

## Call for Papers:



**GEORGE MACDONALD**  
&  
**THE PROPHETIC IMAGINATION**  
A BICENTENARY CONFERENCE  
(1824-2024)

**May 29-31, 2024**  
WHEATON COLLEGE (WHEATON, ILLINOIS)

*Featuring an evening event with*  
**Malcolm Guite**

ORGANIZED BY THE GEORGE MACDONALD SOCIETY IN COORDINATION WITH THE MARION E WADE CENTER

[www.george-macdonald.com](http://www.george-macdonald.com) • [macdonaldconference@gmail.com](mailto:macdonaldconference@gmail.com)

To celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of George MacDonald's birth, the MacDonald Society and the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College are excited to announce a bicentenary conference on this great Victorian novelist, teacher, preacher, critic, translator, poet, fantasist, mystic, children's author, and prophet. The conference title is taken from what is arguably MacDonald's most important (and understudied) essay: 'The Imagination: Its Function and Its Culture' (1867). In this he writes,

We yield you your facts. The laws we claim for the prophetic imagination. 'He hath set the world *in* man's heart,' not in his understanding. And the heart must open the door to the understanding. It is the farseeing imagination which beholds what might be a form of things, and says to the intellect: 'Try whether that may not be the form of these things'. [...] We dare to claim for the true, childlike, humble imagination, such an inward oneness with the laws of the universe that it possesses in itself an insight into the very nature of things.

Responding to these assertions, we invite proposals that consider the relationship between the 'imagination' and the 'prophetic' with both terms being understood as capaciously as MacDonald intended. In what ways was MacDonald's imagination 'prophetic', either in the sense of preparing the way for other writers (particularly the six other Wade Center authors) or in the sense of anticipating modern problems and concerns? Which prophets imaginatively inspired MacDonald? How did he view the relationship between Biblical prophecy and subsequent manifestations of the imagination? We especially encourage more 'prophetic' proposals, in the sense of breaking new ground and avoiding overly trodden critical paths. Thus, we are particularly interested in papers that elicit conversation on the wealth of yet-unexplored topics in MacDonald scholarship, not just in literature and theology, but also in science, philosophy, music, economics, and social justice. It is our hope that this conference will establish a much broader and more rigorous awareness, understanding, and study of MacDonald's prophetic contribution to discussions of the imagination, its functions, and its culture.

Papers might, therefore, consider topics including, but not limited to:

- MacDonald as a prophetic figure in his time or ours
- How the other six authors of the Wade (Chesterton, Barfield, Tolkien, Lewis, Sayers, Williams) were specifically influenced by MacDonald in his writings on and expressions of Imagination
- How MacDonald's imagination 'prepared the way' for others such as the Wade authors, as well as Auden, Montgomery, L'Engle, Buechner, etc
- Prophetic nineteenth-century figures and their influence on or relation to MacDonald (Novalis, Coleridge, Carlyle, Maurice, Scott, Ruskin, Kingsley, Matthew Arnold, William Morris, Rossetti, etc.)
- MacDonald's engagement with prophetic forebearers (Plato, Petrarch, Dante, Bacon, Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne, Vaughn, Luther, Bunyan, Goethe, Herbert, Hogg, etc)
- The imagination of the 'heart' and how this relates prophetically to the 'understanding'
- Imaginative explorations of prophecy or prophetic figures in MacDonald's works
- How MacDonald's works relate to or incorporate Biblical prophecy (Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, etc)
- MacDonald's view of science and its relationship to faith and/or creativity
- MacDonald's view of history and its relationship to faith and/or creativity
- MacDonald's view of social justice/injustice and its relationship to faith and/or creativity
- MacDonald's view of the individual and their relationship to society (politics, economics, etc) via the imagination and prophecy
- Literary form(s) and prophecy (e.g., is a fairy tale more or less prophetic than a novel? Can a nonsense poem be revelatory?)
- MacDonald's engagement with Theology and the sources of prophecy & imagination (e.g., Church Fathers, Julian of Norwich, Calvin, Erskine, Chalmers, Maurice) or MacDonald's influence on others in this field (e.g., James Torrance, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, Bishop Talbot, Simone Weil, Oswald Chambers, etc.)
- Ways in which MacDonald's imagination **pre**-empted certain ideas: e.g., post-secularism, post-modernism, post-criticism

### **Conference Highlights**

- Evening event with Malcolm Guite
- Tour of the Wade Center's collection of MacDonald books and memorabilia
- Performances of original musical compositions based on MacDonald's works with the awarding of \$500 prize to the winning composition.

### **How to apply**

To apply, please submit an abstract (300 words or fewer) and brief CV (one page or less). Panel papers will be 20 minutes in length.

Please apply by December 31, 2023 (though sooner is better) through this Google form:

<https://forms.gle/wNyECM4V7wfgVSxy9> . We will aim to get back to you by the end of January at the latest.