

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S NOTES ON GENESIS AND EXODUS

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At the very end of his 1898 biography of Christina Rossetti, Mackenzie Bell includes the following note: "A few pages of M.S., consisting of notes upon various passages in Genesis and Exodus, were found among the papers left by Christina at the time of her death. The notes (which may date towards 1865) relate to Old Testament Types of the New Testament dispensations, and to other matters. They are at present (Oct., 1897) consigned to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, with a view to publication" (393). William Michael Rossetti's diaries reveal that he had found these notes in "a bundle of Christina's manuscripts," and that he was the one who sought to get them published (*Diaries*, 29 July 1897). After first enquiring of Edmund McClure, the editorial secretary for the SPCK from 1875 to 1915, as to whether or not the Society would be interested in considering them, William Michael worked on "putting [them] in shape for publication" (*Diaries*, 25 August 1897), mailing them to McClure on 24 September 1897. As the note added to this letter by William in 1905 indicates, although the notes were printed in a "brochure," they were ultimately rejected by the SPCK.¹

Unfortunately, a copy of this brochure has not been located. Neither the Rossetti family nor the SPCK has a copy. Peter Meadows, the current archivist for the SPCK, conjectures that the notes were set in type in order to be reviewed by the Tract Committee of the SPCK (Meadows). The Tract Committee consisted of seven members of the Society, appointed annually, to review manuscripts of a religious nature. Once approved by this committee, manuscripts were then sent on to the Council of Reference, a group of five bishops, for final approval (Allen 191).² Since the minutes of the Tract Committee run only to 1893 (later volumes may have been destroyed by wartime bombing), we do not know why Rossetti's Genesis and Exodus notes were rejected.