

Simply Charlotte Mason presents



# Self-Direction

Charlotte M. Mason

**Ourselves, Book 2**  
Youth Edition

With additional material by  
Sonya Shafer



The choices you make today  
will set the direction  
of your entire life.

In *Self-Direction* (the sequel to *Self-Knowledge*) you will get to know the ruling powers of Mansoul—the kingdom within you. You will discover how to make good decisions that will profit your kingdom and bring honor to your King. You will also become familiar with the lead counselor in your kingdom and learn whether you can trust his counsel.

Self-Direction is all about learning how to govern your kingdom of Mansoul well and become the best version of yourself that you can possibly be.

Today's choices will determine the direction of your entire life. Are you ready to set that direction?

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**Charlotte Mason**  
*.com*

# Self-Direction

Ourselves, Book 2, Youth Edition

by Charlotte M. Mason  
With additional material by Sonya Shafer

This Simply Charlotte Mason edition of *Ourselves, Book II*, presents authentic and accurate page replicas of Charlotte Mason's original work. Some rearranging has been done to make this Youth Edition more useable to the young person. In particular, the Preface to *Ourselves*, written to the parent, has been moved to the back of the book and can be found in the Parent Notes section.

Page replicas taken from *Ourselves* (Volume 4 of the Original Home Schooling Series)

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Self-Direction—Ourselves, Book II, Youth Edition

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# A Note to the Reader

The adventure continues! In *Self-Knowledge* you explored the country within you—the kingdom of Mansoul—with all of its wonders and beauty as well as its dangers and enemies. Now it is time to learn how to govern that country well.

In *Self-Direction* you will get to know the ruling powers of Mansoul. You will discover how to make good decisions that will profit your kingdom and bring honor to your King. You will also become familiar with the lead counselor in your kingdom and learn whether you can trust his counsel. And you will spend some time appreciating and worshipping your King, as Mansoul was created to do.

Your guide on this grand adventure will be Charlotte Mason. As you may have noticed in *Self-Knowledge*, Charlotte believed that you have great potential and that you are smart enough to think about important ideas. She will not talk down to you, so take your time as you go through this book. Read slowly and thoughtfully. After each paragraph (or sentence), pause and try to put what you read into your own words. The more you read and think about what you read, the easier it will become.

You will notice some cultural differences as you go along, because this book was written in England at the beginning of the 1900s. But don't make the mistake of dismissing the book just because it is old! This is a goldmine of helpful ideas to guide you in making good decisions for yourself. It's just that some of the phrases Charlotte used and some of the events she mentioned might be unfamiliar to you. Look in the sidebar for helpful notes along the way.

At the end of each reading, you will find Points to Narrate and Discuss with your teacher or parent. See how many of those points you can remember without looking back. You can write your answers or just talk about them.

Self-Direction is all about learning how to govern your kingdom of Mansoul well and become the best version of yourself that you can possibly be. Charlotte will set a high standard, because the choices you make today and tomorrow and the next day will determine the direction of your entire life. Are you ready to set that direction? Let's begin.

# A Little about Charlotte Mason

Perhaps you have heard your parent or teacher mention Charlotte Mason in connection with your schoolwork. This might be a good time for a formal introduction.

Charlotte Mason (1842–1923) was a British teacher who invested her life in improving the quality of children’s education. She didn’t just go along with the traditional methods of learning that were used in the schools of her day. Instead, she thought long and hard about how children learn best and what kinds of things are the best food for their minds. Then she incorporated her ideas into her classroom with her own students—and saw them flourish.

Over time, more and more parents and teachers in England adopted her methods and ideas about education. So Charlotte spent the rest of her life training them to give their children good habits, great books, and guided discovery of the world around them.

You may have used some of her methods in your own schoolwork. Rather than dry textbooks that present only facts, Charlotte encouraged us to use literary-style books that tell the story and make the subject come alive. And rather than giving a list of questions to be answered about the text, Charlotte wanted us to narrate, or tell back, in our own words everything we can remember from the reading; for once you can do that, you can continue to educate yourself about anything for the rest of your life.

Charlotte was also a firm believer in giving students a wide variety of subjects, for she realized that there is much more to life than just reading, writing, and arithmetic. So students who use her methods enjoy art, music, handicrafts, nature study, foreign language, poetry, Shakespeare, singing, history, geography, Bible, and more.

Perhaps most importantly, Charlotte taught that the goal of learning is not just to know a bunch of facts or to achieve a certain grade or even to graduate from high school or college. No, the goal of learning is to grow as a person.

That's one reason she wrote the book you are now holding: *Self-Direction*. She wanted you to learn these ideas about yourself, so you can grow into the very best version of you!

*“Character is the result not merely of the great ideas which are given to us, but of the habits which we labour to form upon those ideas.”*—Charlotte Mason

# Ourselves

## Book II.—Self-Direction

“Order my goings.”

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### INTRODUCTORY

IN Book I. of *Ourselves*, which deals with Self-knowledge, I have tried to lay before the reader a panoramic view of the Kingdom of Mansoul. I shall continue to use the expression, Mansoul, which we owe to Bunyan, because I do not know any other that suggests a view from the outside, as if one surveyed a tract of country from an eminence. From our imaginary height, we have—supposing that the reader has been my fellow-student in the considerations that occupied the former volume—taken a bird’s-eye view of the riches of Mansoul, of the wonderful capacities there are in every human being to enter upon the world as a great inheritance.

All its beauty and all its thought are open to everyone; everyone may take service for the world’s uses; everyone may climb those delectable mountains in the recesses of his own nature from whence he gets the

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#### Reading 1

Review The Government of Mansoul diagram that you created in the previous book, *Self-Knowledge*.

John Bunyan coined the term “Mansoul” in his book, *The Holy War*. Make plans to read it after this book.



vision of the city of God. If Mansoul has infinite resources and glorious possibilities, it has also perils, any one of which may bring devastation and ruin. None of these perils is inevitable, because Mansoul is a kingdom under an established government. It is convenient to think of this government as carried on in four Chambers.

The House of Body is, we have seen, sustained by the Appetites; but ruined when any one of these appetites obtains sole control. The five Senses are, as it were, pages running between body and mind, and ministering to both.

The House of Mind is amazingly ordered with a view to the getting of knowledge. "Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability," is writ large upon the portals, and within are the powers fitted to deal with all knowledge. There is Intellect, waiting to apprehend knowledge of many sorts; Imagination, taking impressions, living pictures of the glories of the past and the behaviour of the remote; there is the Æsthetic Sense, whose motto is, "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," ready to appropriate every thing of beauty, whether picture, poem, wind-flower, or starry heavens—a possession of joy for ever. Reason is there, eager to discern causes and consequences, to know the why and the wherefore of every fact that comes before the mind; and lest, with all these powers, Mind should become an uninhabited house, with rusty hinges and cobwebbed panes, there are certain Desires which bestir us to feed the mind, in much the same way as our Appetites clamour for the food of the body.

Just as each Appetite carries in itself the possibilities of excess and universal ruin to Mansoul, so each of

these admirable functions of the mind has what we have called its dæmons ; and each of these may not only paralyse that mind-power which it shadows, but may distort and enfeeble the whole of the powers of Mind.

*Dæmon*, in this context, refers to a cruel, evil, or destructive thing.

The House of Heart is, we have seen, dominated, in every Mansoul, by two benign powers, Love and Justice. Pity, Benevolence, Sympathy, Kindness, Generosity, Gratitude, Courage, Loyalty, Humility, Gladness, are among the lords in waiting attendant upon Love ; and Justice has its own attendant virtues—Gentleness, Courtesy, Candour, Respect, Discernment, Appreciation, Veracity, Integrity, and more.

Temperance, Soberness, and Chastity, too, are of the household of Justice ; for these include that justice which we owe to ourselves ; but, alas ! upon every one of these waits its appropriate dæmon, and the safe-conduct of life depends, first, upon discerning, and then upon avoiding, the malevolent dispositions which are ready to devastate the House of Heart. We know how Cowardice, Meanness, Rudeness, Calumny, Envy, and a hundred other powers of evil beset us. The perils are so great, the risks so numerous, that many a goodly Mansoul perishes without ever realising the vast wealth which belongs to it—like a prince brought up in peasant's estate, and unaware of his birthright. Those who begin to realise how much is possible to Mansoul, and how many are the perils of the way, know that a certain duty of self-direction belongs to them ; and that powers for this direction are lodged in them as truly as are intellect and imagination, hunger and thirst.

The governing powers lodged within us are the

Conscience and the Will; but conscience (even the conscience of a good Christian person) is not capable of judging for us, in the various affairs of our life, without instruction, any more than the intellect of the ignorant hind can pronounce upon a problem of the differential calculus.

Therefore, Conscience must learn its lessons, regular and progressive lessons, upon the affairs of body, heart, and mind. One of the objects of this volume is to point out some of the courses of instruction proper for conscience, and some of the ends at which this instruction should aim. The affairs of the heart are so far interdependent with those of mind and body that the separate consideration we need give them at present is contained in the former volume of *Ourselves*.

Concerning the Will, too, the highest but one of all the powers of Mansoul, we need instruction. Persons commonly suppose that the action of the will is automatic; but no power of Mansoul acts by itself and of itself; and some little study of the 'way of the will'—which has the ordering of every other power—may help us to understand the functions of what we have called the prime minister in the kingdom of Mansoul.

It is well, too, that we should know something of the Soul, the name we give to that within us which has capacity for the knowledge and love of God, for prayer and praise and faith, for the enthronement of the King, whose right it is to reign over Mansoul. We may believe that the Creator is honoured by our attempt to know something of the powers and the perils belonging to that human nature with which He has endowed us.

#### Points to Narrate and Discuss

- What do you already know about the kingdom of Mansoul within you? Take a look at the completed sections of the map of Mansoul on page 228 for a reminder. The empty sections on the map will give you an idea of what will be covered in this book.
- Explain the focus of this book.
- "Concerning the Will, too, the highest but one of all the powers of Mansoul, we need instruction." What do you suppose is the one power higher than the Will?
- What do you hope to learn in this book?

# PART I

## CONSCIENCE

### *SECTION I*

### *CONSCIENCE IN THE HOUSE OF BODY*

#### CHAPTER I

#### THE COURT OF APPEAL

**Conscience, the Judge, always in Court.—** The affairs of Mansoul do not by any means go right of themselves. We have seen how the powers that be, in body, mind, and heart, are in conflict with one another, each of them trying for sole rule in Mansoul; and again, how the best servants of the state are beset by certain dæmons. But all this conflict and rivalry is provided against. There is a Court of Appeal always open, and therein sits the Lord Chief Justice whom we call Conscience. Let us consider for a moment what is the office of a judge in a court of law. He does not know, and is not expected to know, the rights and wrongs of every case brought before him. Advocates on both sides get up these and set them in order before the judge; but he is in authority; he knows the law, and gives the right decision upon what he knows.

#### Reading 2

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What do you recall about the focus of this book?



**Everyone has a Sense of Duty.**—Just so, with Conscience. He proclaims the law, that is, Duty. No Mansoul is left without the sense of *ought*—everyone knows that certain behaviour is *due* from him, that he *owes* the ordering of his conduct to a higher Power. *Duty*, that which is *due* from us; *ought*, that which we *owe*, is the proclamation of Conscience. We are not our own; but God, who has given us life, and whose we are, has planted within us Conscience, to remind us continually that we owe ourselves to Him, and must order our ways to please Him, and that He is the Judge who will visit every offence surely and directly, if not to-day, then to-morrow. Conscience informs us, too, of the reason of this judging of our God. Judging is saving. It is the continual calling of us back from wrong ways, which injure and ruin, into right ways of peace and happiness. All this Conscience testifies to us; morning by morning, hour by hour, he witnesses that we are not free to do what we like, but must do what we ought.

**Conscience may give Wrong Judgments.**—But if Conscience gives judgment in every Mansoul, how is it that people continually go wrong? As we have seen, there is apt to be anarchy in the State. Sloth or temper, pride or envy, betrays Mansoul.

I need not dwell upon the fate of those who will not listen to Conscience; but there is danger, too, for those who do listen. We hear it said that a man acts ‘up to his lights,’ or ‘according to his lights.’ However wrong he may be, there are some who excuse him because he knew no better. If the man has had no chance of knowing better,



the excuse may be allowed; but it is not enough to act according to our lights, if we *choose* to carry a dim wick in a dirty lantern, when we might have a good light.

Conscience may be tampered with.—We have seen that the judge is not familiar with the ins and outs of the case he tries. It is so with the judge of our bosom. He, too, listens to advocates; Inclination hires Reason to plead before Conscience; and Reason is so subtle and convincing that the judge gives the verdict for the defendant. ‘Obey the law,’ says Conscience; but, ‘This that I choose to do is the law,’ says Reason, on behalf of the defendant. ‘Then, defendant’ (*i.e.* Inclination), ‘you may do the thing you choose.’ This subtle misleading of Conscience is an art practised alike by little children and hardened criminals. It is possible that in this sense everyone acts up to his lights; he justifies himself; his reason proves that what he does is right in the circumstances, and Conscience lets him off—never ceasing to cry, ‘Thou shalt do right,’ but leaving each one free, to some extent, to decide as to what is right.

The “judge of our bosom” is another descriptive name for Conscience.

It is well we should know this limit to the power of Conscience, for many reasons; amongst others, it helps us to understand the histories of nations and individuals.

Conscience must be instructed.—It is necessary that we should all know something about the constitution of Mansoul, in order that we may recognise the voice of the speaker who instructs reason to put the case to conscience. Envy, for example, does not say, ‘I hate Jones because he has a rich father,’ or, ‘because he scores, whether in lessons

*Ovid* refers to studies of a Roman poet. The student, Jones, got a good grade or special recognition because he got a lucky break in that study.

or games,' or 'because he is popular with the other fellows.' Envy pretends that all he wishes for is fair play. 'It's not fair that one fellow should have lots of pocket-money and another have to pinch and scrape.' 'Jones got up by a fluke in the Ovid.' 'He's always hunting for popularity: no decent fellow would lay himself out like that.' With arguments such as these does envy prompt reason, who makes out a good case before conscience, and the defendant gets off.

But the person who knows that any depreciation of another, by way of making much of ourselves, comes of envy, and not justice, is on his guard. He keeps his tongue from evil and his thoughts from malice, and submits to the condemnation of his unbiassed conscience.

This straight way of looking at things is what our Lord calls the single eye. Many people seem to have it by nature, and cannot easily be deceived into calling wrong, right. But evil is specious and ready; and it is well for each of us to take pains that we may recognise misrepresentations brought before conscience. An instructed conscience rarely makes mistakes.

*Specious* means "misleadingly attractive."

#### Points to Narrate and Discuss

- Explain how "judging is saving."
- What does it mean when a person is said to act "up to his lights" or "according to his lights"? What modern phrases would you use to express that idea today?
- Explain why "it is not enough to act according to our lights."
- Describe the limit to Conscience's power.
- How does Conscience interact with Reason?
- How can you help your Conscience?

## CHAPTER II

### THE INSTRUCTION OF CONSCIENCE

**Instruction by Books.**—The instructed conscience knows that Temperance, Chastity, Fortitude, Prudence must rule in the House of Body. But how is the conscience to become instructed? Life brings us many lessons: when we see others do well, conscience approves and learns; when others do ill, conscience condemns. But we want a wider range of knowledge than the life about us affords, and books are our best teachers.

There is no nice shade of conduct which is not described or exemplified in the vast treasure-house of literature. History and biography are full of instruction in righteousness; but what is properly called literature, that is, poetry, essays, the drama, and novels, is perhaps the most useful for our moral instruction, because the authors bring their insight to bear in a way they would hesitate to employ when writing about actual persons. Autobiographies, again, often lift the veil, for the writer may make free with himself. In the Bible the lives of men and the history of a nation are told without the reticence which authors are apt to use in telling of the offences of the good or the vices of the bad.

### Reading 3

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What do you recall about Chief Justice Conscience and its limitations?