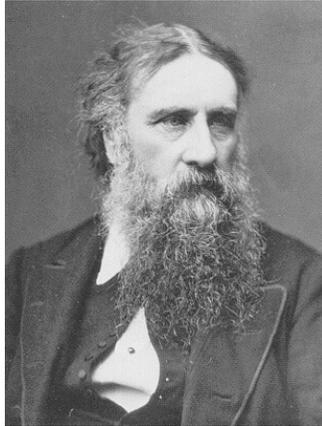


# LILITH

by George MacDonald



## THE AUTHOR

George MacDonald (1824-1905) was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, and attended Aberdeen University, studying chemistry. After three years making a living tutoring, he studied for the ministry and became the pastor of a small Congregational church. Soon his congregation became disenchanted with his liberal theology - he had been influenced in his college years by more than the literary aspects of German Romanticism - and he left the ministry after three difficult years. For the rest of his life, he moved from job to job, lecturing, tutoring, and writing, none of which provided sufficient income to support his wife and eleven children. Despite the family's poverty and the constant need to depend on the help of others, the MacDonalds were known far and wide for their hospitality. George MacDonald died after a lengthy illness in 1905.

After writing several books of poems, MacDonald published his first novel, *Phantastes*, a fantasy, in 1858. His first successful endeavors were his Scottish novels, including *Robert Falconer* (1868). His children's stories, which are among his best-known works today, included the novels *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), *The Princess and Curdie* (1883), and the collection of Christmas-themed short stories, *Gifts of the Child Christ* (1882). He returned to fantasy with the publication of *Lilith* in 1895.

MacDonald had been influenced early in life by the German Romantics, having had an opportunity to read their writings while tending the library of a nobleman during his university years. He appreciated the English Romantics as well, and his writings fit very well into that genre. The open door of the MacDonald home led to long-standing friendships with Thomas Carlyle, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Charles Dodgson, and John Ruskin, whose companionship brought him into contact with the Pre-Raphaelites, whom he greatly admired. MacDonald's writings in turn influenced C.S. Lewis, who considered him the premier exemplar of the mythopoeic in the nineteenth century. Lewis referred to MacDonald as his "master," and traced to his reading of *Phantastes* his "literary conversion" (his spiritual conversion was to come later). Like Lewis, MacDonald's writing also shows the influence of Platonic philosophy.

*Lilith*, written almost forty years after *Phantastes*, is a considerably darker work. It was written shortly after the death of MacDonald's beloved daughter Lilia - a loss portrayed in the character of Lona. In addition to certain obvious uses of Christian imagery, it also shows the influences of Romantics (especially William Blake), the Pre-Raphaelites, Swedenborgianism, and German mysticism (the reference to the "land of seven dimensions" is taken from the writings of German mystic Jacob Boehme). The character of Lilith herself, a fallen angel who was the first wife of Adam, is taken from the Jewish *Kabbala*, mystical writings from the Middle Ages. The book never sold well, and, despite praise from C.S. Lewis and others, has been rejected by many Christians because of the universalism implicit in the story.

## **PLOT SUMMARY**

The story begins with Mr. Vane, the protagonist, exploring the library of the estate he has inherited from his late father. It is full of old books, and also contains a portrait of one of his ancestors. Some days later he sees an apparition of an old man, shabbily dressed, taking a book from the shelves - and indeed the book is missing, but it is back in place the following morning. Later the ghost removes a part of a book that is fixed into a doorframe, and thus is unable to be moved at all. After seeing the apparition for the second time, he consults the butler and discovers that the ghost is Mr. Raven, the librarian to Sir Upward, whose picture adorns the library alcove.

A week later, Vane sees the ghost again and follows it. Raven leads him through parts of the house in which he has never been before, and finally Vane finds himself in a small chamber beneath the roof. There he finds a large mirror, and as he goes toward it for a closer look, he discovers that he sees in it not a reflection of himself or the room behind him, but of a grassy land in which a raven is hopping around. He suddenly falls through the mirror and is himself in that same land, face to face with the raven. The bird speaks to him, and he soon realizes that the ghost and the bird are one. By this time Vane has lost all sense of time, place, and even of his own identity, and wonders if he may be dead. He follows the raven, but while passing through a shadowy area between trees, he falls and again finds himself in the garret of the house. He rushes back to the library, determined never to pass through that mirror or follow Raven again.

The next day the raven appears again, and despite his intentions to the contrary, Vane again finds himself in the strange land. He begins to question the bird, and is told that he is in the land of seven dimensions, which occupies the same physical space as his house. Raven then offers to introduce Vane to his wife, and on the way Raven speaks to him of those who create life by speaking. Vane puzzles over this, but Raven tells him that only those who can do this are truly alive, and that there is One whose every thought generates life. When they reach Raven's cottage, Raven tells Vane that he is a sexton who oversees a great churchyard. Vane meets Mrs. Raven, an old but beautiful woman. When Raven returns to human form, he explains to Vane that everyone has multiple selves inside him - beasts, birds, creeping things, plants, and crystals - and the one that appears most often reveals the person's character; apparently the serpent-self is the hardest to crush. Raven's wife serves them bread and wine, which Vane finds perfectly satisfying. He then asks to rest, and they take him underground into the crypt and offer him a bed among the dead on one of the great stones there. He flees in terror, and when he reenters Raven's cottage, he finds himself back in his own library again. There he finds an open drawer stuffed with old papers; when he examines them he finds that they belonged to his father.

He begins to read his father's manuscript and discovers that he, too, had met Raven and had been led to the mirror, though he had refused to enter the land he had seen there. Vane regrets having fled from the Ravens and their cemetery, and arranges the mirrors in the chamber in such a way as to allow him to return. When he does, he is pleased to find Raven once again, but the old man tells him that he is not ready yet to return to the cottage. Raven leaves him a luminescent butterfly to guide him, but Vane, trying to hold the butterfly, kills it. He then wanders off on his own, encountering fearsome monsters and apparitions. He senses that he is protected from these monsters only by the light of the moon, and indeed when the moon sinks behind a hill, the monsters attack and he is forced to run for his life to the top of the hill. Then the moon goes below the horizon and he falls asleep. When he awakes he continues his journey, and that night takes shelter. He soon witnesses a strange battle of skeletal creatures smashing one another to pieces.

He soon reaches a region covered with small fruit-bearing shrubs. Wondering whether they are good to eat, he samples one and hears high-pitched voices behind him. Soon children appear. They call him "good giant" and minister to his every need, frolicking around him at every opportunity. He is offered a large sour apple, which he discards, but then is attacked by two "giants" slightly larger than himself. They take him prisoner and make him labor for them. Meanwhile, the children attend to him during the day and make his work light. He knows he can easily escape from the giants, but wants to learn more of the society into which he has fallen. He questions Lona, the oldest of the Little Ones, who appears to be no more than fifteen, and finds that she can answer few of his questions. He discovers that they find babies in the woods and raise them, but that they never outgrow childhood; the only exceptions are the ones who are not content to be children, and they soon become coarse and ignorant, unable even to see the children - in short, they become giants. He desires nothing more than to spend the rest of his days with the Little Ones, but is soon again attacked by the giants, and realizes that he must leave; answers are only to be found elsewhere, since the children can tell him virtually nothing.

Lona gives him directions and warns him of an ugly creature called the Cat-woman. Before long he meets this creature, who shows him great kindness and hospitality. The Cat-woman's name is Mara - the same name as the cat he had seen in the underground crypt cared for by Mr. and Mrs. Raven. She tells Vane that the creatures among whom he had sojourned were the Bags and the Lovers, and confirmed that he could expect little intelligence from either. She also tells him of a great city called Bulika, ruled over by an evil queen who came to their world from Vane's own. She offers him food and a bed for the night, then gives him directions to Bulika. As he travels, he enters a wood and finds a vine-covered bower, where he takes shelter. Soon ghostly figures are dancing around him. They have no knowledge of his presence, and in fact pass right through him when he goes among them. A beautiful and frightful woman comes to the dance, and he sees on her side a shadowy mark like that he had seen among the dead in the crypt. When the dance came to an end, the flesh fell in great strips from the bodies of the dancers.

As Vane flees the scene, he comes upon a carriage containing the skeletons of a noble couple, along with the coachman and footman. The man and woman bicker constantly, and she is frequently called upon to tie his loose leg bones back together. He tries to twist her arm, and she breaks one of his leg bones. Vane, disgusted with this scene, prepares to leave, but suddenly hears behind him a familiar voice - that of the Raven. He tells them that the couple were once the most handsome at court, but now are revealed for their true selves. He expresses hope, however, that even they may one day learn to love, since love is the true state of all who have been created

by Love. The Raven soon leaves him, and Vane continues his journey. In the forest, he discovers the corpse of a tall naked woman. Believing that she might yet have life in her, he covers her, sleeps beside her to give her the warmth of his body, and bathes her daily in a hot spring nearby. Her body temperature rises, but as yet she shows no sign of life. When herds of animals pass by, he is reminded of his loneliness - an alienation so severe that his greatest hope is that he may be able to restore life to the female corpse he has taken into his care. One day he notices that she bears the same discoloration on her side that he had observed a number of times previously in other visions in the strange land. After weeks of constant care, the woman begins to revive, though Vane notices bites that look to have come from a leech on his body when he awakes in the morning. One day the woman arises and tells Vane that she has pulled a giant white leech from his neck and cast it into the water. She then treats him scornfully and strides off toward the city of Bulika, with Vane following as fast as he can. She renders him unconscious, then continues her journey. As Vane travels toward Bulika, he meets a mother and child; she tells him that she is hiding her child because the leopardess that is a pet of the Princess drinks the blood of children; none is allowed in the great city.

When Vane arrives at Bulika, he finds the people unpleasant - in fact, much like the giants in the land of the Little Ones. They treat him rudely, and he finally finds shelter in the home of the same woman he had met on the way carrying her baby. The people of the town do nothing but dig for precious stones in their basements, of which there are an abundance, so that the citizens are very rich and never need to work. He soon discovers that the Princess has two leopardesses, one white and one spotted. The spotted one attacks children, but the white one approaches Vane more like a pet, licking him and enjoying being stroked. He finally goes to the palace and demands to see the Princess. Not surprisingly, he finds the woman he had brought back from death. This time she receives him cordially, but he has a strong sense of evil even as he is mesmerized by her beauty. She tells him that she has lived for thousands of years and been sought by many men, but all wanted to possess her rather than love her. She tells Vane that, having put him to the test in the forest, she is convinced of his selfless love and is willing to offer him hers in return. He also discovers that she had fallen into her trance while visiting a savage race of dwarves at the borders of her kingdom - presumably the Little Ones. Something warns him against committing himself to this woman, especially when he notices that her hand is injured (the woman with the baby in the forest had crushed the paw of the spotted leopard with a rock), that her appearance mysteriously coincided with that of the white leech, and that the cry of the white leopardess sounds through the palace - he thinks as a warning to him.

He falls asleep, and when he wakes he discovers that the Princess has again been sucking his blood. She turns into the spotted leopardess, and he follows her through a large room of ghostly figures and out into the town. Hearing a scream, Vane sees that the leopardess has stolen the baby from the woman he had seen earlier. He is about to attempt a rescue when the white leopardess attacks, freeing the baby, who is taken up by Vane, and wounding the Princess, who soon runs away. The white leopardess takes the baby in its mouth and runs away as well. He follows the spotted leopardess to the palace, where it has again turned into the Princess. She tells him that the Cat-woman has attacked her (he now knows the identity of the white leopardess). She asks him to fetch a flower for her from the top of a tree, but insists that he cannot climb barefoot, and wraps his feet in cloth from her gown. As he climbs, he feels enchantment overtaking him and falls, meanwhile hearing the croaking voice of the Raven saying, "I told you so!"

When he awakes, Vane finds himself in the fountain at his own house. The Raven rebukes him for obeying one he did not trust, and Vane expresses his desire to help the children. Raven tells him that he could have helped them much had he stayed with them instead of running off to Bulika. Soon Vane notices a large Persian cat, which he had never before seen around the house. In fact, the Princess had followed him to his home in the form of the cat. Raven then reads a poem from a book; it is about the woman Lilith, the first wife of Adam, and sets the Persian to howling and caterwauling. Raven then tells Vane that he himself is Adam, and that the Princess is Lilith, his first wife, angelic and immortal. She refused to fulfill her role of submission to her husband, and fled from him, though after she had borne a child. She then gave herself as a consort to the Shadow, and spent her life seeking to destroy her child, since it had been prophesied that the child would bear a son who would destroy her. Adam, meanwhile, had been given another wife, the woman Eve. Both had repented following their sin in the Garden, and were now charged with looking after their offspring. The Persian then takes on the form of the Princess, and repeats her determination to have her way. Despite repeated pleas to repent, Lilith continues to seek children whose blood she can drink in order to sustain her beauty.

Vane again expresses his desire to go to the Little Ones, but Raven tells him that he must first go to his wife. Vane reluctantly agrees, and the two go to the room with the mirrors. Suddenly, the spotted leopard leaps into the room and hurtles through the mirror in search of the Little Ones, especially Lona. Raven assures Vane that Mara has been warned, and that the spotted leopardess is no match for the white one. Raven then summons a great steed on which Vane can ride. Vane, a lover of horses, immediately covets this magnificent specimen, and begs to be allowed to ride him to the land of the Little Ones. Raven warns him that, should he break his word to go to Eve's house, he will harm both himself and the children, but Vane is heedless of the warning and urges the horse to follow the spotted leopardess. The great charger races through the night, but when the moon goes down, it drops dead in its tracks. When Vane awakes, he again finds himself the prisoner of the giants. Soon the Little Ones rescue him again, and Lona tells him of their flight to the trees of the forest in order to make the giants think they have left the country. Having gained the friendship of forest animals, they soon drive the giants away. Lona also tells Vane of a fierce battle between the two leopardesses, won by the white cat. Vane then warns her that the spotted leopardess is evil and seeks the destruction of the children, while the white one is a friend. He does not, however, tell her that Lilith is her mother.

The woman with the baby whom Vane had met in Bulika arrives among the Little Ones and encourages them to mount an invasion and take the city, which is poorly defended and populated by cowards. Vane trains the children, who are growing bigger and stronger by the day, to fight, while Lona organizes the provisions for the journey. With the animals on their side, the children are sure of victory, and are motivated even more strongly to mount the assault when Vane tells them that their mothers, citizens of Bulika, had left them in the forest to save them from the evil Princess. All long to see their mothers - Lona most of all. Vane, meanwhile, has fallen in love with Lona and envisions the day when she will rule Bulika from her mother's throne, with him by her side as her consort and chief minister.

When the little army reaches Bulika, they meet little resistance, and the few who put up a fight are easily dispatched. The only loss of life is a boy who was well on his way toward turning into a bad giant. Lona orders the children to sleep in the street with their animals, but Vane fears that the quiet only portends some evil plot on the part of the Princess. Lona is inclined to leave the place in disgust, but Vane insists that the prophecy assures their triumph. The next

morning Vane, Lona, and ten of the biggest boys enter the palace on their beasts. Lilith is waiting for them, and Lona immediately recognizes her mother. She rushes to embrace her, but the evil Princess dashes her to the floor, her lifeblood trickling from her wound. Vane takes up the motionless body and carries it from the palace, only to find that the children are gone. He leaves Bulika, followed by an increasingly-menacing crowd of citizens. Soon the ten boys arrive on the surviving beasts, carrying the bound and helpless Princess with them. Outside the city they meet the rest of the children, who tell Vane about a great Shadow that had come over them and even within them, filling them with evil thoughts and driving them from the city. They gather around the dead body of Lona, while the white leopardess guards the bound Princess and protects the children from her.

The next day they set out for the house of the Raven, intending to deliver both Lona and Lilith to him. Several of the children try to be kind to the Princess, but when they feed her, she only tries to bite them. One night when the moon goes behind a shadow, Lilith attacks Vane, but he drives her off by striking her wounded hand. Later they arrive at the home of Mara. The children fear her as the cat-woman, but Vane assures them that she is good. To her he gives the Princess, and she determines to bring Lilith to repentance. During the night, the children have nightmares while Mara tries to convince the Princess to turn from the evil she has become, insisting that she is really good, but has been overcome by the Shadow that makes all it touches evil. Lilith argues that she is her own self and belongs to no one else, and that to acknowledge that she was made by and belongs to another would make her a slave like Mara. Soon a fire enters Lilith that enables her to see herself as she really is; she despises herself, but refuses to turn from the evil, insisting still on her freedom. As her suffering increases, she argues that she is incapable of opening her hand and taking the proffered forgiveness. Finally, she yields, is filled with the light she had so long resisted, weeps long and bitterly, and falls into a deep sleep.

In the morning it rains - the first water the Little Ones had ever seen. They prepare to embark to the House of the Dead, where alone Lilith can unclench her hand, closed upon something that does not belong to her. On the way they meet fearful monsters, which attack Lilith in the night. Upon arriving at the House of the Dead, Lilith is still resistant, not believing that she can unclench her hand, but Adam tells her that the Shadow cannot enter his house. The children all choose beds on which to lie, snuggling close to women they believe to be their mothers. Lilith finally begs Adam to bring a shining sword and cut off her offending hand, which he does, then tells Vane that her real hand is being restored even as she sleeps. Two of the children lie down with Lilith, along with the white leopardess. Adam tells Vane that eventually even the Shadow will sleep in his house, and that Lilith and the Shadow will be the last two to wake. Mara walks with Adam, Eve, and Vane out of the Place of the Dead, still carrying Lilith's severed hand.

Vane asks the privilege of sleeping on the couch next to Lona, but Adam tells him he has a task to perform first. He is to take Lilith's severed hand, return to Mara's cottage, and through it go into the desert, where he is to bury the hand where he hears underground water. He is to speak to no one, never turn aside, and never put the hand down until he buries it. On the way he faces many temptations, but all turn out to be phantoms, and he resists them all, finally burying the hand as instructed, then falling into a deep sleep. When he wakes, he returns to the House of the Dead, but finds it unoccupied. Soon a door opens and he sees Lona, who asks to be carried back to her couch. This he does, and lies down on the couch beside her. He cannot sleep, however, but soon Adam, Eve, and Mara come to him, feed him, and cover him with the blanket

of death, and he falls into a deep sleep at last. He dreams beautiful dreams, and dreams of confessing his sins, of loving all creatures, of seeing the world flowing with beautiful rivers that he had set free. He meets Adam in his dream, and the First Man assures him that he is still dreaming, but that he will one day know the Truth without a dream. As the dream continues, he longs to awake again in the House of the Dead, so throws himself down a precipice, hoping thereby to wake himself up. Instead, he finds himself back in his own house, and, to his great grief, is unable to return to the land from which he had lately come.

After four nights in his own house, he wakes again in the House of the Dead. He finds Lona standing beside him waiting for him to wake. Soon they are joined by Adam, Eve, and Mara, and Adam tells them that they will die no more, but continue to live more strongly in the death that is life indeed. The Shadow hovers over the place, hoping to regain the woman who had once been his. Vane and Lona go off to find Vane's parents, assured by Adam that Lilith will rise and find Lona in due time. They and the children travel through a beautified land, experiencing the joy of resurrection morning as they see the new heavens and the new earth. They see a city in the distance and travel toward it. It is the heavenly city, from which flows the river of life that fills the land with goodness and beauty. At the top is a throne on which sits the Ancient of Days. As Vane and Lona approach, Vane feels his hand being taken. He is then pulled through a door, and finds himself again in his library. The story ends with an admission that he has never again been able to return to the magic land or find his Lona, though Mara is often with him and instructs him. He knows not whether he is still dreaming in the House of the Dead or whether he will pass from the present life into an eternal dream that is the only true reality.

## **MAJOR CHARACTERS**

- Mr. Vane - The protagonist, he travels from the library of an old house he has inherited into a strange land by way of a mirror.
- Mr. Raven - The former librarian to Sir Upward and now a sexton in another land, he leads Vane into the mysterious land on the other side of the mirror. Eventually Vane discovers that he is Adam, and his wife Eve.
- Lona - The oldest of the Little Ones, she cares for Vane and directs him on the next phase of his journey. She is the daughter of Adam and Lilith, the latter of whom kills her when they meet. Vane falls in love with her, though they are separated at the end of the story.
- Mara - The Cat-woman who shows hospitality to Vane in his travels and gives him directions to Bulika. She has a white leopardess who is the determined enemy of Lilith. She is also the daughter of Adam and Eve.
- Lilith - The Princess of Bulika, Vane finds her naked and almost dead in the forest, and cares for her and revives her. She is initially scornful of his aid, but later offers him her love when he selflessly perseveres in following her to the capital city. She is capable of turning herself into a spotted leopardess and a white leech. Vane later finds that she is an angelic being who was the first wife of Adam, but turned to evil and became the consort of Satan, known in the story as the Shadow.

- The Shadow - A dark Presence who often accompanies Lilith, he represents Satan.

### **NOTABLE QUOTATIONS**

“The strange thing to you will be, that the more doors you go out of, the further you go in.” (Raven, ch.3, p.13)

“So I held my peace, and it was my wisdom, for what should I say to a creature such as this raven, who saw through accident into entity?” (Vane, ch.3, p.14)

“When a heart is really alive, then it is able to think live things. There is one heart all whose thoughts are strong, happy creatures, and whose very dreams are lives.” (Raven, ch.5, p.25-26)

“Every one, as you ought to know, has a best-self - and a bird-self, and a stupid fish-self, ay, and a creeping serpent-self too - which it takes a great deal of crushing to kill! In truth he has also a tree-self and a crystal-self, and I don't know how many selves more - all to get into harmony. You can tell what sort a man is by his creature that comes oftenest to the front.” (Raven, ch.6, p.30)

“Your thirst must be greater before you can have what will quench it, but what I can give you, I will gladly.” (Mrs. Raven, ch.6, p.30)

“Be of good comfort; we watch the flock of the great shepherd.” (Raven, ch.7, p.36)

“I had had the chance, and had flung it from me; Blunty and I were alike! He did not know his loss, and I had to be taught mine!” (Vane, ch.13, p.67)

“Knowledge no doubt made bad people worse, but it must make good people better!” (Vane, ch.14, p.68)

“The part of philanthropist is indeed a dangerous one, and the man who would do his neighbor good must first study how not to do him evil, and must begin by pulling the beam out of his own eye.” (Vane, ch.14, p.71)

“I had chosen the dead rather than the living, the thing thought rather than the thing thinking!” (Vane, ch.16, p.84)

“They must at last grow weary of their mutual repugnance, and begin to love one another! for love, not hate, is deepest in what Love ‘loved into being.’” (Raven, ch.17, p.94)

“A man must not, for knowledge, of his own will encounter temptation!” (Vane, ch.22, p.117)

“Could such beauty as I saw, and such wickedness as I suspected, exist in the same person? If they could, *how* was it possible?” (Vane, ch.25, p.128)

“What you have made me is yours! I will repay you as never yet did woman! My power, my beauty, my love are your own: take them.” (Lilith, ch.25, p.131)

“Nobody knows what anything is; a man can only learn what a thing means! Whether he do, depends on the use he is making of it.” (Raven, ch.28, p.140)

“The fact is, no man understands anything; when he knows he does not understand, that is his first tottering step - not toward understanding, but toward the capability of one day understanding.” (Raven, ch.30, p.152)

“You will be dead, so long as you refuse to die.” (Raven, ch.31, p.157)

“As I sat gazing on the still countenance, it seemed to smile a live momentary smile. I never doubted it an illusion, yet believed what it said: I should yet see her alive! It was not she, it was I who was lost, and she would find me!” (Vane, ch.36, p.185)

“Into the created can pour itself the creating will, and so redeem it.” (Mara, ch.39, p.200)

“There is no slave but the creature that wills against its creator.” (Mara, ch.39, p.200)

“Verily, thou shalt die, but not as thou thinkest. Thou shalt die out of death into life. Now is the Life for, that never was against thee!” (Mara, ch.39, p.207)

“I may not be old enough to desire to die, but I am young enough to desire to live indeed!” (Vane, ch.42, p.225)

“The world and my being, its life and mine, were one. The microcosm and macrocosm were at length atoned, at length in harmony! I lived in everything; everything entered and lived in me.” (Vane, ch.45, p.243)

“Our life is no dream, but it should and will perhaps become one.” (Vane quoting Novalis, ch.47, p.252)

## **ESSAY QUESTIONS**

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. George MacDonald’s *Lilith* has never been as popular with Christians as some of his other writings despite the praise it received from C.S. Lewis. One of the reasons for this is the claim that it contains a universalistic view of salvation. Do you agree? What in the novel might lead people to this conclusion? Does this, in your opinion, detract from the value of the book? Why or why not?

2. The whole question of the nature of reality underlies the story found in George MacDonald's *Lilith*. What does the author conclude about the nature of true reality? If he leaves the question unanswered, why do you think he does so? Support your conclusions with details from the novel.
3. As is true in the writings of C.S. Lewis, George MacDonald was greatly influenced by the philosophy of Plato. How is this influence evident in his final novel, *Lilith*? Include not only specific references to Plato's work, but also note plot elements that illustrate Platonic ideas.
4. God never appears in George MacDonald's *Lilith*, yet He is a constant presence implied in some of the most significant dialogue in the novel. Discuss the author's view of God and support your assessment with specifics from the story. Is his view a biblical one? Why or why not?
5. Discuss the concepts of sin and repentance as presented in George MacDonald's *Lilith*. Does the author portray a biblical view of these central Christian truths? Why or why not?
6. Discuss the concepts of forgiveness and redemption as presented in George MacDonald's *Lilith*. Does the author present a biblical view of these central Christian truths? Why or why not?
7. The Pre-Raphaelites and Aestheticists of the late nineteenth century spent a great deal of time considering the relationship between Truth and Beauty. George MacDonald was influenced by both of these groups. How does *Lilith*, his last novel, treat this question? Is his answer a biblical one? Why or why not?
8. The epigraph at the beginning of George MacDonald's *Lilith* is a quotation from Henry David Thoreau's *Walking*. What is the significance of this epigraph? Why do you think MacDonald chose it? How does it relate to the themes of the novel?
9. George MacDonald's *Lilith* ends with a quotation from Novalis (George Philipp von Hardenberg), an early German Romanticist. This quotation, one of MacDonald's favorites and one that he incorporated into a number of his works, says, "Our life is no dream, but it should and will perhaps become one." What is the meaning of this quotation in the context of the novel? What does it reveal about the author's understanding of the nature and meaning of life? Be sure to incorporate specifics from the story in answering the question.
10. The question of identity recurs frequently in George MacDonald's *Lilith*. The reader, as well as the protagonist, is often confused about whom certain characters actually are. Surely this confusion is not accidental. What might the author's purpose be in presenting the question of identity in such a confusing way? What might he be saying? Support your conclusions with specifics from the novel.

11. Charles L. Dodgson, whose pen name was Lewis Carroll, was a close friend of George MacDonald. The latter seems to have borrowed from the former the device of entering a magical land through a mirror for his novel *Lilith*. What do MacDonald's novel and Carroll's *Alice* stories have in common? Pay attention to both imagery and the authors' views of the relationship between reality and fantasy in writing your essay.
12. Discuss the symbolic significance of the names of the central characters in George MacDonald's *Lilith*. Pay special attention to the protagonist, Mr. Vane, and his mentor and guide, Mr. Raven. What symbolic meanings could be associated with these names? Consider both the Bible and literature in developing your answer.
13. Discuss the use of time and space in George MacDonald's *Lilith*. How does the warping of these dimensions add to the mystery and contribute to the themes of the novel? Be specific.
14. In George MacDonald's *Lilith*, the author makes occasional references to Dante. Compare the characters of Virgil, Satan, and Beatrice in Dante's *Divine Comedy* with those of Raven, Lilith, and Lona in MacDonald's novel. How do the pairs fulfill the same functions in the journeys of the protagonists? Are they in any important ways different?
15. Discuss the concept of right and wrong as it appears in George MacDonald's *Lilith*. Does the author believe in absolute moral standards, or does he picture a universe where right and wrong change according to one's environment? Support your answer with details from the novel.
16. Discuss the treatment of love in George MacDonald's *Lilith*. What is the meaning of love to the author? Why does he consider it to be so central to human experience? Is the true love of which he speaks closer to the biblical teaching on the subject or to the Romantic view of love? Support your conclusion with details from the novel.
17. In George MacDonald's *Lilith*, what is the role of suffering, both in the story and in his understanding of human experience? To what extent is it a consequence of someone's behavior, and to what extent is it a necessary step in human development? Support your answer with specifics from the story.
18. Discuss the picture of death and immortality presented in George MacDonald's *Lilith*. Does the author have a biblical view of these things? Why or why not? Support your answer with specifics from Scripture and the novel.
19. What are the consequences of evil according to George MacDonald's *Lilith*? Consider the author's view of Hell in answering the question. Is his view of this issue biblical? Why or why not?

20. In Matthew 10:39, Jesus says, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” To what extent is George MacDonald’s *Lilith* a commentary on this verse? Discuss the author’s view of self-sacrifice and its relationship to personal salvation. Be sure to incorporate specific details from the novel in your answer.
21. In George MacDonald’s *Lilith*, he pictures the title character as subsisting by drinking the blood of others, particularly children. Consider this image in relationship to the Industrial Revolution, the central social conflicts of our own era, and the nature of evil in general. Be sure to use details from the novel to support your analysis.
22. Analyze the role of Mara in George MacDonald’s *Lilith*. In your essay, consider the meaning of her name, the function she fulfills in the plot, and the extent to which she serves as a foil for Lilith.
23. In George MacDonald’s *Lilith*, what does the author consider to be the nature of true wisdom? How does this wisdom differ from what people normally think or believe? Use specific incidents from the experience of the protagonist to develop your answer to the question.
24. George MacDonald was strongly influenced by the Romantic literature of the nineteenth century. Consider the major elements of Romanticism and discuss how these elements may be found in *Lilith*, his final novel.
25. George MacDonald was strongly influenced by the Romantic literature of the nineteenth century, but he was also a professing Christian, though an unorthodox one. Consider *Lilith*, his final novel. Which aspect of MacDonald’s personality is dominant by the end of the story, Romanticism or Christianity? Support your answer with details from the novel.
26. To what extent can George MacDonald’s *Lilith* be viewed as a medieval romance - the story of a brave knight on a quest in the name of his fair lady? What aspects of the novel fit this pattern, and which ones do not?
27. In George MacDonald’s *Lilith*, what are the important lessons learned by the protagonist in the course of his quest? How does the author intend the reader to apply these lessons to his own life?
28. Some aspects of George MacDonald’s *Lilith* involve a critique of the philanthropy practiced by the wealthy in England during the Industrial Revolution. What aspects of British philanthropy does the author find objectionable, or even harmful? How does the story illustrate these criticisms of the society in which MacDonald lived?

29. One way in which Christians sometimes deal with the problem of evil is by asserting what some call the “fortunate fall” - the idea that the fall of man was ultimately good, because without it he never could have learned what he needed to know in order to achieve salvation. To what extent can this idea be found in George MacDonald’s *Lilith*? Does he see sin, despite its obvious wickedness, as ultimately a good thing? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with specifics from the story.
30. The title character in George MacDonald’s *Lilith* is unquestionably evil, but of what does her evil consist? If you were to delineate the essence of her wickedness, what would it be? Support your conclusion with incidents and quotations from the novel.
31. Some critics have suggested that George MacDonald’s *Lilith* contains in it something of Hegelian philosophy in the sense that progress occurs through the combination of opposites. Would you agree with this assessment? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with details from the book.
32. Evaluate the ending of George MacDonald’s *Lilith*. Did you find it satisfying? Why or why not? Why do you think he chose to end the story in such an ambiguous way?