



Trusting the Method: Faith, Reason, and Responsibility in the Charlotte Mason Way

Art Middlekauff

CharlotteMasonPoetry.org



1 Kings 17:5–24
The Message



“Elijah appears like a bolt out of the blue...
the power he assumes has no precedent.
We know nothing of his background except
that he comes from the other side of the
Jordan...

We know nothing of his call...
at the close of the story the woman declares
... that she now knows that Elijah is a man of
God...

To recognize Elijah is to recognize Yahweh.”

“he undoubtedly serves Yahweh
fearlessly and confidently;
he lives his name,
‘My God is Yahweh’”

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”



“The future ministry of the coming prophet is described in terms of bridging the generation gap.

The fifth commandment implied that the home was essentially the school of the community.

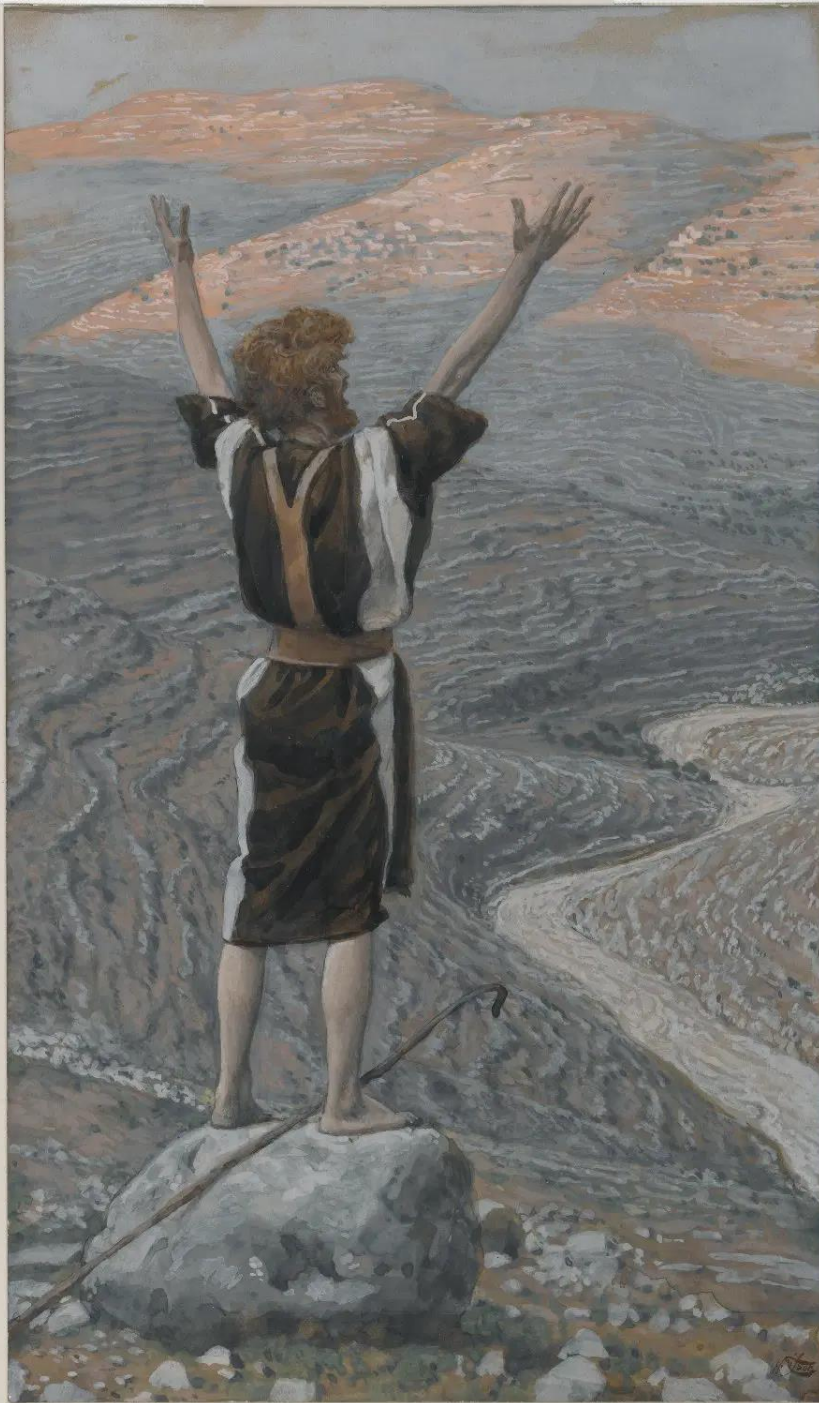
There, in a ‘world in miniature’, authority and submission, love and loyalty, obedience and trust could be learned as nowhere else and, with the word of God as guide in the home, society could be changed.”

Luke 1:13–17 NIV84

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“How did you learn to trust CM’s methods?
Education by things and books are not common and don’t seem
rigorous enough.

Are her methods truly working?
(For example, learning to read at age 6 and using short lessons.)

What are the common challenges faced by families
implementing the CM method in an urban, high-pressure
environment like Singapore, and how can they be addressed?

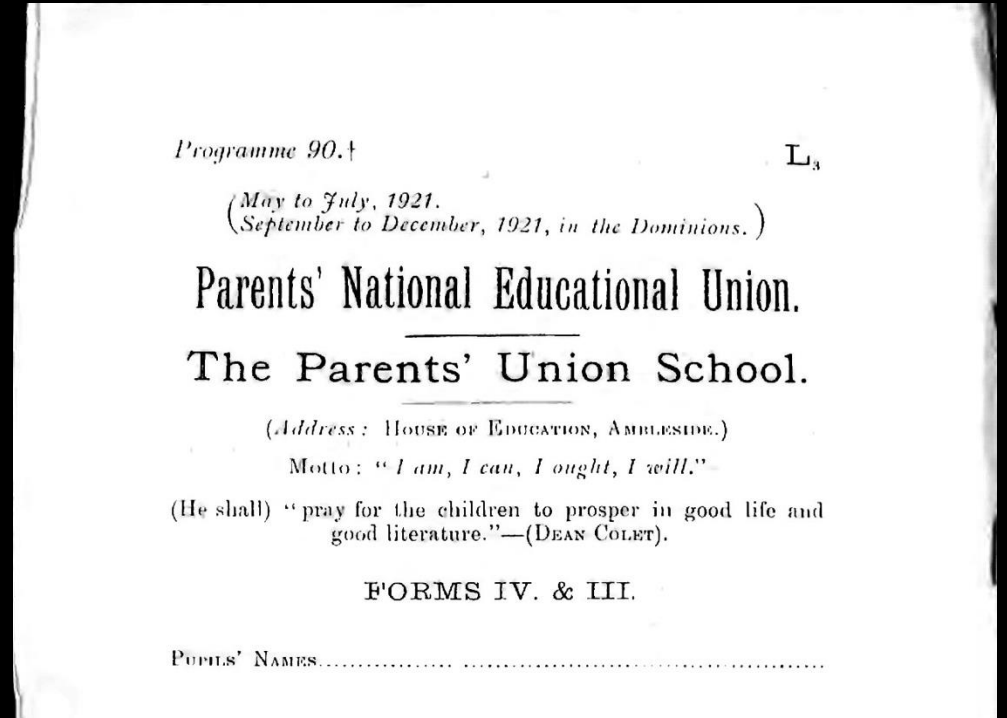
In Singapore, all children must take a national exam at 12 years
old. Homeschool children must score at least 33rd percentile of all
students taking the exams.

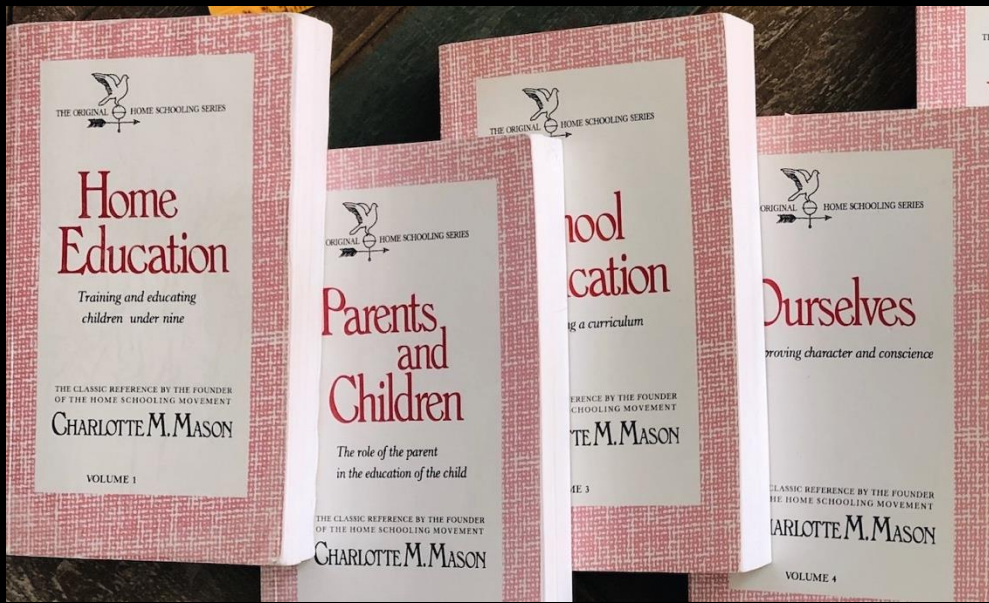
How can parents balance the CM approach with the rigorous
academic standards and examinations in Singapore?”

“How did you learn to trust
CM’s methods?”



“How did you learn to trust CM’s methods?”





- Living books
- Narration
- Written narration
- Dictation
- Nature Study
- Child-led discovery
- Short lessons
- Morning lessons
- No homework

Programme 90.†

L₃

(May to July, 1921.
(September to December, 1921, in the Dominions.))

Parents' National Educational Union.

The Parents' Union School.

(Address: HOUSE OF EDUCATION, AMBLESIDE.)

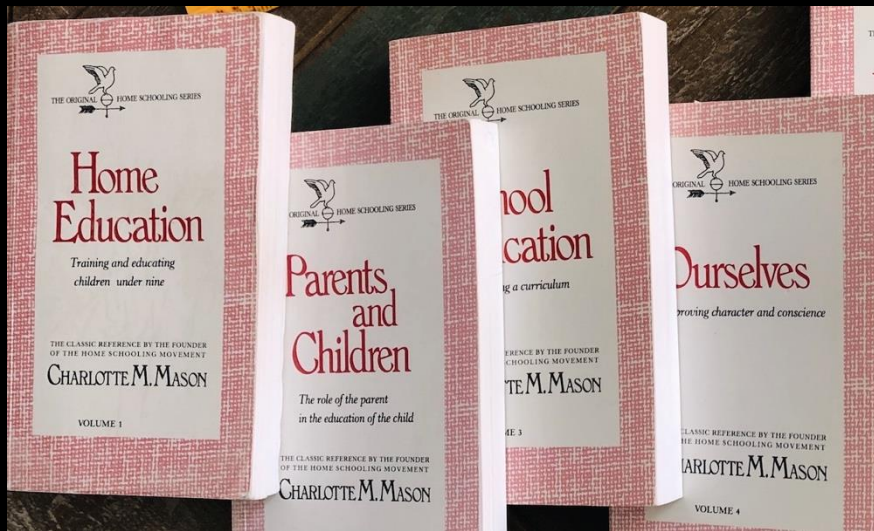
Motto: "I am, I can, I ought, I will."

(He shall) "pray for the children to prosper in good life and
good literature."—(DEAN COLET).

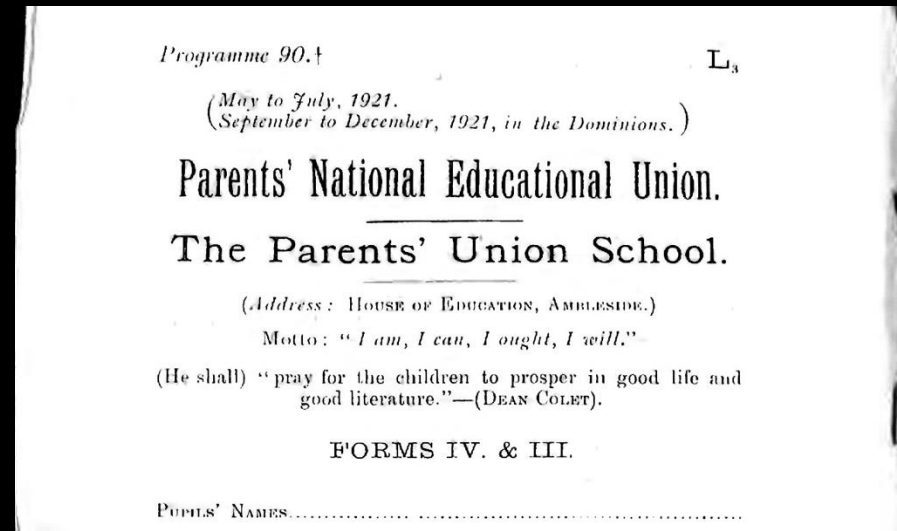
FORMS IV. & III.

PUPILS' NAMES.....

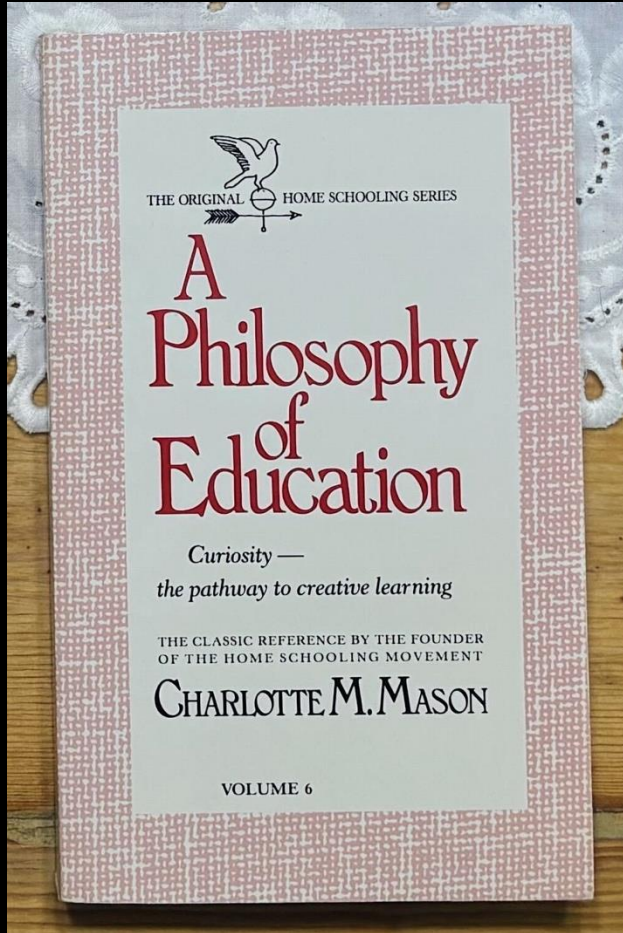
- Précis writing
- Architecture
- Italian
- German
- Virgil
- Literary science
- Algebra and trigonometry



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We do what is possible to introduce children to Architecture ; and we practise clay-modelling and the various artistic handicrafts, but there is nothing unusual in our work in these directions. ¶

¶ For details see the Parents' Union School programmes.



“We rather emphasise Italian,
the language is so beautiful
and the literature so rich, and
I should like to suggest that
schools should do the same.”



“In [Forms V and VI] some definite teaching in the art of composition is advisable... Here is an example of a **programme** set for a term's work in these two Forms,—‘A good **précis**; Letters to *The Times* on topics of the day; ... **essays** on events and questions of the day; a patriotic play in verse or prose.’ Here are questions set for another term,— ... ‘An **essay** on the present condition of England, or, on President Wilson.’”



“I can only point to the unusual results we obtain through adhering not ‘more or less,’ but strictly to the principles and **practices** I have indicated.”

Reenactors

Follow Charlotte
Mason's Practice

Do the same artists,
in the same order,
in the same way
as in the programmes
(even the same
paintings)

Reformers

Follow Charlotte
Mason's Precedent

Choose artists and
study them in ways
that reflect our latest
understanding of the
lights Mason followed

“She is usually spoken of as a pioneer in education, a pioneer being one who goes ahead, plans for the future, and prepares a way for others to follow.

If we accept that view of her work, we must trust her foresight and resolve to adapt our doings, our schools, the circumstances of our times, **to the teaching of her philosophy**, in much the same way as we strive to amend our lives in obedience to the teaching of our religion.

When we have received principles, religious or educational or artistic, to guide our lives, loyalty requires us not to change them but to live up to them. It is **our lives which have to be adapted** to suit the principles, not vice versa.”

“Our motto must be **apply**, not adapt...
... what might not be done by us ... if we would
have courage to bring modern life to the bar of
her philosophy in order to **judge it by her**
wisdom, instead of judging her by its changing
fashions?”

Reenactors

Follow Charlotte
Mason's Practice

Do the same artists,
in the same order,
in the same way
as in the programmes
(even the same
paintings)

Renewers

Follow the Principles
in the Practices

Choose artists using
Mason's principles
and criteria, and
study them in the way
described in the
volumes

Reformers

Follow Charlotte
Mason's Precedent

Choose artists and
study them in ways
that reflect our latest
understanding of the
lights Mason followed

Renewers

“when covenant renewal comes, it is never simply a return to the old ways. Rather, it is a renewal of the old ways in a new form, a form appropriate to the times and to the stage of growth.”

Reenactors

System

Recipe

Renewers

Method

Thought



“Miss Mason left no recipes behind her. She believed in thinking persons, therefore she bequeathed certain principles based upon truth itself. Every parent and teacher is free to apply these principles in ever fresh practice according as **new needs and difficulties** arise. If members fail to understand these principles and are content to act only according to advice—however sound,—they will make P.N.E.U. thought into a series of recipes which though useful at the moment, will be entirely inapplicable to the material of everyday life in **another generation.**”

“How did you learn to trust
CM’s methods?”



Don't trust the *system*!

Renewers

“renewal of the old ways in a new form”

Child
Community
Context
Calling



Distinctive Qualities ask for Culture. — It is, at first sight, bewildering to perceive that for whatever distinctive quality, moral or intellectual, we discern in the children, special culture is demanded; but, after all, our obligation towards each such quality resolves itself into providing for it these four things: nourishment, exercise, change, and rest.



Child

Exercise	“let him learn his declensions, and whatever else he takes to without the least sign of effort”
Nourishment	“It is a great thing that the child should get the <i>ideas</i> proper to the qualities inherent in him”
Change	“provide him with some one delightful change of thought, that is, with work and ideas altogether apart from his bent for languages”
Rest	“A game of romps..., nonsense talk, a fairy tale, or to lie on his back in the sunshine, should rest the child”

“I’m writing with a question about my 8-year-old son’s education. He has only known living books and specifically with science I’ve read him Thornton Burgess and the *Storybook of Science* and Holling Clancy Holling among others.

He has now asked though that I please read him the *Usborne Book of Knowledge* ‘because it has so many facts that I don’t know.’ From a Charlotte Mason perspective, what do you think of this preference for **something not living**? Is it the pictures? Is he somehow hungry for more?”



“We give children a diet of facts, either condensed or diluted, unaware that the mind has really no use for facts uninformed by intelligence. It takes ideas to evoke ideas, intelligence to awaken intelligence, and the heavy compendiums of the schoolroom are of no use in education.

An encyclopedia is another matter, because it is when our intelligence has been awakened, our curiosity excited, that we consult it, and **no school (or family) should be without a good encyclopedia**, which every scholar is free to use.”

“I think the great strength of living books is that they can be scheduled in as a way to supply living ideas in literary form, where the curriculum is chosen by the parent and not the child. But if a child has a steady ‘diet’ of this kind of reading, then I see no harm in **supplementing it** with ‘facts’ when the child is curious and specifically asks for it...

I would say not to be surprised that your child is **hungry for facts**; knowledge is delightful for its own sake, and we are all born with curiosity, until it is ‘educated out of us’ by school. I would say to rejoice that your child is still curious, and I would suggest that you pray that he continues to stay curious as long as you are teaching him!”



Community

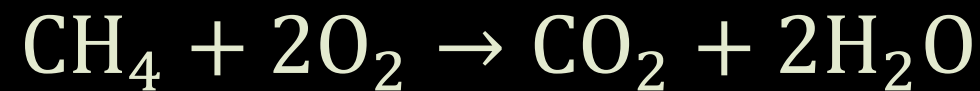
“to acquire the speech of **neighbouring nations** is not only to secure an inlet of knowledge and a means of culture, but is a duty of that higher morality (the morality of the family) which aims at universal brotherhood”



“all educated persons should be
able to speak French”

Are **educated persons** able to
speak these languages?

```
print('The square root of %0.3f is %0.3f'%(num , num_sqrt))
```



$$\mathbf{F} = m\mathbf{a}$$

$$r(\theta) = 2 \sin 4\theta$$

Are **educated persons** able to
speak these languages?

Python

Chemical Reactions

Physics

Precalculus

Not Reenactors!

Python

Chemical Reactions

Physics

Precalculus

Reenactors

1. If it were important, Charlotte Mason would have assigned it!
2. Your children will get it in college!

“Trust the method!”

“In Singapore, all children must take a national exam at 12 years old. Homeschool children must score at least 33rd percentile of all students taking the exams.

How can parents balance the CM approach with the rigorous academic standards and examinations in Singapore?”





Calling

“I had of course known all along that playing the piano was my job; the first concert merely confirmed it.

But I also knew without a shadow of a doubt, although I had not yet written anything, that I was a composer. Not that I *wanted* to be a composer — that I *was* one.”



Calling

“And each person, in whatever station, requires preparation for his calling;

first, the **general preparation** of being a person ready and fit;

and next, a **special preparation** of training and teaching for the particular work in question.”



Calling

“the first three **lustres** belong to what we may call **the synthetic stage** of education, during which his reading should be wide and varied enough to allow the young scholar to get into living touch with earth-knowledge, history, literature, and much besides.

These things are necessary for his intellectual life, and are especially necessary to give him material for the **second stage** of his education, the **analytic**, which, indeed, continues with us to the end.”

Synthetic Stage

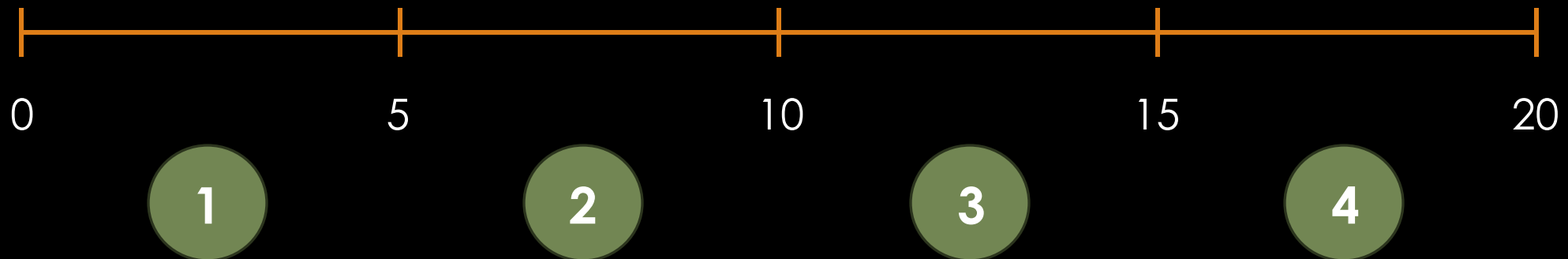
General Preparation

"The question is not,—how much does the youth *know*? when he has finished his education—but how much does he *care*?"

Analytic Stage

Special Preparation

"she should work for Matriculation ... as a girl would work from any school"



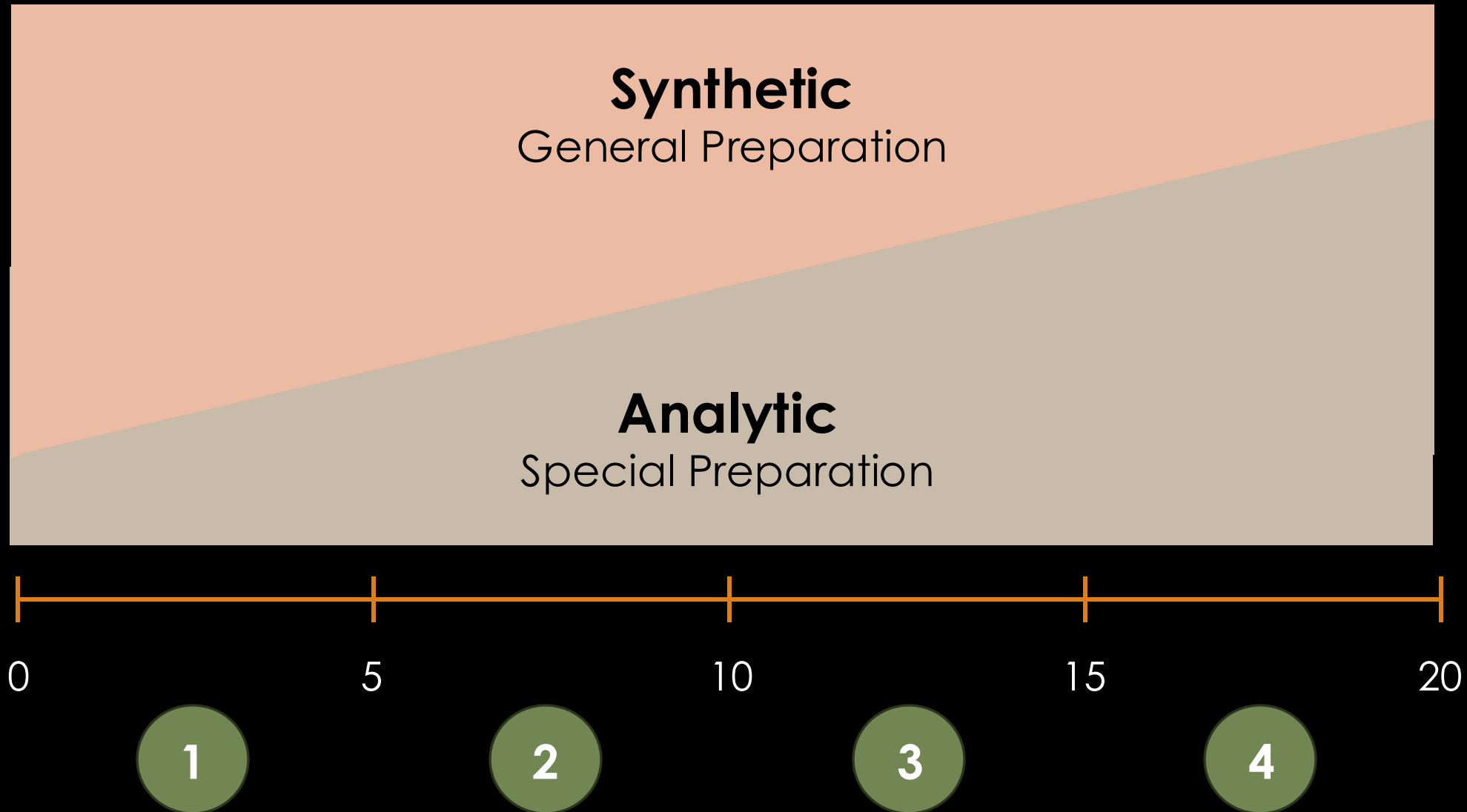


Calling

“... if we are to read and grow thereby, we must read *to know*, that is, our reading must be study—orderly, definite, purposeful. In this way, what I have called the two stages of education, **synthetic** and **analytic**, **coalesce**;

the wide reading tends to discipline, and in the disciplinary or analytic stage the mind of the student is well nourished by the continued habit of wide reading.”

Calling



“How did you learn to trust
CM’s methods?”



Method adapts to child,
community, context, and calling



“Parents should trust _____ more.”



“Parents should trust themselves more.”



“the woman receives from the Spirit of God Himself the intuitions into the child’s character, the capacity of appreciating its strength and its weakness, the faculty of calling forth the one and sustaining the other, in which lies the mystery of education, apart from which all its rules and measures are utterly vain and ineffectual.”



“I have attempted to unfold ... a system of educational theory which seems to me able to meet any **rational** demand, even that severest criterion set up by Plato; it is able to ‘run the gauntlet of objections, and is ready to **disprove** them, not by appeals to opinion, but to absolute truth.’”

“How did you learn to trust CM’s methods?”



Insistence on trust in the method
should never undermine trust in your
God-given intuition, conscience, and reason

Trust the Gas?

Do I have to **trust the gas** every time I get into my car?

... but I still need to plan my trips carefully!

Trust the Method?

I **apply** the method

because I believe it is the most **effective** way
to **achieve** my goals

... but I still need to **plan** my trips carefully!

$$\text{distance} = \text{rate} \times \text{time}$$

You can say:	Physics will say:
I'll drive at 55 mph for 2 hours	OK, you'll go 110 miles
I'll drive 90 miles in 3 hours	OK, you'll go at 30 mph
I'll drive 80 miles at 20 mph	OK, it will take you 4 hours
I'll drive 110 miles at 20 mph and it will take me 2 hours	Nope!

The Fundamental Law of Scheduling

$$\text{scope} = \text{pace} \times \text{time}$$

How much content
is covered

How much time
is spent on lessons

How fast the material
is presented

$$\text{scope} = \text{pace} \times \text{time}$$

You can say:	Physics will say:
I'll go at my child's pace for 2 hours per week, for 5 weeks	OK, you'll only get through 4 chapters
I'll finish the book in 5 weeks, for 2 hours per week	OK, you'll go faster than your child can handle
I'll go at my child's pace for 2 hours per week and finish the book	OK, it will take you 16 weeks
I'll go at my child's pace and finish the book in 5 weeks, 2 hours per week	Nope!

Scope

How much content is covered

The **full** banquet

Your child's special interests

The prerequisites for your child's **calling**

Pace

How fast the material is presented

Your child's learning speed

Time

How much time is spent on lessons

“a quiet growing time”

Short lessons

Morning lessons with free afternoons

“How did you learn to trust
CM’s methods?”



Embrace the Fundamental Law of Scheduling

scope = pace × time

“Which of you, intending to build a tower,
does not sit down first and count the cost,
whether he has enough to finish it?”

How to Embrace the Fundamental Law of Scheduling

1. Goals for your homeschool
2. Goals for next year
3. Plan for next term
4. Repeat

Trust

I Believe