MacDonald on Social Issues: Gender, Philanthropy, and Ecology

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George MacDonald’s views on various social issues such as poverty, the role of women, environmental concerns, and animal rights is evident in his life and in his extensive writings. I believe that his views on these issues are still worth consideration a century later. This paper will attempt to describe his ideas on these issues. MacDonald commented on other social issues such as race, euthanasia, war and peace but these will have to wait for a later study.

As a college student, MacDonald was influenced by a young pastor, John Kennedy, who was active in social concerns. “It was through this man Kennedy that MacDonald had his first taste of social work and his first sight of the poverty and squalor of a big city” (Raeper, p. 51). MacDonald was later influenced by F. D. Maurice who advocated Christian Socialism. “The program these Christian (not Marxist) Socialists advocated emphasized individual responsibility as well as social reform by the application of Christian principles to all social relationships” (Hein, p. 293-4).

A character in Weighed and Wanting says, “[T]he condition of our poor in our large towns is the great question of the day” (p. 262 - all references to MacDonald’s books are to the Johannesen editions). MacDonald seemed to agree with this as shown by the frequency this problem occurs in his novels. (MacDonald commonly used certain characters in his novels to express his own views. All such quotations in this paper are, I believe, expressions of his personal views.)

How to help the poor, though, is a difficult question. Money alone is not the answer. In the Seaboard Parish he says, “Nothing is more difficult than to make money useful to the poor” (p. 107). Statements like this abound in MacDonald. “The first question is not how to do good with money, but how to keep from doing evil with it. Money is important as dynamite is important – mainly because it is exceedingly dangerous” (Castle Warlock, p. 364). However, “It [money] is powerful for good when divinely used” (Paul Faber, p. 33). And, money should be used to help the poor. “Certainly the rich withdraw themselves from the poor. Instead, for instance, of helping them to bear their burdens, they leave the still struggling poor of whole parishes to sink into hopeless want” (The Vicar’s Daughter, p. 177). Also in Paul Faber, the answer to a wealthy man who asks what he should first do with his money to try to set things right for the poor is, “I should say injustice. My very soul revolts against the talk about kindness to the poor, when such a great part of their misery comes from the injustice and greed of the rich” (p. 185-6).

One problem that MacDonald had with just giving money to the poor was that it might make them dependent on gifts and they might not know how to use it wisely. “[Y]ou ought not to give them anything they ought to provide for themselves, such as food or clothing or shelter.” (The Vicar’s Daughter, p.163). He qualifies this statement by saying that it is okay to provide food, clothing, or shelter if they are unable to do so. And he suggests that something unexpected like flowers might be given!

A personal relation with the poor is necessary before giving alms.
When compassion itself is precious to a man . . . it must be because he loves you, and believes you love him. When that is the case, you may give him any thing you like, and it will do neither you nor him harm. But the man of independent feeling, except he be thus your friend, will not unlikely resent your compassion, while the beggar will accept it chiefly as a pledge for something more to be got from you; and so it will tend to keep him in beggary (The Vicar’s Daughter, p. 163).

This theme of personal relations runs through all of his books and is best exemplified by Robert Falconer in the book by the same name. Falconer works in the slums of London and gets to know the people before attempting to help. He does cooperate with others but rejects any kind of official organization and firmly believes that money is worse than useless except as a genuine outcome of human feelings and brotherly love. Falconer is a doctor and studies law so that he can help the poor with legal matters, that is, to help them to receive justice. Robert Falconer was “an expose’ of London slums that helped transform social work in England” (Amell, p. 15). As a result of reading the book, many Young people in England went to London to work in the slums.

Here is a description of one of Falconer’s schemes.

To provide suitable dwellings for the poor he considered the most pressing of all necessary reforms. His own fortune was not sufficient for doing much in this way, but he set about doing what he could by purchasing houses in which the poor lived, and putting them into the hands of persons whom he could trust, and who were immediately responsible to him for their proceedings: they had to make them fit for human abodes, and let them to those who desired better accommodation, giving the preference to those already tenants, so long as they paid their reasonable rent, which he considered far more necessary for them to do than for him to have done (p. 372).

This housing scheme is very similar to that of his friends, John Ruskin and Octavia Hill. Ruskin put up the money to buy up property and hired Hill to manage it. In The Vicar’s Daughter, Clare is a character who lives in the slums of London and helps the poor with financial aid from Lady Bernard. Clare’s character is based on Octavia Hill; and Lady Bernard’s partly on Lady Byron who gave financial assistance to the MacDonalds and partly on John Ruskin who financed Hill. In Robert Falconer, he said that one of the reasons for poor housing was, “the rapacity of the holders of small house-property, and the utter wickedness of railway companies, who pulled down every house that stood in their way, and did nothing to provide room for those who were thus ejected – most probably from a wretched place, but only to be driven into a more wretched still” (p. 372).

Octavia Hill (1838-1912) was a close personal friend of the MacDonald family and her ideas about the problems of poverty were remarkably like MacDonald’s. She was the “leader of the British open-space movement, which resulted in the foundation (1895) of the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty. She was also a housing reformer whose methods of housing project management were imitated in Great Britain, on the Continent, and in the United States” (The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998). She not only managed housing so that poor people could afford it, she ministered holistically to their physical, social, educational, and
spiritual needs. “The ‘Octavia Hill system’ as it became known, was summed up by Lord Salisbury as; ‘to improve the tenants with the tenements’” (Whelan, p. 5).

Octavia had definite ideas about how to help the poor. Her parents and grandfather had experience working for those in need and F. D. Maurice (the same man who influenced MacDonald) influenced her ideas. She believed that her housing projects should not be gifts to the poor, but should make a 5% profit for the investor. (This 5% figure is the same as that in the housing project in *The Vicar’s Daughter.*) There were two reasons for this. She wanted her work to be copied by others who would not do so if they did not make money. But, more importantly, the poor should have the satisfaction of being able to take care of themselves. The spiritual and moral welfare of the people was more important than their physical welfare. This did not mean that the rich had no responsibility. In fact, they had more. They must help the poor to learn to manage and must help provide work that paid a living wage. In other words, the privileged should work to get rid of injustice.

In an article Octavia wrote in 1872, she said, “If the poor are to be raised to a permanently better position, they must be dealt with as individuals and by individuals” (Bell, p. 200). She always worked personally with her tenants and got to know them and they her. Even later as her work expanded to hundreds of houses and thousands of tenants, she trained other workers to have individual relations with those she was trying to help. In his novel *Robert Falconer*, MacDonald uses his hero to express his ideas about charitable work, ideas similar to Octavia’s that he could work with individuals only, not with classes.

One example, which is illustrative of Hill’s method of encouraging responsibility on the part of her tenants, is given in the following quotation.

> She told them all how much money she had to spend on repairs in each house, and promised that if the actual cost of necessary repairs fell short of the sum she had put aside, the balance should be spent on any improvement they desired, safes, washing stools, copper lids or cupboards, the choice should be theirs. At once it became the interest of all to keep the repairs bill low; wanton damage ceased at once, accidents became fewer, and many of the men became interested in doing repairs themselves to save money (Bell, p. 83).

One of her principles was that she would first of all make the housing sound and hygienic and do nothing more until she was sure that the tenants would value and not abuse the added improvements.

There is an interesting example of how MacDonald used Octavia’s experiences in his novels. It also shows that there is some truth in the old adage that “truth is stranger than fiction.” In *Robert Falconer*, the hero offers a landlord enough money to buy his building but is refused. The owner admits that he cannot make that much money from rents. However, he is also an undertaker and says, “But it’s the funerals, sir, that make it worth my while… I count back-rent in the burying. People may cheat their landlord, but they can’t cheat the undertaker. They must be buried. That’s the one indispensable – ain’t it, sir?” (*Robert Falconer*, p. 373) When I first read that, I thought it was unrealistic. Then I read Octavia Hill’s biography and found that it was a true story. She was told by a landlord-undertaker, “Yes Miss, of course there are plenty of bad debts. It’s not the rents I look to, but the deaths I get out of the houses!” (Boyd, p. 107)
In *Weighed and Wanting*, a character says that many are talking about the question of how to help the poor, but “if all who found the question interesting would instead of talking about it do what they could . . . to its removal they would at least make their mark, . . . of which not all the wind of words would in ten thousand years blow away a spadeful” (p. 262-3).

MacDonald did not only talk about the problem but he did something about it? MacDonald often went to Octavia Hill’s housing projects to speak to the tenants. Due to his sincerity and ability to treat them as equals many responded positively as he read them his fairy tales and used moral anecdotes in order to teach them about Christ. The MacDonald family often had “entertainments” (food, music, drama) at their home in London for their friends. However, there were “large numbers of underprivileged people who came to the ‘entertainments’. ” These were “mostly from among Octavia Hill’s tenants” (Hein, p. 206). In fact, MacDonald’s wealthy friends would serve the underprivileged at these “entertainments.” After one of these occasions, MacDonald apologized to John Ruskin for keeping him so busy serving the poor that Ruskin’s needs were not met.

Penniless persons or drunkards were taken in by the MacDonald family and helped, sometimes successfully and sometimes not. A young mother of two girls, divorced and disowned by her husband, was cared for by the MacDonalds until her death and then they raised her daughters. They also took in other orphans for indefinite periods of time and treated them as part of the family.

He would also “occasionally waive a speaking fee for lectures . . . donating his services for a worthy cause. . . [For example,] at an 1887 lecture in Bristol on *King Lear*, ticket proceeds were donated to a ‘ragged school’ for the poor” (Amell, p. 27). So MacDonald did more than just write about poverty.

A second issue to be considered is the role of women. MacDonald’s view of women is also shown in his novels and fairy tales. In the fairy tales the God figure is always a woman; the foremost examples of this are the Wise Woman in *The Wise Woman* and the great grandmother, Irene, in both of the Curdie stories. In his novel *Castle Warlock*, he has Cosmo’s father say that God is “father and mother both to all men” (p. 18). In one of MacDonald’s sermons, he said, God “is simply and altogether our friend, our father—our more than friend, father, and mother—our infinite love-perfect God.” (*Unspoken Sermons, Series One*, p. 14) In *David Elginbrod* the title character prays to God to “Be thou by us, even as a mother sits by the bedside o’ her ain’ wean a’ the lang nicht; only be thou nearer to us” (20). In a short story that is told in Adela Cathcart, a little boy is dreaming and in the dream he is in a storm and he looks up. “And lo! a shadowy face bent over him, whence love unutterable was falling in floods, from eyes deep, and dark, and still, as the heavens that are above the clouds… The face was like his mother’s and like his father’s, and like a face that he had seen somewhere in a picture, but far more beautiful and strong and loving than all” (363-4). He knew that it was the face of the Lord.

A Statement by Madeleine L’Engle is one of the finest, certainly the most unusual and interesting tributes to MacDonald.

“My image of the Father, if I have to have one, is maternal, is, in fact, George MacDonald, so, yes there is a beard, but there is also deep maternal love. It does not bother me that maternal is a feminine word, and George Macdonald was a
male. When I call out to God in trouble or joy, as I often do, I think I am calling out to the whole Trinity, which is as far beyond our sexisms as love is beyond pornography” (L’Engle, p. 221-2).

In his realistic novels, a man is often the “ideal Christian.” However there are exceptions. The most notable one is Janet Grant in Sir Gibbie. She is described as prophetess (p. 9) and priestess (p. 170) not only for the young Gibbie, but also for her husband.

Strangely mingled — mingled even to confusion with his faith in God, was his absolute trust in his wife… To Robert, Janet was one who knew — one who was far ben with the Father of lights… When Janet entered into the kingdom of her Father, she would see that he was not left outside. He was as sure of her love to himself, as he was of God's love to her, and was certain she could never be content without her old man. He was himself a dull soul, he thought, and could not expect the great God to take much notice of him, but he would allow Janet to look after him (p. 121).

In another novel, even though Mr. Raymount was a university graduate and successful author, his wife is described as “half the head and more than half the heart of [the] family” (Weighed and Wanting, p. 9).

MacDonald was aware of the low status of women in Victorian England as shown by the following remark by a character in Phantastes, “I dare say you know something of your great-grandfathers a good deal… but you know very little about your great-grandmothers on either side” (p.18). In many of his novels he has women studying subjects that were not considered appropriate for women at that time. In Castle Warlock, Aggie understood algebra and geometry better than the hero of the novel and she was physically stronger as well as shown by a snowstorm incident. “Aggie was more than a match for Cosmo: smaller and stronger in proportion to her size, she bored her way through the blast better than he. The moment he began to expostulate she would increase the distance between them until she could not hear a sound he uttered” (p. 73).

MacDonald taught mathematics and science in women’s colleges. He also taught his future sister-in-law mathematics. She was considered, in her own words, “the fool of the family,” but she said that MacDonald “understood me as an equal” (Greville, p. 98).

MacDonald believed that there are feminine and masculine characteristics. In Malcolm he wrote, “By no words can I express my scorn of the evil fancy that the distinction between them [the sexes] is solely or even primarily physical” (p. 80). For example, he thought women were keener of perception than men (Castle Warlock, p. 51). George would have been proud of his son Greville who wrote, “If I say my mother had beyond most women masculine courage, it is to name her the nobler woman: if I find my father gifted beyond most men with feminine pity, it proclaims him the greater man” (Greville, p. 338). George MacDonald praises one of his fictional characters for his “mingling of manly confidence with feminine trustfulness” (St. George and St. Michael, p.109). In other words, MacDonald believed that some characteristics were feminine and some masculine but both men and women were better men and better women if each had both kinds of characteristics. An interesting comment about how these masculine and feminine characteristics combined in male and female is found in David Elginbrod where he
referred to, “The beauty of [David] . . . and the wondrous loveliness which he had transmitted from the feminine part of his nature to the wholly feminine and therefore delicately powerful nature of [his daughter] (p. 319).

According to his biographer William Raeper, “in many ways he [MacDonald] was . . . liberal even feminist” (Raeper, p. 259) However, in The Seaboard Parish, he wrote,

And here I may remark in regard to one of the vexed questions of the day –the rights of women— that what women demand it is not for men to withhold. It is not their business to lay down the law for women. That women must lay down for themselves. I confess that, although I must herein seem to many of my readers old-fashioned and conservative, I should not like to see any woman I cared much for either in parliament or in an anatomical class-room; but on the other hand I feel that women must be left free to settle that matter. If it is not good, good women will find it out and recoil from it. If it is good, then God give them good speed. One thing they have a right to—a far wider and more valuable education than they have been in the way of receiving (p. 291).

He wrote this passage in 1868. By 1871 he had changed his mind about the medical education of women, perhaps as a result of meeting Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the first woman doctor. At that time “he signed a letter along with Florence Nightingale, James Balfour and Charles Darwin” and others in favor of a petition for rendering possible the medical education of women (Raeper, p.260).

His friend Octavia Hill did not favor women’s suffrage partly because she thought that political equality with men might lower the number of volunteers for charitable work and probably because she believed that it was not the solution to the problem of gender inequality. In Mary Marston, MacDonald wrote, “But the thing will be set right one day, and in a better fashion than if all the women’s rights’ committees in the world had their will of the matter” (p. 208). I suspect that both MacDonald and Hill believed that laws would cause more antagonism between the sexes and that individual minds and hearts had to be changed.

George’s wife, Louisa, was, without doubt, one of the reasons he had such a high opinion of women. She was a strong woman who raised eleven children, nursed George through many illnesses, superintended some of their many moves when George was ill, and even wrote and directed plays put on by the family to raise needed finances. As Katherine Moore, who has made a study of Victorian marriages, said that the MacDonald marriage “came nearest to a break away from the conventional pattern.” (Moore, p. xxvii-xxviii). Louisa supported her husband by entertaining not only their friends but the poor people of London. She took in strangers and orphan children. She planned and worked to provide happiness for her family and all around her. Greville praises his mother for her part in the Christmas celebration of 1857. “That the inspiring spirit of these festivities was my mother is obvious enough, a spirit we shall often see in like transformations of forbidding circumstances… I can conceive of no more perfect counterpart to my father’s than these practical works of my mother” (George MacDonald and his Wife, 288).

However, MacDonald may not have been entirely consistent about gender equality in his personal life. For example, biographies of MacDonald indicate that he seemed more concerned
about his sons’ education than his daughters’. This may have been a necessary concession to the society and economic structure of his day.

We will now look at concerns about the environment and the use or misuse of technology. MacDonald was concerned about protecting the environment. According to his son, George MacDonald inherited the characteristic virtues of the Gael including the love of the soil. (Greville MacDonald, p. 39). He loved nature and in one of his literary essays he wrote about the importance of keeping open eyes “for the sweet fashionings and blendings of her [nature’s] operation around him” (A Dish of Orts, p. 41). The basis for MacDonald’s ecological views is given in an essay on Wordsworth’s poetry.

God is the first of artists;… he has put beauty into nature, knowing how it will affect us, and intending that it should so affect us;… he has embodied his own grand thoughts thus that we might see them and be glad. Then, let us go further still, and believe that whatever we feel in the highest moments of truth shining through beauty, whatever comes to our souls as a power of life, is meant to be seen and felt by us, and to be regarded not as the work of his hand, but as the flowing forth of his heart, the flowing forth of his love of us, making us blessed in the union of his heart and ours. (A Dish of Orts, p. 246-7)

He believed that greed was a cause for the “hideous lacerations and vile gatherings of refuse which . . . disfigure the earth” (Malcolm, p. 344). In the novel, What’s Mine’s Mine, MacDonald took a very strong stand against the eviction of small farmers in the Highlands for large sheep herding farms and the resulting “abuse and misuse of the land by those who did not know or love it, even accurately predicting the loss of certain wildlife species such as the capercaillie.” (Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson in MacLachlan, Pazdizio, and Stelle, p. 245) He had some very strong words about the men who caused these environmental problems. “May the ghosts of the men who mar the earth, turning her sweet rivers into channels of filth, and her living air into irrespirable vapours and pestilences, haunt the desolations they have made, until they loathe the work of their hands and turn from themselves with a divine repudiation. (Malcolm, p. 344). He wrote a long poem, “A Manchester Poem,” describing filth of Manchester’s factories and compares it to nature. It begins

Tis a poor drizzly morning, dark and sad.
The cloud has fallen, and filled with fold on fold
The chimneyed city; and the smoke is caught,
And spreads diluted in the cloud, and sinks,
A black precipitate, on miry streets.
And faces gray glide through the darkened fog.

MacDonald appreciated and enjoyed technology but understood its drawbacks as well as its benefits. There is a wonderful character in St. George and St. Michael, Lord Herbert, who is a creative inventor. One of his inventions was a “water commanding engine” about which the inventor claimed, “herewith may marshland be thoroughly drained, or dry land perfectly watered; great cities kept sweet and wholesome,” and be “beneficial to all mankind” (p. 133-4). However, the narrator in the novel comments,
Little did Lord Herbert dream of the age he was initiating – of the irreverence and pride and destruction that was about to follow in his footsteps, wasting, defiling, searing, obliterating, turning beauty into ashes and worse! That divine mechanics should thus, through selfishness and avarice be leagued with squalor and ugliness: . . . What would the inventor of the water-commanding engine have said to the pollution of our waters, the destruction of the very landmarks of our history, the desecration of ruins that ought to be venerated for their loveliness as well as their story! (p. 430-1)

Finally, and very briefly, we will consider MacDonald’s concern about animal rights. “[He] devoted entire written sermons to denouncing cruelty to animals” (Amell, p. 103). In many of his novels characters are condemned for their mistreatment of animals. He loved animals, especially horses and even believed that they would be in heaven. He lost his first and only pastorate partly because of a sermon on the possibility that some animals might have eternal life. This position was also advocated by his most famous twentieth century disciple, C. S. Lewis.

Vivisection was another of MacDonald’s concerns. “Part of [the] novel, Paul Faber, Surgeon was reprinted as an anti-vivisection tract” (Raeper, p. 175). MacDonald must have discussed this issue with his good friend Lewis Carroll who wrote an essay, “Some Popular Fallacies about Vivisection,” (reprinted in The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll) which was a logical analysis of the problem. An essay by C. S. Lewis entitled “Vivisection,” appears in God in the Dock and has views quite similar to MacDonald’s.

In all of the positions that MacDonald took on these issues, he was obviously influenced by the opinions and prejudices of his time but I believe that on most issues he held a more enlightened view than most of his contemporaries. His ideas show worthwhile insights that are still valuable in any thoughtful consideration of the problems today.

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A response to Dr. Neuhouser’s MacDonald lecture titled George MacDonald on Social Issues. Steven Bird. March 4, 2014.
Response to Dr. David Neuhouser’s Presentation about George MacDonald on Social Issues

Dr. Steve Blrd

The first prefatory comment is to recognize that this interaction this evening is a great demonstration of the value of integrative thinking.

George MacDonald was known both for his creative writing and for his work in exegetical theology and while these are two different kinds of humanities fields, they share one of the truly great aspects of the humanities: an ability to engage us personally with really powerful important questions. While a great story or explication of an idea does not necessarily correctly describe reality in an empirical sense, it has the power to envelope us in what is incredible and important and meaningful. The social sciences, on the other hand provide us with powerful ways to see what really is through empirical observation but also through a way of seeing that manifests the ambiguities of life—the clouds of probabilities we live in.

It is dangerous, we should note, to trust the plotline or characterizations in a story to help us understand reality—the author has the great advantage of only needing to stay within the confines of the reader’s credulity rather than the harsher dictates of reality outside the story. And yet it is in the story that we can consider what we would otherwise never see in our daily lives. We are particularly benefitted from the story when it allows us to see, in some setting where we are not embedded in our own assumptions, questions of power and justice.

So this specific lecture touching on MacDonald’s views of gender, philanthropy, and ecology, with a response by a social scientist, provides us an unusual and valuable opportunity to merge the meaning-laden engagement of the humanities with the reality grounding of the social sciences.

What, then, can we gain from an understanding of MacDonald’s views on social issues? He may or may not have been correct in his perceptions of what was happening in society systematically around him, but we can be nearly certain that he was engaged with the powerful and important questions of meaning associated with the social issues he saw. And, since he was engaging with those larger questions with a theological view as well as a creative impulse, we can learn about a Christian way of engaging with reality through a creative look at big questions of meaning embedded within biblical assumptions and perspectives.

My second prefatory comment is to recognize social context.

One problem the humanities face—and George MacDonald faces this problem, then—is that the big questions of meaning that they engage us with are themselves shaped by the social reality within which the question is framed. How can issues of gender and compassion and such be considered without implicitly (whether intentionally or not) reflecting the assumptions of the social reality within which the questions were posed. As Dr. Neuhouser shares, much of what MacDonald presented in his stories was a reflection of his own personal experience. And so we wonder, what would his stories have said, how would the characters have acted, if the stories were written by an impoverished Black woman of that time? Or an immigrant Indian man? How different would his insights have been if he had been writing 100 years earlier or
later? Or if he was writing from an African location or a South American one? We need not see MacDonald’s insights as accurate descriptions of reality as much as a view that engages us with the big questions found in the social location within which he lived as seen from within that social location.

So let’s consider the sociological context of MacDonald’s writings.

MacDonald lived in the time of greatest societal transition that has ever been. He lived during the main transformations associated with the industrial revolution and he was in England where the change was first experienced. As industrialization undermined the existing political structures and reshaped not only the economic systems but all systems in society including the family, education, and religion, questions were raised that previous societies had never faced in the same way. At the core of these were the political and economic rights of individuals. MacDonald, then, lived at exactly the right moment to face the first great wave of changes in societal understandings of human rights. The rights of the poor were noticed because they were crammed into cities instead of being peasants out of sight in villages as they had been before, the rights of women were now considered because wage labor in factories reshaped societal understandings of the role of individuals and families and that led to a reconsideration of the roles of women. The issues of massive pollution were newly created as factories used coal power and smothered cities in smoke. Much like a practical theologian living in Beijing today would be looking at issues of inequality, gendered rights, and economic devastation because it is the very reality he or she lives in, MacDonald spoke to the central issues of industrialized England. A time when nothing was as it used to be and confusion over right and wrong in society was complicated and extensive.

But MacDonald adopted stances on those issues that were not necessarily the mainstream ones for his time. Would MacDonald have seen life the same way and made the same commentary on it if he had been a different color or ethnicity? It is possible he would have. MacDonald did not express the known view of a white man from England at that time. That is part of why he has lasted as one of the masters that C. S. Lewis and others—including us—still look to. His thinking was substantially more inclusive than was accepted then. His intents were far more charitable than was broadly accepted then. He is not notable for being a White man in England sharing the common view. He is notable for being a person who could look at the realities of massive societal change through a lens of biblical thought and the desire to wrestle with questions of great import and come to answers that moved toward a practical grace and love. Even today, we are surrounded by those who simply reflect the common thinking of their day with no thought about the real import of the issues and the real meaning of the questions. Even today we have many who can quote the Bible but do not immerse themselves in it as a lens to see through the principles of Godly life.

So, yes, MacDonald wrote what he did because he lived in the throes of the industrial revolution. But we remember him and still have presentations about what he concluded because he moved in a direction we can now see as worthy of the name Christ follower.