

"If mothers could learn to do for themselves, what they do for their children . . . we would have happier households."

-Charlotte Mason

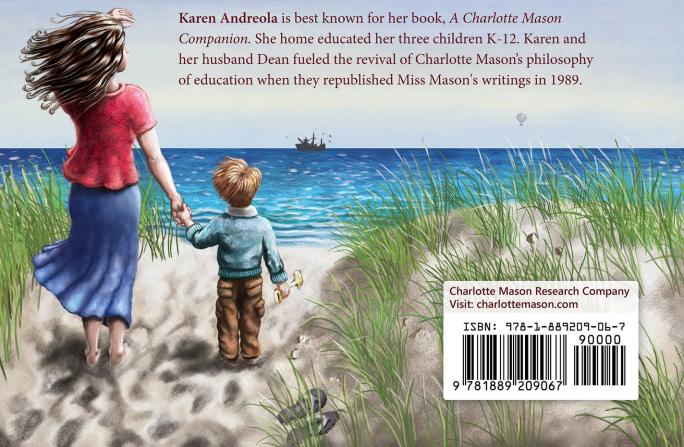
Karen says,

"Mother Culture® is the skillful art of how a mother looks after the ways of her household. With a "thinking love" she creates a culture in the home all her own.

A mother does a lot of taking care, so she needs to take care of herself, too. As a mother is feeding and cultivating the souls of her children, she is nourishing her own soul with ideas, while taking a little time for her own play and creativity. Nourished and refreshed, she keeps growing closer to God and into the Christian woman God is designing her to be.

May you find the principles on these pages to be invigorating – especially if you have a low battery. May they strengthen you in your on-going efforts to create the happy home your heart desires."





Mother Culture®

For a Happy Homeschool

By Karen Andreola



Charlotte Mason Research Company

Mother Culture® Karen Andreola

All of the pictures in *Mother Culture* have been manipulated for use in this book and are from Karen Andreola's personal collection of antique illustrations—a collection that took some thirty years to acquire. Therefore they may not be taken directly from this book to decorate or illustrate books, newsletters, websites, stationary, curricula, etc. One's own research and collection of original source material should be relied upon for one's own projects.

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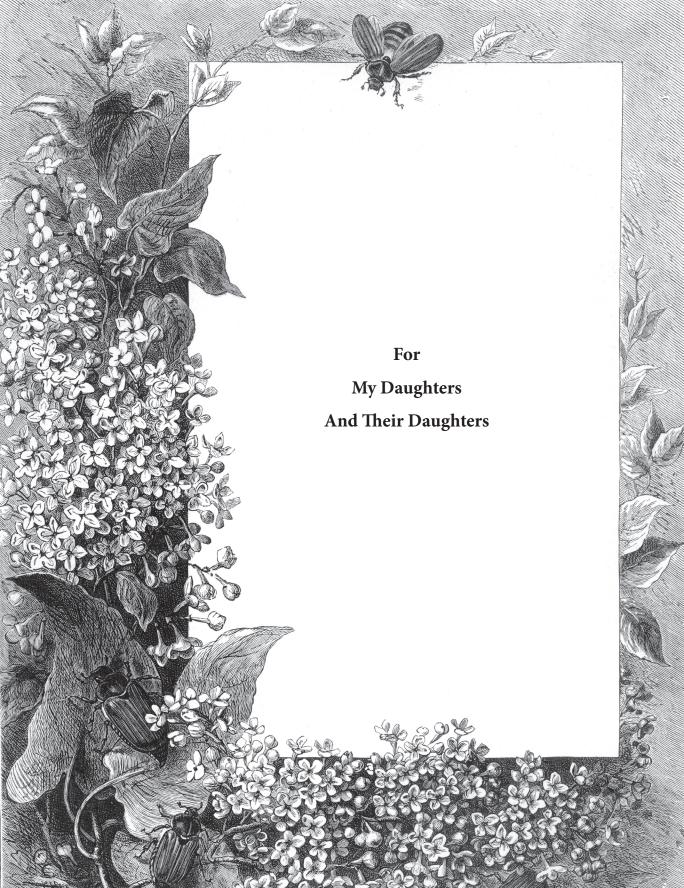
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Foreword

G reetings. I am Karen Andreola's firstborn child. In these pages my mother sometimes refers to me as Baby One, Big Sister, or Sophia. Despite our family's many household moves and frequent challenges, the memories of my childhood are happy ones. Some of my favorite memories are of playing make-believe, going barefoot in the creek, our family's many nature walks, and being absorbed in a good book.

Fast forward to adulthood and the exciting anticipation of my own firstborn. As my husband and I planned for our baby's arrival, I dreamed of creating those same happy memories for him.

My mother made it look easy, but I quickly found motherhood was not as dreamy as I had planned. With his birth came a screaming baby, sleepless nights, exhaustion, and loneliness. Life with my baby was really, really hard. The grace of God and many long distance phone calls to my mother saw me through those early years of adjustment. Now I have three children. As they grow, so do my mothering and home teaching skills. I am learning to apply the art of Mother Culture. These wise principles are the tools I have needed to grow into the mother I had dreamed of being—not perfect, but well equipped to face the daily challenges of a home teacher.

Perhaps those many hours of phone chats with a frazzled daughter convinced my mother of the need for this book on Mother Culture. I can remember one especially trying wet winter's day several years ago. "Mom, after chores everyone's been in a sour mood," I said. "They're crying and

so am I. It's been a horrible morning."

"Put on some sunshiny music and dance with the children," my mother advised. "When you are all good and tired, sit on the floor. Open a cute picture book. The children will gather around you, the littlest one on your lap, to hear you read aloud. It will calm your frazzled nerves and theirs, too. Then you can return to lessons." So I did. It worked. Later, when Daddy got home, Mommy took a peaceful walk by herself and read a chapter from an edifying novel. It is amazing how refreshing a thirty-minute break can be. Similar words of advice have rescued many a day for my mother's grandchildren.

My days at home with my children are increasingly being filled with joy and peace. My firstborn baby is now age ten. Today, on this beautiful spring day, after a long winter, he and I, along with his younger brother and sister, made some of those childhood memories that I always dreamed about. We had a happy time reading together under a maple tree in our back yard.

By applying the principles preserved in this book, you will not only be encouraging yourself but be inspired to encourage and uplift those you love.

Sophia Englar, April 2018





1

What is Mother Culture®?

"Mothers should cultivate their souls so that in turn they may cultivate the souls of their children." ¹

A re you a hard-working home teacher who could use some encouragement? Welcome to the invigorating ideas of Mother Culture.

When I am asked, "What is Mother Culture?" I usually say something like this: "Mother Culture is the skillful art with which a mother looks after the ways of her household and herself. In her home she creates a culture all her own with a mingling of love and responsibility. A mother does a lot of taking care, so she also takes care of herself. So much depends on how she manages her life."

Peace

Over the years, as my concept of Mother Culture began to take shape, I started noticing how the insights of British educator Charlotte Mason (1842-1923) related to this concept. For instance, she remarks that

The old painters, however diverse their ideas in other matters, all fixed upon one quality as proper to the pattern of Mother. The Madonna, no matter out of whose canvas she looks at you, is always serene.... We should do well to hang our walls with the Madonnas of all the early Masters [of art] if the lesson, taught through the eye, would reach with calming influence to the heart.²

When our children see our faces, what do they see reflected there? Do they see a face of peace and contentment?

Nurture

The educational premise that "children are born persons" is a good place to start, because "persons" applies to everyone. For a Christian mother to keep growing into the person God is designing her to be, she continues in His Word. Fathers and mothers are given the task to feed God's lambs, that their children may grow in wisdom.³ While a mother nurtures a child to grow in character, intellect, imagination, and creativity, she is intentional about not putting her own spiritual and intellectual life on hold.

Direction

As a new home teacher I craved direction. Hardly a generous "older woman in the Lord" could be found in person. This might be your situation, too. You might be the first Christian in your family line. And yet, who God calls, He also equips. Pondering Miss Mason's Christian advice in her original writings supplied me with time-honored, tried and true ideas. In the upcoming chapters I highlight selected passages for you.

Play

"I always have been a busy person, doing my own housework, helping the Man-of-the-Place... but I love to work and oh, I do just love to play." —Laura Ingalls Wilder

Because it is a big responsibility to be a home teacher, it is easy to get stressed. Miss Mason understood the need for play in people of all ages. She says, "If mothers could learn to do for themselves, what they do for their children... we would have happier households." Just as a mother takes joy in seeing and hearing her children play, she would benefit from a little play herself. Rather than wait until you are tottering on the brink of burn-out, consider fitting in at least two 10-minute moments of Mother Culture a day. Play for a mother, could mean simply sitting calmly at a favorite window long enough to finish a glass of ice tea.

What makes play possible for a busy mother? She chooses little pleasantries within reach. These can be enjoyed in 10-to-15-minute intervals that are not difficult to fit into her cubby-holed hours. For one mother, play might be making a greeting card and composing a pithy Emily-Dickinson-style poem inside. For another mother, taking a solitary walk might be the most refreshing interlude of her day, or puttering around the back garden, or reading and jotting a few lines into a journal, or drawing a wildflower into a nature diary, or photographing a rosy sunrise or the bumblebees that alight on the hollyhocks. It might be the delight of knitting a pair of mittens. Her moments of Mother Culture are *her* choosing. Have you ever taken a bubble bath in the middle of the day while Baby is napping, rather than waiting until 9 pm? I tried this during a stressful week. It was the relaxing break and restorative I needed. When moments of Mother Culture are woven into the rhythm of a mother's life, she isn't too hectic or exhausted to enjoy her husband's company.

Radiant Living

"What feeds the soul matters as much as what feeds the body."

—Corrie ten Boom

In the home where Charlotte Mason's recommendations are followed, beautiful music fills the air. The family becomes intimately familiar with paintings and masters of art. Nature is observed with a sense of wonder. Good books are savored. The family understands the Bible by reading it, and by narrating it, too. These are a person's "very bread of life." Children are watching their mother. They notice how much or how little she enjoys all the true, just, pure, lovely, praise-worthy, and excellent things to think about. When these things are mutually appreciated, a moral stir and intellectual spark of enthusiasm, something hard to live without, shows up on faces. King David observes this in Psalm 34:5:

"Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed."

A mother learns alongside her child. But she also learns *off to the side*. My suggestions invite her to dig, dabble, dream, ponder, treasure, to meditate and then to express herself. When she does, her face will not only show peace and contentment: her countenance will be radiant. Speaking about radiant living and radiant faces, Miss Mason says:

The bracing atmosphere of truth and sincerity should be perceived in every school; and here again the *common pursuit of knowledge* by teacher and class comes to our aid and creates a current of fresh air perceptible even to the chance visitor, who sees the *glow* of intellectual life and moral health on the faces of teachers and children alike.⁶

Three Tools for Creating a Happy Home

"If Mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy."

—American Saying

The home teachers I've known have a heart of devotion for their family. They work from sun-up to sun-down and sometimes feel overwhelmed. What will the children remember about Mother and how she lived her life among them? One secret for not feeling overwhelmed is learning to like what we have to do. In this book I place three reliable tools for creating a happy home in a mother's hands.

- **Atmosphere** For cultivating good attitudes, fostering peace, and the love of learning, Atmosphere is a mother's loyal guide.
- **Discipline-of-Habit**—What enables a family to work together and play together with minimal friction? Good Habits and true courtesy.
- **Life-of-Ideas**—It is important to feed our "inner life" with nourishing, spiritually edifying, and inspiring Ideas.

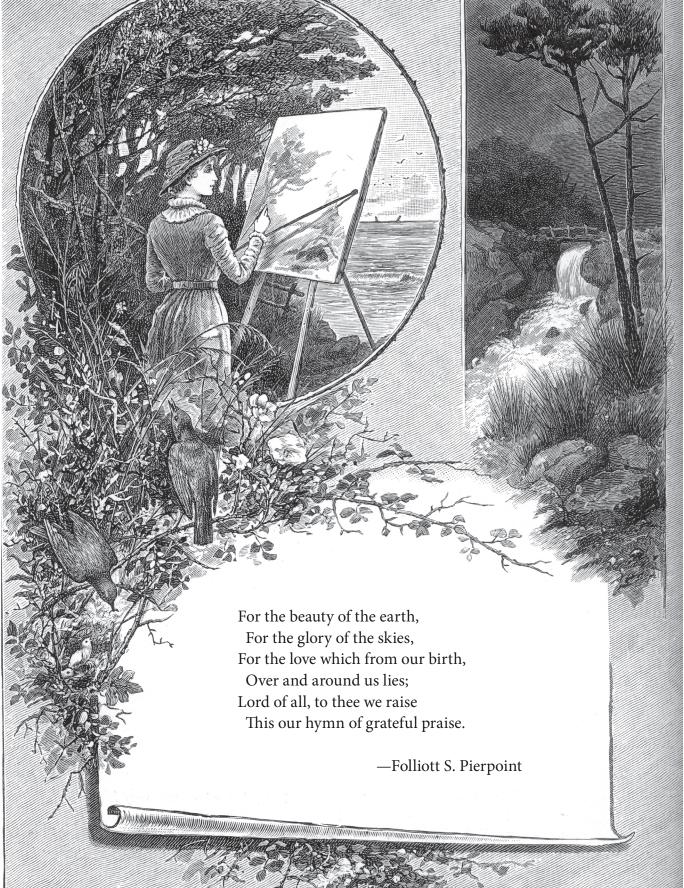
Joy Spiraling Outward

If there is such a thing as the joy of childhood, there is such a thing as the joy of motherhood. The mother who cultivates her soul can say, "My cup runneth over." It runs over into the family circle. The benefits of Mother Culture do not end with her. They spill over and spiral outward. Eventually, she is the mother who becomes the generous "older woman in the Lord" that she longed to know when she was young.⁷



Notes

- 1. I am unable to produce evidence of the source of this quote because I heard it so long ago. But since the early 1990s I've been attributing it to Billy Graham.
- 2. Charlotte Mason, School Education, p. 33.
- 3. John 21:15.
- 4. Mason, School Education, p.33.
- 5. Charlotte Mason, A Philosophy of Education, p. 111.
- 6. Ibid., p. 97. (Italics mine.)
- 7. Titus 2:4-5.



2

About This Book

Please Hop Around

I wrote this book to bring joy for today and hope for tomorrow. Some of the chapters will resonate with you more than others. You are welcome to choose your pie. I have cooked up a big batch of flavors. Please feel free to hop about the chapters, lingering wherever you wish. With my farm table so full of ingredients, it was difficult to know how to arrange the chapters. In and around my collection of messages meant to be thought-provoking, I have sprinkled some light-hearted humor.

Obscure Term Brought to Light

The term "Mother Culture" isn't found in any of the writings of Charlotte Mason. It is an obscure term I unearthed during the 1990s after countless hours of research with the old bound volumes of *Parents' Review*. Mother Culture struck a chord within my heart. In the years that followed, I rounded out my concept of it, making it relevant for a new generation. I first introduced the term Mother Culture in my magazine, *Parents' Review*, in 1993, developed it for live audiences, and expanded upon it in my book *A Charlotte Mason Companion*. Soon after, I registered Mother Culture[®] as a trademark for my business/ministry. You can say I am "up in years" now. This book is a culmination of those years.

In a Spirit of Gentelness

I like to call Miss Mason's practical philosophy the "Gentle Art of Learning $^{\mathrm{TM}}$ " and do so throughout these pages. While we were talking

about this, my husband, Dean, said

Gentleness in education is not a dumbing-down or a weakness. Gentleness is akin to strength with self-control. True gentleness aims higher than the world. It isn't easily put into practice. It takes effort. When we practice gentleness in our homes we are following a biblical role model, imitating Christ himself, in our relationship with our children and in how we choose to educate them. The Charlotte Mason Method helped our family accomplish this.

In Context

I am a Christian who confesses the Apostles' Creed and who believes in the inerrancy of Scripture. The guiding light of the Word of God is dear to me. Any verses I reference can be looked up in your Bible to find the full context. Further Bible reading will give you another layer of understanding and confidence. I have placed notes of references at the end of the chapters for your convenience.

Quotations from Miss Mason's original writings can be looked up and read in their full context, too. The page numbers I reference correspond to the pink volumes my husband Dean and I kept in print for more than twenty years through Charlotte Mason Research. They also match the pages of Miss Mason's books published by the curriculum company Simply Charlotte Mason. I invite you to pick up a volume and sip the pages slowly, like tea. *Home Education* is a good place to start. Even though it was first published in the 1880s, and the writing style is less contemporary than a young parent might prefer, on the subject of bringing up children as Christians, *Home Education* is my top pick.

Quotations

My messages are dotted with quotations from a wide variety of people. This isn't to say I agree with the full spectrum of the philosophy held by a particular person, but that I find some relevant or entertaining truth in what is stated.

Illustrations

The illustrations are from my collection of antique books. I've been a collector for several decades. One hundred years ago support for the traditional Christian family was great. Publishers depicted people living responsible, loving, and honorable lives. Illustrators portrayed families with dignity. The Victorians were idealists, I know. But as the traditional family dwindles, I would like to think that I can restore some of that inspiring ideal.

Cover

At my request my son Nigel painted the artwork for the front and back covers. He is a graphic artist, illustrator, and website designer. One morning he said, "I have a surprise for you. I added something to the picture."

"Really? What?" I questioned.

"Take a look," he said.

He had painted my purple book, *A Charlotte Mason Companion*, on top of the pile of books he had placed within easy reach of the mother.

Narration

"One eare it heard, at the other out it went."

—Chaucer

I assume Chaucer is the source of our modern expression "In one ear, out the other." Studies show that people learn best through discussion and by reiterating what they have learned. This discovery is nothing new, really. Therefore, I suggest keeping a journal of your thoughts and narrations. I have prepared questions for personal reflection and group discussion. My prayer is that you will be greatly encouraged, however you use this book.



3

The Majesty of Motherhood

In Proverbs 31 the clothing of the godly homemaker is of fine linen, and it is purple. For centuries, this rare and expensive fabric dye has been associated with royalty. To me, purple represents the Majesty of Motherhood.

Many Hats

A mother wears many hats. She is wife, nanny, nurse, cook, governess, taxi-driver, laundress, seamstress, gardener, and friend. Dear mother, please add to your hats a crown. The day your child was placed in your arms was your coronation day. Yes, while you were gazing into the face of your precious little one, you were crowned queen. An essential aspect of Mother Culture is understanding your high-ranking position. You were crowned with authority by the Almighty God.

Queen Victoria

A biographer says of young Queen Victoria:

From the roots of her being she believed that Divine Providence had called her to the throne and that, young and inexperienced (she was eighteen years old) there could be no question about her fitness for her task. It was God's wish that she should reign. He would support her.¹

Do we have such confidence in our calling... from the roots of our

being? It is God's will that parents reign. In the home Father is king. Mother is queen.² What a big responsibility it is to reign! "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," says Shakespeare.³ And yet, "it is not open to parents either to lay aside or to sink under the burden of the honor laid upon them." Because God's love is the well-spring, and because it is God's mandate that parents reign, if we ask Him for more love and for more wisdom, He gives it to us. Faithful Christians do not work alone. They work in cooperation with God's Holy Spirit. Their children are on loan to them by God. Parents do not bring up children for their own glory, to do themselves proud or to look good. They work with God for His glory.

Parents Hold Office

In America we are privileged to live in a constitutional republic. Yet, we are over-saturated with the democratic way of thinking. Therefore, it isn't surprising when the notion of democracy slips into the home, where it does not belong. A temptation hovers about a mother who is with her children all day. The temptation is to be too buddy-buddy or palsy-walsy with them. The more her authority dwindles, the more she succumbs to their whims and whines. One of the fruits of home education is the close relationship that develops between mother and child. It is valuable and necessary for a loving, warm, home atmosphere. Rules only, without a relationship of affection, sympathy, and understanding, invite rebellion. But let's look at the flip side. Relationship only, without rules, promotes a weary life of chaos and friction. A child's regular outspoken, soft-spoken or even sly unspoken, "But I don't want to" is a symptom of a household that is democratic.

"It is perhaps a little difficult to maintain an attitude of authority in these democratic days, when even educationists counsel that children be treated on equal terms," writes Charlotte Mason.⁵ Therefore, it is important for us to remember: "The foundation of parental authority is that the parents *hold office*."

Under Authority

A Roman centurion believed Jesus could heal his terribly sick servant from afar. Although such a thing hadn't yet been demonstrated, he believed that all Jesus had to do was to say the word. The centurion understood the chain of command, made up of positions of responsibility and authority. Since God is the highest authority, He must have the power of His high position. My husband Dean told me that "it is possible that this centurion recognized more power in Jesus than in the Roman Empire. Caesars were looked upon as being god-like. They had the power of the sword, but they did not have the miraculous power to heal. The power and authority of Jesus was unlike anything this Roman centurion had ever seen." Wow.

"For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith."

A mother trusts and obeys God because she is under God's authority. In turn, God crowns her with authority over her child. This is a chain of command. Miss Mason writes these beautiful words about fathers and mothers:

In the first place, they are the immediate and personal appoint[-ments] of the Almighty King, the sole Ruler of men; they have not only to fulfil his counsels regarding the children, but to represent his Person; his parents are as God to the little child; and yet a more constraining thought, *God is to him what his parents are*; [the little child] has no power to conceive a greater and lovelier personality than that of the royal heads of his own home; he makes his first approach to the Infinite through them; they are his measure for the highest.⁸

Queen Elizabeth

"The greatest among you shall be your servant."

—Matthew 23:11

A good queen does not put herself first. She is a servant-queen. She serves while she reigns. Love, duty, and a degree of self-sacrifice have taught the mother to anticipate the daily needs of those she serves. In 1999, during the celebration of entering a new millennium, a vast majority of people voted Queen Elizabeth I of England a favorite person of the 2nd millennium. At the time, I happened to be reading aloud to my children from *Queen Elizabeth and the Spanish Armada*. I jotted down these sentences. "It is not easy to be queen. But she was a queen, and so always she must think first of her country and her people, before she thought of herself." Isn't this what the mother does, as she serves the children of her realm, in all the hundreds of little duties she carries out day by day?

The Mini Kingdom of Home

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

—Ephesians 6:1-3

Children, too, have a part to play in this mini-kingdom of home. The queen expects her subjects to faithfully serve her. Because Charlotte Mason was British it seems apropos that she would be more familiar with the characteristics of royalty than we Americans are. She said, "It is good for the children to faithfully serve, honor and humbly obey their natural rulers. Only at home can children be trained in the chivalrous temper of proud submission and dignified obedience." ¹⁰

Oh, how I enjoyed answering my children's requests for some treat or screen-entertainment with a "Yes." But often my answer was a thoughtful "No." I remember saying to my young children, after I had already said "No," and they were teasing me to say otherwise, "The queen has spoken." Children will stop teasing or whining when they see it brings them no

satisfaction. As they mature, they grow to understand that your authority is wise and just.

If You Are Good You Will be Happy

So many of the theories of bringing up children focus on amusing a child enough to keep him perpetually happy. Miss Mason says that many parents

are content, believing that if he is happy he will be good; and it is so to a great extent; but in the older days the theory was, if you are good you will be happy; and this is a principle which strikes the keynote of endeavour, and holds good... through... the whole of life.... The child who has learned to 'endeavour himself' [to do what is right] (as the Prayer Book has it) has learned to live.¹¹

A pleasant atmosphere of home rests upon a foundation of authority, when both parent and child accept the dignity of their positions. Miss Mason says, "The presence of the slight, sweet, undefined feeling of dignity in the household is the very first condition for the bringing-up of loyal honourable men and women, capable of reverence and apt to win respect." ¹²

A Spiral Effect

While a mother builds a happy home, her leadership has a spiral effect. Like a pebble dropped in a pond, her leadership sets in motion ever-widening circles. Rather than society influencing the home, it ought to be the Christian home influencing society. Righteousness brings beauty of character. Character creates harmony in the home. Harmony in the home brings order to civilization, which makes peace on earth. This must be what is meant by "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."



Q. How does the image of queen help you to understand your responsibility and position of authority?

Notes

- 1. Noel Streatfeild, *Queen Victoria* (New York: Random House, 1958), p. 64.
- 2. Colossians 3:18-22; 1 Corinthians 11:3.
- 3. William Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part II.
- 4. Charlotte Mason, Parents and Children, p. 14.
- 5. Ibid.
- 6. Ibid. (Italics mine.)
- 7. Matthew 8:9-10.
- 8. Mason, Parents and Children, p. 14.
- 9. Frances Winwar, *Queen Elizabeth and the Spanish Armada* (New York: Random House, 1954). And Matthew 20:28.
- 10. Mason, Parents and Children, p. 13.
- 11. Ibid., p. 253.
- 12. Ibid., p. 14.

For Further Study: Colossians 1:15-20; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14.