare use Bacon's comment as the epigraph to *Guesses at Truth, by Two Brothers* (1827). In *Guesses* the influence of Coleridge's methods are clear. The Hares emphasize that their offerings are very much "in growth," insisting that their aphorisms are "glimmerings" and "dreams of thought" that should not be "taken on trust" (v).

After selecting a passage from his source, Coleridge might meditate upon a particular word, challenge an interpretation, or connect an idea from the aphorism to another passage from *Aids to Reflection.* For example, in the "Aphorisms on Spiritual Religion," Coleridge includes Bishop John Hacket's call for "public souls" who think themselves "rich and fortunate by the good success of the public wealth and glory" (*AR* 150). However, Coleridge suggests that had Hacket lived in the nineteenth century, his call would have been for "thinking souls" possessing "the habit of referring actions and opinions to fixed laws; convictions rooted in principles" (151). Coleridge's comment not only reiterates his own call for greater reflection among the youth of the 1820s, but also shows how the insights of past thinkers can be translated into the terms of the present.

Coleridge's interaction with the passages he collects affirms Hedley's observation that the aphorisms constitute not only intellectual discoveries, but "spiritual exercises" that demand the participation of the reader.[33] Julius and Augustus Hare echo Coleridge's demands in their own collection of aphorisms, *Guesses at Truth* (1827), warning readers that if they belong to "that numerous class which reads to be told what to think, let me advise you to meddle with the book no further" (v). An aphorism, then, is an ideal form for a writer wishing to train readers to exercise interpretive freedom within the context of a literary and philosophical tradition. Coleridge arranges the aphorisms according to congruent ideas, effectively showing how Leighton and the other writers in *Aids to Reflection* are part of a larger tradition of faith. He then demonstrates his own method of reading in a way that authorizes individual interpretation within what he claims is the tradition of Christian (or at least Protestant) thought and interpretation.

[33] Hedley approvingly cites W.R. Inge's suggestion that "[t]he good aphorism is an essay or sermon in miniature, and the beauty of it is that it leaves us to think out the essay or sermon for ourselves" (Inge 154).

In his study of *Aids to Reflection,* Hedley emphasizes Coleridge's role as a reviver of the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists (2), but he also raises an important question about the relationship between the seventeenth century aphorism and the "Romantic fragment" as practiced by the Schlegels, Novalis, and, indeed, Coleridge himself. Although aphorisms and anthologies were popular among Romantic writers and readers, Hedley questions whether Coleridge sustains the irony inherent in the *Athenaeum Fragments* in *Aids to Reflection*, and also notes that while Schlegel is interested in "ironic self-presentation," Coleridge is more concerned with the ideas of other writers (91–92). However, while Hedley's emphasis on Coleridge's Idealist pedigree provides a helpful balance to his reputation a Romantic poet, there are important ways in which the aphorisms of *Aids to Reflection* are very much like Romantic fragments. For example, Coleridge does not claim that *Aids to Reflection* provides a comprehensive survey of the Christian tradition; rather he selects a limited number of "elder divines" whose ideas speak to the concerns of the 1820s. Furthermore, by presenting the aphorisms in the spirit of Bacon, as knowledge in growth rather than as static truths, Coleridge suggests that the fulfillment of the aphorism lies in its ability to provoke further reflection from a reader.

Additionally, Coleridge's extensive commentary and footnotes can be read as fragments of the *magnum opus* he never completed. As "a scribbler of inspired marginalia" (Hedley 17), Coleridge delivers some of his most important and original ideas in his commentary and footnotes following each passage. Ultimately, however, Hedley is right that irony is not the quality Coleridge attempts to create in *Aids to Reflection.* Rather, he uses aphorisms and fragments to cultivate sympathy between his

readers and the Christian tradition represented by Leighton and others. Many of Coleridge's readers recognized that in *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge was attempting to bear witness to the invisible Church by reading and reflecting upon sympathetic fragments and aphorisms. In *Kingdom*, Maurice credits Coleridge with teaching him "how one may enter into the spirit of a living or a departed author, without assuming to be his judge; how one may come to know what he means without imputing to him our meanings" (xiv). Coleridge's method in *Aids to Reflection* attempts to transmute irony into its kindred trope, paradox. The idea that one can give a "much truer, livelier, and more retainable Idea" of a writer through fragments than through a complete work (*AR* lvii), or that divines of the past offer better guidance than churchmen of the present, each arise from Coleridge's most significant paradox: that the "universal Faith" proclaimed in the Bible can only be unlocked through "self-knowledge" (*AR* 10).

In addition to the affinities between the aphorisms of *Aids to Reflection* and the poetic fragments of his early career, Coleridge emphasizes that the ability of aphorisms to provoke reflection depends upon their literary qualities. As noted above, he compares Bishop Leighton's writings to those of Shakespeare, offering rich veins of truth for philosophical readers, as well as ideas a lay reader might comprehend (*AR* liii). In the same way, he compares the Bible to Shakespeare in *Confessions,* describing by analogy the ability of both the Bible and Shakespeare's works to establish a sense of "unity or total impression comprising and resulting from the thousandfold several and particular emotions of delight, admiration, gratitude excited by his works" (*Confessions* 1130). While affirming the truth of a presumptively historical and spiritual text such as the Bible by comparing it to works of fiction might seem counterproductive, Coleridge's strategy

affirms that spiritual truths--even if ecclesiastical and "objective"--can best speak to man's reason and will through aesthetic means. Coleridge's willingness to confront religious ideas in aesthetic terms would be one of his most significant legacies to Victorian thought. Both Newman and Keble, for example, were working in the tradition of Coleridge when they determined that "[r]eligion and aesthetics met not merely in forms of worship, but also in the belief that the unity of the Church itself was best understood by aesthetic analogies" (Prickett, *Modernity* 155). In *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge attempts to show the universal Church advancing through one tradition of the Church of England. This demonstration implies that emphasizing the poetic aspects of religious and biblical language can provide grounds for sympathy and unity among Christians.

Coleridge's interest in poetic language remain in the background for much of *Aids,* but in several instances he uses theories of poetic language to confront difficult religious questions. He argues, for example, that reading biblical language as somehow poetic might resolve many of the divisions that have divided Christians throughout history. This theory receives its most powerful exposition in Coleridge's discussion of the doctrine of the Atonement. Building on his symbol/metaphor distinction from *The Statesman's Manual*, Coleridge argues that the doctrine of substitutionary atonement misreads Pauline language as symbols rather than as metaphors (*AR* 320–35). A metaphor, he argues, offers a helpful but arbitrary image for a spiritual reality; the Atonement as "payment" for "the wages of sin" is an example of such a metaphor because it merely describes how one feels as a result of the Atonement. If it were a symbol, on the other hand, the earthly transaction and the spiritual reality would be

essentially the same, different degrees of the same truth. A symbol, in other words, can be extended beyond the original point of comparison. A metaphor, however, cannot be extended. In the case of the Atonement, the idea of Christ "purchasing" sinners may describe (as a metaphor or analogy) the experience of being redeemed from sin, but it cannot be a symbol, because such a symbol would mean that the cause, as well as the effect, of the Atonement was of the same kind as an earthly mercantile exchange. This cannot be, Coleridge claims, because it would treat persons as things, which God does not do. In contrast, Coleridge offers the biblical image of being "born again" as a symbol of what happens as a result of the Atonement. In this commentary, Coleridge insists that poetic language is more than illustrative or ornamental. Prickett has argued that following Lowth, poetry becomes the "partner" rather than "handmaid" of religion (*Modernity* 53), and Coleridge advances this partnership by declaring the unsoundness of doctrines that do not recognize the essentially poetic function of most biblical language.

Coleridge's commentary on the doctrine of the Atonement confirms what has been inherent in his method throughout *Aids to Reflection*. By assembling a variety of sources, arranging them according to their ideas, rather than their original context, and providing his own commentary and redaction, Coleridge has recreated, in miniature, the idea of the Bible as a "sacred library," and of the Church's role as a community that reads and interprets the Bible through the lens of reason (*Confessions* 1145). In its final section, the "Aphorisms on Spiritual Religion," Coleridge's anthology begins to resemble a structure analogous to a church building, in which the writers of the past and readers of the present assemble for proclamation and reflection. Fittingly, the final aphorism in *Aids to Reflection* concerns baptism, the rite signifying entrance into the Christian

Church. Coleridge's discussion of baptism emphasizes this symbolic act as a mark of participation in the Church, and describes this participation in terms not of doctrinal agreement, but of love:

> [Baptism was] to mark out, for the Church itself, those that were entitled to that *especial* Dearness, that watchful and disciplinary Love and Loving-kindness, which *over and above* the affections and duties of Philanthropy and Universal charity, Christ himself had enjoined, and with an emphasis and in a form significant of its great and especial importance. A NEW COMMANDMENT I give unto you, that ye love *one another*. (*AR* 370)

Coleridge begins *Aids to Reflection* with the hope that presenting a tradition of mystical Protestantism could cultivate self-knowledge while also checking solipsistic fancies among his readers. If the Church enjoins "*especial* Dearness" to those within, then his anthology has aimed not only to cultivate reason in his readers, but also to strengthen their capacity for "watchful and disciplinary Love" of one another.[34] By concluding his collection with reflections on baptism, Coleridge symbolically brings his readers to the point at which they must decide if they will follow Leighton and Coleridge himself into the Church of England. With characteristic deference, Coleridge leaves his readers at the threshold of this decision.

MacDonald's Phantastes*: Literary Baptism and the Defeat of the Self*

Had George MacDonald been born a generation earlier, he doubtlessly would have been among the skeptical young men Coleridge initially hoped to reach with his *Aids to Reflection.* Born in 1824, one decade before Coleridge's death, MacDonald came of age with a dim view of established forms of religion in England and Scotland. Having

[34] Coleridge describes baptism as initiation into the mystery that "Christian faith is the perfection of human reason" (*AR* 541). Thus, he devotes much of *Aids to Reflection* to showing that because the source of "Morality" is "some majestic Lake rich with hidden Springs of its own" it can flow into "and become one with, the Spiritual life" (*AR* 540). The Church, therefore, is not universal in the sense that it already contains all men and women, but because it perfects the universal gifts of reason and morality.

rejected the Calvinism he was taught in the "Missionar Kirk" of his childhood, as a young man MacDonald expressed little admiration for the Church of England or any other denomination.[35] After studying natural philosophy and chemistry at King's College, Aberdeen, and training for the ministry at Highbury Theological College, MacDonald pastored a Congregational church in Arundel. However, his middle-class congregation did not respond well to many of his unconventional ideas--including the possibility that the reprobate might receive the opportunity for salvation after death--and his tenure there was brief (Raeper 78). Following his failure at Arundel, MacDonald had little affiliation with either independent or established churches until he entered the Church of England in 1866. Indeed, after Arundel, MacDonald's search for signs of the Church turned increasingly to literary forms and traditions.

MacDonald was an avid reader of Coleridge's poetry, and he was clearly familiar with Coleridge's major prose works as well. Dale Nelson argues that works such as *Biographia Literaria* and *Aids to Reflection* were "surely known to MacDonald," and in his critical essays, MacDonald frequently invokes Coleridge by name (Nelson 25).[36] Similarly, in *Thomas Wingfold, Curate* (1876), a young clergyman experiencing a crisis of faith wonders if reading "Leighton … or Coleridge" can help him (36). In addition to his own reading, many of MacDonald's friends and mentors were avid readers of

[35] In 1853 MacDonald wrote to his father, "I have no love for any sect of Christians as such -- as little for independents as any, nor has what I have seen of them tended to produce other feelings. One thing is good about them -- which is being continually violated--that is the independence …" ("To His Father" 16 Nov. 68).

[36] Of the essays MacDonald republished in *A Dish of Orts* (1893), the following include explicit references to Coleridge: "Wordsworth's Poetry" (n.d.); "Shelley" (n.d.) "The Imagination, Its Function and Culture" (1867), "St. George's Day" (1864), "The Art of Shakespere [sic], As Revealed by Himself" (1863), and "On Polish" (1865).

Coleridge.[37] Maurice, for example, admired and emulated Coleridge's methods of inquiry. Additionally, MacDonald read and translated many of the German philosophers and poets who had influenced Coleridge, particularly Goethe and Novalis.[38] The lines of influence connecting the two writers, then, are complex and powerful.

While many scholars have studied the "intertextual" qualities of MacDonald's work, Coleridge's ideas about literary tradition and the relationship between literature and the Church illuminate MacDonald's innovative, yet deeply traditional, vision of a renewed relationship between literature and religion. In *Phantastes*, MacDonald extends and interprets Coleridge's suggestion that literary traditions can (and perhaps must) revitalize the English religion by training individual readers to overcome solipsism and enter the universal Church of Christ.

As his friendship with MacDonald and admiration for Coleridge has already suggested, F.D. Maurice provided an important link between Coleridge's concerns about the Church--both as the eternal Church of Christ and the temporal Church of England--and MacDonald's literary interpretations of those concerns. In *Kingdom*, Maurice attempts to determine the marks of a universal Church in relation to the traditional creeds and ordinances of Christian practice. Maurice opens *Kingdom* with a letter to Derwent Coleridge, acknowledging his debt to the philosophical methods of the elder Coleridge. This method includes the imaginative power to enter into "the spirit of a living or

[37]Many of the poets and thinkers MacDonald admired, including Tennyson and Thomas Arnold, were among the Cambridge Apostles, who eagerly read and discussed *Aids to Reflection* as undergraduates. In a letter from 1850, MacDonald writes admiringly of Arnold's plan for revitalizing the clergy of the Church of England, and remarks that "[i]f Dr. Arnold's plan could be carried out … I should have very little objection left" to entering the Church of England ("To Miss" 27 Dec. 42-43).

[38] During his time at Arundel, MacDonald wrote that he was translating the *Spiritual Songs* of Novalis, and many of these translations were later published. Richard Reis suggests that MacDonald's translations of Novalis may be the best in English (27).

departed author," and the ability "to honour others of the most different kind, belonging to our own and to former times, which [he] otherwise should not have understood, and might, through ignorance and self-conceit, have undervalued" (xiii). In other words, Maurice values Coleridge's philosophical prose for training readers to sympathize with a broad tradition of thinkers and writers. This sympathy, in turn, assists a reader as he attempts to deal with the problems of his own day. Like Coleridge, Maurice believes these problems are numerous. He laments, for example, the plight of the typical young man who is baffled by "Criticism":

> he is haunted … by a sense of the connexion between his own life and the books which he reads, by theories about the nature and meaning of this connexion, by authoritative dogmas respecting the worth or worthlessness of particular poems and paintings, by paradoxical rebellions against these dogmas, by questions as to the authority of antiquity and the distinct province of our time, by attempts to discover some permanent laws of art, by indignant assertions of its independence upon all laws. (xiii)

This series of questions could stand almost unchanged if "Criticism" were replaced with "Religion," and for Maurice, as for Coleridge, resolving the problems of aesthetic criticism and seeking the marks of a universal Church are inextricable. Furthermore, both demand a renewed balance between subjective and objective means of discovery that requires the critical and creative vision of the past. Seeking the truth about the connection between one's own life and books, for example, "may be greatly assisted by the previous successes or failures of another" (xiv). In his study of the Church, Maurice applies the methodological principles of *Aids to Reflection* even more systematically than Coleridge himself. While Coleridge uses aphorisms from Leighton and others to guide readers to reflection and into the Church of England, Maurice conducts an exhaustive survey of religious leaders and movements from Christian history, probing not only

Protestant opinions, but also the views of Roman Catholics and secular philosophers. He presents this survey, moreover, as a series of letters with a Quaker who has begun to question the biblical foundation for certain tenets of his faith. By choosing a Quaker as his immediate audience, Maurice extends Coleridge's fascination with the radical tendencies of Protestant hermeneutics and ecclesiology.

Thus, while Maurice insists that the Reformation's greatest contribution to Christian history is the recognition of man as individual, not merely as part of a mass, he also argues that the fathers of the reformation believed allegiance, not rebellion, is the true and right state of a man's soul (89–90). For Maurice, Bernard Reardon explains, this idea of a universal Church means that the "world… contains the elements of which the Church is composed. In the Church these elements are penetrated by a uniting, reconciling power. The Church is to be thought of, therefore, as human society in its normal state, whereas the world is the same society in an irregular and abnormal state" (127). This "reconciling power" is God's adoption, and Maurice devotes *Kingdom* to discussing the signs of this adoption.

Maurice insists that the traditional ordinances and creeds of Catholic and Protestant Christianity are the most important of signs of God's adoption, and he considers "the meaning of this ordinance of Baptism as a key to the nature of ordinances generally" (xxv). In other words, comprehending baptism as a symbol promises to reveal the other signs of Christ's spiritual society. Maurice picks up where Coleridge leaves his readers in the final aphorism in *Aids to Reflection,* with an exposition the physical rite and spiritual reality of baptism as a true symbol, in which "the former must be ejusdem generis with the latter--the Water of Repentance, reformation in *conduct*; and the Spirit

that which purifies the inmost *principle* of action" (368). Maurice describes baptism as the sign announcing repentance and participation in the universal society of mankind, the Church.

Baptism, Maurice continues, is not a magic rite that guarantees one's entrance into this universal Church, but a symbol making visible God's adoption. For the Jews, John the Baptist's baptism was a sign that God's chosen people were now to stand upon a "universal human ground" (*Kingdom* 388). Now, Maurice argues, baptism is a mark of participation in the Church, which is both universal and "distinct" from the world (385–86). Baptism serves as "a sign of admission into a Spiritual and Universal Kingdom, grounded upon our Lord's incarnation, and ultimately resting upon the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (1).[39] As an ordinance that is "not a momentary act but a perpetual sacrament" (403), baptism requires the operation of the human will, demanding "that those who will are taken out of that inconsistent condition to which they are prone, and are taken into a reasonable condition, in which they may live so long as they remember the covenant of God" (3). "Reasonable," used here with strong Coleridgean echoes, suggests that an individual, choosing to accept God's adoption, exchanges the inconsistency of complete subjectivity--or "rebellion"--for the universal truths revealed through the Bible, the Church, and the reason. This "reasonable condition," Maurice writes, is presented in the Bible as "an eternal and indissoluble fellowship" (434). Maurice hopes that his survey of Quakers and Calvinists, Catholics and Lutherans, will allow readers to separate the excesses or faults of Christians sects

[39] Reardon emphasizes Maurice's distance from the Tractarian ideas about baptism, noting that for Maurice, baptism is not an act of immediate transformation, but a symbol, "a declaration of what man redeemed actually is: a child of God; and it bids him live as such. It is of the baptized accordingly that the Church consists" (124, 129).

from their common baptism and participation in the universal Church. At the same time, Maurice maintains that the Church of England embodies the strengths of both Catholicity and Protestantism (Reardon 147), thereby providing a national and historical witness to the Church.

Although Maurice's friendship was instrumental in bringing MacDonald into the Church of England, in his fiction and criticism MacDonald is never primarily interested in the established church as a manifestation of Christ's universal body. He is interested, however, in Coleridge and Maurice's attention to the signs and ordinances of the Christian Church. While Coleridge and Maurice defend the value of national forms of religion, MacDonald extends both Coleridge's and Maurice's suggestions that literary traditions can revitalize the symbols that serve the Church. The established forms and expressions of religion, he fears, have ceased to proclaim, and perhaps even to believe in, the idea of a universal Church. He transmits this fear to the young protagonist of *Robert Falconer* (1868), who attends a disappointing service in the granite cathedral of St. Machar's in Aberdeen. The service Robert hears caricatures one extreme version of Protestant faith, which has exchanged the hard sayings of the Bible for a vague idea of culture and morality:

> That morning prayers and sermon were philosophically dull, and respectable as any after-dinner speech. Nor could it well be otherwise: one of the favourite sayings of its minister was, that a clergyman is nothing but a moral policeman. As such, however, he more resembled one of Dogberry's watch. He could not even preach hell with any vigour; for as a gentleman he recoiled from the vulgarity of the doctrine, yielding only a few feeble words on the subject as a sop to the Cerberus that watches over the dues of the Bible--quite unaware that his notion of the doctrine had been drawn from the Æneid, and not from the Bible. (136)

MacDonald goes on to describe the cathedral itself, which is in fact only the nave of the original structure. The rest was damaged when, "more than a century after the Reformation, the great tower fell, destroying the choir, chancel, and transept, which have never been rebuilt" (135). As MacDonald links the Reformation to the tower's fall, he uses this fragment of a cathedral as an emblem of its minister's truncated faith, and as a symbol of all the established and sectarian churches that have failed to sustain not only the faith of their forefathers, but the beautiful forms--whether architectural or poetic--that inspire and sustain worship. The narrator prays, however, that "the reviving faith of the nation in its own history, and God at the heart of it, [may] lead to the restoration of this grand old monument of the belief of their fathers" (135). A renewed sense of tradition, in other words, has the potential to restore the broken church building and the faith it represents.

This renewal, however, requires new forms for communicating eternal truths, and MacDonald observes that in religion, "all history teach[es] us that the forms in which truth has be[e]n taught, after being held heartily for a time, have by degrees come to be held merely traditionally and have died out and other forms arisen" ("To His Father" 16 Nov. 69). Maurice notes a similar problem in *Kingdom*; the important innovations or ideas of one leader, whether Luther or George Fox, are difficult to hand down to a second generation (64). Even Coleridge's decision to offer selections from Leighton and others in *Aids to Reflection* comes from his fear that Leighton's ideas will not reach nineteenth-century readers in their original form. Even more boldly than Coleridge, MacDonald uses imaginative literature to recreate the symbolic and aesthetic forms used to communicate the eternal truth of the universal Church.

In *Phantastes,* as we have seen, MacDonald's protagonist experiences both the terror and hope of Coleridge's idealism, pursuing his ideal through the landscape of the imagination, yet haunted throughout by the shadow of the self. Within this psychodrama, Anodos experiences many of the problems Maurice, following Coleridge, believed haunted the young men of the nineteenth century. Maurice attempts to resolve these problems with his historical survey of Christian history, just as Coleridge hoped *Aids to Reflection* could introduce the resources of Protestantism's historical voices to his own readers. MacDonald, likewise, uses literary forms and poetic methods to bring the resources of the past to contemporary readers. Perhaps the most important of these resources, MacDonald suggests, is a renewed understanding of the conditions under which reading can free the readers from solipsism and spiritual isolation. He derives many of these conditions from Coleridge, bringing, as Coleridge does in *Aids to Reflection,* the resources of the literary past to bear on the needs of the present. However, MacDonald enlarges Coleridge's sense that aesthetic modes of communication are most effective in dealing with the problems of subjectivity. By the end of *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge has brought his readers through a philosophical reflection on baptism, guiding them toward the reconciliation of their personal reflections with the traditional witness of the English church. MacDonald goes further, providing for his readers a picture of reading *as* baptism, and inviting his readers into a spiritual communion much larger than the Church of England.

Phantastes establishes the questions MacDonald will explore throughout his literary career, and these questions, as well as the methods he uses to address them, are decidedly Coleridgean. Like the narrator of "Constancy," the protagonist of *Phantastes*

spends much of his narrative pursuing his ideal, the White Lady he awakens by singing. His music--in keeping with the Romantic elevation of music as the highest art--frees the woman from mysterious enchantments more than once, but each time, Anodos botches his pursuit by trying to possess the White Lady. A would-be Pygmalion, Anodos fails when he assumes that through his art he has created his ideal, and that he therefore has the right to possess her. In grasping, Anodos embodies the worst impulses of modern subjectivity: the assumption that the creative power and desires of the self need not submit to any moral law. These impulses find their symbol in Anodos's shadow, which destroys, rather than enables, the imaginative vision Anodos needs to understand the spiritual truth of the natural and social world. The shadow inverts Coleridge's vision of individual freedom unified through the Church, first appearing in a parody of Christian liturgy. Anodos meets his shadow in an ogre's house, which he soon discovers is a "Church of Darkness": "a long, low hut, built with one end against a single tall cypress, which rose like a spire to the building" (*Phantastes* 92). Within, the ogre's daughter reads from a book that inverts the promises of the Gospel of John, asserting that "as darkness had no beginning, neither will it ever have an end. … Where the light cannot come, there abideth the darkness. The light doth but hollow a mine out of the infinite extension of the darkness" (93).[40] To confront this nihilistic and willful redaction of the Bible, MacDonald must construct a literary tradition that teaches Anodos another way of reading, bringing him not into the bondage of the self's despair, but into free communion with others.

[40] The Gospel of John was one of MacDonald's favorite books of the Bible, and the ogress's reading redacts the compelling prologue to this Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1.1-5).

Even before the advent of the shadow, MacDonald reveals that his protagonist is in danger of spiritual isolation. MacDonald presents this isolation in terms of Anodos's ignorance of his family history, just as Coleridge and Maurice attempt to redress their readers' ignorance or misapprehensions of religious history. The narrative of *Phantastes* begins the day after Anodos's twenty-first birthday. As he wakes, Anodos recalls the previous day when, having come of age and inherited the family estate, he went to his father's study to take possession of his father's private papers. Like the readers of *Aids to Reflection*, Anodos is on the verge of adult life, and the estate he now must govern is a spiritual society in microcosm.[41] However, Anodos has no idea what resources his father's history may give to him, nor whether reading his father's papers will illuminate anything of value. This uncertainty suggests that Anodos, whose name can either mean "pathless" or "a way up," depending on how one glosses MacDonald's Greek, is a man without a sense of tradition; that is, he is without any understanding of how the past can be recreated for the present. Fittingly, he compares himself to a student of the science that changed the ways many nineteenth-century men and women understood the past:

> Perhaps, like a geologist, I was about to turn up to the light some of the buried strata of the human world, with its fossil remains charred by passion and petrified by tears. Perhaps I was to learn how my father, whose personal history was unknown to me, had woven his web of story. (2–3)

[41] Coleridge often emphasizes the domestic foundations for the spiritual life of a nation. For example, in *On the Constitution of the Church and State,* he objects to Catholic Emancipation on the grounds that an unmarried clerical class cannot provide spiritual guidance to England. Similarly, Maurice argues that the existence and strength of familial bonds is evidence of man's essentially spiritual constitution (*Kingdom* 328). Like many English poets and writers, MacDonald often uses domestic settings and imagery to deal with questions of larger social import. For example, in the parable "The Castle," first published in *Adela Cathcart*, MacDonald uses the image of a large castle, inhabited by many brothers and sisters and governed by the eldest brother, to construct an allegory of a spiritual society of mankind under the headship of Christ (see Chapter Three for a more complete discussion of "The Castle"). Anodos, as the eldest brother of the family, also has a spiritual responsibility to the household now under his authority.

For readers in the 1850s, Anodos's comparison to a geologist might inspire excitement or uncertainty. A relatively young science in the 1850s, geology was responsible for upsetting many received ideas about the age of the earth and, in turn, for raising questions about the authority of the Bible in matters of science and history.[42] The image of a geologist suggests that MacDonald is confronting the problems of history. Moreover, this geological comparison is a Romantic trope, and it suggests that both artistic and spiritual development are at stake.[43] In Novalis's *Henry von Ofterdingen,* miners serve as figures of nature and poetry, and their influence is crucial to the protagonist's development as a poet. In the midst of his own *Bildgungsroman*, Henry meets an old man who asserts that mining must carry a special blessing from God, "for there is no art which might make its participants happier and nobler, which would do more to arouse men's faith in a heavenly wisdom and providence, and which would keep the innocence and childlikeness of the heart in greater purity, than mining" (69). Mining, indeed, is an "earnest symbol of man's life" (71). According to this description, a Romantic poet mines human experience for truth and beauty, delving for treasures beneath the surface of the natural world and the human psyche. MacDonald's description of the nascent poet Anodos as a geologist sustains the idea that an artist delves into the strata of human

[42] The first recorded use of "geologist" in the *OED* comes from 1795 ("Geologist"). Less than half a century later, Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) shattered conventional ideas not only about the processes of geological formation (replacing older catastrophic models with the now-orthodox theories of uniformitarianism), but about the age of the earth. These discoveries, in turn, sparked both scientific and religious debates about the scope, nature, and formation of history.

[43] In the introduction to his translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister,* Carlyle points out that the miner Jarno teaches Wilhelm how a man's understanding of his work reveals both his "self-mastery" and his awareness of the spiritual life of humanity. To a narrow mind, work is only a trade, "for the higher an art; and the highest, in doing one thing, does all; or, to speak less paradoxically, in the one thing which he does rightly, he sees the likeness of all that is done rightly" (Goethe 1:xiv). Volume 2 of *Wilhelm Meister* contains a section entitled "Confessions of a Fair Saint, which inspired the title of Coleridge's *Confessions of an* Inquiring Spirit (Goethe 2:69ff).

thought and history, but also enhances the possibility that Anodos's may be unsettled, rather than empowered, by his journey into the deep.[44]

However, before Anodos can delve into the strata of his father's past, he learns that he can neither comprehend the significance of his father's history, nor become a fit leader of his household, without learning to receive a complex dynamic of inheritance. Before Anodos learns anything from his father's documents, "a tiny woman form, as perfect in shape as if she had been a small Greek statuette roused to life," magically emerges from a hidden chamber in the desk and says she is his grandmother (*Phantastes* 4). When Anodos objects to her claim, she chides him for knowing so little of his lineage, retorting, "I dare say you know something of your great grandfathers … but you know very little about your great grandmothers on either side" (6–7). Rather than explaining this astonishing charge, the grandmother changes the subject and reminds Anodos of a conversation he had the day before:

> "Now, to the point. Your little sister was reading a fairy-tale to you last night."
> "She was."
> "When she had finished, she said, as she closed the book, 'Is there a fairy-country, brother ?' You replied with a sigh, 'I suppose there is, if one could find the way into it.'"
> "I did; but I meant something quite different from what you seem to think."
> "Never mind what I seem to think. You shall find the way into Fairy Land tomorrow." (7)

Although the shift from family lines to fairy tales may seem abrupt, the Fairy Land Anodos will soon explore and the lineage he knows so little of are intimately linked. Fairy tales and other imaginative forms, the grandmother implies, offer visions of the past that would otherwise be inaccessible. In Coleridgean terms, MacDonald suggests that

[44] MacDonald returns to images of miners in his later fairy stories, *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883).

fairy tales, like religion, may present the past as seen through the lens of imaginative reason. The "grandmother" herself personifies an imaginative vision of history, for while she exhibits the marks of Fairy Land (appearing youthful despite great age, changing her physical form at will, and, of course, emerging mysteriously from a secretary desk), she claims to be an ancestor of Anodos. Indeed, she turned "two hundred and thirty-seven years old, last Midsummer Eve" (6). If one subtracts her age from the year *Phantastes* was published, this fairy grandmother would be a contemporary of Coleridge's seventeenth-century churchmen in *Aids to Reflection,* and like these poets and divines, the grandmother represents tradition as a creative transformation of the past.

Anodos's exchange with his grandmother outlines the primary concerns of the narrative, for she tells Anodos that his ideas about the value of reading are insufficient. His first attempts to read in *Phantastes* have been fruitless; reading with his sister inspired a longing he saw little hope of satisfying, while his ignorance of the past renders him unfit even to find his father's papers. His grandmother, using these reading experiences to indict the narrowness of Anodos's vision, reveals that MacDonald wishes to represent both Anodos's tyrannical subjectivity and the traditions that lead him to redemption in terms of reading. The final test of Anodos's success in Fairy Land will be his ability to stand as an artist and reader who can surrender subjective vision, self-serving desires, and spiritual isolation in exchange for forms of reading and creation that affirm his place within an imaginative, yet historical, spiritual communion.

The day after this strange encounter, Anodos begins his sojourn in Fairy Land, and MacDonald uses *Phantastes*, as Coleridge uses *Aids to Reflection,* to create literary structures that model the creative appropriation of past texts. Coleridge originally

planned *Aids to Reflection* as a typical nineteenth-century anthology of "beauties," but he published a much more complex work. *Aids to Reflection* models the reflective movements of a reader's mind as he attempts to perceive, through private readings of Leighton and others, objective truths about spiritual religion. MacDonald's adaptation of this method is even more explicitly aesthetic. He presents his work as a "romance," not an anthology, but due to its extensive allusions and epigraphs *Phantastes* is, like the much later *Lilith* (1895), a "romance of intertextuality" (Mendelson 22). For Anodos and the readers who follow his adventure, Fairy Land is built upon literary traditions, and MacDonald formally integrates these traditions into his narrative in many ways. As one nineteenth-century reviewer noted, *Phantastes* dramatizes the "the moral experience of most earnest and highly educated men in this self-conscious age" (Stowell 112), and MacDonald offers tradition--manifest in his formal use of epigraphs--as an alternative to his age's overwhelming self-consciousness.

Phantastes supports its narrative with an intricate matrix of epigraphs, allusions, and other intertextual references. MacDonald's desire to teach Anodos his "family history" results in an innovative literary form, neither strict allegory nor realist novel, but a richly symbolic narrative that transforms elements from the past into one of the first modern fantasies.[45] The title of his romance comes from Phineas Fletcher's allegory of the physical and mental life of man, *The Purple Island* (1633). "Phantastes" is Fletcher's personification of imagination or fancy, and this faculty will remain MacDonald's primary concern throughout his own narrative. Furthermore, by calling his work a "romance," MacDonald hints at his narrative's affinity with German literature, an affinity

[45] Colin Manlove, for example, includes MacDonald in his seminal *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (1970).

later confirmed by the many epigraphs from Novalis, Goethe, Schiller, Fouqué, and others. Indeed, MacDonald heads every chapter with at least one epigraph from other works. All these elements confirm Jennifer Koopman's assessment that the landscape of *Phantastes* is "resoundingly literary" (63). Although epigraphs were a standard feature of nineteenth-century fiction, MacDonald uses these excerpts to address many of the questions Coleridge tackles with his aphorism-and-commentary structure in *Aids to Reflection*.

Originally referring to any kind of superscription (first on buildings, then on texts), "epigraph" eventually came to refer to quotes from external sources incorporated into another work, and epigraphs became increasingly common during the nineteenth century ("Epigraph").[46] The question of how to read epigraphs, and how they relate to works in which they are embedded, points to larger questions about the possible functions a literary tradition may have for an artist. For a Victorian writer, epigraphs could serve as "an intellectual game," as an example of the "commonplaces" popular in Victorian anthologies, or even as "pontifical explanations" of the author's conscious plan (Higdon 129). Readers of MacDonald have expressed a similar variety of explanations regarding MacDonald's epigraphs, either dismissing the majority as revealing only "what is already self-evident in MacDonald's text" (Docherty 38); crediting them with providing "other witness to the truth of [Anodos's] narrative" (Ankeny 127); or finding them "extraordinarily helpful: because this rhetorically indirect work lacks his own commentating voice, they are the sole direct aid that he, as author, provides" (Robb, *George* 91). Within *Phantastes*, epigraphs can serve in all of these ways, but

[46] The *OED's* first recorded use of "epigraph" to refer to a quoted superscription before a chapter, rather than as the imprint of an entire book, dates from 1844 ("Epigraph").

fundamentally, MacDonald's epigraphs represent an artist and reader's contributions to a literary tradition, and as he finds passages that speak to the needs of Anodos, MacDonald attempts to model a way of reading in which the gathered witnesses of literary tradition limit the potential excesses of the individual imagination.

Part of this governance comes from frustrating the reader's ability to understand what he or she is reading, thereby challenging the authority of the individual reader. The uncertainty arising from MacDonald's treatment of some of his epigraphs raises a question also pertinent to Coleridge's aphorisms, namely, whether the epigraphs in *Phantastes* should be understood as a form of the Romantic fragment. While a Victorian epigraph per se need not function in this way, the epigraphs MacDonald uses in the first pages of *Phantastes* suggests that MacDonald sees his own work as a carefully arranged collection of fragments that, paradoxically, provide a vision of a whole spiritual truth. These epigraphs come from Novalis, the first being one of the German poet's definitions of a fairy tale. Novalis defines "true Poesie" as consisting mainly of associations between "fragments of diverse things" a definition that seems to describe MacDonald's use of epigraphs in his romance.[47] Furthermore, this definition comes from Novalis's *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, an encyclopedic work that is itself a collection of fragmentary observations.

Additionally, in the early editions of *Phantastes,* the passage by Novalis functions as a kind of uber-fragment because these editions did not provide a translation.[48] A literate audience in 1858 might be expected recognize a line of Latin, or perhaps even

[47] The original German, printed on the frontispiece to the first edition, reads *"wie Bruchstücke aus den verschiedenartigsten Dingen.*" The translation is my own.

[48] As late as 1906, a reviewer of *Phantastes* lamented that the passage from Novalis was not translated (Robertson 308).

Greek, but very few English readers in 1858 were familiar with German language or literature (Prickett, *Victorian* 191). For a writer whose rhetorical stance toward his readers is often explicitly pastoral, this seems to be a curious choice on MacDonald's part. Additionally, in 1851, MacDonald had privately printed his translation of Novalis's *Hymns to the Night*, and it seems odd that he would not take the opportunity to introduce the English public to a poet he so clearly emulates. Yet leaving the text in German actually creates the sense of fragmentation and disorientation Novalis describes in *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, and this disorientation serves the reader as the grandmother's scolding serves Anodos: it points to truths beyond the reader's knowledge, and to the need for a new way of reading and perceiving these truths. Since ordinary acts of reading presuppose that the text will conform to laws the reader understands, including grammar, vocabulary, and syntax, including an incomprehensible epigraph announces that *Phantastes,* like a fairy-story, may be a "vision without [syntactical or linear] coherence."[49] Such a vision must, first of all, disorient its readers. Whether translated or not, the passage from Novalis suggests that the "great world" *Phantastes* brings into view is one in which an individual reader may not be able to discern the true meaning of a text in isolation. Just as mirrors in the narrative lift familiar rooms "out of the region of fact into the realm of art" (*Phantastes* 155), this extended epigraph reflects and defamiliarizes the entire text, suggesting that, by turning the first page of the book, the reader has already crossed into a realm in which ordinary customs of signification are altered, disregarded, or obscured. This disorientation, which can occur on a less dramatic scale with any epigraph, recreates the kind of epistemological crisis that catalyzes the

[49] From the frontispiece of the first edition, the original German reads "*Ein Mährchen ist wie ein Traumbild ohne Zusammenhang*." The translation is my own.

formation of a tradition.[50] Like Anodos's grandmother, who both identifies the limits of Anodos's knowledge and directs him to the Fairy Land that can save him from solipsism, MacDonald uses the romance's epigraphs both to disorient readers' ideas about how a text creates meaning, and to extend the promise of a literary tradition that can reconcile individual readings and sympathetic communion. Thus, while MacDonald seems to be consciously following the Romantic idea of the fragment, he, like Coleridge, places less emphasis on the irony of striving for an inaccessible whole, and instead cultivates an epigraph that upholds the paradox of a tradition that is a composite of fragments, yet can challenge the isolation of modern subjectivity.

In MacDonald's understanding, a tradition is both received and constructed, and it is the task of a poet-reader (whose relationship to a text, he believes, is essentially the same) to participate in the development of literary traditions. Just as T.S. Eliot would later argue that the best and "most individual" aspects of a poet's work may be those in which artistic ancestors "assert themselves" most strongly (2), MacDonald inaugurates Anodos's coming of age as a poet (and, arguably, his own literary career) with a structure that both governs and inspires the individual imagination by bringing the artist into conversation with the literary past.

Many of the romance's later epigraphs, while not as obscure as the Novalis passage, continue to challenge readers' expectations as MacDonald redacts familiar literary works for his own thematic purposes. For example, the epigraph to Chapter One comes from Shelley's *Alastor*:

> A spirit . . .
> The undulating and silent well,
> And rippling rivulet, and evening gloom,

[50] See above, pp. 16-17

> Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,
> Held commune with him; as if he and it
> Were all that was. (qtd. in *Phantastes* 1)

In *Alastor,* these lines describe the encounter of "the Poet" with a vision that seems to give the poet access to his ideal image. The epigraph raises the possibility, therefore, that as he begins his adventure in Fairy Land*,* Anodos is a proto-Alastor, longing for a vision of beauty but in danger of reading only according to his own will to possess (Koopman 26). Koopman notes that this epigraph, positioned at the beginning of the romance, presents two possible fates for Anodos. MacDonald's selection could promise an encounter with a spirit in nature that challenges isolation with communion. This possibility takes form in the romance when a beech-tree maiden rescues Anodos from the vampiric Ash and protects him during his first night in Fairy Land.

However, readers familiar with *Alastor* will know that it ends with the Poet's solitary death, denying the kind of communion with "the spirit" that MacDonald's excerpt seems to describe. Mary Shelley's notes on *Alastor* emphasizes that the Poet's ideal vision betrayed an extreme narcissism. "Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave," she writes, because "[t]he Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin" (Shelley 14–15). Following Anodos's meeting with the beech-maiden, MacDonald recreates this darker, original reading of *Alastor*. The Alder-Maid, a treacherous foil to the beech tree, seduces Anodos and tempts him, as Koopman demonstrates, with a form of "reading" that locates all value in the self (Koopman 59). She then delivers Anodos to the Ash, whose "vague, shadowy" form anticipates the shadow that will later emerge from Anodos's own self-centered behavior. Koopman rightly argues that MacDonald makes

"literature the locus of spiritual revelation--and spiritual peril" in *Phantastes* (46), and Anodos's relations with the beech and the alder dramatize his two options: one following the fatal choices of Shelley's Alastor, and the other seeking communion according to MacDonald's "redeemed" version of the Shelley's text.

Koopman's theory that MacDonald attempts to "redeem Romanticism," while convincing in its arguments about MacDonald's specific attitudes toward Shelley, does not address all that is at work in MacDonald's handling of literary tradition. While much of the past is problematic and in need of creative renewal, MacDonald suggests that literary traditions also contribute to the redemption of the present, sometimes by pointing toward the ideal, but often by signaling Anodos's increasing danger. For example, MacDonald begins the chapter in which Anodos encounters his shadow with a line from Goethe's *Faust*, "I am a part of the part, which at first was the whole" (*Phantastes* 92). This line, which MacDonald notes is spoken by Mephistopheles, summarizes MacDonald's own vision of damnation: utter isolation within the self.

This epigraph also comments on Anodos's relationship to his own reading. As his grandmother suggests it will, Anodos's journey into Fairy Land introduces him to his ancestors. While the epigraphs introduce MacDonald's readers to Anodos's literary ancestors, such as Shelley and Coleridge, Anodos also meets his progenitors through reading. In the first house he enters in Fairy Land, Anodos finds an old volume containing "many wondrous tales of Fairy Land, and olden times, and the Knights of King Arthur's table," including the story of Sir Percivale, whose armor is rusty and "all to-smirched with mud and mire" after his encounter with the Alder-Maid (*Phantastes* 20–21). After leaving this house, Anodos meets a knight in similar array, and this ruddy

knight also warns him away from the Alder-Maid. Anodos, however, does not connect this knight's story to his own plight, and he succumbs first to the Alder-Maid, and then to his shadow. When Anodos next meets this knight, their stories have diverged; the knight has redeemed himself through "a torrent of mighty deeds," and no shadow follows him (102). Anodos feels himself wretched, and the story of his friend's nobler adventurer "roused all my heart; and I was at the point of falling on his neck, and telling him the whole story; seeking, if not for helpful advice, for of that I was hopeless, yet for the comfort of sympathy" (103). The story of one who has gone before makes Anodos feel his need for sympathy and noble action, and before Anodos can ask for sympathy with his companion, "round slid the shadow and inwrapt my friend; and I could not trust him" (103). They part company, and Anodos dismisses the thought of sympathy with the red knight's story, beginning instead to take pride in his shadow, which he begins to believe "shows me things in their true colour and form." In this state, however, Anodos comes no nearer his ideal, but finds himself wandering through a desert.

Anodos's longing for sympathy with the knight is an important sign of his slow but certain redmeption. The motto for his escape from his shadow could be one of MacDonald's final epigraphs in *Phantastes.* Taken from *The Revenger's Tragedy* by Cyril Tourneur, this passage reminds readers that "Joy's a subtil elf. / I think man's happiest when he forgets himself" (*Phantastes* 275). It is precisely this kind of self-forgetting that MacDonald envisions as the culmination of Anodos's encounter with literary tradition.

Anodos's most important experience of "self-forgetting" occurs in the palace of Fairy Land, and it is during this episode that MacDonald's questions about a universal

spiritual society--a universal and invisible Church--come to the fore. Not surprisingly, MacDonald, who was still largely estranged from institutional religion when *Phantastes* was published, does not announce the ecclesiastical implications of his works as explicitly as Coleridge or Maurice. However, the transformation Anodos experiences in this palace suggests that its queen (whom Anodos never sees) may be the Church herself. During his time in this unseen queen's palace, which forms the narrative center of the romance (Chapters 10-16), Anodos begins to read in a way that challenges the tyranny of self and the shadow. Simply by entering the palace, Anodos finds himself free from his shadow, and he has a feeling "that there were others there besides myself, though I could see no one, and heard no sound to indicate a presence" (*Phantastes* 119). While dwelling with this invisible company, Anodos spends much of his time reading. However, while the readings of the Alder-Maid and the influence of the shadow teach Anodos to interpret all life and literature according to his own desires, he soon realizes an important "peculiarity" of the books in the fairy palace. No matter what the subject, Anodos is taken beyond his own experience, and into perfect sympathy with the writer and characters:

> If, for instance, it was a book of metaphysics I opened, I had scarcely read two pages before I seemed to myself to be pondering over discovered truth, and constructing the intellectual machine whereby to communicate the discovery to my fellow men. … Or if the book was one of travels, I found myself the traveller. New lands, fresh experiences, novel customs, rose around me. I walked, I discovered, I fought, I suffered, I rejoiced in my success. Was it a history? I was the chief actor therein. I suffered my own blame; I was glad in my own praise. With a fiction it was the same. Mine was the whole story. (132)

Koopman describes Anodos's reading in the library as his redemption from solipsistic reading, for the books allow the reader "to transcend his or her own self by transforming the reader into someone else" (59, 64–65).

However, taken out of context, this passage, particularly its last line, could justifiably be read as an assertion of the subject's authority to recreate all narratives in his own image. Only in the context of *Phantastes's* baptismal imagery does Anodos's time in the library truly suggest sympathetic transformation. MacDonald hints at baptismal imagery at the beginning of Anodos's journey, when his room turns into a forest bower, and his basin becomes the fount of "a stream of clear water was running over the carpet, all the length of the room, finding its outlet I knew not where" (*Phantastes* 9). After washing himself in the stream, Anodos "crossed the rivulet, and accompanied it, keeping the footpath on its right bank, until it led me, as I expected, into the wood." Washing himself in the water hints at the water's spiritual value, as does Anodos's feeling that he should continue to follow the course of the stream. When he ignores this intuition, he finds himself lost in the woods. After wandering, tormented by his shadow, Anodos again finds "a small spring; which, bursting cool from the heart of a sun-heated rock" (111). He drinks, is refreshed, and decides he "could not do better than follow it, and see what it made of it" (111). The sleep he experiences after following this stream suggests the regenerating power of the water, for Anodos "slept as [he] had not slept for months," and when he awakes the next morning, he is "refreshed in body and mind," rising "as from the death that wipes out the sadness of life, and then dies itself in the new morrow" (113). The stream becomes a river, and he finds on its shore a boat, which he takes to the

palace itself, again repeating the symbolism of rebirth as he sleeps in the "cradle" of the boat as a "weary child" (114).

When Anodos is within the fairy palace, MacDonald applies this baptismal imagery even more explicitly to imagination and to reading. In the palace, Anodos finds a pool and, plunging into its depths, he finds that the water "clothed me as with a new sense and its object both in one. The waters lay so close to me, they seemed to enter and revive my heart" (*Phantastes* 127). By giving Anodos a "new sense and its object," this pool provides Anodos with new powers of perception, enabling him to see marvels that his shadow would have obscured or disenchanted. These new senses are very similar to Coleridge' conceptions of reason and imagination, for they not only enlarge the scope of Anodos's vision, but enable meaningful contact with others. Following his bath, Anodos begins to see the "faint, gracious forms" of the palace's other inhabitants (128). The same dynamic of baptism and communion also occurs as Anodos reads. After describing his identification with the writers and character he meets in the library, Anodos describes his reading as being "buried and risen again in these old books" (104). This imagery of burial and resurrection repeats the symbolism of baptism, suggesting that Anodos's encounters with literary traditions have begun to transform an isolated, self-oriented reader into one whose "baptized" imagination is capable of sympathy and communion with others. Furthermore, MacDonald not only uses the ecclesiastical imagery of baptism, but recreates it in a way that could speak to Victorian readers who, like himself, were skeptical of both established and dissenting forms of religion. While baptism itself is a symbol, participating (says Coleridge) in the reality of that which it represents, for MacDonald's readers it had also become a conventional form, and therefore one in

danger of being received without a sense of its true meaning. Anodos's reading renews the symbol of baptism, preserving the water imagery of baptism while providing a new picture of dying to self and rising to new life within a spiritual community.

The effects of this baptism, moreover, suggest that MacDonald's understanding of baptism is very similar to Maurice's. Maurice believes that baptism represents a person's decision to acknowledge the election God has already accomplished, and Anodos's baptisms do not earn a place in the Fairy Palace, but reveal to him that it is already his proper home. It is here that he finds "The Chamber of Sir Anodos" carved upon one of the palace's many doors (120). At the same time, by depicting these baptisms outside of conventional church buildings or services, MacDonald implies that the signs of the universal Church, such as baptism, remain valid and meaningful outside of any institutional religious body.

In *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge uses water imagery to represent ideas of tradition and continuity with the past (Prickett, *Modernity* 75-76), and in *Phantastes,* images of water serve a similar function. For example, Anodos's decision to leave the stream that first guides him to Fairy Land anticipates his later decisions to ignore the warnings he receives from Fairy Land's other inhabitants. If the stream represents ideas about tradition, MacDonald fuses folkloric images of boundary-waters with iconography of Christian baptism to reinforce the spiritual matters at stake in Anodos's encounters with literary traditions.[51] Unlike Coleridge, however, MacDonald does not suggest to readers of *Phantastes* that this baptism refers primarily to participation in the Church of England.

[51] As Anodos's experiences in the pool and library suggest, C.S. Lewis's claim that *Phantastes* was able "to convert, even to baptise … my imagination" is a more appropriate metaphor than most readers of MacDonald or Lewis realize (Introduction xi).

The ogress's "Church of Darkness" might imply that MacDonald had little interest in guiding his readers into any organized form of religion. Furthermore, in light of the spiritual power MacDonald assigns to reading, it seems that the writer of *Phantastes* would sympathize with Matthew Arnold's belief that eventually, poetry would supply the emotion needed to inspire morality, obviating the need for doctrines of a spiritual world.

However, in one of the romance's most powerful scenes, MacDonald makes it clear that these literary baptisms lead not merely to moral guidance and intellectual refinement, but into a Church in which human history and literature bears witness to the reality of a spiritual world. Following yet another attempt to take the White Lady by force, Anodos, now exiled from the Fairy Palace, undergoes his most harrowing baptism. After a "torturous descent" and dreary journey underground, Anodos reaches water once again, and the boat he finds lulls him into a second sleep that brings "dreams of unspeakable joy" and restoration (*Phantastes* 223). Waking, he finds refuge in the cottage of a mysterious woman. In her cottage are four mystical doors, and through one of these doors, Anodos finds himself in a dark chapel. Within this chapel, Anodos discovers the tomb of a noble knight and recognizes him as one of his own ancestors. Realizing that he is in "the chapel above the burial-vault of my race," Anodos calls to the dead for comfort, crying, "I am a stranger in the land of the dead, and see no light" (246). In answer to this cry, "A warm kiss alighted on my lips through the dark…. And a great hand was reached out of the dark, and grasped mine for a moment, mightily and tenderly. I said to myself: 'The veil between, though very dark, is very thin'" (246). This image of a chapel, filled with a congregation of the noble dead, and bringing the material and spiritual world into intimate proximity, reveals that *Phantastes's* baptismal imagery is the

beginning of a much larger meditation on the relationship between literary tradition and a Church that houses both living and the dead.

Secret Growth and Lyric Communion: Cultivating "Sympathy" in England's Antiphon

Anodos's movement from the "Church of Darkness" to the ancestral chapel charts a course MacDonald hopes his own readers will take from solipsistic isolation to imaginative communion with the past. By envisioning Anodos's death and rebirth through his participation in the literary traditions that shape Fairy Land, MacDonald attempts to renew the symbolism of baptism in ways that challenge the notion of Anodos's spiritual self-sufficiency.

However consoling the spiritual baptism of *Phantastes* may be for its readers, the communion into which Anodos is baptized remains "very dark," and the romance only provides glimpses of the spiritual society marked by these immersions. Upon his return from Fairy Land, Anodos takes up his role as head of his household, "somewhat instructed, I hoped, by the adventures that had befallen me in Fairy Land," but readers receive no picture of this family (*Phantases* 320). The relative isolation of Anodos, even in his redemption, echoes some of MacDonald's assessments of English churches during the 1850s. In a letter penned just a few years before *Phantastes* was published, MacDonald writes:

> as far as England is concerned the Spirit of the [Christ] Child seems most deficient in our churches -- there is more of it in what the churches call the world, perhaps. Not therefore that there is less religion in the world. I believe there is much more than ever, but it is not so much in the churches, or religious communities (as such at least) in proportion, as it was at one time.… In every church and chapel there are those with whom I can hold close communion, but I must wait awhile before this communion is possible to the degree I should desire it ("To His Father" 16 Nov. 68)

His complaint is a strange composite of frustration and hope, locating true religion in "what the churches call the world," in the past, and in the future when, after "awhile," he can enjoy communion with those from many churches and chapels. The movement of his hope suggests a spiral, as a turn to the past rises toward an even more complete communion. In many of the works following *Phantastes*, MacDonald continues to test the relationship between literary tradition and religion, looking, as Coleridge and Maurice before him, to the texts and voices of religious history for signs of the invisible, universal Church. He extends the ecclesiastical implications of his imaginative vision most directly in *England's Antiphon* (1868), published a decade after *Phantastes.* In *Antiphon*, MacDonald illuminates the ancestral chapel in which Anodos receives his consolation, showing how a literary tradition can provide the space in which readers from many churches and chapels can hold communion with one another. If traditions served as the baptismal waters around and within the Fairy Palace in *Phantastes,* here they become both building and song for the Church's worship. Like Coleridge, MacDonald insists on renewing and revealing the idea of the universal Church, and in *Antiphon* he constructs a literary tradition that can serve as a chapel in which readers can experience "communion" across time and sectarian divisions.

Stephen Prickett calls *Antiphon* "one of the best anthologies of devotional verse of its century" (*Romanticism* 229), and in it MacDonald gathers poems from throughout England's literary history, ranging from medieval mystery plays to the work of MacDonald's Victorian contemporaries.[52] His goal, however, is not merely historical.

[52] Some of MacDonald's contemporaries suggested that works such as *Antiphon* were MacDonald's most valuable legacy. Upon MacDonald's death in 1905, for example, W. Garrett Horder

Rather, he hopes his work will serve as a "small pebble" he may cast "at the head of the great Sabbath-breaker Schism" (*Antiphon* vi). This pebble soon grows into a pile, as MacDonald eschews religious sects for the sake of the Church and describes his collection as "a chapel in the great church of England's worship" (*Antiphon* 2). In *Phantastes*, MacDonald shows the effects of baptism of a literary tradition, arguing that reading *can* help a reader die to self; in *Antiphon*, he explores *how* a literary work can accomplish this by demonstrating that the English tradition of lyric poetry can reconcile the apparently competing demands of religious freedom and catholicity.

In many ways, *Phantastes* dramatizes both the problems and solutions Coleridge confronts in *Aids to Reflection,* and *Antiphon* builds even more directly on Coleridge's ecclesiastical and poetic methods for confronting these problems, arranging texts from the past in such a way that readers will be able to participate in a religious tradition linking writers and readers. This method involves more than simply collecting a representative sample of poetry for readers to peruse. MacDonald's anthology "will give some sense of the nation's religious history," but his "chief aim … will show itself to have been the mediating towards an intelligent and cordial sympathy betwixt my readers and the writers from whom I have quoted" (v-vi). In order to confront schism with sympathy, MacDonald applies Coleridge's principle of polar opposition. As Coleridge writes in *The Friend,* "Every power in nature and in spirit must evolve an opposite, as the sole means and condition of its manifestation; and all opposition is a tendency to reunion" (1:94). MacDonald's interest in Coleridge's idea of opposites is clear in the title

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wrote that if MacDonald "had not given himself so fully to fiction, he might have been one of the surest and sanest critics and exponents of English literature" (688).

of his anthology, which anticipates the reunion--but not dissolution--of England's diverse religious traditions within the Church.[53]

MacDonald introduces the poets in his collection as singers in an antiphonal choir, and MacDonald himself, as anthologizer, is the "leader of the chorus" or "master of the hearing, for my aim shall be to cause the song to be truly heard" (*Antiphon* 3). An antiphon is a musical composition, usually used in worship, in which verses or passages are alternately sung by two choirs ("Antiphon"). By selecting this word, MacDonald actually provides a better term than "opposite" for the kind of fruitful tension Coleridge believes is essential to the English and universal Church, for "an antiphon" connotes difference and unity simultaneously. As a musical form, an "antiphon" also suggests that the restoration of communion will come by aesthetic means, not conceptual argument. According to the technical definitions of the nineteenth century, an antiphon should be a "short piece of plain-song introduced before a psalm or canticle, to the Tone of which it corresponds, while the words are selected so as specially to illustrate and enforce the evangelical or prophetic meaning of the text" (Helmore 73). The antiphon does not replace the psalm or canticle, but introduces the "Tone" of the biblical text in such a way that the hearers are better prepared to receive the scripture passage's spiritual meaning. Like the Bible itself, the work of many prophetic, poetic, and apostolic writers, the antiphonal call and response brings readers into worship that always consists of many voices.

[53] Kerry Dearborn is the most recent scholar to note the influence of Coleridge's concept of polarity on MacDonald's theology. While Dearborn discusses neither *Antiphon* nor the question of MacDonald's ecclesiology, she rightly argues that MacDonald believed "the cleansing and recreation of the imagination in Christ made it an apt relational bridge between polarities" (84–85).

MacDonald's antiphonal tradition prepares its hearers for the Bible's "evangelical and prophetic meaning" by revealing how the unchanging spiritual truth of God's revelation through Christ is manifest in diverse times and hearts. As one volume of Macmillan's "Sunday Library for Household Reading," *Antiphon* aims to extend and re-imagine Sunday worship in a way that brings readers into the Church Invisible. Advertised as a "Historical Review of the Religious Poetry of England" (*Bookseller* 545), *England's Antiphon* was one volume in a series meant to demonstrate that "the history of Christianity, permanent and progressive, is also the history of civilization" (545). The language of "permanent and progressive" forces is strikingly Colerigdean, recalling once again the image of a spiral that moves upward only through the steady movement backward and forward. Patricia Appelbaum notes that the series was intended for "a pious but serious Protestant readership," (807), but the volumes are ecumenical in scope, including biographies of early Christians, German poets, Protestant reformers and Catholic missionaries. In addition to MacDonald, the other contributors include Victorians whose interests were both theological and literary, including Charlotte Mary Yonge, Thomas Hughes, Charles Kingsley, and F.D. Maurice. The publishers imply that the series is to become a part of Sabbath-keeping itself, extending the corporate worship most Christians are supposed to practice on Sunday. Their 1867 notice maintains that

> Sunday should contain the theory, the collective view, of our work-day lives; and these work-days should be the Sunday in action. Our Sunday Books, therefore, ought to do more than afford abstract subjects of Meditation; they should exercise a living power by bringing us into direct contact with all that is true and noble in human nature and human life, and by showing us the life of Christ as the central truth of humanity (*Bookseller* 545).

By bringing their readers into "direct contact" with its various subjects, the publishers hope to recreate the spiritual communion in the context of individual and household reading.[54] According to their advertisement, the Sunday Library will reveal a Church that exists across time, nationality, and sect.[55] Like Coleridge, who revives the influence of the seventeenth-century divines in order to bring readers to the threshold of Christian faith, the Sunday Library draws its audience into a Church that has no single institutional representative, but which lives within a tradition of great lives, poetry, and historical movements.

The aims of the Sunday Library resonate with MacDonald's use of literary tradition in *Phantastes,* and in *Antiphon* MacDonald demonstrates that lyric poetry can train readers to see the universal Church through intensely personal expressions of religious faith and doubt. However, the fact that MacDonald believes that an antiphonal structure is needed if the "song" of the universal Church is to be "truly heard" suggests that he realizes the difficulty of his project, for the tradition of religious verse MacDonald hopes to reveal responds directly to the schismatic crisis that provoked its creation. An anthology always represents a tradition, and, as the ongoing "canon wars" among academic publishers reveals, competing traditions can uphold or dismiss ideologies, fields of knowledge, and views of history. The popularity of anthologies during the

[54] The Sunday Library provides an ecclesiastical variation on what Richard Altick calls the "fireside universities" provided by the anthologies such as Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (Altick 5). Altick cites Maurice's lectures from King's College in the 1840s as an example of the idea that literature could provide common readers with a better understanding of history (5). It is not surprising, therefore, to find Maurice and many of his friends affiliated with a project such as the Sunday Library.

[55] However, like any tradition, the history presented by the Sunday Library editors is selective; "it drew on the history of Catholic Europe as well as of Protestant Britain--but very carefully, looking more at rebels, humanists, and individualists than at Roman theologians or churchmen" (807). Appelbaum--whose study focuses on the popularity of St. Francis of Assisi in the nineteenth century--observes that late-Victorian Protestants sustained a real but ambivalent fascination with Catholicism, and, in turn, with the history of Christianity prior to the Reformation.

Victorian era indicates that the English reading public was eager for a national literary tradition.[56] The publication of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (1861) and the founding of the Early English Text Society in 1864 are two touchstones in the Victorian era's fascination with the enduring value of historical texts.[57]

MacDonald distinguishes his anthology from collections that only chart the historical development of a nation's literature; like Coleridge, he is interested not in "history" but in "History," a vision of tradition that looks back even as it rises. This is not to say that MacDonald scorns the insights of critical methodology. His university training, after all, was in the sciences, and his sermons reveal a keen interest in textual criticism. However, in *Antiphon* as in his sermons, MacDonald values such details only as an aid for understanding a passage's spiritual meaning. In his chapter on the Middle English lyrics, for example, MacDonald notes that his selections come from the publications of the Percy Society, edited by "Mr. Wright from a manuscript in the British Museum" (*Antiphon* 7).[58] The Percy Society, a book club lasting from 1840-1852, was one of many scholarly societies in the nineteenth century that formed in order to provide reliable editions of "original manuscripts and scarce publications" (Wright i). Anticipating the much more extensive work of the Early English Text Society, the Percy

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[56] In addition to *Antiphon*, MacDonald published several other anthologies during his lifetime, including *Exotica: A Translation [in verse] of the Spiritual Songs of Novalis, the Hymn-Book of Luther, and Other Poems from the German and Italian,* (1876); *A Cabinet of Gems, Cut and Polished by Sir Philip Sidney: Now for the More Radiance Presented without Their Setting* (1891), and *Rampolli: Growths from a Long-planted Root* (1897), which included translations from the German and Italian.

[57] It is important to remember, for example, that Arnold originally prepared "The Study of Poetry" as an introduction for T.H. Ward's *The English Poets* (1880, 1883, 1918). Darrel Mansell argues that while Arnold agreed to write the introduction, "Study" contains several challenges to the kind of anthology Ward was publishing. Ward's insistence that specialized editors should make the selections for each section, for example, "bore out Arnold's sense of the incoherence of modern life" (Mansell 284).

[58] MacDonald uses Volume 4 of the Society's *Early English Poetry, Ballads, and Popular Literature of the Middle Ages,* edited by Thomas Wright.

Society hoped to provide a reliable historical record of English literature. The work of these societies epitomizes nineteenth-century efforts to approach history--even literary history--scientifically. In his introduction to *Specimens,* for example, Wright provides meticulous details concerning the provenance of his source manuscript, including notes on the handwriting, geographical references, and political circumstances affecting the manuscript's assembly.[59] From these extensive details, MacDonald makes the most use of notes concerned with spelling, vocabulary, and other details that will facilitate the "readier comprehension" of his readers (7).

While he recognizes the usefulness of Wright's scientific approaches to literary history, MacDonald is more interested in the ways these texts create a sustainable tradition for English faith and culture. In many ways, his approach to the literature of the past is less similar to Wright, than to the Percy Society's namesake, Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore, whose *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) helped inspire the Romantic ballad revival of the late eighteenth century. Percy's influence is most clearly inscribed in the title of Coleridge and Wordsworth's seminal *Lyrical Ballads*, but Percy's approach to his collection also anticipates Coleridge and the later nineteenth-century revival of tradition. In his Preface to *Reliques*, Percy discusses the manuscripts and sources of the collected ballads in some detail, but he also acknowledges significant editorial revision; he has only published the "select remains" of these ancient ballads, and he has been careful "to admit nothing immoral or indecent" (i). He acknowledges the artistic defects of these relics, and doubts "whether, in the present state of improved literature, [the ballads] could be deemed worthy the attention of the public" (iv). However, in spite of their artistic inferiority, Percy hopes that the ballads' "great

[59] MS Harl 2253 in the British Museum

simplicity" and "many artless graces … might compensate for the want of higher beauties, and if they do not dazzle the imagination, [they] are frequently found to interest the heart" (i). In contrast to the aesthetic canons of his day, Percy's values the ballads in a way that is recognizably traditional. As part of a tradition written to "soften the roughness of a martial and unlettered people" (i) the alleged defects of the ballads become the basis for their value in the present. Wright's Preface to *Specimens,* on the other hand, offers neither apologies for nor amendments to the included texts.

The differences between Percy's and Wright's tones suggest the differing concepts of the relationship between literature and history that were available to MacDonald when he began work on *Antiphon*. For Percy, even texts of doubtful artistic merit can be valuable insofar as they "interest the heart." Wright, on the other hand, concerns himself with the texts' place in the past, rather than their potential application in the present or future. Even the titles suggest the different kinds of value the two collectors ascribe to their findings. When Percy published his collection, "relic" carried connotations of sacred physical remains, such as the portion of a saint's body or the sacred artefact of some ancient culture ("Relic"). "Relic" also implied a sense of the relationship between past and present: whether treasured for its religious value, its cultural worth, or both, a relic is something precious that has been intentionally preserved from the past to the present. Since entering the language in the seventeenth century, "specimen" has referred to a representative sample, usually in reference to an object of scientific study ("Specimen"). Thus, Percy's "reliques" are more "traditional" in that they shape and sustain a complex relationship between the past and the present, while Wright's "specimens" are merely "historical." His commentary deals only with the

texts' emergence at a particular point in time and in a particular place, not with any creative presentation to the present.

In *Antiphon,* MacDonald takes what he finds useful from Wright's methods, but he is nearer in spirit to Percy (and Coleridge), striving for a synthesis of the intellect and the heart. Even MacDonald's hope that the poems in Wright's collection contain "a sign or two that in cultivating our intellect we have in some measure neglected our heart" echoes Percy's hopes (*Antiphon* 7). MacDonald omits Wright's learned discussion of secular scribes and Mercian kings, for his intention is not to produce a scholarly edition of these medieval lyrics, but to help his lay readers "enjoy" the texts (8). At the same time, MacDonald does not attempt to dehistoricize the poems, and he chooses works that hold historical realities and enduring relevance in fruitful tension. Only in one instance does MacDonald provide a modernized version of a poem, and even here MacDonald hopes that in "half-translating" the text he has "rendered it intelligible to all my readers" without wandering from the source, and maintaining, even in his translation, "a degree of antiqueness both in the tone and the expression" (20). This mode of presentation embodies an essential tension of any tradition: while the evidence of a custom or idea's historical distance from the present lends authority, some sort of sympathy with this inheritance must confirm the connection between past and present.

MacDonald's decision to build his antiphon from English lyrics is part of his larger vision of religion reconciling subjective and objective aspects of religion through a literary tradition. He emphasizes the extensive relationship between religion and poetry, arguing that religious art can claim some kind of preeminence for all the major poetic forms. "Of the lyrical poems of England, religion possesses the most; of the epic, the

best; of the dramatic, the oldest" (*Antiphon* 1). While the epic, the classical form for narrating events that define a nation or community, might seem to provide better monuments to shared religious experience, MacDonald follows the impulse of his age in emphasizing the value of compact, personal lyrics in which the reader will find "little of theory and much of love" (6). It is this love MacDonald believes will train readers to comprehend the good news and prophecies of the Bible: that there is a universal spiritual society, Christ's Church.

However, while love may create more sympathy than theory, by focusing on the lyric tradition in English poetry, MacDonald must confront the tensions between an inherently subjective form of poetry and communal religious experience. He does so by emphasizing lyric poetry as forms of music, arguing that music is capable of inspiring a subjective experience of and response to spiritual truth, and also of calling others into this experience. The lyric is an essentially musical form, having first been "chanted to some stringed instrument," and music is "one chief mode in which men unite to praise God; for in thus praising they hold communion with each other, and the praise expands and grows" (*Antiphon* 1-2). MacDonald's exposition of the lyric parallels his larger vision of England's literary tradition, in which one hears "heart after heart lifting up itself in the music of speech, heart after heart responding across the ages" (2). The *cause* of an individual's spiritual awakening may remain as mysterious as the sudden appearance of Anodos's grandmother, but once a person finds her heart uplifted, she discovers the power "song-speech" has for communicating these experiences with others:

> The *individual* heart, however, must first have been uplifted into praiseful song, before the common ground and form of feeling, in virtue of which men might thus meet, could be supplied. But the vocal utterance or the bodily presence is not at all necessary for this communion. When we read

> rejoicingly the true song-speech of one of our singing brethren, we hold song-worship with him and with all who have thus at any time shared in his feelings, even if he have passed centuries ago into the "high countries" of song. (2)

MacDonald follows Coleridge's emphasis on the necessity of the subjective apprehension of spiritual truth, but he also follows his literary forefather by arguing that an individual cannot express this experience in private terms; he or she must look to the expressions of others for ways to express spiritual experiences that are both personal and universal. Religious lyricists are "historically dependent" upon one another:

> For we must not forget that, although the individual song springs from the heart of the individual, …. no man could sing as he has sung, had not others sung before him. Deep answereth unto deep, face to face, praise to praise. To the sound of the trumpet the harp returns its own vibrating response--alike, but how different! (3)

In keeping with *Antiphon's* musical conceit, MacDonald describes literary tradition in terms of resonance and response. His paraphrase of the Book of Psalms suggests that the resonance among the lyric poets depends upon their common response to the creative work of God.[60] Thus, while lyric poetry may express the individual longing that precedes fellowship with others, it can also articulate the source of all religious utterances: the soul's longing to return to God.

In *England's Antiphon,* these laws of resonance and response govern not only the composition, but also the reading and interpretation of lyric poetry. By acting as the "leader of the chorus," ordering, "who shall sing, when he shall sing, and which of his songs he shall sing," MacDonald sustains a position that is both active and receptive (*Antiphon* 3); like Coleridge in *Aids to Reflection*, MacDonald presents his anthology as testament to a religious and literary history that exists prior to his efforts, while

[60] "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts" (Ps. 42.7)

simultaneously suggesting that he and his readers must actively sustain and contribute to the tradition. However, in order to emphasize this unified and unifying interplay between an individual and tradition, MacDonald qualifies his own role as "leader of the chorus," with a less presumptuous title, the "master of the hearing" (3). By focusing on the poets' literary achievements, as well the historical circumstances of each writer, MacDonald diminishes his role as interpreter and focuses instead on setting "the song in its true light--its relation, namely, to the source whence it sprung, which alone can secure its right reception by the heart of the hearer" (4).

This idea of facilitating readers' "right reception" puts Coleridge's theories of reason into practice. According to Coleridge, only the reason, which is capable of discerning the recurrent patterns of history, would be capable of grasping the significance of a tradition. Likewise, MacDonald hopes his selections "shall not only present themselves to the reader's understanding, but commend themselves to his imagination and judgment" (*Antiphon* 4). By "understanding," MacDonald means basic comprehension of the language of the poems, a sense in keeping with Coleridge's use of the word. By substituting "imagination and judgment," for "Reason," MacDonald communicates the sense of Coleridge's reason without the confusion that Coleridge often creates with his very specific use of the term.

Throughout *Antiphon*, MacDonald's commentary emphasizes the ways in which lyric forms and poetic language speak to the imagination, building the antiphonal Christian tradition in which differences of time, place, and even doctrine give way to sympathy. Thus, when MacDonald introduces the lyrics of anonymous thirteenth-century poets, he argues that his presumably Protestant readers will be able to find in the

utterances from the "silence of the monastery" evidence of the "deeper life" (*Antiphon* 6). It is these lyrics, rather than the outward manifestations of the medieval Church, MacDonald claims, in which the truly catholic Church becomes visible:

> As we must not judge of the life of the nation by its kings and mighty men, so we must not judge of the life in the Church by those who are called Rabbi. The very notion of the kingdom of heaven implies a secret growth, secret from no affectation of mystery, but because its goings-on are in the depths of the human nature where it holds communion with the Divine. In the Church, as in society, we often find that that which shows itself uppermost is but the froth, a sign, it may be, of life beneath, but in itself worthless. (6)

Lyrics are capable of preserving spiritual truth in a way doctrine cannot, because these poems manifest the Church's "secret growth." MacDonald values this secrecy not because it suggests private devotion, but because it asserts the limits of human knowledge and power. In the worship of Christ, he writes, "a thousand truths are working, unknown and yet active, which, embodied in theory, and dissociated from the living mind that was in Christ, will as certainly breed worms as any omer of hoarded manna" (6). Translating truth into theory can be dangerous, he implies, because these theories may presume an authority and finality they do not have, since the truth of a human's "communion with the Divine" transcends theoretical expression. Poetic language leaves many of the truths of religious experience hidden in "the living mind that was in Christ," just as, Auerbach writes in *Mimesis,* biblical writers never represent God as being "comprehensible in his presence…; it is always only 'something' of him that appears, he always extends into depths" (12). The medieval lyrics MacDonald includes all describe a speaker's encounter with Christ, either through prayer, through recounting a narrative from the Gospels, or through imagining the sufferings of Mary. These poems do not pretend to be complete expressions of Christian faith and practice, but MacDonald suggests that they make the

Church visible in a way doctrine cannot. Whether or not a doctrine is correct, it can at best describe what the Church professes. Lyrics, on the other hand, can provide a glimpse of the persons--with Christ as their head--who constitute the Church itself.

In MacDonald's analysis, these medieval lyrics fulfill a Wordsworthian function, communicating and reviving feelings in the absences of bodily presence. More importantly, the lyrics allow readers to experience, the anguish of Mary and the devotion of the medieval poet in a way that recalls Coleridge's argument about the Atonement in *Aids to Reflection.* Coleridge's conviction that much of the Bible's language is poetic allows him to argue that the Apostle Paul's language about the Atonement is meant to help readers *feel* the effects of the Atonement, not to probe its hidden cause.[61] In the same way, the first poem MacDonald includes describes the crucifixion, but rather than attempting to explain why Christ's suffering were necessary, the speaker emphasizes the "perfect sympathy" between Mary and all mothers by imagining Mary's anguished dialogue with Christ as he hangs on the cross (*Antiphon* 9). Like the prophecies of Isaiah or the Song of Deborah, these lyrics touch both the particular and the universal human experiences of parenthood, and through reading the poem, Mary's anguish, imagined by the monastic poet, becomes the anguish of the reader, as well.

In addition to their power as musical form, the "song-speech" of an English lyric gives living, sympathetic form to spiritual truths at all levels of expression. MacDonald highlights their simplicity, for example, noting that even the adjectives used by the medieval poets exhibit a verbal simplicity that enables modern readers to understand them. Thus, in the line "The stones beoth al wete," the adjective "wete," easily recognizable even to a modern reader, establishes a linguistic sympathy upon which

[61] See above, pp. 53-54.

MacDonald hopes to build (*Antiphon* 14). For MacDonald, the formal simplicity of adjectives and other words corresponds with the thematic simplicity of the poems, rooted in the lyrics' attention to persons rather than theories. He notes that "almost all the earliest religious poetry is about [Christ] and his mother" (7). The medieval poetry is simple, therefore, not only in its Saxon diction, but because these familiar words express a poet's imaginative sympathy with the suffering of Christ and his mother.[62]

Through the simplicity of their words, the medieval lyric poets use words to communicate subjective religious experiences, and MacDonald insists that poetry can serve as a true antiphon, preparing readers to perceive the truths of the Bible, by using language in this poetic way. The failures of religion have often been failures to understand the nature of religious language, and MacDonald indicts

> the irreverence of too many religious teachers, who will repeat and repeat again the most sacred words for the merest logical ends until the tympanum of the moral ear hears without hearing the sounds that ought to be felt as well as held holiest. (14)

By using "sacred words" only as propositional signifiers, rather than as poetic symbols, these teachers fail to create any moral response in their hearers. In contrast to these vain repetitions, the simplicity of the lyrics "bear strongly … on the outcome of feeling in action" (14). MacDonald's argument here is again very close to Coleridge, who claims in

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[62] Again, MacDonald's commentary echoes Wordsworth's claim that incidents from common life make the best subjects for poetry "because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated" (245). Simplicity, in other words, makes sympathy between a poet and his readers possible. Throughout his critical writings, MacDonald values simplicity as evidence of childlike faith and spiritual sympathy. In this 1865 essay, "On Polish," MacDonald discusses elements of literary style, arguing that true stylistic "polish" is "that condition of the surface which allows the inner structure of the material to manifest itself" (*Orts* 182). The end of "polish," whether in literary style or social manners, is "simplicity" (192). Indeed, simplicity is the goal "of all Art, Culture, Morals, Religion, and Life. The Lord our God is one Lord, and we and our brothers and sisters are one Humanity, one Body of the Head" (192). It is this comprehensive simplicity, threatened by religious schism, that MacDonald hopes to revive through England's literary traditions.

Confessions that the "heart-awakening utterances" of biblical writers and heroes, by rousing sympathy from the reader, give biblical language the power to inspire moral action (*Confessions* 1136). MacDonald, like Coleridge, locates the spiritual life of man in the operations of the free human will, and as such, poetry which can enable moral action surpasses religious teaching that only provides logical systems.

MacDonald makes it clear, however, that poetry's ability to inspire moral action does not replace the idea of religion, but performs the religious functions England's churches have neglected. Like "church ordinances," the poems are not in themselves "the service of Christ," but are rather "a means of gathering strength wherewith to serve [Christ] by being in the world as he was in the world" (*Antiphon* 14). Closing his own anthology, Coleridge argues that ordinances such as baptism are essential to the Christian faith because they signify "that the same spirit should be growing in us which was in the fulness of all perfection in Jesus Christ" (*AR* 367). In other words, baptism symbolizes the genesis of perfect human sympathy: being of the same spirit as Christ. Having followed Coleridge's suggestion that tradition can serve as the very waters of baptism in *Phantastes*, MacDonald establishes his anthology as a form of universal church-music that readies the baptized imagination to hear rightly the truths of the Bible.

Conclusion

MacDonald accepts, as Coleridge does, that an artist or reader in a self-conscious age must confront the possibility that human perception and artistic visions are nothing more than shadow-casting and private fancies. However, rather than abandoning art for the supposed objectivity of scientific discourse, MacDonald, like Coleridge and Maurice before him, probes Christian traditions and Romantic ideas about poetic language for

evidence that subjective reflection can lead to self-transcendence through baptism. While Coleridge hopes that his readings of the past will guide readers into a revitalized Church of England, MacDonald challenges the Victorian schism by inviting readers to find the poetic chapel in the "great church" of England's worship.

CHAPTER THREE

Parables in Fairy Land and the Transformation of Allegory

Truth in Disguise?

On October 1, 1890, *The Dundee Courier and Argus* printed the minutes from a meeting of the Aberdeen Established Presbytery. The subject of the meeting, and of the *Courier's* article, was "Is Dr George MacDonald 'Sound?'" The month prior, MacDonald had preached in one of the Aberdeen parish churches, and the assembled ministers had gathered to puzzle over his sermon. Having produced a transcript, a Mr. Cooper read the following passage: "He was, I believe, a man from all eternity; I don't believe that He took our nature upon Him, but that He was man, the Son of God, from the infiniteness, the one perfect man, and that he came to bring all his little brothers and sisters to His Father." Despite his concern that the passage was somehow heterodox, Mr. Cooper admitted that "he could scarcely make any meaning" from it. Another minister, after assuring the gathered company that MacDonald was not, as some of them feared, a Unitarian, settled the question by insisting, "You may take it, Mr Cooper, that it will not do any harm to anyone. It is so unintelligible--so much in the nature of a dark saying -- that it will do no harm." According to the *Courier*, "The matter then dropped."

The *Courier's* report gives a sense of MacDonald's curious reputation at the end of the nineteenth century; now a respected novelist and "divine," MacDonald enjoyed a steady audience for both his novels, fairy tales, literary lectures (most often on Shakespeare, but also including Milton, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Burns, and Dante), and sermons ("Dr. George MacDonald in Leeds" 7). Nevertheless, both his audiences and his

readers were at times baffled by the Scottish storyteller's mingling of religious and literary modes.[1] A reviewer from *The Pall Mall Gazette* admitted that because MacDonald sought to create art as well as to preach, "it is often difficult to decide what to do with him. It seems absurd to treat as a romance what is practically a piece of theology more or less in disguise; it is impossible to deal as a religious tract with what has so many points about it of a work of fiction pure and simple" ("Dr. George MacDonald's New Novel" 12).[2] Both the befuddled presbytery and the uncertain reviewer recognize that MacDonald's modes of expression create a certain kind of obscurity; this tension between enigma and illumination, fiction and revelation, religion and art reveals that MacDonald's methods are not idiosyncratic, but advance a long and uneasy tradition of Christian representation and interpretation.

We have seen, in *Phantastes* and *England's Antiphon,* how MacDonald dramatizes the consolation a reader may receive from the seeming contradictions within a literary tradition. In *Phantastes,* Anodos learns he is not yet fit to govern his household because he knows little of his lineage as an artist and a man. When he does enter the chapel that houses these fathers and mothers, he receives his consolation in the midst of darkness. In other words, his own imaginative vision must give way, at least temporarily, to blindness. Within this darkness, Anodos recognizes his own insufficiency, prompting him to call out for, and receive, help from his ancestors within the family chapel. Similarly, in *Antiphon,* MacDonald upholds the English lyric as a form enabling

[1] At least one reader, however, perceived that MacDonald's integration of literary and religious ideas linked MacDonald to Coleridge. In *George MacDonald: a Biographical and Critical Appreciation* (1906), Joseph Johnson asserts that "George MacDonald was a born preacher because he had a real living message to deliver, and the power to speak it" (138). He immediately follows this observation with Charles Lamb's famous response to Coleridge's question, "Did you ever hear me preach?" Lamb reportedly quipped, "I never heard you do anything else" (138).

[2] The specific novel under review was *Sir Gibbie* (1879).

sympathy, yet implies that most of his readers will be incapable of hearing the true song of the lyric tradition without guidance. With this guidance, however, the tradition becomes an antiphonal choir as MacDonald arranges its lyrics in a way that does not ignore differences in history or doctrine, but emphasizes each poet's contribution to a more complete vision of human experience. MacDonald believes this method prepares readers to receive spiritual truth, just as Coleridge assembles aphorisms and commentary in *Aids to Reflection*. In both *Phantastes* and *Antiphon*, MacDonald implies that the literary past becomes valuable only as a tradition that both reveals and conceals. Thus in *Antiphon*, he argues that anonymous thirteenth-century lyrics describing the experiences of individual Christian reveal more about the universal Church than the public proclamations and intellectual systems of medieval Catholicism. Because these lyrics create sympathy within the reader, they provide a better foundation for spiritual unity than doctrines that speak primarily to the intellect.

MacDonald extends and applies these ideas about the "darkness" of tradition in many of his own works, including, as the ministers of Aberdeen agreed, his sermons. From the Presbytery's standpoint, MacDonald's obscurity signaled a pastoral failure, yet MacDonald plays with dark sayings and disguised truths in many of his most compelling works. Perhaps most importantly, in *Antiphon* as well as his fictional writings, MacDonald examines longstanding anxieties about the nature of allegory in order to continue his explication of the ways in which literary tradition can guide readers to the universal Church. In response to nineteenth-century arguments that would reduce biblical language either according to the empiricism of textual criticism or the "single plain sense" of plenary-verbal inspiration, MacDonald attempts to renew a tradition of

allegorical narratives that can teach other ways of reading the Bible. In doing so, he also confronts many of the ambiguities in Coleridge's theories of allegory. In both *England's Antiphon* and the novel *Adela Cathcart* (1864), MacDonald suggests that transforming allegory, whether into lyric poems or fairy-tale "parables," is one of the ways poets can use literary traditions to uphold the idea of a universal Church. In his transformation of allegorical literary traditions, MacDonald argues that "dark" modes of representation first allow readers to feel their need for interpretive guidance and communion, and then provide methods of interpretation that reveal the hidden forms of the universal Church.

Adela Cathcart *and the Parables of Fairy Land*

While the Aberdeen presbytery concluded that MacDonald's "dark sayings" could do no harm, MacDonald himself believed that they could do a great deal of good. More than two decades before his sermon in Aberdeen, MacDonald wrote a story around the idea that had puzzled Mr. Cooper. This story, "The Castle," is the final short work included in the first edition of *Adela,* and it dramatizes the work of a brother who brings "all his little brothers and sisters to His Father."[3] The narrator of *Adela*, Mr. Smith, is an affable bachelor spending Christmas with his old friend, Colonel Cathcart. Dismayed by the spiritual depression of the Colonel's daughter, Adela, Mr. Smith suggests that Adela's family and friends begin a story club to lift her spirits. Beginning on the cold nights of Christmas, the characters take turns telling stories. Their object is to contribute to Adela's cure by "beginning from the inside," while the new physician, Dr. Armstrong, tends to her physical condition (57). In addition to the avuncular narrator, this club

[3] Many of MacDonald's popular short works and fairy tales, including "The Light Princess," "My Uncle Peter," "The Cruel Painter", and others, were first published in *Adela*. Many of these works were later published in separate collections such as *Dealings with the Fairies* (1867).

includes the Colonel himself; the village schoolteacher, Mr. Bloomfield, and his wife; Dr. Armstrong; the curate, Mr. Armstrong, and his wife; Mrs. Cathcart, Adela's disagreeable aunt; and Mrs. Cathcart's son Percy. Over the course of the novel's three volumes, the members of this club share and invent many stories, many of which include fantastical elements such as enchanted princesses, avenging shadows, and ravenous giants. Adela initially offers polite praise and thanks in response to these tales, calling Mr. Smith's first work "a very pretty story," but after "The Castle," her "face shone as if she had received more than delight--hope, namely, and onward impulse" (1:103, 3:441). It is hope, Coleridge writes in the *Lay Sermons*, that distinguishes a free person from a slave, and the free exercise of the will is the spiritual part of man.[4] Adela's "onward impulse," therefore, indicates that the stories have done their work, moving her responses to imaginative works from conventional accolades to spiritual readiness for work or worship. The role of the story club, which becomes an interpretive and spiritual community, suggests that as MacDonald narrates Adela's transformation, he offers a study of literature and the Church that stands between Anodos's largely solitary journey through literary traditions and *Antiphon's* grand image of poets gathered across centuries and sects into England's literary chapel. This company, like Bunyan's travelers to the Celestial City, move along their journey through storytelling and "goodly discourse," as Bunyan might say.

Almost all of the tales the club's members exchange could be called "dark sayings" in one form or another, whether because a tale is a "curious history," a poem, or a fairy tale, or a form that defies easy classification (*Adela* 1:31). "The Castle" is one

[4] In his second *Lay Sermon*, Coleridge writes that the "Maker has distinguished [Man] from the Brute that perishes, by making Hope an instinct of his nature and an indispensable condition of his moral and intellectual progression" (*LS* 216).

such unclassifiable tale, and MacDonald uses the uncertainty both within and surrounding the story to demonstrate that dark sayings and mysterious stories can, like the parables of the Bible, rouse their readers to surrender notions of moral and interpretive self-sufficiency. The story is an extended meditation on the idea that would later trouble the Aberdeen Presbytery, that Christ's redemption of mankind depends in some way on his role as humanity's "elder brother." To some extent, this way of expressing Christ's relationship to mankind is "dark." At the very least, describing Christ in this way is not conventional in the Catholic, Anglican, or free-church traditions; language about Christ as mankind's brother does not appear in the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Thirty-Nine Articles or the Westminster Confession.[5]

However, many biblical texts describe Jesus as a brother to mankind, and MacDonald uses "The Castle" to explore how this language operates as a dark saying. The Apostle Paul calls Christ "the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8.29), while the writer of Hebrews describes the Incarnation in terms of Christ's willingness "to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God" (2.17). Jesus himself uses this language of kinship, as well. Each of the synoptic Gospels records his claim that his flesh-and-blood family has no special claim on him, for "whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (Mark 3.35).[6] In these passages, the biblical writers use language

[5] The only example I have found of a creed or confession describing Christ as mankind's brother is the Scottish Confession of 1560, a Reformation text used by the Scottish Churches until it was largely superseded by the Westminster Confession eighty years later. The Scottish Confession declares that God "appointed [Christ Jesus] to be our Head, our Brother, our Pastor, and great Bishop of our sauls [sic]" (Schaff 445). Kerry Dearborn writes that MacDonald was required to memorize this confession as a child (13). The more immediate influence on his use of "elder brother" for Christ is doubtlessly F.D. Maurice, who describes Christ as mankind's "elder brother" throughout *The Church a Family* (1850).

[6] Cf. Matthew 12:46-50 and Luke 8.19-21.

poetically, providing an ordinary, physical image to explain a spiritual reality. The Gospel account, moreover, shows Christ invoking customary language about familial relationships in a way that disrupts and redefines these relationships. In Mark 3, therefore, his redefinition of family in spiritual terms, rather than physical or legal customs, frees him from obligations that would interfere with his ministry. At the same time, Jesus's appropriation of family language does not abolish physical bonds, but reimagines them, and from the cross he confirms this new way of understanding the intersection of natural and spiritual relationships: "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home" (John 19.26-27). Christ's recreation of kinship language, extended by the writers of the New Testament epistles, is part of the biblical mode of expressing spiritual truths through dark sayings that do not make sense according to literal reckonings.[7] Since the idea of Christ as an "elder brother" is essentially biblical, yet not particular to any institutional church or sect, it provides an ideal way for MacDonald to reimagine ways of thinking about language, the Bible, and the idea of a universal Church. For all their confusion, the Aberdeen Presbytery was right to conclude that saying that Christ is mankind's "elder brother" is "in the nature of a dark saying," but this obscurity indicates MacDonald's efforts to use his own stories to sustain the tradition of biblical language, showing that there is much in the Bible that is not "intelligible"-- not comprehensible, that is, by the intellect--and that it therefore requires forms of interpretation other than doctrinal exposition.

[7] Nicodemus's confusion at being told he must be "born again" is one of the best examples of the confusion caused by attempting to interpret such sayings literally (cf. John 3.1-21).

Historically, the expression and interpretation of dark sayings in biblical literature has fallen to the realm of allegory. Essentially, allegory concerns ways of "speaking otherwise," but the relationship between the thing spoken and the thing meant shifts throughout literary history.[8] Apostolic and Patristic writers, following Greek exegetes, developed "allegorical" methods for discerning a text's spiritual meaning, often because the text's literal meaning was unclear or problematic, and by the middle ages allegorical interpretation had become part of a complex method of reading the Bible according to several layers or "senses" of Scripture: the literal, tropologial (moral), allegorical, and anagogical (pertaining to the spiritual salvation of Christians).[9] Many of the earliest advocates of allegorical interpretation valued allegory for its ability to make sense of difficult biblical passages. Origen, for example, argues for allegorical interpretation of scripture in *De principiis* "on the basis of the nature of the universe and God's relation to it, his emphasis being ethical and literalism per se being his aversion," and Augustine applied allegorical interpretation to Old Testament passages that were logically or morally problematic (Berkeley 29). For Augustine, allegorical interpretation does with a text what tradition does with history, "creatively appropriating" images, words, and ideas from the source material in a way that is meaningful in the present.

This similarity between allegory and tradition is even more evident in allegorical narratives. Allegorical narratives emerged later than allegorical interpretation (often called *allegoresis*), with a fourth-century Christian allegory, the *Psychomachia,* usually considered the first work to use an extended metaphorical narrative to dramatize a

[8] Literally, an "allegory" comes from the Greek *ἄλλος* (other) and *ἀγορία* (speaking).

[9] For a comprehensive exposition of these levels of Scripture and their permutations, see Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis* (2 Vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

spiritual phenomenon. In modern usage it is this kind of narrative--based upon an extended metaphor, and usually featuring actors who personify or represent ideas, qualities, or values--that is meant by the term "allegory." The texts invite (or in some cases, demand) interpretation by presenting characters or figures that cannot make sense on a literal level. At the same time, the "otherness" of an allegory's spiritual meaning varies. In many allegorical narratives, for example, the literal and spiritual levels of meaning are not in opposition with one another. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a good example of this. There is nothing literally absurd about a man leaving his depraved city to seek a better one, and so the relationship between Bunyan's literal and spiritual narratives is not so much otherness as superabundance; readers realize the man leaving his city is much more than an isolated man, for example when Bunyan announces that the man's name is "Christian."

As Maureen Quilligan demonstrates, every allegory interprets not only itself but some authoritative pretext, most often the Bible (97). Every Christian allegory therefore, interprets a hidden truth of Scripture through its own complex narratives. In this way, an allegorical narrative is an essentially traditional form, not only for its ancient provenance, but for its inherent dynamic between source and sequel, pretext and text. The habit of interpreting a source text, particularly the Bible, with allegorical narratives, is essential to Western literature. Indeed, Quilligan notes that many scholars would argue "that all literature is, in essence, allegorical, if only because literature has readers, and readers, as is their wont, think about what the work 'really' means" (15). Quilligan echoes Northrop Frye's claims in *The Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) that "all commentary is allegorical interpretation, an attaching of ideas to the structure of poetic imagery" (89). However,

while allegory is in some way essential to all writing in which "more is meant than meets the ear," allegorical narratives are also historical forms, contingent, like any literary form, upon any number of philosophical, aesthetic, religious, social, and political forces.[10] In "The Castle," MacDonald adapts the conventions of narrative allegory not only to explore the mystery of Christ's role as "elder brother" as a way to understand the nature of the Church Invisible, but to demonstrate that allegorical forms of representation may provide the guidance readers need to "see" the universal Church Invisible.[11]

Within *Adela,* Mr. Bloomfield is the author of "The Castle," and he begins by describing a "lofty castle" so old that its origins have been forgotten, built into the base of a "great mountain" (3:427). This opening image could easily come from a German fairy tale, and the castle's mysterious history invokes the Romantic hope (shared by Herder and others) that help for the present might lie in the recovery (or reinvention) of a forgotten past. This mountain-castle also recalls Anodos's comparison of himself to a geologist who must uncover the hidden strata of his ancestors' lives. At the same time, the castle and the mountain also introduce an oblique reference to the "rock" upon which Christ promises to build his Church, a reference that is strengthened by MacDonald's description of the entrance to the castle.[12] One reaches this door by taking "a broad flight of steps, cut in the rock," but the stair soon descends into a deep lake, perhaps "to the

[10] The line "more is meant than meets the ear" comes from Milton's "Il Penseroso," which Mr. Smith quotes in order to introduce one of his fairy tales in *Adela* (64).

[11] Attending to MacDonald's place in the history of allegory provides yet another check to claims that MacDonald offers complete interpretive freedom to his readers. By drawing on the traditions of English allegories and asserting the function of the Bible as the pretext for his own allegorical fictions, MacDonald counters Reis's charge that MacDonald insists that literature should "embody Truth," yet never offers a method for discerning the trivial from the true, or how to interpret what kind of Truth may lie within a narrative (50).

[12] See Matthew 16.18. Jesus promises to build his church up the "rock," Peter, after Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ.

very bottom of the water," before reemerging at the foot of the door (3: 429). Like the waters surrounding Anodos's Fairy Palace, this lake, which "look[ed] very black, although it was pure as the night-sky," offers an image of baptismal death and rebirth in the idiom of a Romantic fairy tale (3:429).[13]

The castle's possible analogy to the Church becomes clearer as Mr. Bloomfield describes its inhabitants. Like the members of the Church, those who dwell in the castle are bound by kinship and a common expectation:

> Now in this castle there dwelt a large family of brothers and sisters. They had never seen their father or mother….But Tradition said that one day—it was utterly uncertain *when*—their father would come, and leave them no more; for he was still alive, though where he lived nobody knew. In the meantime all the rest had to obey their eldest brother, and listen to his counsels. (3: 429)

Despite the presence of their brother, however, the younger children are caught in a crisis of knowledge and will. "Tradition"--given extra authority with a capital "T"-- promises the return of the father but leaves the time in "utter uncertainty." It soon becomes clear, moreover, that the younger siblings have little regard for this tradition. They decide to throw a grand party for the neighborhood, even though "the old tradition said that these rooms were to be kept entirely for the use of the owner of the castle" (3: 430). Although the "younger had been educated by the elder, and these by an unseen care and ministration," the children have not acknowledged the role tradition has played in their upbringing, and "about the sources of [their education] they had, somehow or other, troubled themselves very little—for what people are accustomed to, they regard as

[13] Although MacDonald never offers a formal definition of the admittedly broad genre "fairy tale," in "The Fantastic Imagination" he does name Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's tale *Undine* "the most beautiful" of all the fairy tales he knows (*Orts* 313). Although "The Castle" is more explicitly theological than *Undine*, MacDonald's Alpine setting, mysterious royal house, and sublime portrayal of elements such as storms, suggest that his conception of a fairy tale owes much to the work of writers such as de la Motte Fouqué, Novalis, and E.T.A. Hoffmann.

coming from nobody" (3:429). Consequently, the family is in chaos, for "almost all the family was very fond of liberty, as they called it; and liked to run up and down, hither and thither, roving about, with neither law nor order, just as they pleased" (3:429). This "liberty" is another form of individual authority that submits to no law other than its own desires." Anodos's ignorance of his family history makes him vulnerable to temptation in Fairy Land, but the children of the castle are even more culpable in their rejection of a tradition that would check their false "liberty."

From these first paragraphs, one can see that MacDonald is experimenting with various forms of narration. The story begins like a Romantic fairy tale, then introduces "Tradition" almost as though it were a character itself, personified in the mode of an allegory such as *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Additionally, the promise of the father's parousia suggests that "The Castle" is an allegorical interpretation of the biblical promise of the Second Coming. As Mr. Bloomfield proceeds, the language of "The Castle" points more directly to a biblical pretext. He explains that when the elder brother rebukes the children for their plot, they attack him, chaining him in the dungeons of the castle. Plans for the festivities proceed, and soon the children and their neighbors are rioting like "the lords and captains" when "the daughter of Herodias danced before them" (3:433). In the midst of this debauchery, a terrible storm rises, and soon rain and flood-waters have destroyed the finery of the hall. In the midst of this storm, the elder brother appears, "gaunt, haggard, and motionless; his hair and beard untrimmed, his face ghastly, his eyes large and hollow. … In his hand he carried an iron fetter-bar, which he had found on the floor of the vault. More terrified at his aspect than at all the violence of the storm, the visitors, with many a shriek and cry, rushed out into the tempestuous night" (3:434-35).

The brother's terrible arrival in the hall recasts the Gospel accounts of the cleansing of the temple, in which Christ forcefully restores the spiritual, rather than commercial, purpose of his "house."[14] Likewise, the comparison to the daughter of Herodias links the feast to Herod's decadence and the destruction of John the Baptist.[15] Like the phrase "elder brother," these biblical allusions provide a clue to "The Castle's" spiritual meaning. By using biblical titles, allusions, and plot elements, MacDonald invites readers to interpret the family within the castle as the "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2.9) made up of "lively stones, [that] are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2.5).

At the same time, "The Castle" complicates or darkens many of these biblical truths even as it suggests them, and its narrative is not entirely self-interpreting.[16] In several cases, for example, MacDonald bypasses an obvious metaphor for more obscure images. For example, the conventional emblem for the laws the children violate would be a text of some kind--a book, scroll, or tablet, for example--that would point to the Bible.[17] Instead, MacDonald names "Tradition," which is neither a concrete object nor a personification. This tradition refers not only to the promise of the father's return, but to the ability to see the truths of the past as prophecies of the future. It is this process of

[14] Christ's cleansing of the Temple is recorded in all four of the Gospels: Mark 11:15–19, 11:27–33; Matthew 21:12–17, 21:23–27; Luke 19:45–48, 20:1–8; and John 2:13–16.

[15] Mark 6.17-29, Matthew 14.1-18

[16] The darkness MacDonald creates by complicating "The Castle's" relationship to the Gospels might be an example of what David Sandner calls "the fantastic sublime." Sandner suggests that MacDonald extends Coleridge's concept of the sublime as an experience in which "the imagination reaches beyond its grasp in a movement towards transcendence," as well as Coleridge's sense that fairy tales could engender the sublime (50). The storm and flood that disrupt the party in "The Castle" seems to support Sandner's thesis, although MacDonald does not invoke the sublime as some Romantic poets and philosophers did, to replace "earlier methods of transcendence, whether religious or otherwise" (50). Rather, MacDonald's treatment of biblical language brings readers to the edge of comfort and comprehension in order to reassert the transcendent revelation available through Scripture.

[17] In *The Pilgrim's Progress,* for example, it is the book he receives from Evangelist that causes Christian to cry, "What shall I do to be saved?" (Bunyan 11).

tradition--of life lived in obedience to what can only be accepted by faith--that MacDonald wishes to dramatize. For this reason, the promises of the castle traditions do not correspond exactly to the language of the Bible. Tradition promises that "their father would come, and leave them no more," and this promise is similar to Christ's promise, prior to the Ascension, that he will return.[18] Yet it is the return of the Son, not the Father, that John 14 looks forward to. At times, it seems that "The Castle" is less of an attempt to express biblical truths with fairy-tale disguises (e.g. an alpine castle in place of a church), and more of an imaginative vision of the way the narratives of the Gospel might take shape in another world. It remains very much an allegory, but it is an allegory that complicates its relationship to its source text, defying expectations that it is only a narrative illustration of propositional arguments.

MacDonald continues these strategies of illumination and concealment throughout "The Castle." Following the destruction of the feast, he includes fewer direct biblical allusions, and the story becomes more of an allegory of Coleridge's ideas about religion. In the days that follow the storm, the elder brother slowly and gently restores the order of the household. At first, the younger siblings fear him, but as dread gives way to "firm friendship," he is able to direct his siblings' work, so that "[w]ithout immediately ordering their labours, he always influenced them, and often altered their direction and objects" (3:436). In the place of anarchic "liberty," the brother's influence begins to change his kindred's desires and aims. The family begins to enact a perfectly Coleridgean picture of reason as "knowledge of the laws of the WHOLE considered as One" (*LS* 59):

[18] In John 14.2-3 Jesus promises his disciples that "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

> [The brothers and sisters] began to discover that they were all meditating different aspects of the same thing; and they brought together their various discoveries, and recognized the likeness between them; and the one thing often explained the other, and combining with it helped to a third. They grew in consequence more and more friendly and loving; so that every now and then one turned to another and said, as in surprise, 'Why, you are my brother!'—'Why, you are my sister!' And yet they had always known it. (3:438)

As their sympathy with one another grows, their confidence in the truth of the tradition about their father's return grows stronger, and as the story ends, "[w]hat was once but an old legend has become the one desire of their hearts" (3:441). The siblings' growing friendship with their elder brother transforms an "old legend"--a term implying dubious reliability--into the "desire of their hearts"--a phrase that appears often in the Psalms.[19] While their engagement with tradition is not as explicitly literary as Anodos's, it is significant that the siblings find their hope in a "legend," not in an argument or theory. This movement from legend to desire, and from an obscure record of the past to hopeful expectation, repeats Coleridge's description of biblical prophecy, as well as the growth of tradition itself, which recreates a difficult or obscured past in order to provide hope for the future. Additionally, it anticipates Adela's own response to the story: hope and "onward impulse" rather than merely aesthetic appreciation.

In "The Castle," MacDonald provides one of his most compelling applications of Coleridgean ideas to an age in which artists and readers no longer understand how something can be both a work of fiction and a religious text. Within the castle, the arts and sciences, having forgotten their relations to one another and their responsibilities to their father, turn to decadence and brutality. Only after the destruction of their feast do the children realize that "the old tradition" has the power to renew and transform their

[19] E.g. Psalm 21.2 and Psalm 37.4.

work. The earnest artists and scientists among the castle's children could be training to join Coleridge's clerisy. One sister soon senses a change in the music she practices:

> It became yet more wild, and sometimes retained all its sadness, but it was mingled with anticipation and hope. The past and the future merged in one; and while memory yet brought the rain-cloud, expectation threw the rainbow across its bosom-- and all was uttered in her music, which rose and swelled, now to defiance, now to victory…. (3:438)

If the castle and its family provide a picture of the Church Invisible, then this daughter's music suggests that art capable of expressing spiritual truth will synthesize past and future with new forms. In *The Statesman's Manual,* Coleridge writes that if means exist for establishing "hope …. that is the natural home and workshop of all the active virtues … these means must be sought for in the collaboration of the present with the past" (*LS* 59). MacDonald applies these ideas to the role of art in relation to religion, not only in his description of the children's transformed arts and sciences, but in his own recreation of narrative allegory.

Throughout *Adela,* MacDonald's characters struggle to describe how a traditional literary form such as narrative allegory can be recreated in order to make readers feel their need for spiritual truth, thereby leading them into the Church Invisible. Rather than attempting to imitate the conventions of medieval or Renaissance allegories, MacDonald attempts to reshape allegorical representation into a literary form that can bring the resources of that tradition to bear on the religious anxieties of the nineteenth century. As one reviewer for *The Spectator* recognized, in *Adela* MacDonald writes as "a story-teller and a teacher of truths which can only come forth in living forms, which perish when they are reduced into formulas" ("Adela Cathcart" 454).[20] The "living form" that

[20] This reviewer realizes that with *Adela,* MacDonald is continuing his experiments with literary forms that do not merely describe, but communicate, spiritual realities. The writer considers *Adela* a

interests MacDonald most in *Adela*, according to the members of the story club, is the "parable." Mr. Bloomfield calls "The Castle" a "parable," and Mr. Armstrong does the same after hearing it. Mr. Smith, however, worries about how to classify the story, thinking to himself that "it would be more correct to call it an *allegory*. But as that word has so many wearisome associations, I, too, intend, whether right or wrong, to call it a parable" (3:427).

Given the history of scholarship on literary allegories and parables, Mr. Smith should be forgiven for his apparently willful decision to call "The Castle" a parable instead of an allegory. Even current commentaries on narrative form are of two (or more) minds regarding the relationship between parable and allegory. In the recent *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory,* for example, Madeleine Kasten argues that allegorical narratives, because they dramatize the practice of *allegoresis*, are almost always self-interpreting (10). Features such as names of personified abstractions or direct allusions to their pretexts (particularly the Bible) allow allegories to offer the solution to their own darkness. *Routledge's* entry on a "parable" goes on to suggest that a parable and an allegory are the inverse of one another, for a parable "functions as a concrete source domain that invites comparison with a target domain that remains implicit ... The story itself does not contain the corresponding target domain .... The explication of the target domain often follows as a separate text and is considered to be an extrinsic comment on the mean of the parable" (Steen 418). In other words, parables are not self-interpreting in

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success because MacDonald yields neither to the popular conventions of realism, nor to his "own line" that often veers into the "purely fantastic" (454). By developing the distinctive "department of literature which he is vindicating for himself," MacDonald produces a novel which both represents earthly human life and recognizes "an abiding supernatural influence as necessary to sustain the order of earth and the life of men" (454). Similarly, another review calls *Adela* "something better than a novel….It is a real book, meaning what it says, and saying it with a sweet and powerful voice, with strange tones of awe and love thrilling through it" ("The New and Popular" 320).

the ways allegorical narratives are. However, scholars writing for the *Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* observe that this tension between explicit and implicit keys to interpretation is present in all forms of Christian allegory. For example, David Berkeley notes that "[s]ome allegorists have been regarded as 'purer' than others (e.g. Dante, Spenser, Bunyan) because they often relate their visual images to examples and precepts, but Canticles is arguably purest allegory because it never explains the meaning of its images and incidents" (30).[21] As we have seen, MacDonald's methods in "The Castle" sustain this tension, at times guiding interpretation and at times allowing the story to complicate direct correspondences between itself and its biblical pretext.

The members of the story club discuss the meaning of a parable throughout *Adela*, and from these dialogues it becomes clear that MacDonald is creating a kind of literary parable that is meant to draw its hearers into the Church. The curate, for example, often preaches through parables. It is his brother the physician, however, who provides the most explicit definition of a parable for Mrs. Cathcart, whose termagant questions provoke some of the novels' most interesting conversations:

> "What do you mean by a parable, Mr. Henry?" interrupted Mrs. Cathcart.
> "It sounds rather profane to me."
> "I mean a picture in words, where more is meant than meets the ear."
> "But why call it a parable?"
> "Because it is one."
> "Why not speak in plain words then?"
> "Because a good parable is plainer than the plainest words." (2:272)

As evidence for this point, Dr. Armstrong quotes Tennyson's claim that "truth embodied in a tale / Shall enter in at lowly doors'" (2:272).[22] His brother adds that Goethe "has a

[21] Frye, for example, claims that a text only becomes a "genuine" allegory when a writer begins to announce a second level of meaning and to suggest the direction interpretation should take (89–90).

[22] *In Memoriam* (stanza 36).

little parable about poems, which is equally true about parables":

> Poems are painted window-panes.
> If one looks from the square into the church,
> Dusk and dimness are his gains--
> …
> But come just inside what conceals;
> Cross the holy threshold quite—
> All at once, 'tis rainbow-bright …. (2: 272-73)

The fact that both the physician and the curate turn to poetry, rather than the Bible, to explain how a parable works, anticipates MacDonald's later vision of literature as the antiphon preparing its hearers for the Gospel-reading. The passage from Goethe, however, is particularly telling, for it points to one of the essential mysteries of a parable--the question of whether it is meant to reveal or conceal truth. It depends, Mr. Armstrong suggests, on whether one is inside or outside of the "family" that inhabits the Church. At this early stage of the novel, therefore, Adela can make no sense of the discussion of parables. Unlike her radiant comprehension of "The Castle," in response to Goethe's parable, she states flatly, "I can't follow that" (2:272). Later, however, when her father cannot understand "The Castle," saying that the story "seemed all the time to be telling me in one breath something I knew and something I didn't and couldn't know," Adela promises to help him understand (3:441). Her ability to comprehend spiritual truth has grown as she has listened to the club's many stories.

The idea that parables only reveal their truth to those who are on "the inside" is hardly unique to MacDonald. However, MacDonald uses the darkness of parables, like the darkness of the untranslated epigraph in *Phantastes,* to make readers feel the need for interpretation. Like Coleridge, MacDonald hopes to use aesthetic forms to help his readers experience their need for faith, rather than offering intellectual arguments in favor

the idea of a Church.[23] If readers are baffled, they are to be baffled like the old colonel, who thinks Mr. Bloomfield's parable "sounded very beautiful indeed" even though he "did not know what to make of it" (3:441). The ability to interpret comes to those who desire it, and if that darkness comes in a poetic form, it can arouse the will, just as the "old legend" of the father's return becomes "the one desire" of the children's hearts. As MacDonald would later write in "A Letter to American Boys" (1878), "to those who do not care to understand it, [a parable] will be dark,--but to those who desire to know its meaning, may give light" (202). The difference between being "inside" and "outside" is not a matter of election, but of will. MacDonald often writes that faith and obedience are one, and this emphasis on a subject's desire for meaning seems to be MacDonald's response to Christ's enigmatic and troubling explanation of his parables. He speaks to the crowds in dark language, he tells his disciples, "because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matthew 13.13).[24] MacDonald interprets the crowds' lack of understanding as a lack of desire, an interpretation consistent with Christ's lament, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23.37). While some nineteenth-century exegetes believed that Jesus himself

[23] As discussed in Chapter Two, Coleridge directs his work in the *Aids to Reflection* to helping readers feel their need for spiritual reflection and participation in the Church. Frustrated with methods of spiritual education that pandered to the abstract intellect (that is, to the "understanding"), Coleridge exclaimed, "*Evidences* of Christianity! I am weary of the Word. Make a man feel the *want* of it; rouse him, if you can, to the self-knowledge of his need of it, and you may safely trust it to its own Evidence" (*AR* 405–406).

[24] In "The Way," from the *Unspoken Sermons, Second Series* (1886), MacDonald makes a similar commentary on the relationship between obedience and understanding. The sermon is a commentary on Matthew 19.16-30, the account of a rich young ruler who asks what he must do to obtain eternal life. MacDonald speculates that to the young ruler, Jesus's call to relinquish his wealth was incomprehensible, but that "[h]ad he done as the Master told him, he would soon have come to understand. Obedience is the opener of eyes" (*Unspoken* 102)

presented clear similes, but the Gospel-writers distorted and darkened them, most theologians would now affirm MacDonald's suggestion that failure to understand Jesus's parables is "related not to intellectual obtuseness but to moral obduracy, the hearer's 'hardness of heart'" (Carnell 581).

In his sermon "The Last Farthing," MacDonald argues that the same dynamic of obedience and interpretation is true for biblical language as a whole:

> The gospel itself, and in it the parables of the Truth, are to be understood only by those who walk by what they find. It is he that runneth that shall read, and no other. It is not intended by the speaker of the parables that any other should know intellectually what, known but intellectually, would be for his injury—what knowing intellectually he would imagine he had grasped, perhaps even appropriated. When the pilgrim of the truth comes on his journey to the region of the parable, he finds its interpretation. It is not a fruit or a jewel to be stored, but a well springing by the wayside. (*Unspoken* 142)

This image of a "pilgrim of the truth" who finds a parable's meaning only as he attempts to enact its truth is very similar to Coleridge's own image of the way biblical authority is confirmed by experience and tradition. In *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit,* Coleridge constructs his own parable of pilgrimage to describe a subject's realization of the Bible's authority:

> As if on some dark night a pilgrim, suddenly beholding a bright star moving before him, should stop in fear and perplexity. But lo! traveller after traveller passes by him, and each, being questioned whither he is going, makes answer, "I am following yon guiding Star!" The Pilgrim quickens his own steps, and presses onward in confidence. More confident still will he be, if by the way side he should find, here and there, ancient monuments, each with its votive Lamp, and on each the name of some former pilgrim, and a record that there he had first seen or begun to follow the benignant Star! No otherwise is it with the varied contents of the sacred Volume. The hungry have found food, the thirsty a living spring, the feeble a staff, and the victorious Warfarer Songs of Welcome and Strains of Music…. (*Confessions* 1154)

In *Adela*, MacDonald attempts to develop a kind of literary parable that recreates this gap between intellectual understanding and experiential interpretation.

Phantom Proxies and Admirable Allegories: Coleridge and the Problems of Representation

MacDonald's debt to Coleridge's theories of biblical authority, while clear from the similarity of these images of interpretive pilgrimage, is even more interesting when one realizes that Coleridge himself was responsible for many of the "wearisome associations" attached to allegory in the nineteenth century. George Landow has shown that by the middle of the nineteenth century, the tradition of allegory in art and criticism, "so vital in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, had all but died" (321).[25] He cites, for example, Macaulay, who judges *The Faerie Queene* to be the most tedious specimen of an inherently boring form (321-22). This prevailing impatience with allegory was encouraged by Coleridge's famous dismissal of allegory in *The Statesman's Manual*.[26] Coleridge deems allegory a "phantom proxy" for expressing "worthless" abstractions, and calls it a product of the mechanical "fancy," rather than of the living imagination (*LS* 30). An allegory (or metaphor) operates by artificially linking two things that have a superficial similarity, but which are essentially different, while a symbol builds upon an

[25] While nineteenth-century thinkers and writers posed new challenges to allegory, it is important to recognize that "since its invention by Greek interpreters of the Homeric myths, allegory has been subject to the debate and intense theoretical conflict" (Madsen 1).

[26] From the 1850s onward there were, certainly, Victorian champions of allegorical representation, including MacDonald's close friend, John Ruskin. In third volume of *Modern Painters* (1856) Ruskin makes the sweeping and fragile claim that allegorical painting "has been the delight of the greatest men and of the wisest multitudes, from the beginning of art, and will be till art expires" (3:101). While Ruskin and the artists he influenced, most notably the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, attempted to revive allegorical representation in interesting ways, their work was a minority movement in Victorian art, and it is the legacy of Coleridge that shaped the critical fortunes of allegory both in the nineteenth century and in the years since.

organic connection between two kindred subjects.[27] Fancy, not imagination, creates such an allegory, which "is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses" (30). As a "counterfeit product of the mechanical understanding," an allegory does not deal in real ideas or actual sensory experiences, but rather in the understanding's vain attempts to deal with subjects proper to the reason (30). Thus, allegories are inferior both in *what* they represent (the products of the understanding), and in *how* they represent (through the dead aggregations of the fancy).

Coleridge denigrates allegorical representation in favor of symbolism. In his writing, a symbol is "tautegorical" rather than allegorical; a symbol and that which it represents appear to be different, but they are in fact essentially of the same kind. Coleridge maintains that a symbol "always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible" because it is a part of the whole it represents (30).[28] Symbols belong to the province of the imagination, the faculty capable of rendering the relationship of the whole

[27] In *Coleridge as Poet and Religious Thinker,* David Jasper summarizes the importance of organic form to Coleridge's idea of the symbol. He traces the distinction between artificial and organic form to A.W. Schlegel, who, in his *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* (1809-11), contrasts mechanical form (imposed on material "as an accidental addition without reference to its quality") and organic form, which is innate and natural to the material being formed (16). Coleridge's definition of the symbol sustains this sense of organic form (16). It is interesting to note that Jasper uses *The Statesman's Manual's* definition of symbol as representative of Coleridge's use of the term (17-18), illustrating how easily this definition--and its corollary denigration of allegory--can be read as Coleridge's final word on the subject.

[28] The confident tone of this passage belies the extent to which Coleridge attempts a radical shift in usage with his definition of "symbol." Literally, a symbol means something "thrown together"--and the conventional use of the term (both before and after Coleridge), emphasizes a symbol's arbitrary or conventional resemblance to its subject ("Symbol."). In fact, readers may wonder if the "tautegorical" figure Coleridge describes might more properly be called a synecdoche. While Coleridge understood that the meanings of words evolve, his definition of symbol in *The Statesman's Manual* shows an uncharacteristic neglect of etymology, a gap which may indicate that his definition is not as stable as he hopes it will appear.

to its parts.[29] Coleridge makes this point with such force (one might even say stridency) in *Statesman's* because it is crucial to his exposition of biblical language as "the living educts of the imagination" (*LS* 29).[30] Based on this definition of inspired language, Coleridge builds his claim that the State must be guided by a philosophic class, which should correctly interpret the spiritual, moral, and political truths of the Bible. Most readers, however, do not interpret rightly because they read all biblical passages as either strictly literal or purely metaphorical (i.e. allegorical), neglecting the symbolic nature of most inspired writing (30).[31]

In Coleridge's analysis, it seems that the failure of allegory is that it reveals too much of the wrong thing, highlighting incidental similarities while obscuring the deeper level of truth which a tautegorical symbol could reveal. However, while Coleridge presents his distinction of symbol from allegory as an act of desynonymy that advances the progress of language and thought, his discussion in the *Lay Sermons* seems to dehistoricize allegory in a way that serves his rhetorical purposes, but which does not actually do justice to the complexity of the English allegorical tradition. Because his

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[29] The imagination, "that reconciling and mediatory power," is able to give "birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors" (*LS* 29).

[30] The symbolic character of biblical prophecy, for example, means that the particular concerns of a prophetic text become "a symbol of Eternity, inasmuch as the Past and the Future are virtually contained in the Present" (*LS* 29). In this way, the prophet Isaiah "revealed the true philosophy of the French Revolution" in its ancient commentary on the state of God's people (34). This does not mean that the biblical writer predicted the revolution itself, but that the words of the prophet describe a spiritual condition essentially of the same kind as that behind the revolution.

[31] Although Owen Barfield does not address Coleridge's use of allegory, he does explicate some of the difficulties inherent in Coleridge's much larger project, viz., distinguishing between Imagination and Fancy, and, in particular, determining whether these faculties differ in degree or in kind. Barfield argues that, while Coleridge appears to be inconsistent, at different levels of inquiry, the categories kind and degree themselves begin to break down. He suggests that the ambiguity of "fancy"--which remains far more problematic than the concept of "imagination" in all Coleridge's works-- may have less to do with Coleridge's inconsistency as a philosopher, than with the nature of fancy itself. See Chapter 7 of *What Coleridge Thought,* "Imagination and Fancy (2)," pp. 76–91.

polemic against allegory does not consider the full history of English allegorical narratives, Coleridge's scorn for allegory loses much of its vigor when confronted with an actual allegory. For example, Coleridge calls *The Pilgrim's Progress* "that admirable Allegory, … which delights everyone," and to preserve his system of representation he must posit that Bunyan produced a good work only because his imaginative narrative transcends the "allegoric purpose" he tries to "force" upon his readers (*Coleridge's Miscellaneous* 31). Frye notes that an allegory's attempts to "force" its meaning on a reader is at the root of the modern disdain towards allegorical modes of expression; critics dislike that an allegory "directs them to understand it rather than leaving them to their own interpretive choices" (90). Apparently discomfited by the delight *The Pilgrim's Progress* produces, Coleridge attempts to divorce the narrative from its "allegoric purpose," completely, as though the narrative and Bunyan's theology are only "mechanically" connected. However, Coleridge is not above "forcing" allegoric purposes of his own upon readers, and in the second of the *Lay Sermons,* Coleridge introduces his sermon (which he means to be a more accessible version of his arguments in *Statesman's*) with an "Allegoric Vision." This "Allegoric Vision" dramatizes the function of true Religion, which enables spiritual vision and guards against the excesses of human understanding. Coleridge used versions of this allegory at least four times throughout his career, both before and after its incongruous appearance in *The Lay Sermons*. A comparison of these four versions of the "Allegoric Vision" reveals that Coleridge's definition of allegory in *The Statesman's Manual* is far less stable than it appears, and that Coleridge's poetic application of allegory anticipates important shifts in

his later formulations of the allegory/symbol distinction, shifts which MacDonald reflects in his own allegorical criticism and creations.

Given Coleridge's disparagement of allegory in *The Statesman's Manual*, it is genuinely surprising to find an "Allegoric Vision" introducing the second of the *Lay Sermons*, in which Coleridge aims to present the thesis of *Statesman's* to a middle-class audience. In order that he might "neglect no innocent mode of attracting or relieving the Reader's attention,"[32] Coleridge uses this allegory to dramatize a premise that is central to both of the *Lay Sermons*: that true religion enables one to enjoy the truths of reason, while human understanding, if applied to spiritual truths, inevitably leads to superstitious bondage or blind materialism (*LS* 131). The presence of this allegory in the second *Lay Sermon* undermines Coleridge's earlier denigration of allegory, and suggests that he continues to ruminate on the possibilities of allegorical representation. Indeed, reading this 1817 "Allegoric Vision" alongside the other three versions confirms that during the composition of the *Lay Sermons*, Coleridge's concept of allegory remains more fluid than his tidy desynonymy implies.

The two earliest versions of the "Allegoric Vision" anticipate *The Statesman's Manual's* scorn for allegories. For example, in the first "Allegoric Vision", which prefaces the first of Coleridge's *Lectures on Revealed Religion* (1795), the narrator introduces his allegory as a dream he had "towards Morning when the Brain begins to reassume its waking state, and our dreams approach to the regular trains of reality"

[32] This comment implies a rhetorical justification for including the "Allegoric Vision," for the second *Lay Sermon* is written to include the middle classes, while *The Statesman's Manual* attempts to cultivate a philosophic class from among the higher estates of society. One could argue that what is "worthless" to a philosopher might be "innocent" enough for another class of readers. However, rhetorical concerns do not entirely resolve the tension between Coleridge's philosophical judgment and his poetic use of allegories.

(*Lectures* 89). Coleridge nods to the tradition of presenting allegories as dreams, but it is hardly more than a nod, and his emphasis on the dream's proximity to "Morning" and "regular" reality betrays some embarrassment about the wild, uncontrolled visions often associated with dreams and sleep. Still addressing an eighteenth-century audience, Coleridge acknowledges the anxieties of the passing two centuries, which feared or derided the "slumber" of the intellect and the ascendancy of imagination or fancy.[33] Like a good Enlightenment thinker, he asks his audience to accept his "allegory" only as useful fiction he uses to illustrate philosophical arguments.[34]

Coleridge's concessions to anxieties about these fictions, however, may have more to do with his Protestant inheritance than with his Enlightenment airs. Indeed, the century from which Coleridge draws so much inspiration in *Aids to Reflection* was shattered by debates about the relationship between the human imagination, the Church, and, in turn, the legitimacy of allegorical fictions that purport to reveal spiritual truth. The dangers of an ungoverned imagination loomed over seventeenth-century disputes about the relationship between an individual Christian and a community of believers. As Reid Barbour's study of "the church fanciful" argues, all Protestant groups recognized the need for boundaries on the authority of individual reason and imagination. However, because their criteria for determining whether the Holy Spirit or the human spirit was guiding an individual's faith varied widely, these groups frequently charged one another with excessive reliance on human fancies. Many Puritans saw the trappings of liturgy,

[33] One cannot help but contrast Coleridge's description of this regular, nearly-waking "dream" to his much more famous vision, "Kubla Khan, or A Vision in a Dream." Although scholars continue to debate the date of "Kubla Khan's" composition remains in debate, most agree that the poem was written within a few years of the *Lectures on Revealed Religion*, sometime between 1797 and 1799 (*PW* 509).

[34] While editors have posited numerous sources of inspiration for Coleridge's "Allegoric Vision," the 1811 version seems to owe much of its tongue-in-cheek self-deprecation to eighteenth-century allegories, particularly those by Addison (*Essays* 270n15).

with its sensuous appeals to the imagination, as signs of covert "Romish" loyalties, while Laudians lambasted the Puritan emphasis on individual faith for allowing the fanciful creation of "private idols" (Barbour 92). However, even as they used signs of "fanciful" faith to deride their opponents, English Protestants shared a desire for greater certainty about the possibility of a sanctified imagination (93). Most Protestants agreed that whatever the benefits of fancy, it must remain obedient to faith (104). The forms of this obedience came to bear directly on the life of the individual Christian within a church, whether the Church of England or a local conventicle. For conservative members of the Church of England, liturgy provided both "products and stimulants of a holy fancy," while the doctrines of the Church formed a bulwark against private fancies (92, 99). Puritans, Dissenters, and more radical Protestants, however, lacked both clear, formal limits on individual imagination, as well as many of the sanctioned "stimulants" to the fancy, such as liturgical objects and ceremonies.

Along with the idea that allegories indulge private fancies, at the root of Coleridge's charge against allegory is the fear that an allegory can easily deceive: it purports to make visible some invisible (especially spiritual) truth, but the visible form and the spiritual significance are fundamentally different, and therefore the allegorical metaphor cannot completely illuminate the nature of the spiritual reality it represents. However, MacDonald values allegorical forms of expression precisely because they create a certain kind of obscurity. He recognizes that parables create, as Frank Kermode says, a "genesis of secrecy" that separates those within from those outside.[35] Coleridge's theories of allegory could lead to impatience with literary forms that relentlessly direct

[35] According to Kermode, Jesus explain his parables "as stories *told to them without*--to outsiders--with the express purpose of concealing a mystery that was to be understood only by insiders" (2).

interpretation beyond the literal or human level, and that require the interpreter's submission to the authority of some pretext, such as the Bible. This resistance to interpretive guidance is, of course, part of the larger challenges of subjectivity discussed in Chapter Two. Coleridge attempts to mitigate these tendencies in *Aids to Reflection* with his emphasis on literary traditions governing interpretation and drawing readers into the Church of England. However, his preference for "tautegorical" modes of expression nevertheless looks forward to varieties of symbolic expression that require no external authority to affirm interpretation.[36]

In addition to arguing for the revival of the Church of England, Coleridge also responds to the longstanding Protestant distrust of the imagination by dividing the "imagination" from the "fancy."[37] By making the fancy a "private" faculty that whimsically attaches ideas to images without regard to truth, Coleridge hoped to demonstrate that the "imagination" of an individual could be the vessel of universal and eternal truths. The artificial or "fictional" aspects of allegories that allegedly emerge from "fancy" are essentially the same qualities Coleridge's ancestors mistrusted in the imagination generally. Thomas Luxon has shown that no "mode of discourse is more consistently vilified by Reformation authors from Tyndale to Milton than allegory" (ix). Just as human fancy could obscure truth through its own wild inventions, allegory was a

[36] The desire for a form of symbolism that requires no submission to a pretext is part of the much larger turn to the subject described by intellectual historians. Scholars such as Kathleen Swaim have applied this turn to practices in seventeenth-century allegories, arguing, for example, that Bunyan's pilgrim allegories shift from a "symbolic" mode of representation, in which the arbitrary assignment of meaning to objects or events requires the guidance of the Holy Spirit in interpretation to an "emblematic" mode that conveys "nonarbitrary meanings which when found prove entirely native and natural, an outpouring from the thing itself if the reader will 'open' to it" (250). While Swaim uses "symbol" to mean what Coleridge calls allegory or metaphor, the shift she posits is visible in Coleridge's resistance to authors who would "force" a meaning on readers.

[37] For most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, "imagination" and "fancy" were used synonymously ("Fancy").

mode of discourse that obscured the "single literal sense" central to Protestant hermeneutics (ix). While Coleridge has little sympathy with literalism, his criticism of allegory is remarkably similar to earlier Protestant anxieties. Coleridge dislikes allegory and metaphor because such modes artificially multiply levels of meaning, while a symbolic mode expresses the organic unity between the referent and its symbol. Allegory's otherness fails to satisfy both the Puritans' "single literal sense" and Coleridge's tautegorical unity.

However, while overtly rejecting the multiple levels or "senses" of Scripture that Catholics or conservative Anglicans discerned, English Reformers could not actually escape allegorical discourse, and the same seems to be true for Coleridge.[38] Coleridge continues to use his allegoric vision even as he attempts to undermine the allegory itself. The second version of the allegory appears in *The Courier* (1811). In this version, Coleridge renames the piece "Superstition, Religion, Atheism," relegating, "An Allegoric Vision" to a sub-title in small print. In this 1811 version, Coleridge has recast his narrative into a polemic against Catholic Emancipation, but the most noticeable change actually involves the narrator's reaction to his dream. While the 1795 version simply records the narrator waking up, the 1811 narrator calls the vision a "nightmare" and hastily explains that, upon waking, he drank peppermint water to relive the gaseous pains "which had interpreted themselves under these [allegoric] forms" (*Essays* 270). This explanation, which nearly makes a farce of the whole vision, posits an utterly fanciful link between the dream and his concerns about religion; the fancy forges an artificial bond between questions of religion and the pains of indigestion.

[38] As Luxon notes, the alleged "literalism" of the Reformers "had the effect, not of dispensing with allegorical modes of thought, but of installing a denial of Christianity's allegorical structures, a denial that prompted a crisis in Reformation theories of representation more generally" (34).

In the 1817 *Lay Sermon*, however, Coleridge changes the tone of the "Allegoric Vision" dramatically, adding a framework that invests more authority in the text than either *The Statesman's Manual* or the earlier versions lead one to expect. The narrator is no longer a philosopher suffering from indigestion, but a traveler in the Apennines who hears the allegory from an elderly pilgrim as they take shelter together in a chapel. The figure of a pilgrim reinforces the text's allegorical purposes, perhaps even alluding to *The Pilgrim's Progress* and its journey toward salvation. At the same time, the sublime landscape, religious architecture, and the pilgrim's description of his tale as a "vision" from a "visionary" transforms the allegory from a vivid but trivial illustration, to a Romantic work of imaginative prophecy (*LS* 133-34).[39] Coleridge often describes the operation of reason in terms of sight and vision (perhaps most famously in the title of *Aids to Reflection*), and within the allegory itself, Religion enables her followers to see "the relation of the different parts [of the landscape], of each to the other, and of each to the whole, and of all to each" (136). She also provides them with an "optic glass" that allows the dreamer to see beyond the Valley of Life (136).[40] If the allegory is indeed a "vision," then it cannot be dismissed as a product of the mechanical fancy.

This "visionary" presentation of the 1817 allegory reveals that even within the *Lay Sermons*, Coleridge's distinction between symbolic and allegorical works is not completely stable. In a private copy of this second *Lay Sermon*, Coleridge admits that he feels "this introduction is too ~~myst~~ romantic" and, therefore, "too good" for the "parable" he composed twenty years earlier (*LS* 133n4). Nevertheless, he includes the "Allegoric

[39] The pilgrim's old age and marvelous tale also recall "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

[40] In *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge extends this visual metaphor: "By the eye of Reason through the telescope of Faith, i.e. Revelation, we may see what without this telescope we could never have known to exist" (341).

Vision"--with its "romantic" introduction, in the 1829 and 1834 editions of his *Poetical Works*. Its inclusion suggests that, first of all, Coleridge was not so convinced of the frame's unfitness that he felt the need to remove it, and even more importantly, that he believed the "Allegoric Vision" could stand as an autonomous poetic text, generating meaning apart from the philosophical works it once illustrated.

In addition to the ambivalence preserved in Coleridge's various introductions to the "Allegoric Vision," the allegorical narratives themselves provide positive evidence that Coleridge's 1816 definition of allegory collapses in practice, and suggests that Coleridge himself may have sensed this collapse. First, just as the 1817 "Allegoric Vision" suggests that the story might be a work of imaginative Reason, all versions of the "Allegoric Vision" create meaning in ways nearer the *Statesman's Manual's* description of symbolism than its description of allegory. Take, for example, the experiences of the various narrators in the Temple of Superstition. Each encounters a wall covered in phosphorescent inscriptions (*LS* 135). They find they can understand individual words, but the words make no sense when put into sentences (135). In each version, the dreamer's guide--a representative of a corrupt clergy--offers no guide to interpretation, but rather commands that the dreamer "Read and believe: these are MYSTERIES!" (135).[41] The inscriptions, glowing weirdly with a light that does not illuminate the relation of the part (word) to the whole (sentence), represent the attempts of the understanding to comprehend spiritual truth. The "sepulchral" light of the inscriptions is like the dead doctrines of superstition, but phosphorescence and superstition are not unified by participation in a greater whole: thus far, the "Allegoric Vision" follows Coleridge's

[41] This mandate is nearly identical in all four versions of the "Allegoric Vision." The only differences are insignificant changes in punctuation.

sense of an allegory's artificial links between picture and abstract idea. Most of the nouns in the allegory--the Temple of Superstition, the female personification of Religion, the blind man's microscope, and so on—can be called allegorical in this sense.

However, an allegorical *narrative* depicts not only objects but actions, and as Coleridge describes the process of the dreamer's futile reading, the text recreates the experience of anyone who attempts to comprehend spiritual truth without the aid of Religion. For readers of the 1795, 1817, and 1824 versions, these inscriptions are experienced as textual blanks; Coleridge does not reproduce any of the bewildering sentences, creating a gap in the text that corresponds to the dreamer's failure to understand.[42] The texts operate symbolically, reproducing an experience that is similar to a process that exists outside the text. This paradox of a "symbolic" allegory affirms Coleridge's frequent emphasis on the dynamic nature of the symbols that flow from imagination; the nouns in an allegory may be "fixed" to an arbitrary or conventional resemblance, but the verbs of the allegory--the movement of the traveler, the actions of personified Religion--allow readers to experience, however faintly, the same kind of processes they dramatize. One wonders, then, if any narrative (which necessarily involves movement, if only through time), can ever be "allegorical" in the narrow sense of *The Statesman's Manual*.

Thus, while Coleridge's editors emphasize the differences among the four versions of the "Allegoric Vision," it is equally significant that Coleridge never alters the

[42] The 1811 version does reproduce two of the "hard sayings," but these riddles, while obscure, do in fact make sense in the context of his argument against Catholic Emancipation (cf. *Essays* 265n5-6). Coleridge's decision to remove them from the two later versions suggests an impulse to emphasize the allegory's broader applicability to religious questions.

fundamental narrative movement of the allegory, nor any of its major emblems.[43] One might argue that the ability to recast the "Allegoric Vision" into a new argument indicates that it is indeed a "phantom proxy," devoid of significance apart from the argument that frames it, but the arguments surrounding the first three versions are not, in the final analysis, ever "new." Each text attempts to answer the same fundamental questions about the nature of true religion.[44] Just as biblical prophecy speaks both to its particular historical moment and to eternal truths, so the texts containing versions of the "Allegoric Vision" respond not only to Coleridge's momentary opinions on social and religious issues, but also reveal his ongoing philosophical and theological preoccupations.

The four versions of the "Allegoric Vision," then, narrate four distinctive ruminations on the same subject, and this observation not only highlights their "tautegorical" nature, but underscores their analogy to inspired Scripture. Even when Coleridge doubts the fitness of the "visionary" framing narrative, he refers to the text--in all its versions--as a "parable," just as the narrator of the 1817 "Allegoric Vision" does when describing the pilgrim's tale (*LS* 133n4, 133). Linking allegories with parables further undermines *The Statesman's Manual's* attempt to relegate allegory to the understanding, for a parable, however humble, is used throughout Scripture. It is, in fact, one of the few literary forms the Gospel writers attribute to Christ himself. According to *The Statesman's Manual*, the words of inspired biblical writers embody ideas and principles that not merely "confirmed by reason," but are in fact "reason itself!" (*LS* 17).

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[43] See Patton and Mann's notes to the 1795 "Allegoric Vision" (*Lectures* 89n1), Erdman's comments on the 1811 text (*Essays* 262n1), White's discussion of the 1817 allegory (*LS* 131n1), and Mays's introduction to the 1824 version (*Poetical* 197-98).

[44] Throughout his intellectual biography of Coleridge, Basil Willey emphasizes that the changes in Coleridge's religious allegiances and doctrines do not emerge from a changeable or inconsistent spirit, so much as they indicate his lifelong ruminations on several essential questions.

The implication of this theory of inspiration, as Coleridge later acknowledges, is that any writer who creates imaginatively, approaching the truth of reason, creates works similar in kind, but not in degree, to inspired Scripture.[45] If inspired Scripture flows from reason itself, and if parables are a genre of inspired Scripture, then the parabolic "Allegoric Vision" models an effective method for communicating spiritual truth.

At least one of Coleridge's later discussions of symbolism suggests that he became aware of the gaps in the 1816 definition of allegory. In particular, the increasing emphasis he places on the narrative of the "Allegoric Vision" (first by adding the "visionary" frame with its two wayfarers, and later by publishing the "Allegoric Vision" as an autonomous text) anticipates the revised explanation of symbolism Coleridge offers in *Aids to Reflection*. Although he still refers readers to *The Statesman's Manual*'s 1816 definition, Coleridge nevertheless refines the symbol/allegory distinction in an important way (*AR* 206). He asks his readers to imagine two passages, one metaphorical (allegorical) and the other symbolic, each describing "an Act, which in its own nature, and as producing an efficient *cause*, is transcendent" (206). The metaphorical passage will illustrate the effects of the act, "not for the purpose of rendering the Act itself, or the manner of the Agency, conceivable, but in order to show the nature and magnitude of the Benefits received from it" (206). A symbolic embodiment, on the other hand, will make the act itself conceivable.

In this passage, Coleridge no longer speaks in terms of undefined "subjects" but uses an "act" as his example, emphasizing the sense of intellectual and spiritual movement that shapes every version of the "Allegoric Vision." Furthermore, Coleridge

[45] See, for example, *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, in which Coleridge illustrates a point about the process of inspiration by comparing the biblical writers to Shakespeare, and then goes onto reject the claim that biblical writers cannot be read "as any other honest and intelligent Writer or Speaker" (1130).

shifts his attention from the origin of symbols or metaphors in a particular faculty, to the effects of these figures on a reader: symbols make visible a transcendent act, often by depicting an analogous act, while metaphors can only show what comes from the act. This means, first of all, that allegories are not merely the servants of worthless abstractions, but can communicate the real benefits of a transcendent act. Moreover, if being "symbolic" means to present a familiar analogy to a transcendent act, then Coleridge's allegories can be called symbolic, at the very least, in their representation of the mind's reflective movement from understanding to reason.

Additionally, in an extensive footnote to *Aids to Reflection,* Coleridge finally clarifies the relationship of allegories to Scripture. He continues to distinguish allegories "*toto genere*" from symbols, but admits that the writings of St. Paul and the book of Jonah undermine the notion that "parables, allegories, and allegorical or typical applications have no place in *inspired* Scripture" (*AR* 264). By allowing that allegorical texts may be inspired by reason*,* Coleridge effectively recants his categorical dismissal of allegories as phantom proxies of the understanding's abstractions. Furthermore, when Coleridge turns from his theory of allegories to an actual allegory such as *The Pilgrim's Progress*, his tone often changes from suspicion to affection, if not wonder. His claim that Bunyan writes an admirable work because his "piety was baffled by his genius" (*Coleridge's Miscellaneous* 31), suggests that, despite his protests in *The Statesman's Manual*, Coleridge's own suspicion was baffled by his delight in any text capable of meaning more than it seems to intend. "All extremes meet," remarks the dreamer of the *Lay Sermons*, and in Coleridge's "Allegoric Visions," the apparent variance of the allegorical and the tautegorical come together to create a meaningful series of narratives

(*LS* 133). As Coleridge's own analysis suggests, the extremes of allegory and tautegory meet in parable.

Extremes Meet: MacDonald's Parables of the Lost Church

It is this possibility--that allegorical and symbolic modes of expression can work together in parables--that MacDonald explores in his fairy tales and fantasies. By insisting on the recreation of narrative allegories, rather than on a wholesale shift to "tautegorical" symbols, MacDonald sustains Coleridge's checks on subjectivity in a way other nineteenth-century readers of Coleridge do not. Coleridge's motto "Extremes meet" appears frequently in MacDonald's own works, and his creation of parables in *Adela* allows MacDonald to recreate allegorical traditions in a way that restores their power as "dark sayings."[46] The notion that allegories were didactically self-interpreting made them unpalatable to many critics, but MacDonald attempts to restore the "darkness" of allegory in a way that reveals the insufficiency of an individual reader and invites those on the outside of the narrative's spiritual meaning to step inside. To use the terms of "The Castle," MacDonald hopes that recreating the tradition of Christian allegory will prompt readers to exchange false liberty for free participation in a spiritual family, the Church.

As in *England's Antiphon,* in *Adela* MacDonald emphasizes the hiddenness of the Church, yet suggests that artistic traditions can make the Church--or a portion of it--visible. During one meeting of the story club, Dr. Armstrong shares a poem that describes the way a solitary reader might find his way into this tradition. The poem,

[46] See, for example, "Essay V" from *The Friend* (1818), "On the Errors of Party Spirit: Or Extremes Meet." For an example of MacDonald's use of this phrase and idea, see "Shakspere" (*sic*) from *A Dish of Orts* (101).

which Dr. Armstrong calls "a parable," is "The Lost Church," by the German poet Ludwig Uhland (2: 266). This poem first describes the speaker's journey into the forest. Though he comes "From times corrupt" and is "on evil bent" (line 11), the speaker's "heart to God [goes] out in sighing" (line 12), and as he wanders, he hears the mysterious tolling of a bell, which legend claims is from "the lost church."[47] Once the road to this church was "full of pilgrims," but now none can find it (line 7). This road, beginning in the past and dwindling into legend, is the perfect image of a lost tradition. The entire poem is resonant with MacDonald's own methods of parable-making, for its images are neither completely "arbitrary" metaphors nor entirely "organic" symbols of the speaker's encounter with a poetic religious past his "corrupt times" have neglected. The sound of the bell, for example, is tautegorical in that it, like utterances from the past, offers a partial music, beautiful but dim, that increases the wanderer's longing for God and leads him--without his conscious knowledge--to the legendary church. At the same time, the bell is allegorical and arbitrary, as well, for while church bells have been used since antiquity to herald the time for prayer or worship, this usage is conventional, not essential. More importantly, the tolling of the bell is a dark harbinger, and while the speaker recognizes that it rings from the lost church, he cannot understand its full meaning until he has entered the church itself. Following the sound, the speaker eventually finds "a ministers structure proud" that seems to be upheld by the clouds in the sky above him (line 26). After crossing the threshold, the he sees "Darksome yet clear" windows depicting the histories "Of holy women and God's warriors" (lines 43, 48). This cloud of witnesses, though present only through an artistic rendering of the past,

[47] All lines from "The Lost Church" come from *Adela* (2:266-69); the translation is MacDonald's.

move the speaker to kneel in prayer, and as he prays, the church building gives way: "The dome's high sweep had flown asunder; / The heavenly gates wide open go; / And every veil unveils a wonder" (lines 54-56). The poem has offered a series of images of tradition, each increasing in the clarity of their revelation: the forgotten path once full of pilgrims, the tolling bells, the windows narrating the stories of the saints. The parable suggests, through its own metaphors and symbols, that only within the Church does one truly become capable of seeing rightly.

At the same time, the poem concludes with a typically German-Romantic sense of longing. The poet has received a vision of the Church, but his "mortal words can never tell" precisely how to find the lost church (line 61). To one who has not yet felt the need for the church, words would do no good, and so the parable itself remains a "bell / That dimly soundeth" (lines 64-64). Following this parable-poem, the curate explains that "the lost church of the poem" is "the Church of God; the great cathedral-church of the universe; of which Church I trust the Church of England is a little Jesus-chapel" (2: 269-70). This poem affirms, he explains, that "Whoever finds God in his own heart … has found the lost Church—the Church of God" (2: 270). Taken alone, Mr. Armstrong's commentary seems to confirm the tendencies of radical Protestantism, which ultimately lead to a church of one.

However, in the case of Adela and nearly every other wandering pilgrim in MacDonald's work, finding God in her own heart does not happen until she begins to participate in a community that imaginatively sustains the traditions of the Bible. For Adela, the parables her friends offer serve as bells ringing out the promise of spiritual restoration. MacDonald asserts the role of literary traditions in this restoration

throughout *Adela*. Over the course of the novel, his storytellers offer literary parables that are beautiful but dark to those on the "outside" of their spiritual meaning. By offering fairy-tale parables that are neither wholly allegorical nor entirely "symbolic," MacDonald attempts to resolve the instability of Coleridge's division and to advance Coleridge's hopes for a renewed English Church.

Within *Adela*, the parish church where Mr. Armstrong serves becomes an emblem for this renewal, just as in *Robert Falconer* the Cathedral of St. Machar embodied religious decay. Initially, Mr. Smith describes it as "a blessed little church that, standing in a little meadow church-yard, with a low strong ancient tower, great buttresses that put one in mind of the rock of ages, and a mighty still river that flowed past the tower end," but for lack of worshippers, "the church got disheartened, and drooped, and now looked very old and grey-headed" (1:18). Like a neglected literary tradition, the church building should be an artifice that brings the past into contact with the present, thereby inspiring worship, but the rector, "Old Mr. Venables," embodies a form of religious expression that has little to say to the present. The service, which "Mr. Venables mumbled like a nicely cooked sweetbread" is vaguely nostalgic, as though it were a "memorial of departed dinners" rather than a proclamation "of joys to come" (1:19). Mr. Smith, bored with this mumbling, turns instead to one of the church windows, and finds the key to Mr. Armstrong's claim--that the universal Church can be found in one's heart--in an illusion created by this window:

> Now all my glad thoughts came to me through a hole in the tower-door. For the door was far in a shadowy retreat, and in the irregular lozenge-shaped hole in it, there was a piece of coarse thick glass of a deep yellow. And through this yellow glass the sun shone. And the cold shine of the winter sun was changed into the warm glory of summer by the magic of that bit of glass.

> Now when I saw the glow first, I thought without thinking, that it came from some inner place, some shrine of old, or some ancient tomb in the chancel of the church—forgetting the points of the compass—where one might pray as in the *penetralia* of the temple; and I gazed on it as the pilgrim might gaze upon the lamp-light oozing from the cavern of the Holy Sepulchre. But some one opened the door, and the clear light of the Christmas morn broke upon the pavement, and swept away the summer splendour.--The door was to the outside.--And I said to myself: All the doors that lead inwards to the secret place of the Most High, are doors outwards--out of self--out of smallness--out of wrong. (1:19)

As in many of his descriptions of church-buildings, MacDonald presents this church as an emblem of religious art and ecclesiastical tradition--beautiful, reverend, and ancient. If the narrator's ruminations ended with the interruption of the summer illusion and the realization that the door led outside, then this passage would provide a stirring image of the need to seek God outside of the England's chapels and churches. Certainly, MacDonald makes it clear here and elsewhere that the Church of England is not to be confused with the Church, Christ's mystic body. However, even as the narrator is dwelling on the *paradox* of the outward door leading "inwards to the secret place of the Most High," a voice from the communion table interrupts him. Through this voice, "the words became inspired and alive, and I forgot my own thoughts in listening to the Holy Book" (1:19). To his great surprise, this preacher, Mr. Armstrong, proves that "the voice of every loving spirit [is] a fresh inspiration to the dead letter," and delivers a sermon that captivates the narrator (1:18). The parables Mr. Armstrong uses in many of his sermons, like the fairy tales Mr. Bloomfield, Mr. Smith, and others tell, revive a tradition that both enables and governs the authority of an individual reader. Like the antiphonal singing of England's lyric tradition in *England's Antiphon*, the small church window prepares Mr. Smith to hear the words of the Bible and to forget his own thoughts. Following Mr.

Armstrong's sermon, it seems that the door that opens outward does not leave the church, but opens into a temple that is too vast to be visible.

The Transfiguration of Allegory in England's Antiphon

According to Coleridge's systems of representation, MacDonald's tale "The Castle" is a composite of symbolic and metaphorical elements, and by making the extremes of allegory and tautegory meet in these fairy-tale parables, MacDonald helpfully shifts nineteenth-century discussions of allegory away from absolute distinctions between "arbitrary" and "organic" emblems, and toward the ethical implications of "speaking otherwise." For MacDonald, an allegory is valuable insofar as it can hide its meaning from purely intellectual and individualistic interpretations, including readings that would value only the literal meaning of a text, or which would dismiss the literal level as an arbitrary vehicle for the higher truth. MacDonald creates parables that allow imaginative interpretation within the context of the Bible's own language and images, and which one can only truly understand by shaping the will according the Bible's exhortation to love God and neighbor. In "The Castle," "tradition" is the medium of this moral law, and the action the parable means to inspire is interpretation itself. The story ends when the brothers and sisters have learned to receive the castle's legend as their common hope, and, as discussed above, the proof of Adela's transformation comes not only in her own comprehension, but in her desire to help her father understand "The Castle" for himself. The "darkness" of these parables, therefore, is meant to point readers to a community that can interpret the narrative faithfully. This faithfulness can be measured in part by an interpretation's connection to a narrative's literary and theological pretexts, but also according to the love and selflessness of the

community that shapes the interpretation. This community can include a reader or listener's immediate neighbors, such as Adela's story club; official representatives of a church, such as Mr. Armstrong; and other artists and interpreters, such as the tradition MacDonald assembles in *Antiphon*. In whatever form it appears, allegory upholds the authority of tradition not as a way to eradicate individual interpretations, but as a way to prevent an individual's imaginative freedom from degenerating into "private fancies." Thus, while in some ways MacDonald's parables advance the general shift from allegory to symbol, they also renew a tradition of Christian allegory that trains readers to recognize those who dwell within the Church Invisible.

In *England's Antiphon,* MacDonald provides the theoretical and historical framework that undergirds the parables of *Adela*. Unlike Coleridge, who writes of allegory and symbolism as absolute, unchanging categories in the *Lay Sermons*, MacDonald presents allegory as a historical body of tropes and narrative forms, part of a tradition that must be recreated in order to remain viable as a mode of spiritual expression. By embedding his most extensive commentary on allegory in *Antiphon*, MacDonald avoids the absolutism of Coleridge's most direct statements on allegory, while extending the possibility, which Coleridge admits in *Aids to Reflection,* that allegory can be a form of inspired Scripture. Furthermore, while in *Adela* MacDonald suggests that allegory diagnoses the insufficiency of subjective interpretation, in *Antiphon* MacDonald argues that allegory is a vital component of the "literary chapel" in which readers learn to participate in an antiphon of faith. MacDonald's makes it clear that only from within the universal Church, whether in the "great church" of England's worship or its smaller chapel of lyrics can one interpret life, nature, and the Bible

correctly (*Antiphon* 332). This argument is a version of Coleridge's claims about the need for a clerisy to guide individual readings of the Bible, but MacDonald is far democratic (or, more accurately, more "congregational") in his picture of the true Church's priesthood.[48]

Additionally, while *Adela* focuses primarily on the receiver of allegory, who finds consolation and community through the darkness of the tales, *Antiphon* scrutinizes how poets create and sustain this wholesome darkness. In both cases, MacDonald implies that allegory affirms the authority of Scripture by showing how the Bible provides language that enables men and women to find universal meaning in intensely personal experiences. Instead of serving as a mechanical or didactic poetic device, allegory becomes, in MacDonald's commentary, a way for the Bible to "find" readers, the process Coleridge movingly describes in *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*.[49] MacDonald presents the quality of English allegory as a bellwether for the ability of literature to restore right relations between a writing (or reading) subject and the Church Invisible. "An allegory must be Mastery or Moorditch," MacDonald writes in "The Fantastic Imagination," and in *Antiphon*, MacDonald attributes the success or failure of an allegory to the poet's ability to reveal the universal significance of individual experiences by recreating conventional literary forms, tropes, and ideas (*Orts* 317). In

[48] In the second of the *Lay Sermons*, for example, Coleridge admits his shock when he hears "a Bishop of the Church publicly exclaim,--… No notes! No comment! Distribute the Bible and the Bible only among the poor!--a declaration from any lower quarter I should have been under the temptation of attributing either to a fanatical notion of immediate illumination superseding the necessity of human teaching, or to an ignorance of difficulties which … have successfully employed the learning, sagacity, and unwearied labours of great and wise men, and eminent servants of Christ, during all the ages of Christianity" (201).

[49] For example, Coleridge reader the words of Deborah and the Old Testament writers, as "heart-awakening utterances of human hearts--of men of like faculties and passions with myself" (*Confessions* 1136).

Antiphon's narrative of literary tradition, allegory either serves as the ground for literary revival, or as evidence of artistic and spiritual stagnation.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, MacDonald establishes *Antiphon* on Coleridgean principles, not offering his vision in defiance of history, but revealing patterns that lie hidden within lyric expressions. His discussion of allegory begins with the medieval allegory *Pearl* and draws on some of the freshest historical resources available to a writer in 1868.[50] MacDonald's primary interest is in the poet's relationship to writers that have come before him. MacDonald presents the *Pearl* poet as a man grappling with the problem that faces anyone who would write out of personal experience: he helps his readers experience a version of his own private feelings and spiritual experiences. As C.S. Lewis would later note in *The Allegory of Love*, medieval writers often turn to allegory when dealing with the inner life of man, a realm that is largely alien to a literature best suited to accounts of deeds and adventures. Lewis describes allegory, stiff and arbitrary as it may seem to modern readers, as a form that "besides being many other things, is the subjectivism of an objective age" (*Allegory* 30). In his commentary on *Pearl,* MacDonald emphasizes that the poet recreates biblical images and allegories in order to dramatize this inner life. Using the image of a pearl to represent his lost child, the poet introduces the object of his grief with an image Jesus uses to describe the Kingdom of Heaven in his parables.[51] Within the speaker's dream-vision, the speaker sees his daughter arrayed as a queen. The child, saved by her baptism

[50] The Early English Text Society began publishing in 1864, only four years before the appearance of *Antiphon.* According to the *Nineteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue*, *Pearl* appeared with several other works in *Early English Alliterative Works* (edited by Richard Morris), in the first volume of the EETS's Original Series (1864). Though MacDonald does not refer to Morris's edition in his discussion of *Pearl*, he does indicate his debt to Morris in his commentary on several other medieval poems (*Antiphon* 10, 12, 40).

[51] For example, see Matt. 7.6, 13.45-46

into the Church, consoles her father with lessons from the Bible, and the poet, in turn, uses biblical images to communicate his grief and consolation to his readers.[52]

MacDonald praises the author of *Pearl* for advancing a tradition that recreates biblical language. It is this turn to and adaptation of traditional language that MacDonald sees as essentially poetic, for "although the highest aim of poetry is to say the deepest things in the simplest manner, humanity must turn from mode to mode, and try a thousand, ere it finds the best. The individual … must take up the forms his fathers have left him, and add to them, if he may, new forms of his own" (*Antiphon* 37). Using the "forms of his fathers" and imagery from scripture prevents the Pearl poet from slipping too often into self-centered fancies; indeed, MacDonald's only criticisms of *Pearl* center on the poet's fantastical descriptions of the dream-world of "crystal cliffs, woods with blue trunks and leaves of burnished silver, gravel of precious Orient pearls" (38). This landscape, MacDonald claims, "is a noteworthy specimen of the mode in which the imagination works when invention is dissociated from observation and faith" (38). These fancies, in other words, are self-focused, showcasing the poet's descriptive abilities, perhaps, but doing little to establish sympathy with others.

The poet's allegorical frame, however, checks these gorgeous fancies by subordinating the speaker's perspective to the wisdom of the pearl-maiden, who tells her father that instead of trusting his vision of the world and its sorrows, he should take comfort from the things that are unseen. MacDonald's selections from *Pearl* emphasize the limits of the speaker's own understanding; he includes a lengthy passage in which the pearl-maiden rebukes her father for basing his love and his hope on sight rather than on

[52] The maiden uses Jesus's image of himself as the "true vine" (John 15.1) to explain how baptism grafts innocents into the body of Christ: "As sone as þay arn borne, by lyne / In þe water of babtem þay dyssente: / Þen arne þay boroȝt into þe vyne" (11.625-28).

faith.[53] In terms of his literary craft, the image he adapts from the biblical tradition--a pearl as an emblem of the thing most precious to him--is more trustworthy than his brilliant landscape.

The *Pearl* poet does better, MacDonald claims, when rather than inventing novel landscapes, he transforms the allegorical forms he has received in the crucible of human grief: "The poet, who is surely the father himself, cannot always keep up the allegory; his heart burns holes in it constantly; at one time he says *she*, at another *it*, and, between the girl and the pearl, the poem is bewildered" (*Antiphon* 38). It is through such a bewildered and bewildering form, MacDonald suggests, that the poet begins to reconcile his own grief with the promises of the Christian faith. The fact that this fusion of personal and metaphorical language keeps *Pearl* from being a perfect allegory does not trouble MacDonald at all. Rather, he sees the poet's "failure" to distinguish the literal and spiritual levels of his poem a moral and aesthetic victory because it leads to an even greater defeat of the poet's narrow vision of grief. Initially, the poet uses the image of a pearl to dramatize his own grief, but he receives no consolation until he realizes that his metaphor has much larger implications. The maiden makes it clear that as a "pearl" she represents not only the sorrow of losing a private treasure, but the joy of gaining the

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[53] MacDonald translates the passage, from *Pearl* VI.301-312 into modern English, with glosses for some of the archaic forms he retains:

> I hold that jeweller little to praise
> That loves well that he sees with eye;
> And much to blame, and uncortoyse, *uncourteous.*
> That leves our Lord would make a lie, *believes.*
> That lelly hyghte your life to raise *who truly promised.*
> Though fortune did your flesh to die; *caused.*
> To set his words full westernays
> That love no thing but ye it syghe! *see.*
> And that is a point of surquedrie, *presumption.*
> That each good man may evil beseem, *ill become.*
> To leve no tale be true to tryghe, *trust in.*
> But that his one skill may deme. (*Antiphon* 40)

Kingdom of Heaven, which she has done through God's grace. As the maiden uses the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard to interpret her elevation as a queen in heaven, the speaker realizes that he must interpret his own dream-vision according to the language of the Bible (*Pearl* 10).[54] MacDonald also argues that the proof the vision's efficacy comes after the speaker has awoken and reflects on what he has seen. Whereas he began his poem lamenting his daughter's absence, his allegorical dream has inspired obedience, and the speaker submits his own will to the pleasure of the "prince" whose kingdom he saw (*Antiphon* 41). In MacDonald's account, the *Pearl* poet, like Adela, overcomes the tyranny of self by means of a transformed allegorical image.

MacDonald's selections demonstrate that by adapting the Bible's allegorical language, the *Pearl* poet is able to turn a private experience of grief into a vision of the Church's common hope. MacDonald notes that the speaker's vision of his deceased daughter culminates in a vision of "the New Jerusalem given in the Book of the Revelation" (*Antiphon* 40). There, the speaker sees "the Lamb and all his company, and with them again his lost Pearl" (40). The pearl-maiden has become a bride of Christ, and as such, she represents and speaks for the Church that is called Christ's Bride.[55] It is through her instruction that the speaker learns to interpret his own grief and hope rightly, and this union of subjective experience with submission to Christ's Bride endows the

[54] The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard comes from Matt. 20.1-16

[55] 'My makeleȝ Lambe þat al may bete',
Quod scho, 'my dere destyné,
Me ches to hys make, alþaȝ vnmete
Sumtyme semed þat assemblé.
When I wente fro yor worlde wete,
He calde me to hys bonerté:
"Cum hyder to me, my lemman swete,
For mote ne spot is non in þe." (13.757-64)

poet with the voice of a prophet. While MacDonald does not limit this sort of prophetic power to allegorical poetry, he does suggest that medieval allegories provide some of the most vivid examples of literary works that recreate the language of the Bible. For example, while *Pearl* gives voice to "the longing of Hannah at home, having left her little son in the temple," *Pierce the Plougman's Crede* is "the cry of John the Baptist in the English wilderness" (34). As Coleridge hears "heart-awakening" human cries in the words of the Old Testament, MacDonald praises *Pearl* for sending "[o]ut of the far past … the cry of bereavement mingled with the prayer for hope: we hear, and lo! it is the cry and the prayer of a man like ourselves" (41).

With these descriptions, MacDonald explicates an allegory's complex dynamic of mutual interpretation with its biblical pretext. An allegory does not announce its pretext outright; rather, it "discovers" the pretext to readers through the artful deceit "that the narrative the reader reads is an original story in its own right--not simply another commentary on the Bible" (Quilligan 97). In MacDonald's commentary, however, the darkness that demands interpretation is not the father's initial presentation of himself as a jeweler, but the question of how a tradition of literary allegory can reveal the resonance between one man's grief and the Church's reading of the Bible as a narrative of hope and revelation.

The *Pearl* poet, MacDonald believes, resolves the gap between personal experience and spiritual community by creatively asserting the authority of the Bible. A nineteenth-century reader of *Pearl*, however, would face problems with the status of allegory and biblical language that the *Pearl* poet would not have imagined. Quilligan observes that the authority of an allegory is contingent upon the authority of its pretext.

If "[the pretext's] language can name truth, then the language of the allegorical narrative will be able to, but if the language of the Bible is no longer "felt to have special powers for revealing reality, then the language of the allegory will have a corresponding difficulty in articulating the truth of the human condition" (98). Such difficulties with the status of biblical language increased throughout the nineteenth century, and as we have seen, Coleridge's attack on allegory in *The Statesman's Manual* is an effort to preserve the authority of the Bible by countering hermeneutical practices that would reduce all biblical persons and events to "a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses" (*LS* 30).

Unfortunately, many of Coleridge's most influential readers, such as Arnold, describe allegory as a form that obviates human life and concerns. In "Dante and Beatrice" (1863), for example, Arnold states outright that "The *Divine Comedy* … is no allegory, and Beatrice no mere personification of theology" ("Dante" 446). Indeed, he considers "hardly worth refuting" those "who allegorize the *Divine Comedy,* … who reduce to nothing the sensible and human element" (445). Arnold's startling assessment of Dante's comedy anticipates later works, such as *Literature and Dogma* (1873), in which Arnold argues that the value of the Bible rests in its ability to provide instruction for righteous living, not in its illusory depictions of the restoration of beloved children or its visions of a new heaven and new earth. Any notion of "a secret allegorical sense, that is higher than the natural sense," therefore, is an affront to Arnold's conviction that the truth of Christianity is its ability to produce happiness for mankind in this world (*Literature* 258). MacDonald, on the other hand, believes that literary allegories can affirm the most basic human experiences while at the same time revealing methods for

interpreting the Bible.[56] Far from diminishing the importance of earthly life, MacDonald suggests, allegory affirms the value of human experience by showing that these experiences reveal the supernatural and "secret" senses of the Bible.

Rather than dismissing the allegorical senses of Scripture and looking only to the "human element" in biblical literature, MacDonald follows Coleridge into the much more difficult task of asserting the authority of the Bible without ignoring modern developments in biblical and textual criticism. MacDonald did not believe that Higher Criticism per se threatened the authority of the Bible; his sermons, for example, occasionally refer to recent developments in biblical translation.[57] Like Coleridge, MacDonald believes that drawing readers into the Church is the best answer to difficulties with the Bible. In *Adela*, members of this universal Church draw others in by creating and interpreting fairy-tale parables that connect the truths of scripture to common human life. In *Antiphon,* poets who create "dark sayings" reveal the congruence between a biblical narrative and a poet's experience. In doing so, these poets demonstrate that the Bible might preserve readers from the flatness and acedia that plague Adela.

As MacDonald continues his survey of English religious poetry, he continues to argue that the quality of a historical period's allegory reveals the moral and spiritual state of that era. His commentary on *Pearl* could serve as a manifesto for his own fairy-tale

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[56] Kristin Jeffrey Johnston argues that *The Princess and Curdie,* in which MacDonald integrates biblical language and fairy-tale elements even more masterfully than in "The Castle," might be part of a direct response to Arnold's theories of biblical language (166). Johnston offers a compelling analysis of *Curdie* as a work in which MacDonald engages contemporary debates about the book of Isaiah, and she concludes that for those "for whom inexactitude implies a possibility of even more truths rather than a proof of none, the very sense of fairy tale is an inextricable aspect of the essence of scripture" (169).

[57] For example, in "Freedom," from the Third Series of the *Unspoken Sermons* (1889), MacDonald praises the work of Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, whose critical edition of the Greek New Testament was published in 1881 (481).

parables; like the *Pearl* poet, MacDonald tries to "take up the forms his fathers have left him, and add to them … new forms of his own" (*Antiphon* 37). Furthermore, just as MacDonald writes that biblical parables can only be interpreted by one who attempts to enact them, so he believes that literary allegories can provoke a reader's will to choose faith over self-oriented canons of interpretation. The essential work of a poet, he writes, is to make "the word cousin to the deed," and this can only be done when the poet reshapes tradition (37). MacDonald thus attributes *Pearl's* role in the fourteenth-century revival of English letters not to the poet's fantastical imagery, but to his use of allegory to help readers "regard with steadfastness the blank left by a beloved form, and believe in the unseen, the marvellous, the eternal" (34). Faith, for MacDonald as for Coleridge, involves the will as much or more than the intellect, and so a poet's ability to inspire belief is an important part of its antiphonal function: the poets' words should prepare readers to receive and enact the truths of the Bible. As the pearl-maiden does for her father, allegories should point readers to the Bible and the members of the universal Church as the chief resources for interpretation.

Allegories can only serve in this capacity, however, if they, like *Pearl*, are both products of and testaments to the interdependence of personal and communal authority. Following *Pearl*, MacDonald argues, allegory suffered as the form became conventional, and allegorists neither exercised their imaginations nor based their work on real human experience. Medieval morality plays, for example, attempted to dramatize "metaphysical facts turned into individual existences by personification" leaving little room for the creative work of either poet or audience (*Antiphon* 54). The intellectual (rather than imaginative) basis for the dramas fails to endow the form with any fresh life, and

MacDonald hails the move beyond such personifications, toward the stories "of real men and women" as "a great stride in art" (54). At the same time, he reiterates that it is not allegory itself, but static imitation, that sends allegory into disgrace:

> Allegory has her place, and a lofty one, in literature; but when her plants cover the garden and run to seed, Allegory herself is ashamed of her children: the loveliest among them are despised for the general obtrusiveness of the family. Imitation not only brings the thing imitated into disrepute, but tends to destroy what original faculty the imitator may have possessed. (54)

The alternative to such imitation, MacDonald claims, came with the Reformation. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, allegory once again became a vital literary form as English writers experienced "the sense of personal responsibility, and of immediate relation to God," in conjunction with "the grand influences, both literary and spiritual, of the translated, printed, and studied Bible" (*Antiphon* 62). MacDonald calls this period, beginning in the reign of Elizabeth and extending through the seventeenth century, England's second revival of religious literature, and he names *The Faerie Queene* as the "the great poem" of this revival (63). Spenser, MacDonald argues, models how a poet can renew a literary form without imitating earlier versions of it. In particular, MacDonald admires Spenser's ability to fashion a "wonderful allegory" around England's religious life. MacDonald is in many regards a champion of the Reformation, but he is careful to emphasize that "sense of personal responsibility" and even the "immediate relation to God" evinced by poets such as Spenser is praiseworthy not for the sake of personal authority, but because such works strengthen the Church itself (62). Fittingly, then, the passage MacDonald includes from the *Faerie Queene* describes Una bringing Arthur--Prince of English legend--to rescue her would-be champion:

> Ay me! how many perils do enfold
> The righteous man to make him daily fail;
> Were not that heavenly grace doth him uphold, *it* understood.
> And steadfast Truth acquit him out of all!
> Her love is firm, her care continual,
> So oft as he, through his own foolish pride
> Or weakness, is to sinful bands made thrall:
> Else should this Redcross Knight in bands have died,
> For whose deliverance she this Prince doth thither guide. (qtd. in 63)[58]

Just as Spenser deploys Arthur in the service of Una, MacDonald hopes that allegory could provide material for English poets to aid the moral life of readers within the context of English Christianity.

Spenser also provides MacDonald with another opportunity for faulting imitation, which can cause a vibrant literary tradition to lose its momentum and its efficacy. He faults Spenser for using archaic diction, which MacDonald calls an "artistic falsehood" that imposes "antique effects in the midst of modern feeling" (*Antiphon* 64). Such revivals are only valuable if they enrich language for the needs of the present; all is well if poetry revives "fine old words, by the loss of which the language has grown poorer and feebler," but "nothing ought to be brought back *because* it is old" (64). Similarly, many of Spenser's admirers erred in creating allegories only so that they might be like Spenser, rather than because allegory was the best form for the truth they wished to express. In the case of Fletcher's *The Purple Island,* MacDonald writes that the allegorical form provides a pleasing shape, but without any imaginative recreation, the action of the story flounders. The work "is like a well-shaped house, built of mud, and stuck full of precious

[58] The quoted text comes from MacDonald's edition; for the original, see *FQ* 1.8.1.1-9.

stones.… Never was there a more incongruous dragon of allegory" (156).[59] This commentary on allegory reasserts MacDonald's overarching thesis in *Antiphon*: true poetic excellence lies not in the brilliant but isolated vision of a solitary genius, but in the creative participation in national and religious literary traditions.

In an essay published the year before *Antiphon*, MacDonald credits an artist's creative appropriation with a poem's ability to reveal the insufficiency of subjective authority. The *Pearl* poet and Spenser seem to be the sort of poets MacDonald has in mind in "The Imagination: Its Function and Its Culture," in which he suggests that the medieval title "*Trouvére*, the *Finder*" might be a more fitting name for an artist than the Greek "*Poet*, the *Maker*" (*Orts* 20).[60] Ideally, a poet "takes forms already existing, and gathers them about a thought so much higher than they, that it can group and subordinate and harmonize them into a whole which shall represent, unveil that thought" (20). In this developmental process, the work of the poet is to recreate existing forms in order to unveil an eternal truth. This creative transformation should yield "a form which makes us feel the truth of it afresh" (22). In this way, poets contribute to the ongoing revelation of truth, for "every new embodiment of a known truth must be a new and wider revelation. No man is capable of seeing for himself the whole of any truth: he needs it echoed back to him from every soul in the universe; and still its centre is hid in the Father

[59] Later critics have affirmed MacDonald's judgment of *The Purple Island.* Maureen Quilligan observes, "Fletcher's numerous puns irradiate no underlying structure, being mere bits of verbal wit, bright moments of local color, but no more" (177).

[60] In *The Allegory of Love* (1936), C.S. Lewis writes that readers of medieval literature "must try to repress our modern conception of the poet as the sole source of his poetry […]. *Trouvere* as well as *maker* is the name for a poet" (*The Allegory of Love* 209), echoing MacDonald's essay on "The Imagination" almost verbatim. In the same work, Lewis also heads his chapter on Spenser with an epigraph from MacDonald's novel *Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood* (1867): "The quiet fulness of ordinary nature" (qtd. in Lewis 297). The influence of MacDonald on C.S. Lewis has been well-documented, and while this influence is usually discussed in terms of Lewis's conversion and fantasy writing, these similarities in their discussions of allegory suggests that MacDonald's work may have shaped Lewis's work as a scholar, as well.

of Lights" (22). The inherent limitations of human vision, therefore, necessitate both the received forms, as well as the new forms a poet develops in response to his or her own unique experience and place in history.

What allegory provides, in MacDonald's analysis, is much more than a way to animate propositions or points of doctrine from the Bible. Rather, allegories have the potential to recreate the Bible's continual revelation of steadfast Truth. When an artist finds a way to transform allegory into new forms, he reveals the dynamic of reserve and revelation that operates within Scripture itself. Imitative allegories fail because they attempt to ornament propositional truths. Imaginative allegories flourish because they recreate, albeit faintly, the nature of divine revelation itself. Not surprisingly, therefore, in several of his later discussions within *Antiphon*, MacDonald consistently favors allegorical poems over lyrics that set doctrine to verse. He prefers these allegories for the same reason he values *Pearl*. Like the medieval poem, Richard Baxter's "The Return" or a lyric by John Wesley create "dark sayings" that integrate the moral life of the speaker with biblical images or stories. In his commentary on Baxter, for example, MacDonald writes, "The allegory is so good that one is absolutely sorry when it breaks down, and the poem says in plain words that which is the subject of the figures, bringing truths unmasked into the midst of the maskers who represent truths--thus interrupting the pleasure of the artistic sense in the transparent illusion" (*Antiphon* 237). As with *Pearl*, the importance of this "transparent illusion" is not only aesthetic; so long as the truth wears a mask, the reader must actively interpret the disguised truth. When the literal level of the text is not sufficient for conveying meaning, the reader must turn to imaginative, moral, and communal forms of understanding.

The last allegorical lyric MacDonald includes is John Wesley's "Wrestling Jacob," in which Wesley uses Old Testament accounts of Jacob wrestling God's angel to describe a Christian's spiritual travails.[61] By adopting the voice of Jacob, Wesley's speaker subordinates his identity and experience to the biblical narrative, just as Jacob, in receiving the name "Israel," is transformed from an individual into a nation. At the same time, Wesley uses the biblical account to express the agony facing readers as they attempt to interpret the Bible. Like the biblical Jacob, Wesley's speaker demands the name of the one who wrestles with him. "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name," he demands: "Speak, … / And tell me if thy name is Love" (298). His cry echoes the trouble many Christians throughout Christian history have faced in attempting to reconcile the New Testament's account of a loving God with certain passages and narratives from the Old Testament. His antagonist does not reply, and this refusal to "unfold" the "secret" leads the speaker to "self-despair" in which, paradoxically, he finds the strength to hold the "the God-man" (298).[62] Having relinquished his strength, the speaker hears a "whisper in [his] heart" and exclaims, "'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me!… // I know thee, Saviour--who thou art/ Jesus, the feeble sinner's friend!" (298). The speaker is no longer "disguised" as Jacob, but revealed to be the jubilant Christian finding his savior behind the "weighty hand" he sinks beneath (298). Wesley's application of New Testament texts to Old Testament narratives is an established form of Christian interpretation, but as part of MacDonald's narrative of tradition, it is most striking that only when the speaker despairs

[61]For the biblical story, see Gen. 32.24-32, Hos. 12

[62] Wesley's speaker cries, "When I am weak, then I am strong," an exact quotation from 2 Cor. 12.10.

of his own understanding that he gains what the Old Testament Jacob lacks: the name of the one who wounds and blesses him.

Coda: Bunyan and MacDonald

In *Antiphon,* MacDonald argues that a poet can challenge schism and spiritual isolation by adapting the forms of his fathers into new "dark sayings." These dark sayings, in one way or another, recreate the operations of biblical language and signal the insufficiency of self-sufficient interpretation. MacDonald's primary metaphor for his project, as we have seen, is that of a literary chapel in which England's poets are singers in an antiphonal choir. However, as MacDonald conducts his survey of English verse, he often describes himself and his readers as pilgrims on a journey through the uneven--and at times perilous--landscape of England's literary and religious history. For all MacDonald's admiration of Spenser, it is another important allegorist--John Bunyan--whom MacDonald suggests is his guide on this literary pilgrimage. Terms from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which any Victorian reader would have recognized, mark *Antiphon's* movement from medieval to Victorian poetry. For example, the period just preceding Elizabeth's reign is the "Slough of Despond" of the literary landscape (*Antiphon* 57), and following his discussion of Henry Vaughan, MacDonald tells readers that they must now make their descent into the "Valley of Humiliation" (266). Like Coleridge, who quipped approvingly that "The Bunyan of Parnassus has the better of the Bunyan of the Conventicle," MacDonald's comments on Bunyan reveal a similar tension between Bunyan's doctrines and his narratives (*Coleridge's Miscellaneous* 31). For example, in the first series of his *Unspoken Sermons* (1867), published one year before *Antiphon,* MacDonald describes Bunyan as one of the "[g]ood people" who have misunderstood

"faith" to mean unwavering assurance that leaves no room for doubt (*Unspoken* 98–9).[63] Nevertheless, he still believes Bunyan to be a "noble Bohemian of literature and prophecy" and a "brother" of Milton who "has uttered in prose a wealth of poetic thought" (*Antiphon* 267).[64]

In the context of these references, MacDonald's opening image of casting a pebble "at the head of the great Sabbath-breaker *Schism*" should recall the Giant Despair who threatens Bunyan's pilgrims on their journey to the Celestial City (*Antiphon* vi). In Part I of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which details Christian's journey, this giant captures the pilgrims and nearly convinces Christian to commit suicide. However, in Bunyan's second pilgrim tale, which follows the adventures of Christiana (Christian's wife), the pilgrims kill the giant and pull down his castle. In contrast to Christian, who endures his pilgrimage alone or, at most, with one companion, Christiana's pilgrimage involves a large company, led by Mr. Great-heart, a servant of the Interpreter who agrees to serve as the pilgrims' guide and protector.[65] By attempting to guide *Antiphon's* readers through a Bunyan-esque landscape, MacDonald implies that he will serve as Great-heart for the pilgrims who accompany him. This role is explicitly pastoral, for Great-heart's primary service to the pilgrims lies in continuing the training his master began, teaching the

[63] As a Particular Baptist, Bunyan espoused a theology very similar to the Calvinist doctrines against which MacDonald reacted so strongly against as a young man. For example, in an 1846 letter to his father, MacDonald writes that he "cannot agree at all" with Bunyan's belief in imputed righteousness ("To His Father" 10 Feb., 14).

[64] Despite these many points of connection, little work has been done on the influence of Bunyan on MacDonald's writing. One notable exception to this dearth is Kristin Jeffrey's explication of MacDonald's story "The Golden Key" in "The Progressive Key: A Study of Bunyan's Influence in MacDonald's 'The Golden Key."" (*North Wind* 16 (1997): 69-75.

[65] Bunyan's Interpreter is often identified as a representative of the Holy Spirit, although this correspondence is not exact in the way, for example, that the character "Good-Will" represents Christ in the same allegory. Particularly in Part II, allegorical representations of the Holy Spirit become increasingly complex as Bunyan struggles to depict the sanctification of the imagination. For more on the question of the Holy Spirit's presence in Part II, see Bear, [forthcoming].

pilgrims (and Christiana in particular) to understand the significance of their journey by comparing it both to the Bible and to the stories they have heard of Christian's earlier pilgrimage.[66]

The similarity between Great-heart and MacDonald is pertinent to a study of the relationship between allegory, imagination, and the Church for several reasons. First of all, Bunyan's Great-heart embodies Bunyan's ideal pastor, who equips the members of his congregation to interpret their personal experiences in terms of biblical types and narratives. As I have argued elsewhere, among her other roles, Christiana can be read as a personification of the human imagination, and Bunyan uses Part II to dramatize the sanctification of an individual's ability to interpret Scripture, experience, and nature.[67] Bunyan presents this sanctification occurring through the guidance of the Interpreter, Greatheart, and the pilgrims' frequent discourses among themselves. Bunyan's narrative of sanctification also supplies a picture of the Church that is almost wholly absent in Part I. Similarly, MacDonald hopes to guide *Antiphon's* pilgrim-readers to a renewed vision of the universal Church by examining lyric expressions of Christian experience.

In Part II of *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan undertakes a transformation of his allegorical strategies in ways that anticipate MacDonald's own call for renewed forms of allegory. Bunyan's shift in emphasis (from often-solitary justification in Part I, to communal support and sanctification in Part II) is accompanied by a noticeable shift in the mode of Bunyan's representation. In Part I, the names of characters and of places

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[66] In his personal correspondence, MacDonald often uses allusions from *The Pilgrim's Progress* to describe the experiences of his family and friends. For example, in a letter from 1877, MacDonald uses imagery from Bunyan's allegories to describe his wife and children, who were looking for a house in Italy: "Good news still from the pilgrims as I may still call them, for though they have found an ideal -- a House Beautiful they do not enter it till Monday" ("To Mrs. William" 258).

[67] See Bear, [forthcoming].

announce their spiritual significance explicitly both through names ("Hopeful," "Vanity Fair," etc.) and marginal glosses that provide biblical references and other explanatory notes. Indeed, modern readers may feel that Bunyan worries far too much about the "darkness" of his allegories.[68] In Part I, Bunyan tends to leave little room for ambiguity, and he warns readers against the dangers of the "fancies" of an unredeemed imagination. The allegory ends with a grim reminder of this danger, as the hapless Ignorance is dragged to hell from the very threshold of the Celestial City (153–54). Having crossed the river representing death on Vain-hope's ferry, Ignorance is Bunyan's representative of unredeemed human imagination, and his condemnation confirms Christian's accusation that the young man (whose views closely resemble the Quakers of Bunyan's day) has followed a "Fantastical Faith" rather than biblical truth (140). Ignorance's condemnation provides a sober ending to Part I, but there is nothing ambiguous about the reasons for his condemnation. Christian's earlier discourse has already outlined the flaws in Ignorance's theology, and Bunyan's description of the "shining Ones" who "bind [Ignorance] hand and foot" quotes Matthew 22.13 almost exactly, making it clear that Ignorance's lack of true faith renders him unfit for the Celestial City (154).[69]

Bunyan's method is somewhat different in Part II. As he depicts the sanctification of Christiana's imagination, he allows readers to experience this transformation by complicating his system of representation, mingling personification

[68] In his Apology to Part I of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan anticipates the disapproval of readers who believe that "dark" and "feigning" stories such as Bunyan's tale have often "drown'd the weak," and that "Metaphors make use blind" (5). However, he argues that the prophets and Christ used parables to speak, and that while the Apostle Paul tells Timothy that "old Wives Fables he is to refuse, / But yet grave Paul him no where doth forbid / The use of Parables" (6–7).

[69] Matthew 22 records one of Christ's wedding-feast parables. When a guest arrives at the feast without a wedding garment, the king orders his guards, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness" (22.13).

and metaphors with scenes Coleridge might call "symbolic." The text's interpretive key simultaneously becomes both more and less transparent. On one hand, Bunyan promises readers that Part II will make clear what was dark in Part 1 (163).[70] Thus the Keeper of the Wicket Gate is known only as "Goodwill" in Part I, while in Part II Bunyan notes that this keeper is Jesus (180). The names of many of the other characters blur the line between allegorical and ordinary. Christiana's sons, readers learn midway through the narrative, are named Matthew, Samuel, Joseph, and James, and Christiana's companion, Mercy, is a Puritan maiden as much as a personification of a Christian virtue.

At the same time, there are many ways in which Bunyan's allegory becomes more difficult to unmask. Unlike Ignorance's grim fate, all the pilgrims who reach the river in Part 2 eventually enter the Celestial City. Near the end of Part II, summons arrive for two of Great-heart's company, Mr. Dispondencie and his daughter, who for most of the story has been called "Much-Afraid." As they cross, "[t]he last words of Mr. *Dispondencie*, were, *Farewel Night, welcome Day.* His Daughter went thorow [*sic*] the River singing, but none could understand what she said" (287). This departure is much more complex than Ignorance's end. Instead of a clearly-identified vice dragged to hell according to the literal words of the Bible, Bunyan now offers a picture of two pilgrims who are moving from one state of being to another. Much-Afraid's name no longer fits her condition, and so she crosses the river only as a "daughter," whose singing remains a mystery to those she leaves behind. Arguably, this passage is as much a commentary on the Bible as Ignorance's end, for it dramatizes the promise of Revelation that those who

[70] According to Part II's introductory poem, Christiana's adventure is meant to reveal what Part I "left conceal'd," while any remaining obscurities will be clarified by the "nimble fancies" of good readers (Bunyan 163, 165).

overcome will be given a new name.[71] However, the correspondences between the narrative and the biblical text cannot be explicated as one-to-one correspondences. This image is, in many ways, much "darker" than its corresponding passage in Part I. Unlike Ignorance's demise, Much-Afraid's transformation cannot be explicated by a marginal gloss. Rather, her mysterious singing becomes a symbol for the "dark sayings" that Bunyan (and MacDonald) believe can govern "private fancies" by training the imagination within the Church. Coleridge was among the first to notice this depth in Bunyan's allegories, observing that Bunyan's narratives are so vivid that his characters are not merely animated abstractions, but more like real men and women who have been given nicknames by their neighbors (*Coleridge's Miscellaneous* 31). In Coleridge's system, this realism would mean that Bunyan was moving from allegory to symbolism, but MacDonald recognizes this shift as a renewal of the allegorical tradition.

Given the similarities between Great-heart's role and MacDonald's own desire to serve as a guide through England's allegorical renewal, it is hardly surprising that MacDonald literally took up the mantle of Great-heart in his family's theatrical productions of *The Pilgrim's Progress.* Between 1877 and 1889, MacDonald, his wife, and most of their eleven children performed in a version of *The Pilgrim's Progress* which George MacDonald's wife, Louisa, adapted for the stage.[72] These amateur productions were quite successful, and were attended by many members of the London literary

[71] Revelation 2.17

[72] Louisa MacDonald's stage adaptation was published posthumously as *Dramatic Illustrations of Episodes from the Second Part of* The Pilgrim's Progress *by John Bunyan* (London: Oxford UP, 1925). For a history of these performances, including notes on costumes, music, and venues, see Rachel Johnson's "Pilgrims: The MacDonalds and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*." *North Wind* 21 (2002): 15-25.

scene.[73] G.K. Chesterton, who saw these productions as a child, has commented on the appropriateness of this role for MacDonald, remarking that the similarity between MacDonald and the pilgrim-knight "seemed natural to me even when I was a boy" (Preface 9). Elsewhere, Chesterton suggests that MacDonald's fitness for the role indicates his unique position among late-Victorian writers. Appearing as Great-heart "would be possible with no other modern man," Chesterton claims: "The ideal [*sic*] of Matthew Arnold in spangled armour, of professor Huxley waving a sword before the footlights, would not impress us with unmixed gravity" ("George MacDonald and His Work" par. 1). In this observation, Chesterton is not suggesting that MacDonald's sensibilities were archaic. Rather, he observes a mystical and "elemental" quality in MacDonald who, unlike other modern men, remains essentially "unconnected with any particular age" (par. 1). While MacDonald was demonstrably a man of his age in many ways, Chesterton's description suggests that MacDonald possessed a unique ability to recreate the past in ways that offer an alternative to prevailing notions of history and religion. By writing fairy tales that give a "picture of life" with the truth of a "parable," MacDonald is, for Chesterton, one of the "morning stars of the Reunion" coming to Christendom (Introduction 13). MacDonald prepares the way for such a reunion in *Antiphon.*

[73] For example, William Butler Yeats credits these productions for suggesting how stage dressing can reinforce the symbolic meaning of a drama, rather than feigning realism (Yeats 4). Nathaniel Lew has argued that the MacDonald family performances have an important place in the lineage of Ralph Vaughan Williams's operatic version of *The Pilgrim's Progress.* Lew claims that "not only a chain of circumstances but a profound sympathy of spirit exists between the High Victorian devotional-pedagogical exercise and the postwar opera performed to usher in the Festival of Britain 1951, a festival season thoroughly modern in design and orientation" (175). Johnson records comments on the productions from Augustus Hare, Lewis Carroll, Princess Louise, and others (17–18).

Conclusion

While Bunyan, a staunch Dissenter, does not share MacDonald's hatred of schism, he nevertheless provides MacDonald with a model for using literature to reveal the Church Invisible as a community that interprets the truths of the Bible faithfully. In crafting his own parables in *Adela,* MacDonald models the kind of renewal of allegory he calls for in *Antiphon*. In all his work with allegory, MacDonald attempts to make Coleridge's extreme distinctions between allegory and symbol meet by emphasizing the Coleridgean premise that the Bible can use many forms of representation in order to check the readers' sense of interpretive sufficiency. MacDonald's commentary on allegory provides an important key to understanding his methods and aims not only in the fairy tales of *Adela,* but also in semi-allegorical works such as *Phantastes*. Enlarging *Phantastes's* idea of reading as a form of baptism, *Antiphon* depicts the English literary tradition as a house of worship in which each stone rests upon those laid before it.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Wherefore should I love books?": Seventeenth-Century Traditions and the Reclamation of Conscience

Physician-Poets and the Sickness of the Self

Near the climax of George MacDonald's historical romance *St. George and St. Michael* (1876), the Royalist orphan Dorothy Vaughan receives a visit from her cousin, the young physician Mr. Vaughan. As soon as she learns that Vaughan practices medicine, she insists that he visit her would-be suitor, Sir Rowland Scudamore. Scudamore lies ill in the turret-chamber of Raglan Castle, where Dorothy has sought refuge from the English Civil Wars. Vaughan eventually prescribes medicine for his patient, but his diagnosis turns to books before physick:

> "Have you no books about you?" asked Mr. Vaughan, glancing round the room.
> "Books!" repeated Scudamore, with a wan contemptuous smile.
> "You do not then love books?"
> "Wherefore should I love books? What can books do for me? I love nothing. I long only to die." (3:128)

Scudamore echoes, in a more cynical tone, Adela Cathcart's admission that "Nothing seems worth anything. I don't care for anything" (1:25). Mr. Vaughan's diagnosis, moreover, reveals that Scudamore's sickness comes from the same source as another of MacDonald's protagonists, the errant Anodos. "Will you allow me to interpret you?" Mr. Vaughan asks. "Shall I tell thee who hath possessed thee?--for the demon hath a name that is known amongst men, though it frighteneth few, and draweth many, alas! His name is Self, and he is the shadow of thy own self" (3:129). Scudamore's shadow-self, unlike Anodos's, is not visible, but Scudamore's scorn for literary traditions is but a darker

version of Anodos's ignorance of family history. Just as Mr. Smith suggests fairy-tale parables for Adela's ennui, Mr. Vaughan prescribes poetry as an antidote to Scudamore's contempt.[1] He first asks if Scudamore knows of "the sacred volume of the blessed George Herbert," but then, finding that Scudamore knows neither the verse nor the man, he offers some other lines which, though not from Herbert's *Temple*, are similar in tone and effect (3:131).[2] These verses, which Vaughan insists will make Scudamore's condition clearer to him, articulate their speaker's struggle with his own shadow-self:

> 'I carry with, me, Lord, a foolish fool,
> That still his cap upon my head would place.
> I dare not slay him, he will not to school,
> And still he shakes his bauble in my face.
>
> 'I seize him, Lord, and bring him to thy door;
> Bound on thine altar-threshold him I lay.
> He weepeth; did I heed, he would implore;
> And still he cries *alack* and *well-a-day*!
>
> 'If thou wouldst take him in and make him wise,
> I think he might be taught to serve thee well;
> 'If not, slay him, nor heed his foolish cries,
> He's but a fool that mocks and rings a bell.' (3:131)[3]

The speaker's response to the "foolish fool" within him recalls Herbert's use of architectural imagery to probe both the spiritual life of the individual Christian and the place of that individual life within the visible British Church and the universal, invisible

[1] Many of MacDonald's Victorian readers would have recognized the similarity between Vaughan's prescription and John Stuart Mill's description in his *Autobiography* (1873) of Wordsworth's poetry as "medicine" for the state of dejection in which he feared that there was no lasting source of happiness, not only for himself, but for mankind" (143). However, while Mill credits Wordsworth's poetic meditations for his restoration, MacDonald insists on a more overtly Christian idea of salvation, in which poetry affirms lasting happiness through the revelation of God to mankind through Christ.

[2] Mill credits Wordsworth with providing "a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared by all human beings" (143). MacDonald, through Vaughan, suggests that a better poetic medicine begins by challenging, rather than satisfying, the concerns of the self.

[3] The verses appear to be MacDonald's own. Mr. Vaughan says they are not Herbert's, and that he only found them (3: 131).

Church of Christ. Laying his fool on God's "alter-threshold," the speaker implies that he will only find relief within the Lord's temple and, by extension, within the congregation of the faithful. The effect of these verses on Scudamore is immediate. While he has met Mr. Vaughan's other questions and lessons with sarcasm, "[s]omething in the lines appeared to strike Scudamore," and he asks Mr. Vaughan to leave a copy of the poem with him (3:131). The poetry has a power which Vaughan's direct diagnosis does not, and MacDonald uses *St. George's* other characters to examine the causes and effects of this power.

That MacDonald answers Scudamore's self-absorption with literature is hardly surprising; indeed, it would be more surprising if he did not. However *St. George* is the only novel in which MacDonald makes a historical author of such salutary works a character in his narrative. This "poet-physician," whose visit marks the beginning of Scudamore's recovery, is Henry Vaughan himself, and his presence in *St. George* confirms many of the themes MacDonald has been developing throughout the novel's first two volumes, as well as in *Phantastes, Adela,* and *Antiphon* (3:125). Perhaps most importantly, Vaughan's cameo dramatizes one of the primary arguments of *Antiphon*, that literature challenges isolation and enables sympathy with the spiritual condition of another person. Scudamore and readers of *St. George* meet Vaughan not through quotations or allusions, but face to face, as "a rather tall young man of five or six and twenty, with a small head, a clear grey eye, and a sober yet changeful countenance" (3:126). During this personal encounter with his patient and readers, Vaughan tells Scudamore that "it is back to thy childhood" he must go in order to be free of his shadow-self (3:130). Here, MacDonald alludes to the thesis of one of Vaughan's best-known

poems, "The Retreat" (3:130), in which Vaughan's speaker laments the loss of his "angel-infancy" (line 2):

> When on some *gilded Cloud*, or *Flowre*,
> My gazing soul would dwell an houre,
> And in those weaker glories spy
> Some shadows of eternity;
> Before I taught my tongue to wound
> My conscience with a sinfull sound. (lines 11-16)

Vaughan's uses this poem to imagine his speaker's "retreat" to spiritual childhood, which would include the healing of his "conscience." The relationship between "The Retreat" and the dialogue MacDonald imagines suggests that Scudamore's conscience must be restored within the true (but perhaps invisible) Church of Christ, and that poetry that meditates on the interpretation of nature participates in this restoration.

However, Vaughan establishes this precedent for the literary cultivation of conscience with an important caveat. While acknowledging the power of the verses he has found, Vaughan admits, "Human words at least, however it may be with some high heavenly language, can never say the best things but by a kind of stumbling, wherein one contradiction keepeth another from falling" (3:130). Vaughan uses the "stumbling" and incomplete language of poetry to awaken Scudamore's "sense of requirement" for something beyond delusions of "his own merits," but the poet implies that when gathered together, such stumbling words can uphold one another and speak a larger truth (3:134–135). Rightly ordered, a literary tradition can reveal how the inevitable limitations of human language actually contribute to the unification of the members of the universal Church. In *St. George,* MacDonald tests whether the same logic governs the historical Church, or Church Militant, which MacDonald consistently portrays as incomplete in any single manifestation, but living and active when several strands of religious tradition

come together. This idea is, in essence, MacDonald's thesis in *Antiphon,* and Vaughan's influence in *St. George* allows MacDonald to dramatize *Antiphon's* call for a poet who can renew the tradition of Vaughan and Herbert in order to restore unity among English sects and churches.

Vaughan's own "retreat" involves both forward movement, as his poem progresses through its argument, and backward motion, as the speaker looks forward to his return--in death--to his former state. As a pretext for *St. George,* "The Retreat" indicates that MacDonald follows Coleridge in recognizing that a viable tradition does not merely attempt to return to an idyllic past, but recreates a problematic history as a way to address the needs of the present. Thus, while MacDonald admires many lyrics and allegories of the middle ages, he does not, like many in the nineteenth century, set his hopes on the revival of medieval aesthetics. Nor does he follow men such as Newman into the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, he turns to the history of the English Civil Wars. Rather than romanticize a return to the middle ages, a period of apparent ecclesiastical uniformity, MacDonald extends Coleridge's hope that the thinkers and writers of the tumultuous seventeenth-century can provide literary methods and religious ideas that magnify the songs of the true Church in the midst of violent discord. More specifically, MacDonald looks with Coleridge to Vaughan and Herbert for an idea of "conscience" that affirms, rather than challenges, the necessity of an individual's participation in traditions that reveal historical chapels within the universal Church.

Although MacDonald's efforts to establish the unity of the Church Invisible on the fissured ground of the seventeenth century seems idealistic, if not outright contrary to the history of the English Civil Wars, his turn to the past provides yet another creative

application of Coleridgean ideas about the value of literary traditions. Next to *Antiphon*, *St. George* contains MacDonald's most direct treatment of questions regarding the relationship between the universal and invisible Church of Christ, and the Church Militant in English history and culture. At the same time, MacDonald's emphasis on the sanctity of conscience seems to issue yet another radical Protestant license for individualistic faith. However, by adapting Coleridge's idea of "conscience" as apprehension of "the duty of love," MacDonald can argue in both *St. George* and *Antiphon* that conscience--if trained by literary traditions--can reveal the essential and enduring unity of the English "chapel" in Christ's universal Church.

Disputing over the Yule-Log: St. George and St. Michael

In Chapters Two and Three, we have seen a number of ways that MacDonald develops Coleridge's ideas about tradition and symbolism in order to revive the fractured English Church. While in his mature work Coleridge advocates a strong established Church of England, his essential (and perennial) concern is the idea of a universal Church as the synthesis of subjective knowledge or experience and objective truth, and in turn, with traditions, institutions, and texts that embody this synthesis and make the universal Church visible in particular times and places. MacDonald's own visions of this synthesis vary as he attempts to discern the relationship between the historical, literary, and conventional churches of England and the universal Body of Christ. This universal Church cannot be identified with any national or sectarian body, but neither can one enter it apart from the context of Christian history and community. In the early romance *Phantastes,* therefore, Anodos receives baptism yet only enjoys spiritual community within a Church that remains invisible, and his fellow worshippers are long dead. In

Adela Cathcart, Mr. Smith begins to hope that tired parish churches, such as Mr. Armstrong's, might become houses of true worship again. Both the church and the gatherings of the story club help bring Adela out of her apathy and depression.

In *St. George,* published nearly a decade after *Antiphon*, MacDonald looks to the reconciliation of an English Church through a historical romance in which "the bones of fact" are clothed in "the drapery of invention" (3:306). Taken alone, the facts of the seventeenth century suggest little hope for unity, but MacDonald's inventive drapery clothes these facts in a spiritual and imaginative interpretation. MacDonald argues that the schismatic seventeenth-century is, paradoxically, a crucial part of the tradition that can reunify Victorian England's scattered churches. To a greater extent than any of his earlier works, *St. George* shows MacDonald attempting an aesthetic recreation of the past in order to provide a vision for the future of English literature and religion. In *St. George,* MacDonald's methods of characterization and invention suggest that only in the context of tradition can an individual's conscience be preserved from the dangers of private fancies and self-absorption.

The fact that MacDonald ventures into historical romance in *St. George* is a reminder that in *Antiphon* and his other critical writings, MacDonald suggests that one way traditions thrive is for writers and poets to develop new literary forms that can embody the truths of human experience and theology. Translating an idea or experience from one form to another requires the kind of creative fidelity that produces valuable literary traditions, and the works examined in this study have revealed MacDonald's ongoing search for literary forms capable of renewing truths about the relationship between literature and the idea of the Church. In *Phantastes* and *Antiphon*, MacDonald

expands Coleridge's use of aphorisms in *Aids to Reflection* with the epigraphs of *Phantastes* and his antiphonal anthology. In *Adela,* MacDonald counters impoverished nineteenth-century notions of allegorical narratives with fairy-tale parables that reinforce the need for an interpretive community. In *St. George,* MacDonald adapts the conventions of historical fiction in order to test whether Coleridge's definition of conscience can provide viable grounds for ecclesiastical unity.[4]

In *Phantastes,* MacDonald plays with the boundaries between historical and imagined lives by surprising his protagonist with a fairy grandmother when Anodos expects to find factual records of his father's life and business.[5] As the appearance of "Mr. Vaughan" suggests, MacDonald attempts an even more ambitious fusion of history and imagination in *St. George.* While his main protagonists are invented characters, their fortunes recreate the historical plight of the English Church. In his novel, MacDonald follows Dorothy Vaughan and Richard Heywood during the years 1641 to 1646, spanning the first English Civil War.[6] Though childhood friends, Dorothy and Richard spend most of the novel divided by their religious and political convictions. Dorothy considers herself a staunch Royalist, loyal to the king and his established Church, and she

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[4] David Robb notes, for example, that while *St. George* might seem to be an imitation of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverly* novels, MacDonald's treatment of history is quite different from Scott's. Not only does MacDonald refuse to endorse one historical party over another, he presents "history dwarfed by eternity," unlike the Waverly novels, in which Scott makes "history itself a central dimension" to the novel (*George* 14–15).

[5] In a similar vein, Robert Trexler has argued that recognizing MacDonald's interest in the seventeenth century is crucial for understanding his last fantasy, *Lilith* (1895). Trexler argues that *Lilith's* protagonist, Mr. Vane is a literary descendent of the historical Sir Henry Vane. A seventeenth-century Puritan, Vane was the first governor of Massachusetts and established a legacy of remarkable tolerance: he supported Ann Hutchinson, for example, and helped Roger Williams obtain his charter for Rhode Island (50). As a symbol of MacDonald's "historical imagination," Vane becomes a figure through whom MacDonald tests the possibilities of an ideal society (52).

[6] In the novel's second chapter, Richard's father comments that "on the twelfth day of May last my lord of Strafford lost his head" (1: 27). Thomas Wentworth, first earl of Strafford, was executed in May 1641, meaning that *St. George* begins in the autumn of that same year.

sees the Puritans as men who "would tear their mother in pieces" (1:14). Richard leans to the side of Parliament and Puritans, admiring their efforts to "cast out of [the English Church] the wolves in sheep's clothing that devour the lambs" (1:15). When Richard decides to fight with the Parliamentary forces, the rift between them widens, for "Dorothy longed for peace, and the return of the wandering chickens of the church to the shelter of her wings …; Richard longed for the trumpet-blast of Liberty to call her sons together—to a war whose battles should never cease until men were free to worship God after the light he had lighted within them" (1:133–34). Soon after Richard's departure, Dorothy's mother dies, and she takes refuge in Castle Raglan, home to Henry Somerset, fifth earl of Worcester, and his family, including his son Lord Herbert, a scientist and courtier who becomes Dorothy's friend and mentor.[7] Though the Somersets are Catholic, their loyalty to the king wins Dorothy's sympathy. She stays at Raglan Castle until it falls to Parliamentary forces under Sir Thomas Fairfax in August of 1646. During her time there, Dorothy receives occasional news of Richard, but she does not see him until he sneaks into the castle to recover a horse Scudamore has stolen from him. Thinking Richard himself a thief, Dorothy raises the alarm that leads to Richard's capture. However, during his interrogation by Lord Worcester, Richard speaks with such conviction that Dorothy begins to love him. They meet again when Dorothy is captured while attempting to carry a secret message from Raglan to the king. Following Raglan's fall and the seizure of the Somerset properties, Dorothy returns to her own estate. Some months later, homesick for her happy years at Raglan, she rides out to see the newly-

[7] Castle Raglan, located in south Wales, was the home to Henry Somerset, fifth earl of Worcester (1577–1646), and his son Edward, Lord Herbert (1601-1667). During the first civil war, it remained one of Charles I's loyal strongholds. One of MacDonald's primary sources for *St. George* is Henry Dircks's biography of Lord Herbert, *The Life, Times and Scientific Labours of the Second Marquis of Worcester* (London, 1865) (3: 306).

ruined castle. She meets Richard there, and the two soon confess their love for one another and are reconciled.

While this summary omits many of the most entertaining episodes in *St. George's* three volumes--including a lion roaming the castle grounds, an exorcism, and a number of plots involving Lord Herbert's inventions--it does show that MacDonald uses Dorothy and Richard to examine how the values of the Reformation might actually establish unity among conservative Protestants, Puritan reformers, and devout Catholics. "Faithful foes" for most of the novel, Dorothy and Richard exhibit the best and worst qualities of the church parties they support, and MacDonald imagines their victory coming not in the triumph of one over the other, but in their reconciliation (3:220). Furthermore, while Dorothy and Richard initially align themselves with the rhetoric and demands of a particular party in the debates regarding church governance, as the novel proceeds, these direct historical associations give way to a more complex affiliation with England's literary and religious traditions as MacDonald uses *St. George's* narrative to transform English history into a future-oriented tradition.

Initially, Dorothy and Richard see little hope for reconciliation, in part because both defend their positions on the authority of conscience. Consequently, they each believe themselves to represent a religious party that cannot admit the other. During one fight, Richard reminds Dorothy, "You were seventeen last St. George's Day, and I shall be nineteen next St. Michael's" (1:15), and they soon take up these figures as their patrons, with Dorothy crying, "St. George for merry England!" and Richard calling on "St. Michael for the Truth!" (1:15). Dorothy, readers soon learn, is a reader of *The Faerie Queene*, and her cry echoes Spenser's description of Redcrosse as "Saint George

of mery England, the signe of victoree" (1.10.61.9). Invoking *The Faerie Queene* affirms Dorothy's Royalist and Protestant proclivities, but the association between St. George and "merry" England dates back to the middle ages. Nineteenth-century readers would have been familiar with the phrase not only from Spenser, but from the many writers who used the phrase to allude to a golden age of English culture.[8] These allusions were in turns sincere and sarcastic, but regardless of tone, the phrase acknowledged the desire for a tradition that makes the resources of the English past available to the present. Dorothy, therefore, affiliates herself primarily with a church party that sustains English traditions. Her faith is Protestant, yet not entirely estranged from the island's medieval and Catholic past. As Milton scholar Will Hale notes, the Church of England's relationship to its own history was one of the major points of conflict between members of the Puritan and Episcopal camps. While the Puritans believed the Reformation had established an essentially new church in England, abolishing the corrupt and "Romish" church, those of the Episcopal party insisted upon the Church of England's continuity with the past: "They did not believe that the Reformation had destroyed it and established a new one in its stead. It had been freed from the dominion of Rome and certain abuses ... had been abolished, but it was essentially the same church" (xxvii). Richard's response seems to

[8] The *OED's* entry for "merry England" provides evidence of the phrase as early as the fifteenth century, and the term was subject to both reverence and ridicule during the nineteenth century. Sir Walter Scott, for example, writes in *Marmion* (1808), that "England was merry England, when / Old Christmas brought his sports again" (303). Victorian writers often used the phrase "merry England" to allude to a medieval vision of English culture. Similarly, the illustrated magazine *Merry England,* established by Alice and Wilfred Meynell, was a Catholic periodical in which the editors sought "to revive in our own hearts, and in the hearts of others, the enthusiasm of the Christian faith" by publishing the work of William Morris, Francis Thompson, and others (qtd. in Brake and Demoor 410). According to *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature,* the magazine ran from May of 1883 to March of 1895 (Shattock 2962). However, many historians found the myth of merry England misguided, if not dangerous. Thomas Babington Macaulay, for example, condemns the idealization of the past associated with "merry England" in his *History of England* (1849), seeing in the notion an impulse contrary to "the progressive nature of history and society" (Banham and Harris 24). At the end of his *History's* first volume, Macauly cynically (but presciently) suggests that twentieth-century Englishmen will continue to locate England's golden age in the past, and to "talk of the reign of Queen Victoria as a time when England was truly merry England" (420).

follow the Puritan desire for a break with the past by calling for "Truth" over an allegedly corrupt tradition. Richard's patron, moreover is a biblical archangel, rather than a legendary knight, as though he wishes to imply his superior loyalty to the Bible.

However, according to English custom and tradition, George and Michael were considered to be joint patrons of chivalry during the Middle Ages, and near the novel's end, when Richard has begun to doubt the efficacy of the Parliament's war against King Charles, he asks Dorothy, "what can honest people do, while St. George and St. Michael are themselves at odds?" (3:229).[9] Dorothy, once so adamant concerning the exclusive rights of the Church of England, hopefully suggests that the saints "but dispute across the Yule-log," while "men down here, like dogs about the fire, take it up, and fall a-worrying each other. But the end will crown all" (3:229). In these final pages of their tale, Dorothy and Richard have come to recognize that the union of St. George and St. Michael would restore peace to England, and like the inhabitants of "The Castle" in *Adela,* they imply that the Church will only be visible in England through the restoration of the island's legends and traditions (3:229). Speaking in 1646, Dorothy's reference to the Yule log is a bold image of tradition, considering that the Long Parliament had banned all Christmas celebrations in 1644.[10] While Dorothy may intend this image to be

[9] A medieval knight pledged his vows not only before Mary and his personal saint, but also before "St. Michael and St. George, the patron Saints of chivalry" (Ware Cornish 365–366).

[10] According to Macauly, "The long Parliament gave orders, in 1644, that the twenty-fifth of December should be strictly observed as a fast, and that all men should pass it in humbly bemoaning the great national sin which they and their fathers had so often committed on that day by romping under the mistletoe, eating boar's head, and drinking ale flavored with roasted apples" (*History* 160). Christmas at Raglan represents the antithesis of the ban on merry-making, and MacDonald describes the celebration in glowing detail:

> Customs are like carpets, for ever wearing out whether we mark it or no, but Lord Worcester's patriarchal prejudices, cleaving to the old and looking askance on the new, caused them to last longer in Raglan than almost anywhere else …. And when, on the evenings of special merry-making, the candles were lit, the musicians were playing, and a country dance was filling the length of the great

a gentle affront to her Puritan friend, she also points to the ground for unity that MacDonald asserts is simultaneously theological, textual, historical, and personal: the Incarnation of Christ.[11] If the universal Church is Christ's mystic body, and the Church Militant continues the work of the Incarnation by serving as Christ's body in time and space, then Christmas is a perfect emblem and occasion for the renewal of this visible English Church.

Saint George and Saint Michael seem to have resolved their dispute by the novel's penultimate chapter. Readers watch as Dorothy and Richard ride homeward, so "[m]ighty in mutual faith, [that] neither politics, nor morals, nor even theology was any more able to part those whose plain truth had begotten absolute confidence" (3:301). Their union clearly announces hope for the warring religious factions in England, a hope that contradicts the actual historical record--a second civil war, ongoing religious strife, and, as MacDonald himself notes, a coming age of intellectual "irreverence and pride and destruction" (3:302). The crucial question of *St. George,* therefore, is *how* Dorothy and Richard come to share "mutual faith" and "absolute confidence" without persuading one another to change their ecclesiological or theological convictions. Like their patrons, Richard and Dorothy embody not only the conflict, but the mutual dependence, of Episcopal tradition and Puritan reform, and they act out most of their drama within one of England's last Catholic strongholds. In other words, MacDonald introduces all three

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> floor, … a finer outburst of homely splendour, in which was more colour than gilding, more richness than shine, was not to be seen in all the island. (3: 26-27)

[11] Christmas has a special place in MacDonald's fiction. Like many Victorians, Mr. Smith (the narrator of *Adela Cathcart*) takes comfort in England's traditional Christmas celebrations. He anticipates Christmas as a time when a "mysterious pleasure … begins to glow in my mind with the first hint, come from what quarter it may, whether from the church service, or a bookseller's window, that the day of all the year is at hand" (1:5). Above all other Yuletide celebrations, Mr. Smith claims, "I delight in listening to stories, and sometimes in telling them." It is this delight--heralded, significantly, by both church and bookseller-- that leads him to suggest that that a story-club might heal Adela's depression.

major strands of England's religious history into his novel, not to assert the preeminence of one, but to show how they can be woven together into a tradition that binds together a sundered English Church.

Vermiculate Questions: Party Spirit and the Insufficiency of the Intellect

Dorothy and Richard's association with the divided saints of chivalry announce that their reconciliation will depend, in some way, upon English traditions, but the novel is hardly an idealized return to "merry England." In terms of plot, Dorothy and Richard would have nothing to fight about if they both returned to the Catholic Church and took up residence at Raglan castle. MacDonald does not attempt such a conversion, though he does portray the novel's numerous Catholic characters quite sympathetically.[12] Furthermore, he sustains a careful tension between the Puritan and Episcopal values his young disputants represent. He shows the weaknesses of Dorothy's willing acceptance of authority, for example, by allowing her actual meeting with Charles I to shake her notion that "the king was a kind of demigod" (1:134). At the same time, he suggests the futility of the Puritans' attempts to cleanse the English Church through literal or intellectual violence. MacDonald makes it clear that Dorothy and Richard do not persuade one another with arguments, although they argue plenty, particularly in their early meetings. In the novel's first chapter, for example, Richard's attempts to speak of marriage spiral into a heated debate about politics, with Dorothy beginning the fight:

[12] MacDonald presents Lord Herbert, for example, as the epitome of a Baconian scientist. The "workman-lord" of Raglan, Lord Herbert represents a class of scientist who practices "divine mechanics," unlike the scientists of the following century, who established an age of "irreverence and pride and destruction, [of] wasting, defiling, scarring, obliterating, turning beauty into ashes, and worse! (3: 302).

> "I would know whom you choose to serve--whether God or Satan; whether you are of those who would set at nought the laws of the land--"
> "Insist on their fulfilment, they say, by king as well as people," interrupted Richard. (1:14)

These arguments anticipate the physical violence Richard witnesses in the Parliamentary army, and as the Roundheads gain greater control of England, Richard begins to wonder "what was all this fighting for? It was well indeed that nor king nor bishop should interfere with a man's rights, either in matters of taxation or worship, but the war could set nothing right either betwixt him and his neighbour, or betwixt him and his God" (2:121). Richard's doubts are typical of MacDonald's ideas about the dangers of the intellect lacking the influence of love, and as he seeks a solution to these dangers, MacDonald draws upon Coleridge's assertion that "Christianity "restores the *Intellect*" by "clean[sing] the *Heart*" (*AR* 191). Discussing the strife of the English Reformation in *Antiphon*, MacDonald writes that disagreement regarding doctrine "had its part in bringing out and strengthening this tendency to reasoning which is so essential to progress," illuminating error and rectifying obstacles to religious freedom (*Antiphon* 70). However, he also warns that doctrinal disputes can be edifying to the Church only when "religion itself"--not power, nationalism, or selfish ambition--is most important to the individual disputants (70). If those involved have not come to heed the duties of religion--foremost being love of God and neighbor--then " all reasoning upon [religion] must indeed degenerate into strifes of words, *vermiculate* questions, as Lord Bacon calls them" (70). MacDonald hopes his anthology will prevent such strife by making his "chief aim" the revelation of the "heart" in religion, "seeing that, although there is no dividing of the one from the other, the heart can do far more for the intellect than the intellect can do for

the heart" (4). The civil war, Richard realizes, might have political efficacy, but it can achieve none of the spiritual aims of religion.

In the same way, intellectual disputes might reveal real errors, but arguments cannot establish peace between Dorothy and Richard, nor among England's increasingly diverse congregations of Christians. While each party has its errors, MacDonald does not suggest that either side is entirely, or even mainly, wrong in their core values and demands. By emphasizing the fruitlessness of Dorothy and Richard's disputes, MacDonald hints at a resolution that would satisfy Coleridge's ideas of polar opposition and dependence. Through Dorothy and Richard, MacDonald shows the need for both "permanent" and "progressive" forces in English religion: Dorothy is concerned with religion as a bastion of order against anarchy, and she would have all English Christians "to be led by [the Established Church] about the paled yard of obedience, picking up the barley of righteousness" (1:133). Richard insists that the law is meant to make its children free, and he would surrender peace for war so that "the dragon of priestly authority should breathe out his last fiery breath, no more to drive the feebler brethren to seek refuge in the house of hypocrisy" (1:134). So long as neither sees the mutual dependence (if not identification) of law and liberty, then St. George and St. Michael will remain at odds.

MacDonald also undermines Dorothy and Richard's debates by emphasizing the immaturity of their convictions. He gives his young combatants extreme positions to defend, and the results are intentionally melodramatic. During their first argument, for example, Dorothy excoriates Richard not only for his Parliamentary sympathies, but for the fact that he is not even firmly rooted in those sympathies. He protests that he cares

"more for a smile from you than for all the bishops in the church, or all the presbyters out of it," but this earns Dorothy's scorn, and she calls him a "foolish boy" whom she shall "despise" if they speak further (1:16). MacDonald allows Dorothy to make a dramatic exit, but he soon undercuts her self-righteous indignation, noting that she "needed hardly, however, have treated [Richard's] indifference to the politics of the time with so much severity, seeing her own acquaintance with and interest in them dated from that same afternoon" (1:18). Earlier that day, she had been listening to a family friend describe "the arrogance of puritan encroachment, and the grossness of presbyterian insolence both to kingly prerogative and episcopal authority, … and her still sufficiently uncertain knowledge of the affairs of the nation had, ere the talk was over, blossomed in a vague sense of partizanship" (1:18–19). Richard, who leaves this fight determined to prove that he can be a man of conviction, plunges into church politics with equal or greater "enthusiasm" than Dorothy, and as he receives instruction from his father, a radical reformer, he becomes "a little angry with Dorothy for showing a foolish preference for the church party, so plainly in the wrong was it! … It was his duty to acquaint her with the fact that the parliament was the army of God, fighting the great red dragon, one of whose seven heads was prelacy, the horn upon it the king, and Laud its crown" (1:66–7). Not surprisingly, Dorothy objects to Richard's interpretation of this biblical image and charges him with the sin most easily leveled against radical Puritans: "the demon of spiritual pride has already entered into you, and blown you up with a self-sufficiency which I never saw in you before" (1:72).[13] Richard, in turn, accuses Dorothy of merely

[13] The image of the red dragon with the seven heads comes from Revelation 12.3. Among Protestants, the biblical image of the red dragon was often interpreted as an allegorical image of the Roman Catholic Church. Richard's use of the image links the high-church party to the supposed abuses and errors of Catholicism.

repeating the "swelling words" of the churchmen she admires (1:71). To some extent, both Richard and Dorothy are justified in their accusations, but their partisanship exhibits the partial vision and narrowness of the larger conflict, and MacDonald insists that neither understands one another entirely:

> To Richard, Dorothy appeared the dupe of superstition; he could not see the god that dwelt within the idol. To Dorothy, Richard seemed to be one who gave the holy name of truth to nothing but the offspring of his own vain fancy. (1:93)

Richard's judgment of Dorothy is typically Puritan in its conflation of tradition and "superstition," while Dorothy is equally conventional in her accusation that the radical Protestant has yielded to "vain fancy." Following this fight, Dorothy and Richard meet once more before Richard leaves for the war. Again they argue, and as Dorothy leaves the room, Richard's "vague fear that she would not come again grew to a plain conviction" (1:131).

Although both Dorothy and Richard believe that their parting at the end of Volume I marks a "final separation," MacDonald hints that reunion will be possible if Dorothy and Richard understand conscience as more than private or intellectual judgment (1:130). Richard is the first to defend his actions to Dorothy in terms of conscience. He hopes "that an eye at once keener and kinder than yours may see conscience at the very root of the actions which you, Dorothy, will doubtless most condemn" and accuses Dorothy of willfully choosing to see him in the wrong (1:128). Dorothy retorts that her judgment is no choice but objective truth, and that there is nothing "save my own conscience and my mother's love" she would not part with him to believe him honorable, but "[t]hat can never be—not until fair is foul and foul is fair" (1:130). Their argument distills the basic problem with appeals to conscience, whether in the seventeenth,

nineteenth, or twenty-first century. While Richard believes Dorothy is neither keen nor kind, implying a failure of both intellect and heart, Dorothy sees Richard actions upsetting the basic laws and values of her faith.

Both Dorothy and Richard recognize that conscience inspires action and guides belief, but neither can yet understand how they can hold different intellectual convictions and remain true to conscience. The development of conscience becomes increasingly important throughout *St. George,* but at this point in the narrative, Dorothy and Richard are still stymied in one of the central problems of the Reformation, namely, the fact that "conscience" was often used to defend wildly individual opinions or actions.[14] MacDonald remarks that Richard inherits many of his views from his father, Roger Heywood, a devoted reader of Milton, and MacDonald describes the elder Heywood's radical brand of Puritanism as a division "whose distinctive and animating spirit was the love of freedom, … the love of liberty with them not meaning merely the love of enjoying freedom, but that respect for the thing itself which renders a man incapable of violating it in another" (1:64). Though MacDonald's admiration for these reformers is clear from his summary of their position, he admits that this love of liberty could easily degenerate into "the wildest vagaries of speech and doctrine" (1:64). Milton, MacDonald knows, is an important figure in questions of conscience among the English reformers. In *Paradise Lost,* the Father explains to the Son that conscience will work alongside grace to enable men and women to choose both freely and rightly:

> I will place within them as a guide
> My Umpire Conscience, whom if they will hear,
> Light after light well us'd they shall attain,
> And to the end persisting, safe arrive. (3:194-97)

[14] As the terms and stakes of these debates suggest, concerns about the authority of "conscience" often mirrored similar uncertainties about the function of "fancy" as discussed above, pp. 125-28.

However, the "if" in "if they will hear" is considerable, and as Anthony Low has explained, Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* during a century of unprecedented anxiety about whether conscience delivers objective truth or subjective desires. Milton's description of "Umpire Conscience," Low explains, attempts to show that conscience is reliable because it has been placed in man by God:

> That was the traditional Christian belief, but it gained new importance after the Reformation, when authority shifted from the teachings of the church and the authority of the magisterium to the internal deliberations of the individual in his private relation to scripture and the Holy Spirit. Conscience has always been thought to be individual and interior. It is what I believe to be right, not what someone tells me to do. It has also usually been thought to be universal and objective. … But in the further growth of modernism since Milton, as belief in individual autonomy has led to increasing mistrust of tradition and authority, one of these two aspects of conscience has obviously grown at the expense of the other. (357)

With increasing emphasis on the subjective origins of conscience, however, came growing doubts about the reliability of conscience from both religious and secular writers. Thus, by the end of the century, Locke describes conscience in even more self-reflective terms, writing that conscience "is nothing else, but our own Opinion or Judgment of the Moral Rectitude or Pravity of our own Actions" (*Essay* 1.3.8). Conscience contradicts, rather than proves, the notion of an innate moral law, moreover, because "some Men, with the same Bent of Conscience, prosecute what others avoid" (1.3.8).

While Dorothy and Richard's squabbles seem to prove Locke's equation of conscience and opinion, the two also disagree about the relationship between conscience and the authority of the Church. This disagreement, though initially unresolved, actually points toward the possibility for unity. In one of their early debates, Dorothy asks

Richard why his conscience apparently leads him to reject the authority of "the true church." "The true church were indeed an authority," he replies, "but where shall we find it? Anyhow, the true church is one thing, and prelatical episcopacy another. But I have yet to learn what authority even the true church could have over a man's conscience" (1:71). The novel's conclusion might seem to vindicate Richard's radical answer, for when he and Dorothy meet again in the ruins of Raglan, she recognizes that she has misunderstood the nature of her dispute with Richard. Dorothy has been asking Richard if he is angry with her for lying when he intercepted her on her secret mission:

> "Not so, Dorothy, but there is one command in the New Testament for the which I am often more thankful than for any other."
> "What is that, Richard."
> "JUDGE NOT. Prythee, between whom lieth the quarrel, Dorothy? Bethink thee."
> "Between thee and me, Richard."
> "No, verily, Dorothy. I accuse thee not."
> Dorothy was silent for a moment, thinking.
> "I see, Richard,' she said. "It lieth between me and my own conscience."
> "Then who am I, Dorothy, that I should dare step betwixt thee and thy conscience? God forbid. That were a presumption deserving indeed the pains of hell." (3:295)

Richard's disdain for the "presumption" of stepping between a woman and her conscience is consistent with many of MacDonald's own defenses of liberty, including his argument in "The Fantastic Imagination" that the author of a tale must not mandate the meaning a reader derives from it.[15] In the same way, the curate of *Adela* asserts that Christ's redemption of mankind brings the human race out of the tomb and into the "hope that belongs to them, and for which they were created--the air of their own freedom" (*Adela* 2:176). In the context of these passages, as well as MacDonald's own free-church upbringing, one might suspect that Richard serves as MacDonald's spokesman in the

[15] See above, p. 8

novel, and that MacDonald's resolution to the ecclesiastical conflicts in England is a radically Protestant position in which each man or woman follows conscience above all else, even if it leads them into "the wildest vagaries of speech and doctrine."[16] This is, of course, the same pattern we have seen across MacDonald's works--signs of Protestant and "Romantic" convictions that initially seem to endorse the sufficiency of the individual.

Richard's speech on the sanctity of conscience sounds brave, but it does little to show how conscience becomes more than a person's opinions of his or her own actions. As the narrative proceeds, however, MacDonald accomplishes his recreation of the seventeenth century by dramatizing Coleridge's reclamation of the idea of conscience. Recognizing that many heirs of the Reformation abused the word "conscience," in the *Lay Sermons* Coleridge writes that English Protestants should be ashamed for having debased "the sacred household of conscience, into slaves and creatures of fashion" (*LS* 124). To rectify this abuse, Coleridge rejects Locke's conflation of conscience and judgment, and expands the Miltonic idea that conscience enables choice, arguing that "conscience is neither reason, religion, or will, but an *experience* (*sui generis*) of the coincidence of human will with reason and religion" (*LS* 66). Conscience remains interior, but it is not, like the fancy or imagination, a faculty that generates its own images or ideas. Rather, conscience is the recognition of "I' in relationship to a "thou," and this recognition emerges not from private judgment, but from the experience of

[16] Twenty years before the publication of *St. George,* MacDonald had written that while he has "no love for any sect of Christians as such -- as little for independents as any," there is "[o]ne thing is good about them -- which is being continually violated--that is the independence " ("To His Father" 16 Nov. 68).

"loving and being loved" (Harding 144).[17] However, the conscience must be trained and cultivated to recognize the dependence of "I" and "thou." Religion demands and enables this recognition of the self's relation to others, and fittingly, the most apt words Coleridge can find to describe this "testifying state" come from the Anglican liturgy: "The peace of God that passeth understanding (*LS* 66)"[18] Coleridge uses the biblical and poetic traditions of English worship to counter the conflation of conscience and opinion.

Coleridge's readers recognized the importance of preserving the objectivity of the conscience. Arnold, attempting to do this without the doctrine of a personal God, ultimately chooses scientific language to describe the conscience. In *Literature and Dogma,* he reminds readers that "God," from the point of view of science, is not a person but rather the tendency whereby all things fulfill the law of their being" (37). "To please God," therefore, means following a law that is found in the "conscience" and that is above either "wish" or "fancy" (38). In order to save the conscience from the vagaries of private fancies, Arnold must describe it as a kind of moral DNA that coincides somehow with "intuition," but not desire or fancy (217). MacDonald, on the other hand, insists that

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[17] According to Harding, Coleridge sees conscience as the ground not only of action, but of consciousness itself. For Coleridge, conscience "precedes and underlies consciousness because all consciousness is of or for an 'I,' which does not appear before the pre-conscious approach of a 'thou.' The first cognitive act-indeed, what makes cognition possible-is this original revelation (Harding 473). Harding traces these ideas to a letter Coleridge composed in April of 1818. In this letter, Coleridge argues that personality demands a ground that is distinct from the self:

> [This ground] is not what distinguishes us from others, but what makes us prize their interests above our own--the universal law or categorical imperative speaking through the individual and so enabling him to renounce his individuality, or rather his isolation. But where does consciousness begin? In awareness of another, or what we may call 'an I-Thou relationship', Coleridge suggests (Harding 144).

While Harding does not comment on the similarity of these ideas to Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, Philip C. Rule, following Maurice Nédoncelle, does, noting that Coleridge and Buber are two of the only thinkers to admit the priority of the "Thou" over the "I" into philosophy (Rule 51). As Coleridge maintains that the conscience is not a faculty for private judgment, but the "duty of love" that grounds true selfhood, so Buber asserts, "All real living is meeting" (Buber 11).

[18] Cf. Phil. 4.7.

a person's conscience can only develop within a relationship with another person, either human or divine. He echoes Coleridge's affiliation of conscience and religion as he describes the growing power of Richard's conscience, "which, through all the mists of human judgment, eyed ever the blotted glimmer of some light beyond" (1:135). Although readers never see Richard within a church, MacDonald foreshadows the importance of spiritual community by linking the development of Richard's conscience to his relationship with his father.[19] "To be trusted by such a father, to feel his mind and soul present with him" is far more powerful than Dorothy's arguments in developing Richard's conscience (1:135). Thus, the young Puritan who insists that not even the "true church" could have *authority* over conscience finds that it is nevertheless possible for one person to *influence* the conscience of another. Indeed, Richard's relationship with his father suggests that relationships and community cultivate the conscience, and the need for such communion anticipates Richard's later resolution with Dorothy.

While there is no doubt that MacDonald admires Richard's Miltonic defense of liberty, Richard alone is unable to offer a viable image of the true church in England. His dismissive question to Dorothy--"as for the true church, who can find it?"--summarizes the attitude of many radical and dissenting Protestants during the seventeenth century and MacDonald's own age. MacDonald turns to Dorothy, therefore, to provide a more complete answer to his question. Indeed, between accusing Richard of "spiritual pride"

[19] Harding observes that some of Coleridge's early writings contain fairly extreme statements regarding the extent to which one's conscience could be shaped by another person. He cites a passage from Coleridge journals of 1810 in which, in light of his recent estrangement with Wordsworth, Coleridge meditates in his journals on the powers of love. Addressing Sara Hutchinson, he writes, "I hold it therefore neither impiety <on the one hand> nor superstition on he other that you are the God within me, even as the best and most religious men have called their Conscience the God within them. But you, tho' existing to my senses, have ever abode within me - you have been, and you alone have been, my Conscience--in what form, with what voice, under what modification can I imagine God to work upon me, in which *you* have not worked?" (Notebook 13, fols. 320-1, qtd. in Harding 91-92).

and admitting that she has been at war with her own conscience, Dorothy's adventures fill the better part of *St. George's* 700 pages, while Richard reappears only periodically. Furthermore, over the course of these three volumes, Dorothy's symbolic role in the novel shifts. While in the early chapters she speaks and sees herself as a defender of the Episcopal party of the established Church of England, her story becomes more complex and interesting as MacDonald shapes her into a representative of both conscience and literary tradition.

The Conscience of the Heart: Literary Traditions and the English Church

If Richard's bold actions affirm the liberty of the conscience, Dorothy's experiences enlarge Coleridge's understanding of conscience and the idea of love. In his *Notebooks,* Coleridge writes of "conscience--i.e. my affections and duties toward others" and during her years at Raglan, Dorothy's conscience becomes less a matter of intellectual conviction, and more a sign of self-surrender that overcomes sectarian divisions. For example, most of the household at Raglan is Catholic, and "Dorothy had been educated in such a fear of the catholics [*sic*], and such a profound disapproval of those of their doctrines … as was only surpassed in intensity by her absolute abhorrence of the assumptions and negations of the puritans" (1:147). However, she becomes quite close to the marquis's family, including his son, Lord Herbert, and Lord Herbert's little daughter Molly. Each day, Molly looks forward to watching a certain stone horse spout water, not knowing that Dorothy controls the fountain. Each day, the child prays to the Virgin Mary to make the horse to spout. When Dorothy learns this, "an evil thought" rises in "the protestant part" of her mind, and she considers withholding the fountain so that Molly will doubt the efficacy of her prayers to Mary (2:68). However, "the rest of

[Dorothy's] being on the instant turned so violently protestant against the suggestion, that no parley with it was possible, and the conscience of her intellect cowered before the conscience of her heart" (2:68). With this double use of "conscience," MacDonald rejects the Lockean affiliation of conscience with judgment, and affirms Coleridge's notion of "Conscience, or the Duty of Love" (*Notebooks* 3231). Dorothy's rejection of her temptation to disappoint Molly is more than sentimental kindness, but obedience to Christ's warning in the Synoptic Gospels that "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17.2).[20] As Dorothy becomes more responsive to conscience through her "affections and duties toward others," the triumph of her "conscience of the heart" is one of the novel's most explicit accounts of religious division yielding to love. Dorothy's struggle follows Coleridge's assertion in *Aids to Reflection* that Christianity teaches its followers to trust only those thoughts and impulses that "*begin* by bringing the Feelings to a conformity with the Commands of the Conscience" (96).

Dorothy's development is essentially religious; at Raglan, she recognizes her duties toward others, and her behavior begins to follow biblical admonitions rather than second-hand partisanship. With Dorothy at its center, Raglan Castle becomes MacDonald's image of a revitalized and visible manifestation of the true Church in England. While Dorothy never abandons her loyalty to established Anglicanism, MacDonald's vision of the true Church transcends sectarian lines. MacDonald uses the castle's history to create a new tradition of unity based on conscience that is "the duty of love." Dorothy's behavior towards Molly is one of many hopeful images of conscience overcoming schism. Like the siblings in the parable "The Castle," Dorothy comes to see

[20] Cf. Matt. 18.5-7 and Mark 9.42.

Molly as a spiritual sister after she begins to heed her conscience. Through each of these episodes, MacDonald reveals that Dorothy's reactionary loyalty to the Episcopal party is an immature expression of a much more complex affiliation with tradition.

During her time at Raglan, Dorothy ceases to represent a threatened or powerless past, and begins to embody a living tradition. Even before he sends Dorothy to live at Raglan, MacDonald associates Dorothy with symbols of a history that has no power in the present. Her early meetings with Richard, for example, take place in an alcove of a garden on Dorothy's estate, "a circular patch of thin grass, rounded by a lofty hedge of yew-trees, in the midst of which stood what had once been a sun-dial" (1:9). This sundial, however, is broken, and the bower has "a time-forsaken look, as if it lay buried in the bosom of the past, and the present had forgotten it" (1:9–10). The narrator reminds readers that Dorothy and Richard were childhood friends, implying that this grove and its broken timepiece are a symbol of a past that has been consigned to decay. As Dorothy and Richard argue in this yew-bower, they form a picture of English churches divided by present concerns and dismissive of their common history. When Richard, in the flush of his newfound Puritan convictions, meets Dorothy a second time in the yew circle, he finds her "leaning on the dial, as if, like old Time, she too had gone to sleep there, and was dreaming ancient dreams over again" (1:67). Rather than pursuing these "ancient dreams," they argue again, and as Richard watches Dorothy leave, "he gave a great sigh and turned away, and the old dial was forsaken" (1:74). He comes to see the garden as an emblem for an inaccessible past, thinking it looks like "the grave of buried Time, for what fitter monument could he have than a mutilated sun-dial, what better enclosure than such a hedge of yews, and more suitable light than that of the dying moon?" (1:97).

Dorothy, meanwhile, "notwithstanding her initiative in the separation, was leaning as lovingly, as sadly after the youth she had left alone with the defaced sun-dial, the symbol of Time's weariness" (1:94). A sun-dial ought to record the recurrent patterns of time's passage and return, but MacDonald suggests that the true course of history--constituted of both movement and return--has been interrupted. Following their fights, the dial is no longer simply "ancient," but "mutilated" and "defaced," for Dorothy and Richard, by failing to renew their childhood friendship, have lost the ability to understand one another in the present. As a heartsick youth, Richard mourns for his lost confidence he and Dorothy shared as children, but insofar as he represents radical Protestantism, MacDonald suggests that Richard's loss of Dorothy dramatizes the pain the Reformers experience when their reforms require relinquishing religious traditions wholesale. At the same time, the picture of Dorothy "dreaming ancient dreams over again" foreshadows the ways in which her growing ability to synthesize past and present will eventually lead to her reconciliation with Richard.

Thus, while Dorothy initially seems to personify the party that defends the Church of England's status as the true Church in England, she is far more important as a figure of England's literary and religious traditions, and as an embodiment of the present's need for the past. Dorothy's stake in church politics is hasty and uninformed, but her connection to tradition is deep. MacDonald introduces her as the daughter of "Sir Ringwood Vaughan," and he could hardly have invented a better name to personify an organic or "developmental" conception of tradition (1:8).[21] As with the rings of tree, the outer layers of a tradition depend upon the inner rings, and the life of the tree depends on the growth of new layers that build upon the old. Furthermore, while a sundial is an

[21] See above, pp. 16-17.

instrument that measures time according to the movement of the sun, the rings of a tree provide an even more natural image of a living, sustaining historical record--a tradition, in other words--and of the need of this record for the life of the present. Before Dorothy enters Raglan, she acknowledges her advocacy of tradition, but she sees this tradition only in terms of the institutional church and conservative philosophies of kingship. Within the castle Raglan, however, the marquis and his family recognize her connections to England's literary traditions as a way to cultivate greater unity among England's divided religious factions.

Upon meeting Dorothy, Lord Herbert observes to his wife, "What an old-fashioned damsel it is!" "She has led a lonely life," Lady Margaret answers, "and has read a many old-fashioned books" (1:222). The term "old-fashioned" is consistent with MacDonald's increasing association between Dorothy and the past, but it is an ambiguous description of the books Dorothy actually reads. Among the books in Dorothy's home, MacDonald notes, were the New Testament, "Queen Elizabeth's Homilies, Hooker's Politie, Donne's Sermons, and George Herbert's Temple" as well as "a few of those precious little quartos of Shakspere, the first three books of the *Faerie Queene*, and the Countess of Pembroke's *Arcadia*" (1:139). None of these works, save Queen Elizabeth's *Homilies,* would have been more than fifty years old at the time of Dorothy's arrival to Raglan. While it is possible that Lady Margaret has very modern taste in literature, it is more likely that MacDonald wishes to emphasize both the literary methods of the works in the Vaughan library, and the value such "old-fashioned" works have for Victorian readers concerned by the sectarian divisions of their own century.

The volumes in Dorothy's library, however, are less important than Dorothy's literal and spiritual kinship with poets and writers. MacDonald uses these relationships to suggest that conscience--understood in Coleridge's sense of duty and affection, and shaped by literary traditions--can restore unity among Christians. For example, when Dorothy's mother worries about the violence of the impending war, Matthew Herbert, "the personal friend both of his late relative George Herbert and of the famous Dr. Donne" (1:8), assures Lady Vaughan that the rising generations will have a Coleridgean combination of "strong hearts and sound heads" (1:5). He is particularly hopeful for Lady Vaughan's "young cousins, my late pupils, of whom I hear brave things from Oxford, and in whose affection my spirit constantly rejoices" (1:5). These "young cousins" are the poet Henry Vaughan and his twin brother Thomas. Henry Vaughan's later appearance and treatment of Scudamore, therefore, is an example of the way poetry can be used to draw people away from self and toward participation in the true Church. To the extent that Henry Vaughan is a defender of the "Church Militant," Dorothy is not his patient but his kinswoman, and during their first meeting, "they fell into such a talk as revealed to Dorothy that here was a man who was her master in everything towards which, especially since her mother's death and her following troubles, she had most aspired" (3:127). These aspirations are never stated outright, but in the context of Matthew Herbert's comments, naming Henry Vaughan as the "master" of Dorothy's hopes confirms that Dorothy has been striving to become a defender of the Church, even if her early conception of that Church was narrow and reactionary.

Love Alone Can Interpret: The Triumph of Conscience in St. George

Dorothy's affiliation with "old-fashioned" books suggests Dorothy has begun to represent not only the literary traditions available to a seventeenth-century reader, but the tradition MacDonald wishes to present to his Victorian readers, including poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus, Dorothy's response to nature becomes an important index for the growth of her conscience because much of the English literary tradition takes the interpretation of nature as its subject.[22] At the beginning of the novel, Dorothy is like the broken sundial, a silent witness to the movement and meanings of nature. Before depicting her as a partisan debater, MacDonald introduces Dorothy as a young woman fascinated by the possible meanings of nature. While her mother and Matthew Herbert discuss their hopes and fears for the Established Church, Dorothy watches a thunderstorm, "rapt in the transfiguration passing upon the world. The vault of grey was utterly shattered, but, gathering glory from ruin, was hurrying in rosy masses away from under the loftier vault of blue. … A flame burned as upon an altar on the top of every tree, and the very pools that lay on the distant road had their message of light to give to the hopeless earth" (1:6–7). How much of this description belongs to the narrator, and how much describes Dorothy's own interpretation, is uncertain, for only as she

[22] Dorothy demonstrates a remarkable affinity for the natural world and its elements, particularly water. MacDonald imagines Lord Herbert as the inventor of a steam engine that controls the water at Raglan, including its moat and fountains. Dorothy becomes Lord Herbert's apprentice, and during his frequent absences "she sat at the source of all the streams and fountains of the place, and governed them all" (2:28). The "naiad of Raglan," Dorothy becomes a sister to the many wise women of MacDonald's fairy tales (2: 23). While in MacDonald's fairy tales a fairy woman intrudes upon history, in his novel, a "historical" figure becomes more and more like a character of legend.

makes herself at home in Raglan does Dorothy attempt to articulate the messages that nature conveys.[23]

When Dorothy does begin to discuss the message of nature, she reveals that she is struggling to understand the nature and scope of the true Church as it exists in England. Nature, in other words, provides Dorothy with her first uncertain symbols of ecclesiological unity. While walking with Dr. Bayly, Raglan's Protestant chaplain, Dorothy hears nightingales and is troubled by their apparent indifference to human troubles. She questions whether the birds can even be "English nightingales" to sing so sweetly while the nation is torn by civil war (2:29). Bayly suggests that it is better that the birds not heed the battle, and asks, "How would it be if everything in nature but re-echoed our moan?" Readers familiar with Coleridge's poetry should recognize this dialogue as a version of "The Nightingale," in which the speaker questions conventional descriptions of the nightingale as a "melancholy Bird" (line 14). Like Coleridge's speaker, Bayly rejects the idea that nature echoes man's sorrows, and Dorothy, after a short silence, follows the Coleridgean parallel further, concluding that "we must see in these birds and blossoms, and that great blossom in the sky, so many prophets of a peaceful time and a better country, sent to remind us that we pass away and go to them" (2:30). Indeed, this Dorothy seems to be responding directly to Coleridge, who addresses his poem to William and Dorothy Wordsworth, "My Friend, and thou, our Sister!" (line

[23] In *St. George*, MacDonald sees the interpretation of nature as a sign that a man or woman is within the true Church, just as in "The Castle," it is submission to the Elder Brother that transforms one brother's study of "astronomy" which previously had been "more of the character of astrology," into a true science. While he once observed isolated stars or atmospheric freaks, this brother now "might be seen preparing his instruments with that solemn countenance with which it becometh one to look into the mysterious harmonies of Nature. Now he learned what law and order and truth are, …[and] how the individual may find his own end in a higher end, where law and freedom mean the same thing, " (3:305-6). This redeemed astronomy entails not only the "harmonies of nature," but the paradox that an individual finds true freedom only in submission to a higher spiritual law--a paradox MacDonald believes guides conscience as well as interpretation.

40). Reflecting on the nightingale's song, Coleridge reminds Dorothy Wordsworth that they know the nightingale is not melancholy, for they have learned "A different lore: we may not thus profane / Nature's sweet voices, always full of love / And joyance!" (lines 41-43). MacDonald's Dorothy has also learned this lore, but Bayly finds her hope for "a better country" too grim, and assures her that "These evil times will go by, the king shall have his own again, the fanatics will be scourged as they deserve, and the church will rise like the phoenix from the ashes of her purification." Dorothy, however, cannot reconcile Bayly's vision of the future with her conscience:

> "But how many will lie out in the fields all the year long, yet never see blossoms or hear nightingales more!" said Dorothy.
> "Such will have died martyrs," rejoined the doctor.
> "On both sides?" suggested Dorothy.
> Again for a moment the good man stood checked. He had not even thought of the dead on the other side.
> "That cannot be," he said. And Dorothy looked up again at the moon. (2:29–31)

Again, Dorothy reenacts Coleridge's poetic mediation on the nightingale, recalling the speaker who, to soothe his crying child, took the boy into the orchard where "he beheld the moon, and, hushed at once, / Suspends his sobs" (lines 102-03). As though dreaming her ancient dreams again, Dorothy's concern for the "martyrs" on both sides suggests her growing conviction that the true Church is one, and that neither party in the war can claim to represent that Church exclusively. Dorothy's ability to see the moon and birds as "prophets" resonates with Vaughan's "shadows of eternity," as well as with Coleridge's confidence in nature's essential joy, hidden as it may be. MacDonald does not show Dorothy reading her cousin's poetry, and she cannot literally be a reader of Coleridge, but in a sense, she is an important "reader" of both poets because she applies the ideas from their works to questions about the true Church.

Dorothy's interpretation of nature shows the active transformation of her conscience. Dorothy's reading of nature Nature--the nightingales' song--provokes her sorrow over the civil war, but nature alone cannot provide with her with hope for a better country and the "peaceful time" of eternity. By channeling Coleridge's poem, Dorothy's original interpretation of nature is checked and modified. Coleridge's own literary tradition, therefore, directs Dorothy to see in nature one of the primary truths of Christianity by reminding her of the redemptive "lore" of love. MacDonald emphasizes the relationship between conscience, love, and interpretation by contrasting Dorothy with another woman in the castle, Amanda Serafina. Considering Dorothy her rival, Amanda misinterprets Dorothy's character and behavior, thinking her a "sly puritanical minx" who means to undermine Raglan's security (2:200). Amanda's interpretation is informed by malice, not the "duty of love." Speaking of Amanda, the narrator observes:

> Hate will sharpen observation to the point of microscopic vision, affording opportunity for many a shrewd guess, and revealing facts for the construction of the cleverest and falsest theories, but will leave the observer as blind as any bat to the scope of the whole, or the meaning of the parts which can be understood only from the whole; for love alone can interpret (2:200)

MacDonald attributes Amanda's hatefulness to her lack of a vital tradition. Unlike Dorothy, daughter of Sir Ringwood, Amanda is "a twig or leaf upon one of many decaying branches, which yet drew what life they had from an ancient genealogical tree" (2:196).[24] Both women are part of a lineage and tradition, but only Dorothy's connection

[24] One wonders if MacDonald might have had *King Lear* in mind when describing Amanda as a decaying twig. In the play's fourth act, Albany links his wife's wickedness to her violent separation from her family line:

> O Goneril!
> You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
> Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:
> That nature, which contemns its origin,
> Cannot be border'd certain in itself;

to the past enables growth. Her tradition, unlike Amanda's, teaches her to love, while Amanda is concerned only with the acquisition of wealth and prestige. Eventually, Amanda's hatred leads to her exclusion from the "church" within Raglan. When she secretly frames Dorothy in a plot against the marquis, Lord Herbert devises a plan to reveal Dorothy's enemy. His father the marquis "merrily insisted that it was a case of exorcism; that the devil was in the castle, and out he must go; … and what could be better for the church or the world?" (2:293). Amanda flees the castle, and her departure confirms what her behavior had already suggested--that the tradition that gives her life is not religion, but the bitter sap of selfish ambition.

The marquis's description of Lord Herbert's plot as an "exorcism" affirms that Raglan Castle provides an image of MacDonald's vision for the Church in England. Both Protestants and Catholics live in the medieval fortress, and while they have separate chaplains and services, both groups use the same chapel. Furthermore, while the inhabitants respect one another's consciences, this respect does not preclude earnest discussions about the nature of the true Church and its place in English history and society. One of MacDonald's sources, for example, Bayly's *Certamen Religiosum,* records the marquis's attempts to persuade Charles I to return to the Catholic Church, and MacDonald reproduces this dialogue almost verbatim in the third volume of *St. George.* Likewise, in Volume 2 Dorothy explains that she cannot accept the marquis's invitation to mass because attending a Catholic service would suggest she has "forsaken the church of my fathers" (2:269). The marquis, however, points out that she would in fact be

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> She that herself will sliver and disbranch
> From her material sap, perforce must wither
> And come to deadly use. (4.2.30-37)

While Amanda does not "disbranch" herself from her biological family line, she has no connection to the religious and literary tradition that sustains Dorothy.

returning to "the church of thy grandfathers" (2:269). Though she still refuses to attend mass, Dorothy does, in a way, make such a return, in that she becomes a loving and beloved member of the marquis's family.

Texts from the Bible and English literary history draw Dorothy into a religious tradition that extends beyond the Protestant scope of her home library. For example, Dorothy is often present for the religious lessons Lord and Lady Herbert give their daughter. These lessons include stories from the Bible and English poems (2:62). MacDonald includes two such poems, as old "as Chaucer's time," because he believes "that in understanding and coming nearer to our fathers and mothers who are dead, we understand and come nearer to our brothers and sisters who are alive" (2:64-65). One of these poems is a plea for the unity of the Church:

> Jesu, that art, without lies,
> Almighty God in trinity,
> Cease these wars, and send us peace
> With lasting love and charity.
> Jesu, that art the ghostly stone
> Of all holy church in middle-earth,
> Bring thy folds and flocks in one,
> And rule them rightly with one herd. (2:65-66)

Lady Herbert learned this "old-fashioned hymn" from her grandmother, who had in turn learned it from her grandmother (2:66). Just as Anodos discovers his role as an heir of his grandmothers as well as his grandfathers, so Dorothy comes to see that her conscience demands not only loyalty to the English church of her fathers, but sympathy with the Catholic church of her grandfathers and grandmothers. It is soon after hearing this poem that Dorothy decides she cannot in good conscience upset Molly's faith in Marian devotions.

On the other end of the ecclesiastical spectrum, Dorothy's attitudes towards

Milton provide another example of literature establishing sympathy through love and experience, rather than attempting to persuade through polemics. In one of her fights with Richard, Dorothy rails against a Puritan pamphlet "styled 'Animadversions upon--" (1:74). She "cannot recall the long-drawn title," but nevertheless she declaims the piece as "small in bulk, but large with the wind of evil doctrine" and "filled, even as a toad with poison, … full of evil and scurrilous sayings against good men" (1:74). The pamphlet, *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence against Smectymnus* (1641), is a polemic published anonymously by Milton, and Richard knows it well. He, of course, disagrees with her judgment of the pamphlet but recognizes that he cannot persuade her of its merits. Some time later, however, Richard receives a manuscript of Milton's yet-unpublished *Lycidas,* and upon reading it he experiences "an almost fierce desire to share with Dorothy the tenderness of the magic music of the stately monody, … to whisper to her that the marvellous spell came from the heart of the same wonderful man from whose brain had issued … the pamphlet which had so roused all the abhorrence her nature was capable of" (1:137-138). Richard's sense that a work from Milton's "heart," unlike the pamphlet issued by his "brain" will touch Dorothy is accurate. When she becomes accidentally trapped in one of Lord Herbert's inventions, Dorothy consoles herself by imagining that she is "like the lady in Comus, 'in stony fetters fixed and motionless'" (2:43). Dorothy does not realize that *Comus,* "that marvellous embodiment of unified strength and tenderness, as yet unacknowledged of its author," is also "the work of the same detestable fanatic who wrote those appalling 'Animadversions, &c.' (2:43-44). Thus, while Milton's poetry can establish sympathy between Dorothy and Richard, his polemical tract only alienates her from the Puritan ideals.[25]

[25] Dorothy is not the only inhabitant of Raglan who prejudices are mitigated by art. Dr. Bayly, for

Dorothy's growth in Raglan, where literature enlarges her conscience and shows her that "the church of her grandfathers" is much larger than she once realized, provides a considerable contrast with Richard's experiences as a soldier. He listens to many sermons while in the army, "but the religion which seemed to fill all the horizon of these preachers' vision, was to him little better than another tumult of words; while, far beyond all the tumults, hung still, in the vast of thought unarrived, unembodied, that something without a shape, yet bearing a name around which hovered a vague light as of something dimly understood" (1:151-52). This description recalls MacDonald's earlier description of Richard's conscience, which "eyed ever the blotted glimmer of some light beyond." The Puritan preachers, however, do nothing to enlarge the vision of his conscience. They have failed to fulfill Milton's hopes, expressed in *Areopagitica* (1844), that "this pious forwardnes among men, to reassume the ill-deputed care of their Religion into their own hands again" will empower English Christians to see truth, by freeing them from the "Prelaticall tradition of crowding free consciences and Christian liberties into canons and precepts of men"(1019). Dorothy's experiences, on the other hand, have affirmed Milton's confidence that "a little forbearance of one another, and som grain of charity" can bring men and women "into one generall and brotherly search after Truth" (1019). MacDonald, however, demands far more than a grain of charity from his seekers after

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example, agrees one evening to blow the bellows for Delaware, a blind servant of the castle whose one delight is playing the organ in the castle chapel. This kindness nearly causes the Protestant chaplain to attend a Catholic service, however, for "the good doctor had become so absorbed in the sounds that rushed, now wailing, now jubilant, now tender as a twilight wind, now imperious as the voice of the war-tempest, from the fingers of the raptured boy, that the reading of the first vesper-psalm had commenced while he was yet watching the slow rising index" (2: 38). When he hears the "voice of his Irish brother-chaplain, Sir Toby Mathews" begin to read, Dr. Bayly realizes his mistake and sneaks out of the chapel (2: 38). The earl, learning of this incident, thinks the whole thing quite merry, and his delight anticipates the narrator's suggestion that the music might have had some "share in the fact that the good man died a good catholic at last" (2: 38).

truth, and Dorothy's education in Raglan has taught her far more about love than Richard has learned on the battlefield.

When Dorothy and Richard meet in the ruins of Raglan, it is Dorothy, not Richard, who has a real hope for the unity of the Church. While she now recognizes that Richard was right to insist upon the sanctity of an individual's conscience, Dorothy has also come to embody a tradition that transcends the tumult of words. Again, MacDonald offers a qualified vindication of Milton's claims. After discrediting the effectiveness of polemical works, such as the *Remonstrants Defence against Smectymnus,* MacDonald does suggest, through Dorothy and Richard's renewed friendship, that "the perfection [of the house of God] consists in this, that out of many moderat varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes … arises the goodly and the gracefull symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure" (*Areopagitica* 1019). Raglan, which housed Protestant and Catholics, encouraging all divine knowledge, from medieval poetry to scientific advancement, was such a structure before its seizure by the Parliamentary forces.

In some ways, Dorothy and Richard's reconciliation provides a perfect picture of the Victorian Broad Church, whose leaders sought to balance "Tradition and earnest seeking of Truth" (Jones 4). However, he does not follow them into the marriage their final encounter foreshadows, and refusing to assert that the Broad Church is indeed the embodiment of the young lovers' reunion. Depriving Victorian readers of this picture, MacDonald invites his readers to imagine how they might build a house for the true Church in England. He gives them the ruins of Raglan as their building-blocks, hoping that to readers, as to Dorothy, it will seem that the castle's "desolation was gone … as if Raglan were rebuilt; the ruin and the winter had vanished before the creative, therefore

prophetic, throb of the heart of love" (3:292). As Dorothy's love has established her sympathy with her Catholic cousins and her Puritan friend, so also does it gives her a vision of a home in which Protestants and Catholics alike can work and worship. MacDonald has transformed the historical castle into a symbol of England's ecumenical tradition, making "the old resplendent, stately, scarred, defiant Raglan" not only "the grave of many an old story" but also "the cradle of the new" (3: 302). To Dorothy and Richard now falls the responsibility for cultivating those new stories, reviving and sustaining the tradition Dorothy encountered and embodied at Raglan. The young couple ride away as symbols of a tradition that can overcome the divisions perpetuated by violent rhetoric and loveless intellectual disputes.

In *St. George,* MacDonald demonstrates that literary traditions can train the conscience to grow from private opinions to the duties of love as they diagnosis solipsism, reveal England's complex religious "family history," and model the interpretation of nature. Dorothy's years in Raglan lead her into a chapel of the universal Church--a chapel constructed from poems, songs, and stories. This historical romance reveals that MacDonald continued to question the relationship between literary traditions and the true Church in England in the years after *England's Antiphon.* Returning to *Antiphon,* we see that in *St. George,* MacDonald's "drapery of invention" clothes not only the historical "bones" of seventeenth-century ecclesiastical debates, but also what he sees as the crucial facts of George Herbert and Henry Vaughan's poetry.

Dorothy Vaughan dramatizes the ability of literary traditions to quicken the "conscience of the heart" in a way that reveals surprising bonds of kinship within the Church Invisible, and in his commentary on George Herbert and Henry Vaughan,

MacDonald argues that only a vigorous literary tradition can overcome the mistaken forms of symbolism that are at the root of all religious schism. Throughout these chapters in *Antiphon*, MacDonald extends the pattern of Coleridge's commentary on Herbert in order to address the problems with Coleridge's own theories of symbolism. In doing so, MacDonald reveals the key to bringing England's religious "singers" into harmonies that do not obviate difference, but "keepeth another from falling" and herald the certain, albeit deferred, proclamation of "heavenly language," incarnate in the Word himself.

Their Dull Sides Vanish in Its Piercing Shine: George Herbert and the Limits of the Symbol

Although Dorothy's "St. George" refers to the legendary dragon-slayer, the title could be applied to "the blessed George Herbert," one of the novel's poetic patrons (3:131). Having died in 1633, eight years before *St. George's* story begins, Herbert does not appear directly in the narrative. However, his influence pervades MacDonald's presentation of both the plight of the English church and the spiritual health of individual characters. In the first chapter, Lady Vaughan alludes to "The Church Militant" to express her concerns about the nation's growing turmoil, and in doing so she introduces an important pretext for the novel's romance of religion and history. In "The Church Militant," Herbert narrates the history of the Christian religion as it has moved from its eastern origins westward. As he describes "Religion, like a pilgrim, westward bent" (line 29), Herbert makes a number of claims that find expression in MacDonald's narrative and anthology. For example, Herbert's assertion that "above all, thy Church and Spouse doth prove / Not the decrees of power, but bands of love" (lines 9–10) anticipates

MacDonald's vindication of conscience over intellectual compulsion through Dorothy's experiences with Richard and the Raglan community.

Most of the poems in *The Temple* describe these "bands of love" weaving and sustaining the *religio* of an individual, but in "The Church Militant," Herbert traces Christianity's binding love across history, and his poem anticipates MacDonald's own historical survey in *Antiphon*. As it moves through time and space, the love of the Church Militant binds together past and present. Upon reaching Egypt, for example, the Church "Made *Pharaoh Moses*, changing th' history" (line 42). In keeping with classical Christian typology, Herbert sees the Church transforming the past, supplying divinely-ordained heroes in place of tyrants. Herbert positions the Church as a body that moves forward by recreating the past in light of Christ's redemption. Raymond Anselment notes that this poetic narrative has important implications for the religious disputes of the 1740s, for Herbert presentation of the Church Militant emphasizes its relentless movement forward. Radical Puritan reforms, which sought to reestablish "apostolic purity" within the Church of England, are misguided, then, because they neglect the ordained movement of the Church Militant through history (315). MacDonald seems to share a similar vision both of the true Church's ability to transform the past, and in the need for an English "choir" that includes voices from all the ages of English Christianity. Thus, in both *St. George* and *Antiphon*, MacDonald attempts to show how the unity of the Church manifests itself through a carefully (and, MacDonald would say, faithfully) arranged tradition of texts and relationships.

However, Herbert also recognizes that "sin and darkness" have pursued the westering Church, and, as Anselment has explained, Herbert joins patristic writers and

many of his contemporary Anglican churchmen in believing that the degeneracy of the Church Militant is "the inescapable conclusion to be derived from the eschatological implications of both the typology and the westward movement of time" (313–14). Lady Vaughan, likewise, worries about how the rising generation will confront the reality that "sin and darkness follow still / The church and sun, with all their power and skill" (qtd. in 1:4).[26] Her friend and counselor, Matthew Herbert, agrees that "by the tokens the wise man gives us, the mourners are already going about my streets" (1:4). Nevertheless, as noted above, Matthew does sustain some hope for the continuance of the true Church in England, and he finds that hope neither in Laud nor in the reformers, but in the work of poets such as the young Henry Vaughan.

By articulating this hope, Matthew Herbert adapts another idea from "The Church Militant," that also grounds MacDonald's work in *Antiphon*, namely, the role of the arts in advancing and announcing the Church's transformation of history. Herbert follows the Church to "Greece, where arts / Gave her the highest place in all men's hearts" (lines 49–50) and where "Prowesse and Arts did tame / And tune men's hearts against the Gospel came" (lines 75–76).[27] By arranging his work as an antiphon, MacDonald relies upon this power of art to "tame" hearts in preparation for the Gospel.[28] Additionally, Herbert suggests that the arts might once again herald the renewal of the Church:

as before Empire and Arts made way,

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[26] Lady Vaughan quotes lines 272-73 of "The Church Militant."

[27] Herbert uses "against" in the now-uncommon sense of "with respect to, in regard to" ("Against," def. AI3).

[28] It is also possible that MacDonald may have had Herbert's two "Antiphon" poems (I and II) in mind when selecting the title of his anthology. The final lines from "Antiphon (II)," for example, resonate with MacDonald's emphasis on unity: "Praised be the God alone, / Who hath made of two folds one" (lines 22-23).

(For no less harbingers would serve then they)
So they might still, and point us out the place
Where first the Church should raise her down-cast face. (lines 83–86)

While MacDonald shows little interest in the witness of "Empire," he does attempt to prove Herbert's suggestion that the arts might still point towards the reappearance of the true Church. Not surprisingly, then, Herbert is one of the most important singers in MacDonald's antiphonal choir. By arguing that Herbert's poetry can correct divisive notions of religious symbolism, MacDonald's commentary develops Herbert's own description of the arts as harbingers of the true Church.

In *Antiphon*, MacDonald uses his chapter on Herbert to suggest several ways poetry might reveal where the Church has in the past and might once again "raise her down-cast face" in England. First, MacDonald reiterates the liturgical premise of the book, in which an antiphon prepares the congregation for the reading of the Gospel. In poetry, MacDonald argues, the most important thing is "Truth, Revelation," but in the order of time and appearance, "music" comes before a poem's truth. MacDonald describes music as a poem's "meaning in sound as distinguished from word—its meaning in solution, as it were, uncrystallized by articulation. The music goes before the fuller revelation, preparing its way" (*Antiphon* 174–75). In the creation of such music, "Herbert excels," but even more importantly, in terms of revelation, "George Herbert offers us measure pressed down and running over" (174). The unity of Herbert's form and content recreate the larger dynamic of MacDonald's tradition.

MacDonald also looks to Herbert as a model for the integration of heart and intellect, the lack of which is at the root of so many of the conflicts described in *St. George.* He notes, for example, that in many ways Herbert's poetry manifests a love

similar to the medieval lyricists included in *Antiphon's* first chapter, and he claims that "[n]o writer before [Herbert] has shown such a love to God" (178). However, by Herbert's day, "the nation had learned to think more, and new difficulties had consequently arisen. These, again, had to be undermined by deeper thought, and the discovery of yet deeper truth had been the reward" (178). MacDonald characterizes Herbert as a poet uniquely fitted to meet the needs of his age, for while the movements of his mind "are as the sword-play of an alert, poised, well-knit, strong-wristed fencer with the rapier," he has a "conscience as tender as a child's" (176). Herbert's conscience, which unifies intellect and heart in his determination to do God's will, allows the poet to reveal his "deeper thought": a corrective to misunderstandings regarding symbolism.

The misuse and misinterpretation of symbolism, MacDonald believes, is at the root of all religious schism, and it is by correcting such misinterpretations that MacDonald believes literature can restore the relational foundation of conscience. MacDonald's analysis extends Coleridge's concern, in *Aids to Reflection,* that the misreading of biblical symbols has perpetuated untenable doctrines such as substitutionary atonement.[29] While Coleridge relies on his distinction between symbol and metaphor to correct such misreading, MacDonald goes further, arguing that "there never has been even a living true symbol which the dulness of those who will see the truth only in the symbol has not degraded into the very cockatrice-egg of sectarianism (*Antiphon* 186). While agreeing with Coleridge's concern for the care of symbols, MacDonald simultaneously highlights a danger in Coleridge's theory of representation. If a "true symbol" is understood to be a living part of the whole truth it represents, then the symbol can easily become "more or less idolized, and the light within more or less

[29] See above, pp. 53-54.

patronized" (186). In Herbert, MacDonald finds a poet who answers this temptation. Both "true" (tautegorical) and "arbitrary" (allegorical) symbols can obscure the truth if they are venerated in place of that truth, for "men on all sides call that the truth which is but its form or outward sign--material or verbal, true or arbitrary, it matters not which--and hence come strifes and divisions" (186). He wishes instead that all "who delight in symbols" had "a power, like George Herbert's, of setting even within the horn-lanterns of the more arbitrary of them, such a light of poetry and devotion that their dull sides vanish in its piercing shine, and we forget the symbol utterly in the truth which it cannot obscure" (186). In this analysis, MacDonald sustains (with some qualifications) Coleridge's distinction between arbitrary and natural symbols, yet insists that this distinction is only valuable to the extent that natural symbols vanish more readily than artificial emblems or metaphors. Herbert often accomplishes this by using "homeliest imagery for highest thought," and for example MacDonald quotes from Herbert's "The Flower," which Coleridge once called a "delicious poem" (Idol 321):

> And now in age I bud again;
> After so many deaths I live and write;
> I once more smell the dew and rain,
> And relish versing. O my only light,
> It cannot be
> That I am he
> On whom thy tempests fell all night! (*Antiphon* 180)

Herbert uses the symbol of the flower throughout the poem, but the idea--Herbert's spiritual and poetic rebirth--shines through the symbol in words such as "write" and "versing." MacDonald continues to modify Coleridge's symbolic theories throughout his discussion of Herbert, noting for example, that symbols drawn from the natural world are most likely to "vanish" in this way, and that Herbert would have been an even greater

poet if he had used more natural forms, and fewer symbols drawn from "the works of man's hands" (187). However, MacDonald does not deny that arbitrary metaphors can be true and powerful symbols. Indeed, while he calls the conceit of Herbert's "The Pulley" an "oddity," he claims that its result--visualizing the way in which restlessness can lead the heart back to God--is "the story of the world written with the point of a diamond" (185-186). In his analysis of these vanishing symbols, MacDonald recasts the argument he makes elsewhere in *Antiphon,* that allegory must be renewed in such a way that poetry can once again symbolically conceal a spiritual truth in order to reveal it.

MacDonald claims that if readers could, like Herbert, love the truth rather than idolizing the symbol, "the sectarianism of the church would vanish" (186). This is a bold claim, and, as with his commentary on allegory, MacDonald both modifies and depends upon Coleridge's own work with symbols generally and with Herbert specifically. As early as 1809, in his important essay on "Method" in *The Friend* (Essay IV), Coleridge refers to "*Herbert*, that model of a man, A gentleman, a Clergyman," and regrets that modern readers have been blind "to the great general merit of his Poems, which are for the most part exquisite in their kind" (*TF* 45n). As John Idol has shown, Herbert's poems became "dearer to Coleridge's heart and mind" during his later years, as the poet turned increasingly to questions of religion and philosophy (317). From his scattered comments on Herbert in *Aids to Reflection* and *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge suggests that Herbert's poetry can supplement the development of the conscience and, in turn, the conscience's work as a catalyst for the forms of self-reflection that can guide readers back to the Church of England.

Despite going through eleven editions during the seventeenth century, *The Temple* was out of print from 1709 to 1799, and Coleridge inspired a renewed interest in Herbert that lasted throughout and beyond the nineteenth century (Armbrust 131). In *Aids to Reflection,* Coleridge praises one of Herbert's sonnets for "the purity of the language and the fulness of the sense" in the poem, yet notes that he includes it "for higher merits and with higher purposes," namely, cultivating the spiritual reflection and participation in the church that is the goal of Coleridge's work (24n). This sonnet appears in *The Temple* as "Sin (I)," and it describes the conflict between a Christian's "bosome sin" and the checks or graces God provides against such sin, including "Without, our shame; within, our consciences" (line 11).[30] Coleridge includes the sonnet in a footnote to one of his own "Introductory Aphorisms," and the poem illustrates the problems of subjectivity that Coleridge confronts in *Aids to Reflection* and that MacDonald attempts to resolve in *St. George.* Men are reluctant to undertake self-reflection, Coleridge writes, for fear of what they might find within themselves: "an aching hollowness in the bosom, a dark cold speck at the heart, an obscure and boding sense of a somewhat, that must be kept *out of sight* of the conscience; some secret lodger, whom they can neither resolve to eject or retain" (*AR* 24). MacDonald's Vaughan very nearly paraphrases Coleridge description of this "secret lodger" when he tells Scudamore that the demon "Self" must "be cast out and never more enter into thy heart, but remain as a servant in thy hall" (3:129). Coleridge's "comment" on his own aphorism insists that one of the chief duties of "conscience,"

[30] Coleridge does not use this title. In *Biographia Literaria,* he introduces the poem as "THE BOSOM SIN: A SONNET BY GEORGE HERBERT," describing Herbert as an "exquisite master" of "the language of nature and of good sense," that is, the style that characterizes the best English poetry from Chaucer to Wordsworth (*BL* 2: 93-97). In *Aids to Reflection* he calls the poem "Graces vouchsafed in a Christian land" (*AR* 24n).

therefore, is forming the habit of self-reflection, for an "unreflecting Christian walks in twilight among snares and pitfalls ... because he will not kindle the torch which his Father had given into his hands" (*AR* 25). By appending Herbert's sonnet to this aphorism and comment, Coleridge implies what MacDonald's Vaughan states outright: that books and poetry can, in their stumbling but beautiful language, reveal a reader's need for freedom from self, a freedom that comes from submission to "the duty of love."

MacDonald, like Coleridge, attributes Herbert's habits of self-reflection to his ability to develop a mode of symbolism that brings readers into the true Church. MacDonald concludes his study of *The Temple* by noting that "Herbert goes beyond all that have preceded him, in the expression of feeling as it flows from individual conditions, in the analysis of his own moods" (*Antiphon* 192). As Herbert uses poetry to reveal his own "peculiar love and grief," he provides a model for introspection that paradoxically leads the individual away from self-interest and into the congregation of the faithful (192). Thus, just as Coleridge trains readers to reflect in the context of reading the "elder churchmen and divines" assembled in *Aids to Reflection,* MacDonald notes that Herbert performs his self-analysis within "the logic of worship" (192). His poems, in other words, even as they are self-reflective, are prayers. This logic preserves Herbert from solipsism by strengthening his "simple regard to the truth, to the will of God, which will turn away a man's eyes from his own conditions, and leave God free to work his perfection in him—free, that is, of the interference of the man's self-consciousness and anxiety" (192). Once again, MacDonald's analysis of Herbert distills the total argument of *Antiphon*, so that Herbert's works, published as a literary "temple," demonstrate how the logic of prayer can make self-reflective poetry a "path to health"--

that is, freedom from self-consciousness--just as *Antiphon* argues that literary traditions can become chapels for reunification (192). Additionally, the truth MacDonald credits Herbert with knowing is essentially the truth of conscience as understood by Coleridge--the activity of the will according to the love revealed by the Christian religion. Coleridge may have seen Herbert "as one of the staunchest pillars in the Anglican Church" (Idol 317), but MacDonald, less concerned with the true Church as an established institution, adapts Coleridge's praise of Herbert. MacDonald presents the seventeenth-century poet as a writer whose symbolic methods and habits of self-reflection point to the possibility of the Church's renewal in England. In some ways, MacDonald may interpret Herbert's picture of the arts as heralds of an invisible Church even more accurately than Coleridge, for MacDonald accepts that the Church's progress in England may no longer reside primarily or exclusively in the life and development of the Established Church.

MacDonald's admiration of Herbert is yet another sign of his interest in sustaining Coleridge's work with literary traditions. Indeed, MacDonald deserves some credit for the steady growth of Herbert's critical fortunes during the latter half of the nineteenth century. C.A. Patrides calls MacDonald's chapter on Herbert "[o]ne of the most considerable essays in the history of Herbert criticism" (27), but the ideas shaping MacDonald's criticism on Herbert find their full expression five chapters later, in his study of Henry Vaughan.

A Kind of Stumbling: Henry Vaughan and the Future of Tradition

Many MacDonald scholars have observed MacDonald's admiration for Herbert. Raeper, for example, writes that "George Herbert was MacDonald's ideal in the realm of religious verse … for Herbert managed to combine form and sentiment perfectly, as well

as remaining a model pastor" (122). However, MacDonald's commentary in *Antiphon* suggests that even Herbert's accomplishments are incomplete outside of the tradition that includes other English poets, Henry Vaughan in particular. Even during Vaughan's lifetime, his poetry was never as popular as the work of Herbert, whom Vaughan admired and openly imitated. By his death in 1695, *Silex Scintillans* had already been out of print for nearly fifty years, and H.F. Lyte's 1847 collection of Vaughan's *Sacred Poems* was one of the first editions of Vaughan's work to appear in more than a century (H. Vaughan and T. Vaughan v).[31] MacDonald's study of Vaughan in *Antiphon,* moreover, preceded the first critical edition of Vaughan's poetry by several years, and its editor acknowledges his debt to MacDonald at several points in his edition.[32] Even as late as 1910, a writer for *The Nineteenth Century and After* names MacDonald among those whose research and analysis helped revive Vaughan's reputation (C. Vaughan 492, 501).[33] This study of *St. George* has already suggested the reasons MacDonald sought to introduce readers to Vaughan, and in *Antiphon* MacDonald places the poet upon "A Mount of Vision," from

[31] Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847) was an Anglican clergyman best remembered for his hymns, which include "Praise my soul, the king of heaven" and "Abide with me." His edition of Vaughan, "lovingly but most uncritically edited," went into at least one subsequent edition in Great Britain (1858) and was also published in America in 1854 (Grosart, *Works* xiii). According to the *Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue,* only one edition of Vaughan's poetry appeared in Britain before Lyte's. This book, *A Selection of Hymns, adapted to public, private or domestic worship*, was published in 1836, but the *NSTC* lists neither editor nor publisher.

[32] One of the first Victorian critical editions of Vaughan's poems, Alexander Grosart's *Works in Verse and Prose*, was printed "for private circulation" in 1871, three years after *England's Antiphon* (Grosart, *Works* i). At least twice in his edition, Grosart refers appreciatively to MacDonald's commentary (193, 257). Grosart also published an edition of George Herbert's work for The Fuller Worthies' Library, the same series that published his Vaughan, and in it Grosart expresses even more interest in MacDonald's commentary on the seventeenth-century poets. He praises MacDonald's ability to understand Herbert with a "characteristic insight" other critics lack, and repeatedly defers to MacDonald's assessments as "appreciative and reverent, and nevertheless critical" (Grosart, *Complete* lxx, lxxvi). Not surprisingly, then, J.R. Tutin, in his 1893 edition of Henry and Thomas Vaughan's *Secular Poems,* lists *England's Antiphon* among works readers should consult if they wish to learn more about Vaughan's relationship to other poets of the seventeenth century (vii).

[33] None of recent editors of Vaughan, including Rudrum, Martin, or Cummings, mention MacDonald's contributions to the revival of Vaughan's reputation.

which he offers his most powerful discussion of the relationship between the English literary tradition and the idea of a Church that both transforms and transcends history (*Antiphon* 251).

Vaughan stands at the zenith of *Antiphon* because he both advances the tradition MacDonald believes reveals the true Church's presence in English history, and prepares a way for that tradition to continue. MacDonald's discussion of Vaughan's poetry resonates with his fictional Vaughan's observation that human language "can never say the best things but by a kind of stumbling, wherein one contradiction keepeth another from falling" (*St. George* 3:130). MacDonald sees this kind of stumbling support in Vaughan's relationship with Herbert. He observes that Vaughan "consciously and intentionally" imitates Herbert, and that while Herbert remains the master poet in terms of artistry, Vaughan reveals thoughts that are amazingly "profound and just" (*Antiphon* 252). In other words, Vaughan "says more splendid things than Herbert, though he writes inferior poems" (252).[34] MacDonald uses the remainder of his chapter to develop this analysis of Vaughan's place in England's literary tradition, using Vaughan's texts to show in what ways Vaughan surpasses his model, and in what ways he leaves his own grand work unfinished. MacDonald is untroubled by Vaughan's imperfect realization of Herbert's symbolic strategies, however, because Vaughan, by leaving his work unfinished, makes a way for tradition to continue as later poets take up Vaughan's dazzling clues. MacDonald's analysis reasserts the nature and function of literary tradition as a way of recreating the problems of texts from the past. It also suggests another point of contrast with Matthew Arnold. While Arnold famously defines

[34] More vividly, MacDonald remarks that "If [Vaughan] can get his thought dressed, and thus made visible, he does not mind the dress fitting awkwardly, or even being a little out at elbows" (*Antiphon* 252).

"culture" as "the study of perfection," MacDonald uses Vaughan to suggest that it may be more valuable to find in tradition the hopeful witness of glorious imperfection. By detailing the stumbling splendor of one poet, MacDonald hopes to find clues that will reveal how a new poet might turn his or her own work to the ongoing cultivation of conscience and revelation of the universal Church.

The key to Vaughan's splendor, MacDonald argues, continuing the argument he began in his chapter on Herbert, emerges from his use of natural symbols. Despite his musical inferiority, Vaughan occasionally writes "grander lines and phrases than any in Herbert" because he "reveals more delight in the visions of Nature" than any poet in *Antiphon* (261). This delight, as Dorothy Vaughan's experiences have shown us, is not valuable primarily because of the value it assigns to nature, but because the ability to see "shadows of eternity" in nature bears witness to a person's participation in the universal Church. Vaughan's "The Retreat" is MacDonald's primary example of this delight in nature, and MacDonald writes that one need not share Vaughan's belief in a former stage of existence to recognize the truth of his poem, that "we have come from God, and bring from him conscience and a thousand godlike gifts" (255). As in *St. George,* MacDonald praises poetry for its ability to train readers to recognize conscience as a divine gift, rather than as a form of private judgment. In "The Retreat," MacDonald implies, Vaughan not only desires, but demonstrates, the possibility of a return to a purified conscience through the contemplation of "some gilded cloud or flower" (254).

Vaughan's use of natural symbols, MacDonald observes, ought to remind readers of Wordsworth's "Intimations on Immortality."[35] MacDonald describes Vaughan as "a

[35] Almost all nineteenth-century editors of Vaughan pointed to this similarity. Grosart, for example, writes of Vaughan's "personal interrogations and answerings on Nature and the God of Nature,

true forerunner of Wordsworth, inasmuch as the latter sets forth with only greater profundity and more art than he, the relations between Nature and Human Nature" (*Antiphon* 261). Wordsworth, whom MacDonald elsewhere calls a "high priest of Nature" sees God "manifested through the forms of the external world" (*Orts* 247). In this same lecture, MacDonald notes that when Wordsworth was a child, his "conscience was partly developed through the influences of nature upon him" (247), just as, in *Antiphon*, MacDonald credits Wordsworth with showing how the poetic contemplation of nature can produce "such holy moods as result in hope, conscience of duty, and supplication" (*Antiphon* 304) However, as MacDonald notes, nature's formation of the conscience--and Wordsworth's poetic testaments to that formation--are only partial, just as Vaughan's own dazzling poems were rough and incomplete in their revelation. MacDonald's commentary on Wordsworth, both in *Antiphon* and in other essays, present Wordsworth as kind of Old Testament "seer," feeling in nature "the solemn presence of the Divine Spirit," but never proceeding from that feeling to the Incarnation (*Orts* 247).[36]

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anticipative of William Wordsworth and Shelley" (*Works* xx). As early as the 1930s, however, scholars were questioning the grounds for this comparison, suggesting, for example, that while while nineteenth-century scholars saved Vaughan from obscurity, these "Victorian partisans … attached [Vaughan] to the skirts of Wordsworth's muse, hoping in that way to gain a hearing for him among lovers of *Tintern Abbey* and *Intimations on Immortality* (McMaster 313). More recently, the general assessment that Vaughan in any way influenced Wordsworth has been discredited (Bourdette 303). However, MacDonald actually reverses the relationship most "Victorian partisans" traced between Vaughan and Wordsworth by suggesting that Vaughan surpasses Wordsworth in the scope and depth of his vision of nature. Furthermore, MacDonald has little interest in the question of direct influence between Vaughan and Wordsworth. "Whether *The Retreat* suggested the form of the *Ode,*" he writes, "is not of much consequence, for the *Ode* is the outcome at once and essence of all Wordsworth's theories" (*Antiphon* 255). For MacDonald, the fact that each poet could derive such similar visions from nature suggests sometime more important than direct literary response, namely, a poetic apprehension of divine truth. Furthermore, MacDonald is less interested in Vaughan's influence on Wordsworth and more in his ability to inspire a new kind of poetic relationship with nature: "In any history of the development of the love of the present age for Nature, Vaughan, although I fear his influence would be found to have been small as yet, must be represented as the Phosphor of coming dawn" (262).

[36] Given MacDonald's explicit elevation of Coleridge and Vaughan, it is curious that Koopman, in her discussion of *Antiphon*, can claim that "MacDonald represents Wordsworth as England's spiritual savior, as he reads the redemption of poetry through Wordsworth's personal transformation" (21).

Wordsworth can sing with the Psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Ps. 19.1), but he does not complete the logic of

biblical revelation, in which the natural witness yields to the more complete revelation of the law of the Lord and, ultimately, the Word Incarnate.[37]

In light of Wordsworth's partial revelation, MacDonald's most moving descriptions of Vaughan come as he writes that Vaughan is not only the "forerunner" of Wordsworth, but "of some one that must yet do what Wordsworth has left almost unattempted, namely--set forth the sympathy of Nature with the aspirations of the spirit that is born of God, born again, I mean, in the recognition of the child's relation to the Father" (*Antiphon* 262). The language of being "born again" points directly to Christ's conversation with Nicodemus in John 3, and it indicates that MacDonald looks forward to a poet who can find natural symbols that will explore the effects of being born again and, implicitly, or participating in Christ's body, the Church. While poems such as Herbert's "The Flower" use natural symbols in this way, Vaughan turns "many leaves" in Nature's book " which few besides have turned," thus striking "upon a deeper and richer lode than even Wordsworth" (262). Thus, after noting the many similarities between "The Retreat" and Wordsworth's ode, MacDonald claims that Vaughan's poem offers one thing Wordsworth's lacks: "the hope of return" (256). Vaughans' desire to "retreat" into his "angel-infancy" paradoxically advances the Church's literary tradition, for such a retreat is only possible because of the Incarnation. MacDonald sees oblique signs of this hope in

[37] To use a New Testament parallel, a reader following MacDonald's assessment might class Wordsworth among the Gentiles the Apostle Paul describes in Romans 2; these, though not having the law, "do by nature the things contained in the law, … [w]hich shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness (Rom. 2.14-15).

"Night," a poem in which Vaughan's speaker finds God within "No mercy-seat of gold, / No dead and dusty cherub, nor carved stone." Instead, the speaker recognizes that these Old Testament dwellings are no loner necessary, for the "Lord" has come to dwell among mankind:

> [in] his own living works did my Lord hold
> And lodge alone,
> Where trees and herbs did watch and peep
> And wonder, while the Jews did sleep. (258)

As the Lord comes to dwell "in his own living works," nature becomes a witness that can "watch and peep / And wonder" at a revelation the Jews--and perhaps Wordsworth with them--miss. MacDonald points to Vaughan's stanza as a "glorious" example of a poet using his "love for Nature" to offer symbols that ultimately vanish in the light of the truth they contain (259). This truth is the hope of return, the hope of being "born again." Vaughan's poetry, MacDonald claims, shows that retreat is possible because "the movements of man's life are in spirals: we go back whence we came, ever returning on our former traces, only upon a higher level, on the next upward coil of the spiral, so that it is a going back and a going forward ever and both at once" (256). This picture of a spiral is the conventional image of time operating within the context of eternity, and MacDonald suggests that Vaughan's poetry reveals both the return and the ascent of one who has been born into spiritual childhood.

MacDonald's study of Vaughan is not only reveals MacDonald's insightful sympathy with the seventeenth-century poet, but reinforces the Coleridgean foundation of his hopes for the unifying power of literary tradition. Although MacDonald suggests that no poet has yet fulfilled Vaughan's deeper revelations, he hints that the one who does will be a poet who writes not only in the tradition of Vaughan, but of Coleridge. His total

assessment of Vaughan echoes Coleridge's description of religion providing a comprehensive vision of life. Vaughan looks at nature and sees "one thing everywhere, and all things the same—yet each with a thousand sides that radiate crossing lights, even as the airy particles around us. For him everything is the expression of, and points back to, some fact in the Divine Thought. Along the line of every ray he looks towards its radiating centre—the heart of the Maker" (*Antiphon* 262). Calling Coleridge a "sage," MacDonald implies that he might guide poets toward the fulfillment of Vaughan's ideas, for in Coleridge readers find "what we miss in Wordsworth, an inclined plane from the revelation in nature to the culminating revelation in the Son of Man" (307). For this reason, Coleridge's visions of nature can express an "ecstasy [that] is even loftier in Coleridge than in Wordsworth," as in Coleridge's "HYMN: *Before sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni."* MacDonald offers this hymn as an example of Coleridge's higher ecstasy, and suggests that the Trinitarian foundation for Coleridge's prophetic delight is even more apparent in Coleridge's poem "because we find it in his prose" (307). For one aware of Coleridge's overwhelming concern for the sustenance of the English Church in his prose, MacDonald's suggestion tightens the link between the spiritual retreat Vaughan craves and the ongoing, albeit faltering, progress of the true Church in England. Just as Vaughan and Coleridge recognize the need for a man to be born again, so also does MacDonald demonstrate that tradition itself must be born again as each new generation attempts to reveal the Church Invisible.

Conclusion

As he sustains and modifies Coleridge's elevation of natural symbols, MacDonald argues that the highest poetry in English leads to the transformation of conscience and

history through "the culminating revelation in the Son of Man." Such works--by Herbert, Vaughan, Coleridge, or others--illuminate the experience of one who has been "born again" in such a way that their symbols vanish in the light of that experience. Applying this idea of symbolism to interpretation, MacDonald asserts, could bring an end to schism. The characters in *St. George and St. Michael* enact a similar argument, for while Dorothy's initially exhibits a vague and intuitive connection to nature and the past, it is only when MacDonald brings her into literary traditions--through the songs and stories of "merry England" sustained at Raglan, the Coleridgean dialogue from "The Nightingale," and her increasing kinship with her poet-cousin--that Dorothy's conscience becomes capable of revealing her duty and that she, in turn, begins to see visions of the Church's reunion. The plot and characters of *St. George* fulfill Henry Vaughan's recognition that "[h]uman words … can never say the best things but by a kind of stumbling, wherein one contradiction keepeth another from falling" (3:130). Building on Coleridge's sense of mutually sustaining opposites, MacDonald suggests that Dorothy's desire for peace, Richard's willingness to fight for liberty, and the earl's "merry" faithfulness to Catholicism are all necessary elements in the true Church in England. Even doctrinal arguments can serve this Church if the arguers realize that they are only disputing over a yule-log, waiting for "the end to crown all" (3:229)

These "stumbling" and partial expressions of the Church Invisible uphold and correct one another, so that Richard's insistence on the liberty of conscience challenges Dorothy's unthinking acceptance of others' opinions. On the other hand, Dorothy's deepening identification with tradition provides a way beyond Richard's doubts that the true Church can actually be found in England. Furthermore, the characters most

concerned with the fate of the church in England--Dorothy, Richard, and the marquis's family--are intimately linked to England's literary traditions not only as readers, but as men and women who embody what they read. At the root of the novel, MacDonald wants to show that literary traditions, by bringing readers into contact with the past, enable love of neighbor and interpretation of nature in the present. These literary traditions are all stumbling forms that imitate the "heavenly language" that can speak perfectly; fittingly, the strongest description of religious unity MacDonald describes in *St. George* refers to the intimate tradition of gospel stories. As little Molly lies dying, she asks her grandfather to tell her the story of "the good Jesu, … and of the damsel which fell sick and died," and the narrator notes that "[t]orn as the country was, all the good grandparents, catholic and protestant, royalist and puritan, told their children the same tales about the same man" (2:72).[38] Here, MacDonald points beyond the faulty expressions of English Christianity to the unifying power of a biblical, narrative tradition that reveals the nature of Christ.

In the same way, by providing grand but imperfect poetic revelations, Herbert and Vaughan both advance the lineage of arts that herald the presence of the Church Militant, while at the same time illuminating the need for an ongoing tradition of writers and readers who can participate in a more complete revelation. By making these claims, MacDonald restates the argument he has pursued throughout *Antiphon.* For any poet, he writes, "the deepest man can utter, will be but the type or symbol of a something deeper yet, of which he can perceive only a doubtful glimmer" (*Antiphon* 257). Though MacDonald never claims this title for himself, his work in *St. George* and *Antiphon* suggests that he hoped he might strengthen the light of his predecessors' "doubtful

glimmer." In his theories of redeemed symbolism and self-reflection within "the logic of worship," MacDonald strives to follow Herbert, Vaughan, and Coleridge in leading from all his analysis to a revelation of the Son of Man.

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[38]The story Molly requests is the Healing of Jarius's Daughter, found in Mark 5.22-43, Matthew 9.18-26, and Luke 8.40-56.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

As he nears the end of *England's Antiphon*, MacDonald turns once again to Coleridge, the poet who, "more than any man in our times, … has opened the eyes of the English people to see wonderful things" (307). MacDonald praises Coleridge's ability to write prose and poetry that point toward the Son of Man, just as, in *Antiphon's* first chapter, he lauds the anonymous medieval poets who retell "the wonderful story on which their faith was built" with lyrics and allegories (5). MacDonald's attention to the "wonderful" quality of these works echoes Coleridge's own assertion in the *Aids to Reflection:*

> In Wonder all Philosophy began: in Wonder it ends, and Admiration fills up the interspace. But the first Wonder is the Offspring of Ignorance, the last is the Parent of Adoration. The First is the birth-throe of our knowledge: the Last its euthanasy and apotheosis. (*AR* 236)

Commenting upon this aphorism, Coleridge remarks that for "the great Mass of Mankind," wonder never grows into philosophy because "Custom and familiarity" obscure it before an individual is capable of reflection (237). MacDonald recognizes that literature can restore this wonder, making nature "strange" through various elements of style, narration, and symbolism.[1] The "wonderful" truths he traces in *Antiphon,* his short fiction, and his romances shape history into tradition in order to revitalize the idea of a spiritual society open to all readers. MacDonald imagines literary traditions as baptismal

[1] In "St. George's Day," an 1864 essay on Shakespeare, MacDonald writes "Now every one must have felt that somehow there is a difference between the appearance of any object or group of objects immediately presented to the eye, and the appearance of the same object or objects in a mirror… Everything changes sides in this representation; and the room which is an ordinary, well-known, homely room, gains something of the strange and poetic when regarded in the mirror over the fire" (*Orts* 102)

waters that make new birth visible, as family lines that prophesy through love and kinship, and as chapels that house both music and kerygma. In all these cases, MacDonald's literary traditions follow Coleridge's hope for aids that will strengthen "the duty of love" and correct self-centered or idolatrous interpretations of symbolism.

At the same time, while MacDonald believes that revealing the "antiphon" of the literary past can help resolve the problems of the present, he also looks to the future of poetry in relation to England's spiritual and religious doubts. In the final chapter of *Antiphon,* "The Questioning Fervour," MacDonald returns to the challenges facing nineteenth-century Christians, and suggests, as he does in his analysis of Vaughan, that the future of this tradition remains veiled. Just as Coleridge means for his writings to provide models for reflection, so MacDonald invites readers to imagine how future poets might find ways to continue the traditions that reveal England's "lost church." MacDonald believes that it is the duty of an artist or critic to make readers feel what they are missing. Writing of Shakespeare, for example, he observes that while "[m]ost authors seem anxious to round off and finish everything in full sight… Shakspere's [*sic*] tragedies compel our thoughts to follow their *persons* across the bourn" (*Orts* 131). As MacDonald hails an author from the past, or brings forward an imagined character, he does not "finish everything in full sight": Anodos ends *Phantastes* without meeting his ancestors or his Ideal face to face; Mr. Bloomfield closes "The Castle" before the Father has returned; Dorothy and Richard vanish into the sunset; and Vaughan still awaits the heir who will reveal what Wordsworth could not. Readers have reason to hope, however, that by following these poets and characters "across the bourn," they will find themselves at last within the Church that transcends all times and places. We may sense that

"twilight has already embrowned the gray glooms of the cathedral arches, and is driving us forth to part at the door," but MacDonald promises that for anyone who "returns to seek [the singers], the shadowy door will open to his touch, the long-drawn aisles receding will guide his eye to the carven choir, and there they still stand, the sweet singers, content to repeat ancient psalm and new song" (*Antiphon* 332). In the same way, MacDonald's criticism and fiction provide few final statements about the legacy of Coleridge, but they nevertheless demonstrate the perennial urgency of Coleridge's questions about literature's ability to form its readers, and the possibility that this formation could provide a solution to religious schism and other forms of isolation.

The most urgent of these questions, to Coleridge and to MacDonald, is whether a universal Church exists, and how literary traditions reveal this Church. This is, as we have seen, a question Arnold also attempts to answer, perhaps most directly in *Literature and Dogma*, in which he adapts Newman's "developmental" conception of tradition to assert that "[t]he infallible Catholic Church is, really, *the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming of things to come*; the whole human race, in its onward progress, discovering truth more complete than the parcel of truth any momentary individual can seize" (xxvi). Taken alone, this statement says little that MacDonald would reject, but Arnold's line actually emphasizes the crucial differences in their ideas. While Arnold believes the facts of religion have failed, MacDonald suggests that literary traditions point to truths that dwell beyond the realm of facts. Where Arnold would clear "fairy tale accretions" from the Bible with scientific readings that preserve only what is verifiable, MacDonald has argued that writing *more* fairy tales and parables will teach readers how to approach Scripture and other works where "more is meant than meets the ear."

It may seem surprising, therefore, that MacDonald includes a poem by Arnold in the final chapter of *Antiphon*. This sonnet, "The Good Shepherd with the Kid," was published just a year before MacDonald's anthology, in Arnold's *New Poems* (1867). Arnold's speaker contrasts "Tertullian's sentence" (line 2) which insists that Christ "saves the sheep, the goats he doth not save!" (line 1) with a catacomb painting of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, holding "not a lamb, [but] a kid" on his shoulders" (line 14). The painting is an expression of the "infant Church," who pitied the goats because she "felt the tide / Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave" (lines 7-8). The difference the poem describes has been one of MacDonald's themes throughout *Antiphon*: Arnold contrasts a theologian's "sentence" with the Church whose life is hidden in the catacombs and revealed through painting and poetry. Arnold's poem provides an image of a Church whose true baptism--the flood from Christ's grave--has been preserved in art but obscured by formal theology. At the same time, Arnold's understanding of salvation is quite different from that of MacDonald's, and while he may forgive the "infant Church" for the *Aberglaube* that promises a literal resurrection, he would not agree with MacDonald's own confidence in such hopes.

MacDonald gestures to these differences quietly, remarking that the poem is not the "most characteristic" of Arnold's work (*Antiphon* 329). Unlike "Dover Beach" (also published in *New Poems*), in which Arnold sounds the "withdrawing roar" (line 25) of the "Sea of Faith" (line 21), in "The Good Shepherd with the Kid," the speaker seems to find some comfort in the "flood" from the Lord's grave. MacDonald includes this more hopeful poem, but he also provides an antiphonal answer to Arnold in the passage that follows. While Arnold describes only the flood from the Lord's "grave," the next

selection, taken from Tennyson's *In Memoriam,* turns to one of the most miraculous of the "gospel-tale[s]," the raising of Lazarus (*Antiphon* 331). Tennyson's hopeful passage, in which "All subtle thought, all curious fears, / [are] Borne down by gladness" is the last poem before MacDonald's conclusion (331). Reminding his readers of their course "from simple song, lovingly regardful of sacred story and legend, through the chant of philosophy, to the full-toned lyric of adoration," MacDonald suggests that those who would defend the Church of Christ in English history must reveal to readers "wonderful things" that are the parents of adoration--catalysts, that is, to self-surrender and to worship (331).

While I have argued that reading MacDonald in light of Coleridge lays the foundation for a comprehensive theory of MacDonald's fiction and criticism, I have simultaneously revealed how much work remains to be done. A more thorough study of MacDonald's treatment of Spenser, for example, would provide a welcome complement to my own analysis of MacDonald and allegory, and might illuminate my suggestion that MacDonald influenced not only C.S. Lewis's fantasy-writing, but his influential commentaries on English allegories. Similarly, just as I have traced ideas of literary tradition from Coleridge to MacDonald, much could be said about how this relationship informs MacDonald's literary responses to scientific inquiry and knowledge.[2]

[2] A starting-point for such a study might be Colin Manlove's claim that MacDonald repudiated his studies of physics and chemistry, "allowing science no place in the discovery of worthwhile knowledge" (58). However, one need only read *St. George and St. Michael,* in which MacDonald describes the scientist and inventor Edward Somerset a practitioner of "divine mechanics" to realize that he values science that is not reductive or arrogant in its claims to truth (3:302). Even more explicitly, in *Antiphon* MacDonald insists that a true love of nature grows from the perception of "beauty counteracting not contradicting science" (332). MacDonald's views on science, and the ways in which his views respond to Coleridge's admiration for scientists in the tradition of Lord Bacon, is one of many possibilities for further research on the relationship between Coleridge and MacDonald.

MacDonald's hopes for the reintegration of literary and religious traditions should interest readers who are concerned not only with Coleridge's legacy in the nineteenth century, but also with the ways this legacy has shaped the field of literary studies. It is my hope that this study will encourage those who wonder how Coleridge and MacDonald, as part of our own literary and critical tradition, might suggest fruitful approaches to teaching and scholarship. For example, their shared concern for moral education and "interdisciplinary" analysis might supply the sense of purpose lacking in the assessments of the National Humanities Council. F.D. Maurice may have articulated this purpose best in his praise of Coleridge as one who teaches readers "how one may enter into the spirit of a living or a departed author, without assuming to be his judge" (*Kingdom* xiv). Both Coleridge and MacDonald ask readers to surrender notions of self-sufficiency and to explore, through reading, the possibility of meeting another person in spirit and in truth. Entering into another's spirit requires close reading of a text and a tradition, but it also demands that a reader approach a text as one willing to be changed by the encounter. The idea that literature enables empathy and renews language for the sake of something beyond itself removes it from the vulnerable pedestal Arnold erected, yet it reserves an important place for literature within universities that wish to advance the moral, personal, and social formation of its students. Arnold's sense of poetry's value is vulnerable precisely because his vision of the "church" that poetry should serve has no transcendent object of worship. Even for those who do not share Coleridge and MacDonald's religious faith, these theories of literature and tradition offer valuable insights into ways readers shape and are shaped by their reading. Perhaps most importantly, Coleridge and MacDonald attempt to sustain traditions in which ignorance

yields to philosophy and analysis, but only so that knowledge itself can give way to the renewed wonder that is "the parent of adoration." Literary traditions may be the channel for this wonder, but both Coleridge and MacDonald remind readers that the adoration is reserved for something much greater than the most wonderful lyric or tale.

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