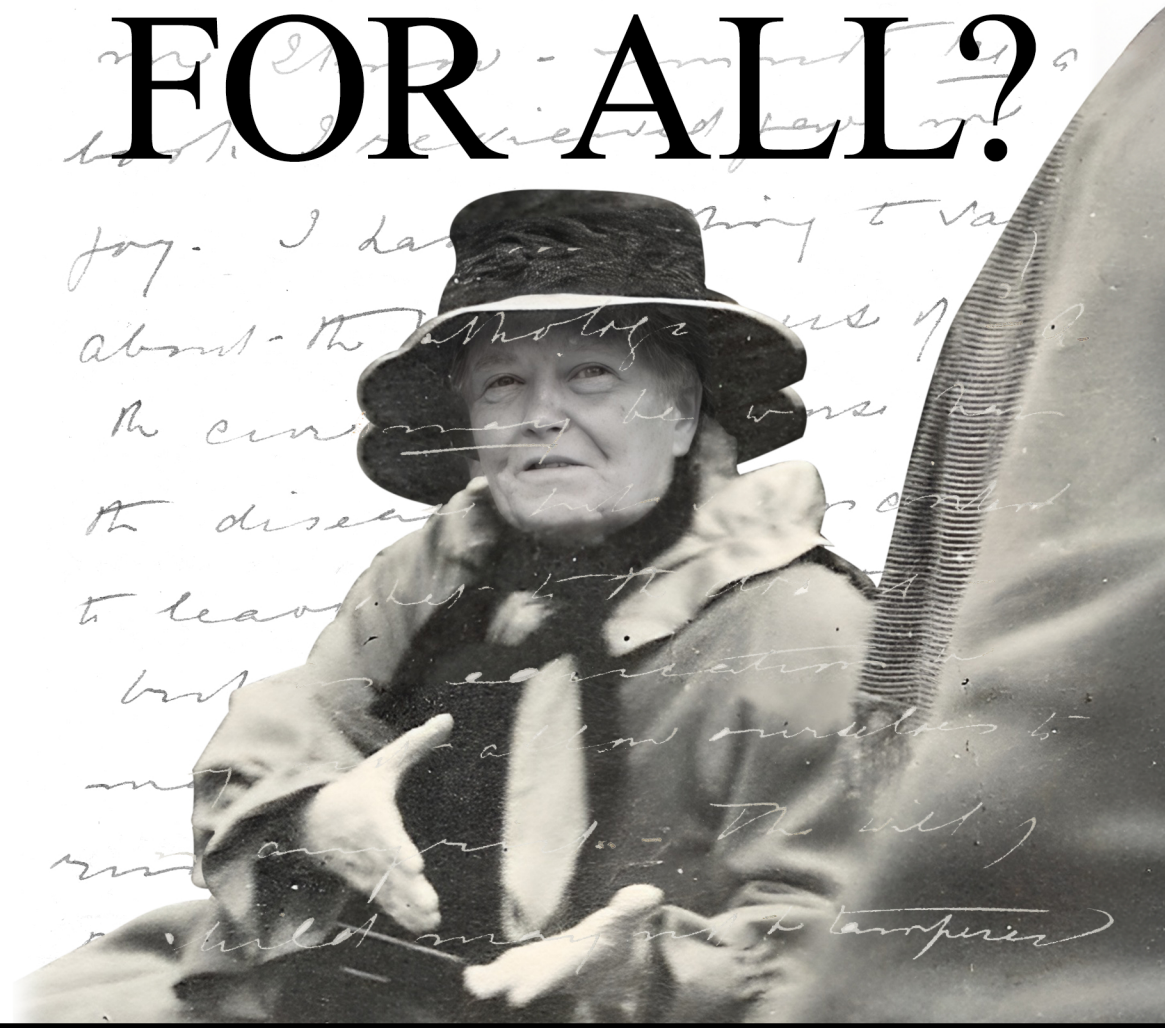
FROM THE LETTERS OF **CHARLOTTE MASON**

A LIBERAL EDUCATION FOR ALL?



JOHN THORLEY, PhD &
J. CARROLL SMITH, EdD

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A Liberal Education for All?

from the letters of Charlotte Mason

by

John Thorley, PhD

J. Carroll Smith, EdD

For Lily, John, Daniel and all children—

may your education feed your mind, body, and spirit as deliciously and inspiringly as Mason required for all children.

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* Images courtesy of the Armitt Library and Museum, used with the permission of the Armitt Trust.

Acknowledgements

When anyone takes on a project such as this book of letters, it is an overwhelming task full of details, twists, and turns. To make it through all those decisions requires a lot of support for each other when working jointly on a project such as this. A project such as this one also takes much support from many people.

John Thorley, wants to thank his wife Joan for her constant support in such a variety of ways. Carroll Smith wishes to thank Andra, his wife for her never ending support.

Because of the Scholar-in-Residence program supported by the Charlotte Mason Institute and the University of Cumbria, Carroll was able to spend a month during two summers at the University of Cumbria campus and at the Armitt Library and Museum. I am thankful for this opportunity. Further, Dr. Lois Mansfield, who is now retired from the University of Cumbria, gave much support and encouragement, along with Faye Morrissey and Sue Osman (since retired) at the Armitt Library and Museum.

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Margaret Coombs' book, *Charlotte Mason: Hidden Heritage and Educational Influence* proves to be a wonderful asset to this book of letters. Her tireless research and study on the life of Mason is much appreciated.

We are thankful to Jacqueline Petrie, the great granddaughter of Lienie Steinthal for her review of the information on the Steinthal family.

Many people through many discussions have contributed to this work in ways unknown to them. If there are any errors, they belong only to us.

Preface

In almost every corner of the world today one hears complaints about education. Individuals and groups say education should be this or it should be that. This book is an effort to provide significant history about Charlotte Mason, a British educator and philosopher in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The unsettled attitudes people have today about education lead many to consider the educational theories and practices of Charlotte Mason. There is currently much interest in Mason all around the world, that was ignited by Susan Schaeffer Macaulay's book *For the Children's Sake* (1984). The publication of that book is followed by Dean and Karen Andreola's republishing of Mason's six volumes (1989) that she wrote in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These two events push the Mason movement forward. The Charlotte Mason Institute, which was established in February 2005, organises conferences on Mason's work with the intention of providing a venue for conversations about Mason's theories and practices.

Along with her books, there is much more of Mason's writing that needs to be fleshed out, examined, and studied in depth. As part of this process, this volume tells the story of a portion of Mason's work called the Liberal Education for All Movement (LEAM). Through the work of Lienie Steinthal, the LEAM starts in 1914, immediately before the Great War, and continues until Mason's death in 1923. We use the letters Mason wrote during this time to tell this story. While this volume is written in a nonacademic style, it is also meant to provide the researcher who wishes to study Mason's work with much of the history of the LEAM.

Emeline Steinthal, Henrietta Franklin, and Horace Household are the key individuals of the LEAM we highlight in this book. The letters Mason wrote to these individuals are examined through commentary written by Dr. John Thorley. John, who was the last principal of the

Charlotte Mason College and one of the few remaining individuals close to the history of the College, reviews most of the letters and provides background information that helps the reader understand the individuals and topics mentioned in the letters. He also provides explanations of the projects that move Mason's programmes of study into Bradford and Gloucestershire government schools. Because he is familiar with the educational history of the United Kingdom through working for many years within the educational system, he provides insight into the letters that many of us could not offer. John is the original organiser of the Charlotte Mason Archive and the Parents' National Education Union (PNEU) Archive at the Armitt Library and Museum, Ambleside, England. We are thankful for John's insights into Mason's history and work.

It has been Carroll's task to collect the letters, transcribe the letters, keep them organised, and do the behind the scenes work of finding a publisher and working with the publisher to complete the details that go with putting a project such as this together. It has taken a number of years with the result that offers the reader a story—a story that tells us about how Mason's work went from homes and small private PNEU schools to large government schools**,** especially in Yorkshire and Gloucestershire. But more than that, our intent is to provide the reader with a compelling story of the LEAM based on original source material. Through these letters we offer the reader background knowledge of the Mason movement in general and take the reader back to 1914 and on to 1923 when Mason died. Included herein is the last letter that she wrote.

Because there is a plethora of letters written by Mason that are housed in the archive at the Armitt Library and Museum, it became apparent that we must limit the amount to be included in this collection. To try and print all the letters would take volumes and to write commentary on them would take even more volumes. Therefore we elect to publish in this book only a partial collection of the LEAM letters.

Anthony Coafield at Living Book Press has been an excellent editor and has offered much insight and support in the publishing of this book.

John Thorley & Carroll Smith,
Millthorpe, UK & Roanoke, Va
September 2024

Information for the Reader

The authors want to make this book of letters as enjoyable as possible and hopefully make it read as close to a story or narrative as possible. There are a few details that need to be explained to help the reader understand the content.

1. Words in these letters that are underlined were underlined by Mason in her original letters.
2. We follow the date pattern of day.month.year. This is the standard pattern followed at the time of Mason as well as today in the UK as well as many other countries. There are occasional times when a different pattern is written and we try to follow the pattern on the letter. However, most of the dates follow the pattern already mentioned.
3. Below the heading of the letter, we place the modes number usually below the date. This number is crucial if a reader wants to see the original letter. The modes number is used by the Armitt Library and Museum as a tool to locate the letter. If requesting a letter from the Armitt it is imperative to use the modes number for easy access.
4. All letters have come from the Charlotte Mason Archive and the Parents' National Educational Union Archive at the Armitt Library and Museum in Ambleside, England.
5. If a question mark in brackets follows a word, it is because we are not totally sure of the word that Mason wrote. Sometimes her writing is extremely difficult to read. And, the question mark indicates our best guess. A blank line means we simply do not know.
6. Frequently Mason uses abbreviations, for example, "I shd [*should*] not have invited her but that I fancied ~~that~~ Mr. Wood rather wished it." The abbreviation is followed by our spelling of the entire word in brackets immediately following the abbreviation.

7. When Mason marks through a word, we do the same. For example, "I shd [*should*] not have invited her but that I fancied ~~that~~ Mr. Wood rather wished it.
8. When Mason has put words in parenthesis, we have done the same.
9. A word in brackets is a word we added that we believe is necessary to understand the passage but the word seems to have been left out.
10. In the commentary on each letter there may be names in bold letters. These names have a biography near the back of the book.
11. The reader will hear two distinct voices in this book of letters. Therefore, we have authored each chapter. The commentaries connected to each letter were written by Dr. John Thorley.

We hope you enjoy the story of the Liberal Education for All Movement.

Charlotte Mason: 'A Liberal Education for All' and the Bradford and Gloucestershire projects

By John Thorley

Charlotte Mason was a remarkable woman. Brought up in the back streets of the industrial town of Birkenhead, opposite Liverpool on the banks of the River Mersey in the north-west of England, Mason was orphaned by the age of 16. At 18 in 1860 she obtained a scholarship to train as a teacher at the Home and Colonial College in London, though apparently because of financial problems she had to leave the course early. She became a mistress (and later headmistress) at the Davison Infants School in Worthing in Sussex on the south coast of England, completing her teaching certificate from the Home and Colonial College during this period by part-time study. Then in January 1874 she became Senior Governess at the Bishop Otter teacher training college in Chichester, a post that she held until March 1878, when she went to Bradford to join her college friend Lizzie Groveham who was the proprietor of a private school for girls up to the age of 18. Mason taught in the school, but also while she was in Bradford she wrote a series of geography books for schools (1880-84) and her first book on the principles of education, entitled *Home Education* (1886), designed as an aid to parents and based on a series of lectures she had given as part of a fund-raising effort at St Mark's church, Manningham, a suburb of Bradford, for the building of a new Parochial Institute and Sunday School. And then in 1888, as a result of meetings with parents from the Bradford area, Mason founded the Parents' National Education Union (the PNEU), which quickly set up branches across the country.

Then in 1892 Mason moved to Ambleside, where she set up a college ('The House of Education' she called it) to train teachers to follow the educational philosophy and methods that she had now established. Mason herself said that she had 'only a few ideas' about education. But those ideas in the late 19th century were radical indeed. She changed the emphasis of educational thinking, putting at the centre the needs of the individual child. 'Children are persons', she insisted, and the motto of the PNEU and the 'House of Education' put it quite simply: 'For the Children's Sake'.

Over the next three decades Mason became a prominent figure in the world of education, and she became well known for her pithy and perceptive letters to the national press. She was in today's terms a capable networker and influencer.

Such a career would be worthy of note today–but this was Victorian England, with its class divisions and assumptions about the role of women.

Mason had long been convinced that her educational philosophy, with its emphasis on a wide curriculum to include the humanities, science and the arts, and the methods she had encouraged to deliver it were equally applicable to all children from every background and economic condition. She insisted that a liberal education was for all.

And indeed from 1914 to her death in January 1923 Mason was convinced that her concept of 'A Liberal Education for All' that had been developed under the auspices of the PNEU and delivered through the Parents' Union School (PUS) since the early 1890s was about to become the foundations of the school curriculum in the whole of England, and maybe beyond. That at least was her hope, and for these eight years and more she had good reason to think that it might happen. In fact all who knew her at the time (she was 73 in 1915) were convinced that her various illnesses before 1914 were largely banished by her new enthusiasm. She had some powerful supporters; the project was tested with considerable success in schools in and near Bradford and in the county of Gloucestershire; by 1922 the signs looked favourable; but then the project foundered. The story is worth telling. Many of the key figures in the project were talented people, whose ideas about education found

favour among many of their contemporaries, and for that reason alone this episode in educational history is worthy of record. But so are the complexities of educational progress and the reasons why good ideas sometimes founder.

The correspondence contained in this book covers most of the surviving letters between Mason and the main figures involved in the organisation of the Bradford and Gloucestershire projects in the period from 1914 to Mason's death in January 1923. In this particular story the individuals concerned and the roles they played were the essence of the story. They were in fact few, and this does at least allow a fairly detailed case study to be compiled.

But firstly some details of the educational context of the two projects. Mason's philosophy, with its focus on the individual child and the need for a wide curriculum, was in sharp contrast to what she herself had experienced. Both at the Davison School in Worthing and at the Bishop Otter College in Chichester she had worked under the government's policy of payment by results, as assessed by a visit, usually annually, by one of the government's inspectors (usually called, as they still are, HMI, Her/His Majesty's Inspectors), who concentrated almost solely on pupils' abilities in reading, writing and arithmetic; it was on these assessments that the government's grant to the school for the next year was assessed. In the next few years Mason developed teaching methods and whole teaching programmes to deliver her philosophy. These methods and teaching programmes encompassed all subjects from 5 to 13, and included recommended books and materials. In 1888 she and several friends and supporters set up in Bradford the PNEU, and in 1890 *The Parents' Review,* a monthly journal on education, was first published. Branches of the PNEU proliferated across the country, and Mason herself spent much of her time travelling to these PNEU branches to give lectures on her ideas. The secretary of the London branch, by far the biggest branch, was Henrietta Franklin, from a distinguished Jewish family, and she became Mason's closest ally and friend. From 1894 'Netta' in effect organised the whole PNEU from her London home. To serve the many families and schools that wished to follow Mason's philosophy the PUS (Parents' Union School) was set up, based in the

college established in Ambleside in 1891-92, and sending materials and teaching programmes around the country, and also offering a system of examinations at every level which were marked by Mason or her colleagues at the college and returned to the senders. All this was organised by Elsie Kitching, Mason's great friend and devoted helper. The result was that by the beginning of the First World War in 1914 there was a whole educational industry, distributing teaching programmes and offering a whole assessment structure serving several hundred schools and individual parents who were homeschooling their children. And Mason had long been convinced that this system was just as relevant to state schools as it was to the privileged few. She had been expressing this idea in various forms for some years, under the title 'A Liberal Education for All'.

And in 1915 an unexpected opportunity arose to put this idea into reality.

The Bradford Project

In 1914 Emeline (Lienie) Steinthal lived near Ilkley, just a few miles from Bradford. Lienie was a founding member of the PNEU who had lived at the time in Manningham, a suburb of Bradford. She was a talented artist and sculptor, and regularly exhibited her works in local and national galleries. In 1887 she read in a newspaper article about the publication of *Home Education* by Charlotte Mason, and discovered that Mason actually lived in the next road in Manningham. She contacted Mason, they met and formed a friendship that lasted until Lienie's death in 1921. It was in Lienie's house in Manningham in the summer of 1887 that a meeting of about a dozen interested people met and formed the Parents' Educational Union (later to become the Parents' National Education Union). (Margaret Coombs tells the story more fully in *Charlotte Mason,* 2015, 151-155.)

For the next three decades Lienie was active with the PNEU and also at the House of Education in Ambleside, where she frequently taught art classes. She had for many years before been involved with schemes to improve the lives of deprived children in Bradford, and this included teaching art in local schools and running art courses for

teachers. It was in one of these that she met Miss Ambler, the headmistress of Drighlington Elementary School on the outskirts of Bradford with its 350 pupils.

Drighlington Elementary School

Drighlington Elementary School seemed eminently suitable for a project that Lienie initiated there in 1914, as an expression of Mason's philosophy of 'A Liberal Education for All'.

Drighlington was a coal-mining village about four miles from Bradford, in an area of considerable social and economic deprivation (much of the film *Brassed Off* (1996), a tragicomedy dealing with the effects of the miners' strike of 1984-85, was filmed a few miles away near Barnsley). Lienie started to use the PUS schemes of work with younger children in the school in 1914, and with the help and encouragement of the enthusiastic headteacher, Miss Ambler, a team of capable teachers and the support of Mr A. C. Coffin, the West Riding Director of Education, the scheme was soon successful and quickly spread to other schools in Bradford and nearby. Mason herself was enthused, and quickly planned a strategy: Agnes Drury, science lecturer at the House of Education, was asked to help with the project: and Ellen Parish (at the time Organising Secretary of the PNEU) and Helen Wix (her Assistant in the PNEU role) also visited schools to offer advice on PUS methods. By the end of 1916, when Mason saw the examination results of the Drighlington children, Mason wrote to Lienie: 'It is a phenomenon & as far as I can discover the world has not seen the like, bless the dear woman & her staff & her children!… I want you to write to the Times Ed. Supt [*The Times Educational Supplement*] about it all. They [the TES] are running a series of articles on "a necessary revolution" & we must show them what we have done in Drighlington.' As a result of this the school was actually visited in 1917 by H. A. L. Fisher, a member of the Board of

Education, Oxford historian, and instigator of the 1918 Education Act (the 'Fisher Act').

By 1918 about 15 schools in Bradford and Leeds were in the project. Another 15 or so from the same area were included in the next two years, and yet more schools scattered across the country who had heard of the project from reports in the educational press also joined the project informally…

The reasons for the success can be identified from what teachers themselves are recorded as saying at conferences:

- The programmes themselves, which were very well organised and supported, and had of course been in use for at least 25 years within the PNEU;
- The conferences that were a major feature for teachers involved in the project. These were held in different locations, mainly in Lienie's home near Ilkley, but also at the college in Bingley;
- The regular support and visits from Lienie, Ellen Parish, Helen Wix and others;
- The extensive use of books and materials (e.g. in art);
- … and, a major reason for many teachers, the contrast with what had gone before.

There are numerous letters between Mason and Lienie in the archive, and a few from Miss Ambler. For Mason this was proof that 'A Liberal Education for All' did really work.

Horace Household and Gloucestershire

Horace Household was from 1903 to 1936 Director of Education for Gloucestershire—a very different place from Drighlington, though with equal poverty and deprivation, but of a rural sort. In November 1916 Horace Household read a PUS pamphlet describing the work done in Drighlington Elementary School by Lienie Steinthal with Miss Ambler and her staff. And Household was impressed. By 1917 he had introduced the PUS schemes into primary schools in Gloucestershire, starting with five schools but quickly extending the scheme to other schools in the county. In May 1920 he went to Ambleside to plant a young oak tree to celebrate 50 Gloucestershire schools joining the PUS (see Margaret

Coombs, *Charlotte Mason,* 2015, 238); soon after the number of schools reached 70, and it was not long before many more of the primary schools and some of the secondary schools in the county were involved at various levels in the project. In fact by 1927 in Gloucestershire 270 (out of 422) schools were using PUS materials, and by the time Household retired it was nearly 400. Horace Household was indeed a keen supporter of Mason's principles and of the PNEU. In 1921 he joined the Executive Committee of the PNEU, becoming chairman in 1922, and he remained a firm supporter of the PNEU for the rest of his life.

By chance we have a pupil's eye view account of life at Slad school, a small village school in the rural heart of Gloucestershire, about three miles north-east of Stroud. Laurie Lee, a well known English poet and writer, was born in the village and attended Slad School from 1918 to the late 1920s, and his schooldays get a whole chapter in his book about his childhood *Cider with Rosie* (1959; a film of the book was made in 1998). A few lines give the flavour of life in the 'Big Room' at Slad School as Laurie Lee remembered it:

Slad School

> 'Miss B, the Head Teacher,… was a bunched and punitive little body and the school had christened her Crabby. We were all afraid of Miss B; she spied, she pried she crouched, she crept, she pounced–she was a terror.
>
> Each morning was war without declaration; no one knew who would catch it next. We stood to attention, half crippled in our desks, till Miss B walked in, whacked the walls with a ruler, and fixed us with her squinting eye… We said the Lord's Prayer… but scarcely had we bellowed the last Amen than Crabby coiled, uncoiled, and sprang, and knocked some poor boy sideways.

> One seldom knew why; one was always off guard, for the punishment preceded the charge.'

Needless to say, Slad School was not in the PUS project! Though it may indeed have been one of the reasons why Household was so keen to introduce PUS methods in as many Gloucestershire schools as he could manage!

The Gloucestershire Local Education Authority organised regular conferences for teachers to promote and develop the PUS project, and in the early years of the project there were frequent visits to schools involved in the project from Helen Wix and Ellen Parish, who advised on PUS methods. In fact, though Helen Wix's actual job at the time was Assistant to Ellen Parish as Organising Secretary of the PNEU, she seems to have spent much, perhaps most of her time in Gloucestershire schools. There is no doubt that the project was a success, as material, including pupils' examination scripts, in the Mason archive shows, and teachers were very enthusiastic about it.

Other local education authorities, encouraged by Mr Household's success in Gloucestershire, also experimented with PUS schemes, including parts of London and the county of Leicestershire. (See Margaret Combs, 2015, 230-238).

The success of the project, as in the Bradford project, was largely due to the programmes themselves, the personal support of the Directors of Education, the conferences for teachers which were very popular, the support given by Helen Wix and Ellen Parish, the use of good books and materials, and the contrast with what had happened before.

Charlotte Mason in Her Educational Context

By John Thorley

I hope you have seen (and read!) Margaret Coombs' book *Charlotte Mason: Hidden Heritage and Educational Influence*. Margaret includes in her book much material on many of the people who influenced Mason, though of course the book is about much more than that. For those interested in the educational philosophy of Mason the question of influences on her thinking has come to the fore recently, in part because of the attempt by some educationists to link her ideas with classical and medieval educational philosophies. In this essay I wish to do no more than to sketch an outline of what and who appear to **be the main influences on Mason's thinking,** using material that Margaret Coombs has identified in her book but adding other relevant material, and also to identify those parts of Mason's thinking that were very specifically her own. In identifying the people who influenced Mason I have given some description of their lives and circumstances, in the belief that these factors influenced their thinking, even if it is impossible to say precisely how.

Mason never claimed that her ideas were entirely original. In her books Mason frequently tells us quite clearly which writers have influenced her thinking. She often also tells us which writers she disagrees with, and that also can be illuminating. But we have to admit that it is often difficult to trace in detail who and what has influenced not only a writer's views but also our own opinions, and even we ourselves can usually only give a very partial view of who influenced our thinking and to what extent, since so many influences on all our lives and thoughts remain deeply hidden in our subconscious minds. Some influences

may well be to the forefront of our thinking, and we may well be very conscious of these, but that does not mean that we have necessarily absorbed even these ideas in their original form; perhaps we always to some extent modify the thoughts of others when we try to make them our own. And Mason certainly did that.

To some extent we can and must use Mason's own account of those who influenced her, but it would also help to understand Mason's thinking if we considered the history of some of the wider social and intellectual currents of thought within which her thinking seems to find a place, even though she does not always make specific reference to them.

Medieval Times to the Reformers of the Early 19th Century

To understand what was going on in the 19th century, especially in the field of what now goes by the fine name of **'intellectual history',** it is useful to go back a bit and to see, just briefly, what was happening in Europe in the previous few centuries. I have included some reference to the medieval period since it is part of the debate about any link between classical and medieval philosophies of education and Mason.

Mason assumed that education was for everybody. But this idea was in her day fairly new, and even when Mason was writing few considered that education beyond the elementary level was a desirable goal for all. Throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern period, certainly into the 18th century, the **very idea of universal education was hardly mentioned.** Throughout Western Europe until the 17th century education essentially **meant education in Latin, as a preparation for the church or for careers in law or government administration**. And let us just pause there; this meant learning Latin to a fairly high degree of fluency, not just learning some grammar and reading a bit of Julius Caesar. Some doubtless did not get beyond that, but for those whose career depended on knowing Latin, the process was quite demanding. So no matter how bright you were, if you could not master Latin (and learning an elaborate, literary language is not everybody's idea of fun), then your career prospects in the church, in law and in government were very restricted. Latin was the language of the intellectual world of Western Europe as well as the language of the

Catholic Church, and that suited the intellectuals and administrators as well as the church very well, since it not only provided a common international language but it also effectively created an exclusive educated class. And with few exceptions such education was restricted to the higher echelons of society. After the Reformation in the 16th century much of Northern Europe broke away from the Catholic Church, but Latin remained a major element in education, law and administration for over two centuries after that, even though the national languages of Europe progressively replaced Latin as the literary and cultural media. Though a classicist myself, still teaching medieval Latin to history students, I have to say that this dominance of Latin in education well into the 17th century caused problems. It is true that Latin provided a common language for the whole of western Europe, but the fact that it was no longer anyone's native language and had to be learned by all who wished to use it created a handicap for education well into the 18th century. Even in the mid-20th century some universities in Europe, including the UK, still insisted, with little justification, on students having some qualification in Latin before entering on certain courses.

But to return to England, where by the late 18th century educationl reform was certainly in the air. It was in fact not until the late 18th century that the idea of universal education was even mooted as a serious proposal. A few philosophers, such as John Locke (1632-1704) in England and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) on the continent of Europe, both mentioned by Mason (hence I have highlighted them, and I do the same for others mentioned by name by Mason in her writings), had proposed that all had a right to education, but the political make-up of the 17th and 18th centuries throughout Europe, with a very rigid class structure of landowners and peasants, was most certainly hostile to any such notion. The Quakers, in many ways the leaders in religious and social thinking though often ostracised from the rest of society for holding these views, had set up schools for their own communities as early as the latter half of the 17th century. They saw no need for Latin, because they were excluded from those professions that still used it, but their ideas on education had not spread much beyond those Quaker communities. Then in the late 1700s and early 1800s several individu-

als, who are broadly categorised as 'social reformers' (though in fact their ideas were quite varied), emerged, many of them either Quakers themselves or influenced by Quaker ideas. Many were concerned particularly with economics and social justice, though some had ideas also in education. One of these was Robert Owen.

Robert Owen (1771-1858) was from Montgomeryshire in central Wales, son of an ironmonger. He left school at ten and worked in a draper's shop. At sixteen he moved to London, and worked in a bigger draper's shop, but soon after that he moved northwards to Manchester, still working in the drapery business. But in 1792, still only 21, he was recognised as a very able young man and he was appointed manager of a cotton mill, and soon after manager and partner of a bigger cotton mill. But Robert Owen was not just a mill manager; in 1793 he became a member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, a society well known for its reforming zeal, and indeed still going strong today. On a visit to Scotland Owen met and soon after married Caroline Dale, the daughter of the owner of New Lanark Mill in the Clyde Valley to the southeast of Glasgow. The mill was large, employing over 2,000 men and women, but Owen's father-in-law was not the most imaginative of men, and the place was already showing signs of failure. Owen persuaded friends from Manchester to join with him in buying the mill from Dale, who seems to have been more than willing to shed his responsibilities. This was finally achieved in 1800, and Owen, by now living near the mill, became both part-owner and manager. He carried out numerous reforms that benefited the workforce–better housing, better working conditions, better shopping facilities in this quite isolated valley, but a major reform was also in the provision of a school for all the children of the workers from the age of three or four. This was a large school, and it was a major factor in the success of the mill. Workers did not have to look elsewhere for their children to be cared for and educated from an early age. The mill rapidly flourished, and Owen became well known as a social reformer, though his ideas were not universally welcomed in the mill-owning class, who found it difficult to believe that more prosperous and better educated mill workers were in fact more productive. As far as education was concerned, Owen showed that mill workers' children

could indeed be educated (even this had been doubted by some of his contemporaries), and the idea of compulsory education (it was required of all mill workers' children to attend the school) and its benefits for the community at large were made clear to all who were prepared to think outside the prevalent class structure of the day. For many decades Owen's school at New Lanark continued to be quoted as a model for the expansion of education. Owen was not in any sense an educational philosopher; what he did (and he was probably the first to do it) was to show that education for all children, whether rich or poor, was both possible and beneficial, both to children themselves and to the society in which they live. That thought was assumed by Mason and remains a key concept and a basic aim of modern educational thought in most parts of the world–even if it is not always achieved.

Owen was far from being alone in his ideas of social reform in the late 18th and early 19th century. Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill are some of the most prominent names from the period who, from different perspectives, put forward radical reforming ideas, many of them based on the writing of the philosopher John Locke, who has often been called 'the Father of Liberalism'. His controversial ideas, focussing on his theory of the 'natural rights' of all people, resulted in his spending five years in self-imposed exile in the Netherlands. Mason mentions Locke several times. Many Quakers were also prominent among these, such as William Allen who had contributed to Owen's purchase of New Lanark Mill. The direct results of the efforts of these numerous reformers in the UK were several acts of parliament, such as the Reform Act of 1832 that made radical changes to the parliamentary system, and a whole series of Factories Acts during the rest of the 19th century that progressively improved working conditions for most workers.

But although Quakers played a considerable part in these reforming ideas, it would be misleading to regard the zeal for social reform as being motivated to any great extent by religion, or at last by church organisations, since many of the leading reformers were atheists or agnostics. In fact the Anglican Church throughout most of the 18th century and well into the 19th century had been going through what one can justly call a period of stagnation. The six novels known col-