

Revd John McNeill

First paper (attached), soon to be published in the US.

**Second paper to be published by
Cambridge University Press later this year**

John's introduction:

I have just submitted the first of my two essays based on my sabbatical presentation tour talk at Bude last year helping to mark the bicentenary of George MacDonald of Huntly's birth. G.K. Chesterton and Ramsay MacDonald, for example, chaired the centenary event with a large entertainment evening in the Pall Mall, London, so it was nice to stand on their shoulders even for a little while.

I attach the first essay which will be published in the U.S. very soon; the second is being published by Cambridge University Press later this year in the Cambridge Companion to George MacDonald.

As I have acknowledged local Church and Circuit support in the final footnote, I thought I would give everyone a heads-up and hope you don't mind.

At Eveningtime It Shall Be Light:
George MacDonald's Influence on Lillas Trotter



You were looking full at the truth, while I was in dark. I saw its light in your face, and believed, and turned my soul to the sun.¹

Over six summers ago, I discovered a direct connection between Lillas Trotter (1853-1928) and George MacDonald in a bungalow in rural Aberdeenshire. I was going through boxes of what could be described as an eclectic range of Victorian effects when I came upon an envelope addressed to MacDonald at St John's Wood Haslemere. Inside was a letter and watercolour which I immediately recognized as Trotter's handiwork.² After a short preliminary in her letter, she gets to her reason for writing. "When I was a child of 13 your 'Seaboard Parish' came out in the *Sunday Magazine*, & opened a new world. A year or two later I found through 'Unspoken Sermons' a God I had never dared hope existed (having been brought up in Calvinism) [...]." The letter was posted on May 14, 1903 from Algiers. Her *Diary*

¹ *The Seaboard Parish* (London: Tinsley, 1868), III, 15.

² My late Mother, Aileen McNeill, had introduced me to Lillas Trotter's spiritual writings and artwork as a child.

(1900) indicates she was in Bude during the first fortnight (4-17) of September that year.³ It was then that she made a watercolour of the Bude breakwater in an autumn sunset (see above) as she mentions in her letter “of the Seaboard Parish of long ago” giving it the title *At Eveningtime It Shall Be Light* which she enclosed with the letter, sensitively closing with the words “This needs no answer.”⁴

Evidently Trotter had discovered MacDonald was in failing health having lost his wife in January 1902, and was now being looked after by various members of his family including Greville, Irene, Robert Falconer, and Winfred. Her letter is written very simply and expresses deep affection and appreciation for the impact of MacDonald’s published work had on her throughout her life from the tender age of thirteen right through to her current age of fifty. In particular, his *Diary of an Old Soul* (1880) was “one of the books of all human books that has come with the most unflinching strength in troubled times.”⁵ As Rev Walton the narrator in *Seaboard Parish* says to his daughter Connie, “Dreamland, my dear. If it is right to thank God for a

³ *Diary* deposited in Special Collections, SOAS Library, University of London, AWM/AMB, Box 17.

⁴ The last entry in her *Diary* (1928), written in faint pencil (hard to decipher) as she lay dying, reads, “‘Open flowers’ (1 Kings 6:29). [...] The opening of flowers, the moment of mystery. ‘*Thy Face the heart of every flower that blows*’ [...] You can read Him in them [...] God the gladness of my joy [...] The oil of gladness above Thy fellows [...] and the shout of the daffodil’s golden trumpet.” SOAS, AWM/AMB, Box 18. Words in emphasis (mine) which Trotter put in inverted commas are from a line in the MacDonald poem ‘Somnium Mystici: A Microcosm in Terza Rima’, Stanza XX. *The Poetical Works of George MacDonald* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1893), II, 45-64 (64).

⁵ There is a scrap of a half pencil/half watercolour by Trotter (originally kept in a brown leather folder) of what looks like a tree-lined stream, beneath which she has written out in pencil the entry in MacDonald’s *Diary of an Old Soul* for May 6th. SOAS, AWM/AMB, Box 13b, Journal extracts, p.4a (circa 1896). The mss for MacDonald’s *Diary of an Old Soul* was deposited by MacDonald’s daughter Winifred in 1945 at Balliol College archives, Oxford, in memory of her late husband and graduate of the College Sir Charles Edward Troup, Balliol listing 418. Lady Mount Temple’s copy of *Diary of an Old Soul* is signed ‘Desideria Jany 1880’, Hartley Library Special Collections [Hartley], MS62/BR/58/19. MacDonald sent her a personal copy, along with her order for twenty copies for distribution, on Jan. 26, 1880; National Library of Scotland [NLS], MacDonald Papers, MS 9745, f.45f.

beautiful thought—I mean a thought of strength and grace giving you fresh life and hope [...].”⁶ That is what *Seaboard Parish* meant to Trotter.⁷

It is possible Trotter heard MacDonald speak at one of the Broadlands conferences⁸ which she does not allude to in her letter but she did at least attend the first of the conferences (July 17-23, 1874) which MacDonald did not.⁹ There is an undated letter of Trotter to Georgina Cowper-Temple, the hostess of the conferences,¹⁰ so they were at least on first-name terms, and the letter indicates she frequented the Cowper-Temples London town-house at 15 Gr. Stanhope Street (now Stanhope Gate), walking distance from her home at 40 Montagu Square in Marylebone.¹¹ MacDonald also convalesced at Stanhope Street while his family effects were being

⁶ *Seaboard Parish*, I, 171.

⁷ Eleanor Kirk also credits *Seaboard Parish* as being a source of strength and comfort in dark times, calling it “one of the most precious books ever written by mortal man,” adding, “There are very few writers who so blend the elements of truth and instruction with the beautiful and poetic.” ‘George MacDonald.’ *Baldwin’s Monthly*, April 1875.

⁸ He certainly spoke at the 1876, 1877, and 1879 conferences then the final three 1886-88. The Broadlands conferences stopped after the death of the host Lord Cowper-Temple in 1888. For more detail, see my essay on ‘MacDonald and Sermons’ in *The Cambridge Companion to George MacDonald* (forthcoming).

⁹ Anon, *Account of the Union Meeting for the Promotion of Scriptural Holiness, held at Oxford August 29 to September 7, 1874* (London: Daldy, Isbister & Co., 1875), 20.

¹⁰ Hartley, BR/57/72/13. Posted from St James Terrace, Winchester. She refers in the letter to an Ellice Hopkins’ book which could have been *An Englishwoman’s Work Among Workingmen* (1875) or her devotional work *Christ the Consoler, A Book of Comfort for the Sick* (1879). She also refers to her “shopgirls”, presumably girls who frequented a dining-room she had opened in Mortimer Street, Marylebone in 1880 for women only. Emily Kinnaid, *Reminiscences* (London: John Murray, 1925), 55f. Finally, Trotter mentions in her letter staying at Broadlands with her brother Alec, leaving her umbrella behind.

¹¹ William and Georgina Cowper-Temple [WC-T, GC-T] took the lease of this property on the east side of Hyde Park in 1872 after leaving Curzon Street; they later sold the lease and moved to ‘Shelley House’ Chelsea for which MacDonald wrote a dedication poem on July 2, 1887; NLS, MS 9745, f.109; Lady Mount-Temple (ed.), *Mount Temple Memorials* (London: Henderson & Spalding, 1890), 90f. British Library [BL], 010825.ff.7. Cf. James Gregory, *Reformers, Patrons and Philanthropists: the Cowper-Temples and High Politics in Victorian England* (London: Tauris Pub., 2010), 124, 172.

packed up at 'The Retreat,' Hammersmith, prior to rejoining his family at Villa Cattaneo in Nervi by Nov. 8, 1877.¹²

It is also possible Trotter and MacDonald knew each other through their mutual friend John Ruskin, but it is not known if MacDonald ever mentioned her in his correspondence, nor if Ruskin mentioned her to MacDonald.¹³ It is known that Trotter was introduced to Ruskin by her Mother when holidaying in Venice in October 1876, and she became one of Ruskin's art protégés in whom he held high hopes as a leading English female artist.¹⁴ Their relationship did not stop after her departure for Algiers in 1888 to establish a missionary-base, and she often stayed at his Brantwood home above Coniston Lake,¹⁵ even sending him a copy of the *Hymns of*

¹² MacDonald to GC-T, Nov. 3, 1877, NLS 9745, f.22-23; MacDonald to WC-T, Jan. 13, 1879, NLS 9745, f.36-37. *Paul Faber, Surgeon* (1879) is dedicated to WC-T.

¹³ Unlike Ruskin's 'relationship' with Rose La Touche in which George and Louisa MacDonald became both intimately involved. Cf. Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Later Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 234ff. Four days after Rose died on May 26, 1875, MacDonald wrote a consoling letter to Ruskin, saying of her, "the Psyche is aloft". MacDonald to Ruskin, Great Tangle Manor, May 30, 1875; Yale b.18, f.458. Ruskin replied, "she is only gone where the hawthorn blossoms go". Corpus Christi College, Oxford, July 2, 1875; Yale b.18, f.473. By Oct. 7, 1875, Ruskin had been given a suite of rooms at Broadlands for his home-base, probably in the Bachelor's Wing of the house (now destroyed), meantime commuting to Oxford for his professorial duties. Ruskin to GC-T, Oct. 5, 1875, in John L. Bradey, ed., *The Letters of John Ruskin to Lord and Lady Mount-Temple* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1964), 361; Joan Evans & John H. Whitehouse, eds., *The Diaries of John Ruskin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), III, 864; Van Akin Burd, *Ruskin, Lady Mount-Temple and the Spiritualists: An Episode in Broadlands History* (London: Brentham Press, 1982), 24.

¹⁴ John Ruskin, *The Art of England: Lectures given in Oxford*, 2nd ed. (Orpington: George Allen, 1887), 24-6. Liliass's Mother sent a little note to Ruskin headed "The Grand Hotel, Venice, October 1876" stating "Mrs. Alex. Trotter has the pleasure of sending Professor Ruskin her daughter's water-colours. [...] if Mrs. Trotter could have Professor's Ruskin's opinion [of them], it would be most valuable." I.R. Govan Stewart, *The Love that was Stronger: Liliass Trotter of Algiers* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), 14.

¹⁵ In June 1885, for example, Liliass stayed a fortnight at Brantwood along with her siblings Alec and Minnie, where she read aloud Ruskin's letters to him before morning class. Blanche A.F. Pigott, *I. Liliass Trotter* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1929), 13. There are thirty-six extant letters from Ruskin to Trotter (1879-1887) preserved in the Henry Ransom Center, University of Texas, John Ruskin Collection, MS_3654, container 2.8.

Ter Steegen, Suso and Others in July 1889, less than six months before Ruskin's death in early 1900.¹⁶

The fact that Trotter credits MacDonald for “rescuing her from Calvinism” at such a young age is an unknown fact in both their biographies. This may have happened with a theological reading of MacDonald's *Seaboard Parish* with its references to Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Herbert, Milton, Wordsworth and of course Ruskin's *Modern Painters* which appear throughout the three books. Evidently MacDonald was a major source and inspiration to Trotter, and her letter acknowledges that debt.

To set the scene, Summer 1867 saw the MacDonald family relocating to Bude on the north Cornish coast, initially Louisa with Lily, Greville, Ronald and MacKay going on their own by train to Bideford on the Cornish/Devon border during the third week of June, then MacDonald rejoined them along with the rest of their children in Bude from early August where they took ‘East Cottage’ as their holiday-base at the canal end of town next door to Sir Thomas Acland's¹⁷ holiday home, now called ‘Efford Cottage,’ under whose invitation they had come.

They were also joined by MacDonald's stepmother Margaret and his sister Jeannie,¹⁸ followed by their social philanthropist friend Octavia Hill as arranged by

¹⁶ Book edited by Frances Bevan (London: Nisbet & Co., 1894), copy inserted with a presentation letter from Trotter to Ruskin, which she signs off, “Always yours with grateful & loving memories”. Now deposited in the Ruskin Library, Lancaster, Ruskin Books A3, 13c.

¹⁷ Acland was a friend of Ruskin so there is a strong likelihood Ruskin cemented the relationship between Acland and MacDonald hence MacDonald becoming Acland's guest. See ‘Ruskin’ references in Arthur H.D. Acland, ed., *Memoir and Letters of the Right Honourable Sir Thomas Dyke Acland* (London: Private Circulation, 1902).

¹⁸ MacDonald to Louisa, June 1867—“Tell me how you met my Mother & Jeanie”, Yale b.8, f.245. Louisa to MacDonald, July 1867—“Mother is so kind & good. Ditto Jeannie”, Yale b.6, f.203. Later in August 1884, Margaret rejoined Louisa for a holiday in the West Cottage in Bude along with Winifred and the Sings (Louisa's sister's family) while MacDonald was with his cousin at ‘The Farm’ in Huntly.

Ruskin.¹⁹ The holiday included a trip to see Tintagel Castle²⁰ which MacDonald describes in *Seaboard Parish* along with the parish church of Kilkhampton when MacDonald visited the poet Robert Hawker of Morwenstow nearby. Before the end of September, Louisa took Greville, Ronald, and baby MacKay with her back to London while MacDonald and the rest of the family stayed on until October 8 allowing him two months in effect to work on *Seaboard Parish*.²¹ MacDonald was still in Bude when *Seaboard Parish* began to be serialized in the *Sunday Magazine* on October 1st; its monthly serialization then ran through to September 1, 1868. It is likely, therefore, that Book I was all written in context in Bude.

Various MacDonald biographers contend MacDonald “took” the parish in Kilkhampton and preached there while staying in Bude,²² but I can confirm this was not the case having checked the Parish registers. Not being in Anglican Holy Orders would have prevented him from doing so in any case. However, his story typically is very much rooted in the locality, with many of the features described in *Seaboard Parish* still extant, including ‘Acland’s Cottage’ built into the rock on three levels which becomes the parsonage in the story; the Kilkhampton Church which he relocates to Bude from six miles away; the breakwater with ‘Tommy’s Pit’ still open to the elements; and the ‘Bishop’s Pool’ in Upper Clapton.²³ What was particularly moving for me was literally standing in what became ‘Connie’s room’ at ‘Acland’s Cottage’ with the study next door, up a little staircase from the second level of the

¹⁹ Octavia Hill to Mary Harris, Aug. 11, 1867, in Emily S. Maurice, ed., *Octavia Hill: Early Ideals* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928), 83; cf. Ruskin to MacDonald, Sept. 3, 1867, Yale b.18, f.467. Notably Octavia helped Greville with his Latin grammar difficulties at the Bude breakwater. Greville MacDonald, *George MacDonald and His Wife* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924), 368f.; *ibid.*, *Reminiscences of a Specialist* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932), 34.

²⁰ MacDonald to an unidentified woman, Aug. 3, 1869—“My wife [Louisa] says it was the driver of our coach from Bude to Tintagel that told us the story”. *Wingfold* #90 (Spring 2015), 52.

²¹ He also spent time finishing off the final draft of *Guild Court: A London Story* ready for publication as a triple-decker. Meanwhile. Louisa was left to almost arrange a house removal single-handedly, with all the extra costs involved, from 12 Earles Terrace to ‘The Retreat’ Upper Mall, Hammersmith which was all done in time for MacDonald’s return from Bude. Louisa to MacDonald, Sept. 30, 1867; Yale b.8, f.246.

²² Rolland Hein, *George MacDonald: Victorian Mythmaker* (Nashville: Star Song, 1993), 194, 196.

²³ *Seaboard Parish*, III, 263. Ten minutes walk from Louisa’s family home ‘The Limes’.

cottage, with the low-lying cliffs across which Connie was escorted to the breakwater which she could see through the bay window of her bedroom which to this day still does not reach the ground-level just as MacDonald described it.

Back in 2015, a documentary film was made of the life of Lillas Trotter called '*Many Beautiful Things*'.²⁴ Interestingly, MacDonald uses the same expression in Book II of *Seaboard Parish* when he says, "it is better to talk of beautiful things", an expression that can also be found in his letters. Evidently *Seaboard Parish* strongly appealed to Trotter's artistic temperament nearly a decade before her tutelage in art under Ruskin. One of the main characters in the novel is Charles Percival (a thinly disguised Ruskin) who is constantly sketching scenes for his art studio back in London.

The parson in the story who also acts throughout as the narrator, Rev Henry Walton, has various in-depth conversations with Percival. Walton likely projects MacDonald's own views of art, thus for example critiquing what he presumes is Percival's subjectivist view of nature with no reference to the transcendent.²⁵

In the biography of his father, Greville is not exactly complimentary of *Seaboard Parish* as a literary text, writing "[It] is not one of the strong novels, neither story nor characters being very convincing."²⁶ I would beg to differ. For me its inconsistency of literary style or even plot is not a manifestation of incoherence. It is rather, I think, a means for MacDonald to articulate a theologically complex and moving vision, in which the dynamics of the shifts in the text are an essential part of what they mean, and which constantly point from the natural to the transcendent by way of the imagination. The question of how the cognitive and the aesthetic relate on any level, given that for MacDonald both are about unifying diversity and so generating spiritual heart-sense, arguably goes to the centre of what he thinks transformation before God looks like, hence the narrator's shifting views of Percival.

MacDonald transfigures nature by use of his transcendental understanding of the imagination. This proved transformative for Trotter as a young teenager, which her letter to MacDonald alludes to.

²⁴ www.youtube.com/watch?v=9g0VXJ7fiq4

²⁵ Much like Jonathan Edwards' treatise on *True Virtue* critiqued the Glasgow Professor Francis Hutcheson's views on moral sentimentalism in the previous century which he thought were theologically vacuous.

²⁶ MacDonald, *George MacDonald and His Wife*, 370.

First, Rev Walton recalls a memory from his childhood:

I especially remember one summer day in my childhood, which has coloured all my ideas of summer and bliss and fulfilment of content. It is made up of only mossy grass, and the scent of the earth and wild flowers, and hot sun, and perfect sky—deep and blue, and traversed by blinding blue clouds [...] have their undeniable relation in my memory to the heavens and the earth, to the march of the glorious clouds, and the tender scent of the rooted flowers; and indeed, when I think of it, must, by the delight they gave me, have opened my mind the more to the enjoyment of the eternal paradise around me. What a thing it is to please a child!²⁷

This is almost identical to how MacDonald describes his childhood experience on the slopes of Ba Hill behind his father's home in Huntly which he reminisces on in the summer of 1855, his first home visit since marriage. Another scene drawn from nature MacDonald gives a thick description of is that of a descending waterfall. The detailed description forms a sublime vignette which the narrator concludes to be a "perfect little picture":²⁸

The head of it was a precipice down which shot the stream from the vale above, pouring out of a deep slit it had itself cut in the rock as with a knife. Half-way down, it tumbled into a great basin of hollowed stone, and flowing from a chasm in its side, which left part of the lip of the basin standing like the arch of a vanished bridge, it fell into a black pool below, whence it crept as if half-stunned or weary down the gentle decline of the ravine [...] I, for my part, had never seen such a picturesque fall. It was a little gem of nature, complete in effect.²⁹

Such detail drawn from nature would surely have delighted and engaged the artistic "heart-sense" of Lillias Trotter.

Going deeper still, there is a thick Platonic description in the text (cf. "I rose, laid aside my Plato"),³⁰ strongly reminiscent of the beginning of *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) with its tripartite model of sky, castle and cavern which in *Seaboard*

²⁷ *Seaboard Parish*, II, 119.

²⁸ This is an almost exact description of Cauldron Linn near Rumbin Brig of the river Devon below the Ochil hills in Clackmannanshire which Robert Burns visited in Autumn 1787 and MacDonald may have visited later on. Charles Roger, *A Week at Bridge of Allan* (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1853), 204-6.

²⁹ *Seaboard Parish*, II, 136.

³⁰ *Seaboard Parish*, III, 2.

Parish becomes Tintagel Castle.³¹ Invalid Connie is carried by her father, Rev Walton, and Percival to Tintagel with her eyes bound so she remained in the dark until the bandage was released, then to her uncovered eyes “all was a confused mass of light and colour”.³² Gradually, however, as her eyes became accustomed to the light, she began to make out forms including the castle battlements until “she saw a great gulf at her feet, full to the brim of a splendour of light and colour [...] But the main marvel was the look sheer below into the abyss full of light and air and colour, its sides lined with rock and grass, and its bottom lined with blue ripples and sand”.³³

Connie’s response was one of wonder and worship, “O Lord God [...] thou art very rich. Thou art the one poet, the one maker. We worship thee. Make but our souls as full of glory in thy sight as this chasm is to our eyes glorious with the forms which thou hast cloven and carved out of nothingness, and we shall be worthy to worship thee, O Lord, our God”.³⁴ Here a parallel can be drawn to one of MacDonald’s favourite texts, Psalm 8:1—“O Lord our God how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set your glory in the heavens [...]” Nature tinged with the transcendent.

Throughout his novel, MacDonald articulated an understanding of God which militated against the Calvinistic idea of God Trotter received from her childhood.³⁵ The story begins with a heavy description of God coming as a baby, not a king—He is “the God of little children”.³⁶ Throughout the text are the interweaving threads of God’s indwelling, his immanence, his fairness and justice, his fatherly likeness, his infinity,

³¹ Similar to Findlater Castle on the Moray coast in MacDonald’s *Malcolm* (1875).

³² *Seaboard Parish*, II, 184.

³³ *Seaboard Parish*, II, 184f.

³⁴ *Seaboard Parish*, II, 185f.

³⁵ In an infamous passage in his sermon ‘Justice’, which Trotter may have read, MacDonald writes, “From all copies of Jonathan Edwards’s portrait of God, however faded by time, however softened by the use of less glaring pigments, I turn with loathing. Not such a God is he concerning whom was the message John heard from Jesus, *that he is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*” *Unspoken Sermons, Series III* (1889), 161f. (italics original). Interestingly, John Piper argues that Edwards, and not MacDonald, was right in his depiction of God in relation to sinners. John Piper, *The Pleasures of God*, rev. ed. (Tain: Christian Focus, 2001), 166-75. Arguably, Trotter would have countered this.

³⁶ *Seaboard Parish*, I, 70. Cf. ‘The Child in the Midst’ in *Unspoken Sermons, First Series* (1867), first preached in Huntly on the Sunday evening of July 29, 1855, which Trotter had read.

his coming to serve not rule, his sovereignty, his glory in Jesus as the Saviour of all, his personhood. God is the source of joy, “the only home of the human soul”.³⁷

In the final sermon of Book III based on John 11 and the raising of Lazarus, Rev Walton asks what is the home for us all, and answers, “God himself. His thoughts, his will, his love, his judgment, are man’s home. To think his thoughts, to choose his will, to love his loves, to judge his judgments, and thus to know that he is in us, with us, is to be at home”.³⁸ The consequence of believing in such a God is to be led out of fear, weakness and despondency into confidence, strength and gladness. To quote Rev Walton again, to become “a living glory of gladness”.³⁹

In Trotter’s *Parables of the Cross*, possibly written while she convalesced in England in Summer 1895,⁴⁰ there is a noticeable similarity to *Seaboard Parish*, in that the threads of life and resurrection and hope are depicted in imagery drawn from nature. Indeed, Rev Walton had advised, “take such vivid forms to your mind that they seem to come through the doors of the eyes into the vestibule of the brain, and thence into the inner chambers of the soul”.⁴¹ In Trotter’s art she took such “vivid images” as dandelions and other plant life which “brought her into closer contact with the movement of all vitality”,⁴² clearly entering into sympathy with nature and its Creator. It was MacDonald who first helped her to see with “heart-sight deep as eyesight”.⁴³ Trotter may have resonated with the drawing master Percival’s approbation and criticism of Wynn’s drawings in the story as she came under the tutorship of Ruskin later on.

Another thing that connects Trotter and MacDonald is the Higher Life Movement centred at Broadlands. Indeed, at some stage MacDonald picked up some of the

³⁷ *Seaboard Parish*, II, 124.

³⁸ *Seaboard Parish*, III, 242.

³⁹ *Seaboard Parish*, II, 17.

⁴⁰ Cf. Miriam H. Rockness, *A Passion for the Impossible: The Life of Lillas Trotter* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Pub., 2003), 151. Trotter quotes from a paper by Prof Williams Huggins, full reference ‘Address of the President.’ *Report of the British Association* (1891), 3-37. Her *Parables* clearly post-date this. *Parables of the Cross*, 7, fn. Copies of the earliest edition of *Parables* can be found at SOAS, AWM/AMB, Box 19a.

⁴¹ *Seaboard Parish*, I, 171.

⁴² *Seaboard Parish*, I, 177.

⁴³ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters. Volume 5* [1860] (Orpington: George Allen, 1888), 292.

language such as “offering upon his altar” found in Phoebe Palmer’s “altar phraseology” from the late 1840s.⁴⁴ Another favourite text was “there remaineth a rest for the people of God”⁴⁵ which MacDonald picks up on in Book II, “a rest that consists in thinking the thoughts of Him who is the Peace because the Unity, in being filled with that spirit which now pictures itself forth in this repose of the heavens and the earth.”⁴⁶ Perhaps the strongest Higher Life thread which can be found in both Trotter and MacDonald’s texts is the Pauline theme “from death to resurrection unto life”.⁴⁷ In Rev Walton’s Harvest sermon, he says “The seed dies into a new life, and so does man”;⁴⁸ “It is from the grave into the sunshine, from the night into the morning, from death into life”.⁴⁹ In her text Trotter refers to “the sunrise glory of resurrection life”.⁵⁰ Like MacDonald there is no sense of morbidity, dwelling in the shadows although death is real enough. For both, death is swallowed up in life.

Drawing from what she had learned from both Ruskin and MacDonald, Trotter designed a whole series of illustrated pamphlets in the early 1900s, one of which *Focussed*⁵¹ had its origins in her *Diary* (1901) for July 23 when she was taking a fortnight’s respite at Stethelberg near the head of the Sauterbrummen valley in Switzerland, less than a year after she sketched the Bude breakwater. Her words went on to inspire Helen H. Lemmel to write the hymn “The Heavenly Vision”.⁵²

⁴⁴ *Seaboard Parish*, II, 4. Cf. Phoebe Palmer, *A Present for My Friend on Entire Devotion to God* (New York: Published for the author, 1847). The Salvation Army printed it with the title *Entire Devotion to God*; see the 14th ed., n.d., chapter XXI ‘The Altar’. Cf. John Kent, *Holding the Fort: Studies in Victorian Revivalism* (London: Epworth Press, 1978), 321f.

⁴⁵ Hebrews 4:9.

⁴⁶ *Seaboard Parish*, II, 121.

⁴⁷ An unnamed quotation from a published letter by Andrew Jukes, a Broadlands speaker, introduces Trotter’s *Parables*, “Death is the Gate of Life”. Cf. Jukes, “death is the way of life”, *The Second Death and the Restitution of All Things* (1867), 10th ed. (London: Longmans, 1885), 146.

⁴⁸ *Seaboard Parish*, II, 255f.

⁴⁹ *Seaboard Parish*, II, 261.

⁵⁰ *Parables of the Cross*, 30.

⁵¹ The original leaflet is deposited in SOAS, AWM/AMB, Box 10a.

⁵² More popularly known as ‘Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus’. It was originally published in 1918 then in the Keswick Convention hymnal *Glad Songs* (1922), becoming the theme song of the 1924 Convention. In 1926, Trotter redesigned her leaflet, calling it ‘*Focussed: A Story + a Song*.’ It was printed on ivory stock and bound by a thin cord. A copy of this ‘third’ edition is deposited in ‘Pamphlets by Lillas Trotter’, Sub-Series

Arguably the story and the song had its roots in Trotter's naturalistic and theological reading of MacDonald's *Seaboard Parish*. Here are her original words from her *Diary*.

It was early morning & I was sitting in a little wood near the Hotel. The sun was climbing behind a steep cliff to the East, & its light was flooding nearer & nearer, steeping the distant meadows first, then making pools among the trees. Suddenly, from a dark corner of purple brown stems & tawny moss, there shone out a great golden star. It was just a dandelion, & half-withered—but it was full face to the Sun, & had caught into its heart all the glory it could hold, & was shining so radiantly that the dew that lay on it still, made a perfect aureole round its head.⁵³

She then commented on her 'dandelion' experience in the published leaflet,

And it seemed to talk, standing there—to talk about the possibility of making best of these lives of ours. For if the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon our hearts, there is an ocean of grace and love and power lying all around us, an ocean to which all earthly light is but a drop and it is ready to transfigure us, as the sunshine transfigured the dandelion, and on the same condition—that we stand full face to God.

If MacDonald ever had had the chance to read this leaflet, I am sure his heart would have been strangely warmed. Arguably he could not have put his spiritual message in over fifty books in more succinct or appealing terms. As Trotter's letter to MacDonald indicates, she was not just spiritually indebted to MacDonald, but she proved to be a worthy purveyor of MacDonald's thought, standing quite consciously on the shoulders of one who had gone before her.⁵⁴

4, Box: 3. Lilius Trotter Papers, SC-225. Wheaton Archives and Special Collections, Wheaton College (IL).

⁵³ SOAS, AMB/AMB, Box 17.

⁵⁴ Professor Mark Noll makes a rather disingenuous remark, in my opinion, to suggest Lemmel's hymn was solely rooted in a fundamentalism-Holiness message, in other words anti-intellectual and sentimental, such that "evangelicals turned their eyes upon Jesus, and the world grew very dim indeed". *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Leicester, IVP, 1994), 144. Without undermining the general thesis of Noll's book, it was rather unfortunate that such an example was chosen, as it perhaps shows ignorance of the rich spiritual tradition in which the original words stood. More constructively, it might have been more faithful to Trotter's (and indeed MacDonald's) biblical insight if Lemmel had transmitted her message with the words "and the things of earth will grow *more alive*, in the light of his glory and grace" (or words to that effect) then the contention would disappear.

At Eveningtime It Shall Be Light was not just an artistic refrain or even a song but a lesson she had learned well from her spiritual master George MacDonald.

Rev Dr John McNeill⁵⁵

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