THE SERPENT AND THE SAINTE-CHAPELLE: THE

GENESIS AND ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF

A WRITING PEDAGOGY FOR CHRISTIAN

COLLEGES AND SEMINARIES

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Amy Leigh Crider

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APPROVAL SHEET

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PREFACE

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<div align="right">Amy Crider</div>

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CHAPTER 1

WHY THE TITLE "THE SERPENT AND THE
SAINTE-CHAPELLE: THE GENESIS
AND ITERITIVE DEVELOPMENT
OF A WRITING PEDAGOGY"?

The Freshman Composition Conundrum

In 2015 when I began my research journey, one of the major conversations in the field of composition and rhetoric was the inability of college students to write. Because freshman composition courses were supposed to equip students with writing skills, much of the conversation focused on what should be done about freshman composition courses. I joined the research battlefront with the intent to wrestle the serpentine monster of freshman composition, which I dubbed "the hydra" due to its nine problems rearing their heads in the discussion. At that time, scholarly discussions seemed to tilt toward one of two opinions: fix freshman composition courses so they would produce stronger writers *or* get rid of the freshman composition course with its many problems and embed writing instruction into foundational classes specific to a student's major. Both secular and faith-based institutions struggled with the issue. For me, the question was twofold: "How can college freshmen learn to write, *and* can the pedagogical framework of the freshman composition course integrate faith and learning?"[1]

I looked for possible answers in secular writing pedagogies but found them to be woefully inadequate and in some cases even antagonistic toward anything that hinted of a Christian worldview. On the other hand, while the popularity of the "integration of faith and learning" paradigm continued to make headway in other disciplines at Christian

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[1] Since the beginning of 2023, artificial intelligence (AI) has rapidly shot to the forefront of conversations on writing instruction, but since AI platforms are changing so quickly that issue is not explored in this dissertation.

colleges, there was a paucity of research on writing instruction specifically rooted in a Christian framework. One expert in the area of integration of faith and learning casually remarked, "writing is a skill like riding a bike, it doesn't need the integration of faith."[2] Since neither the secular field of composition and rhetoric nor Christian higher education's research in integration of faith and learning had answers for writing instructors, a different avenue needed to be found to teach writing more effectively to freshmen and in a more faith-infused way.

The Journey: A Freshman Composition Pedagogy
for Christian Colleges and Universities

With the help of two Christian scholars (Craig Bartholomew and Kevin Vanhoozer), I developed a theological and philosophical model for teaching writing.[3] That model, unfolded in chapters 2-13, answers the question of whether writing can be taught in a distinctly Christian way to students in college freshman composition courses. When I implemented the model in the classroom, students resonated with it, but after field testing the model for several years, I realized the prototype found more of a home in the realm of the abstract than in the daily writing lives of my students. I became increasingly convinced more research needed to be done for the purpose of discovering and forging distinctly Christian writing tools, not only for freshman students but for other undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students as well.

Writing Pedagogy beyond Freshman Composition

In the eight years since developing the original model, I have discovered through classroom experiences that my original model succeeded in helping me shift my writing instruction from secularly-influenced, skill-based training to a pedagogy rooted in the Trinity. The model also seemed successful in motivating my students to invest in the

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[2] Transdisciplinary Conference, Houston, February 23, 2017.

[3] See figure 1 in chap. 5.

art of writing, but it lacked effective strategies for them to use in the process of writing. I began to do additional research.

I decided to try pushing the theologically-driven pedagogical writing model out of ideology into applicability, hoping that in doing so, a truly helpful writing pedagogy would emerge. What happened was something I didn't expect: the Trinitarian nucleus of a theologically-grounded writing pedagogy had the creative energy not just to produce a writing toolbox but a cathedral-sized jewel box with rich treasures, layered meanings, and enough light and color to encompass all Christian writing and Christian writers themselves. The writing jewel box (inspired by the Parisian chapel, the Sainte Chapelle) is comprised of nine Trinitarian-based principles which enable writers to write distinctively *Christianly*. The most recent iteration of the writing model in chapter 16 is anchored securely in the original model's theological and philosophical framework (elucidated in chapter 6), but it progresses in developing specific writing principles upon which students at any level can employ as they hone their craft as writers for God's glory.

Thesis

This dissertation proposes a pedagogical model for teaching writing that is rooted in Kevin Vanhoozer's Trinitarian Theology of Communication and moves from that theological foundation to nine Trinitarian writing principles based on God's character, God's Word, and God's authority to craft writing that is spiritually formational for the writers and promotes human flourishing for the readers.

CHAPTER 2

"COLLEGE STUDENTS CAN'T WRITE"

"When I was grading papers . . . I became alarmed at the inability of my students to write a clean English sentence. They could manage for about six words and then, almost invariably, the syntax (and everything else) fell apart," says one professor.[4] This professor's protest joins the deafening cacophony of voices bombarding composition instructors. Some attacks on college writing instruction come from outside academia because college graduates write poorly on the job. Critics complain, "Most students enter college barely able to string three sentences together—and they leave it that way, too. . . . Some may learn to craft a clunky but competent essay somewhere along the way. But who cares?"[5] Other voices chime in, "Colleges tend to teach students to write long. . . . It's exactly the wrong approach for the workforce. . . . Many students come out of school believing that good writing is formal. But to the contrary, the ability to write conversationally is a highly valued—and marketable—skill."[6] Criticism against college composition courses is rampant and diverse, but the chorus chants in unison: "College students can't write."

The problem is not merely that people outside the academy and inside the academy have different ideas about what defines good writing. Good writing has the ability to transcend genre, even to transcend its particular context of time in history. Over twenty-five thousand people enjoy Shakespeare's four hundred-year-old plays performed in Louisville's Central Park each summer. Good writing lasts whether it is Shakespeare's

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[4] Stanley Fish, "What Should Colleges Teach? Part 2," *New York Times*, August 31, 2009, http://fish.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/31/what-should-colleges-teach-part-2/.

[5] Micah Mattix, "Should We Get Rid of the College Essay?" *American Conservative*, December 16, 2013, http://www.theamericanconservative.com/prufrock/should-we-get-rid-of-the-college-essay/.

[6] Alison Green, "What Students Don't Learn about Work in College," *U.S. News & World Report*, November 21, 2011, http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2011/11/21/what-students-dont-learn-about-work-in-college.

wit, Martin Luther King's ringing phrases, or Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. If good writing is so recognizable, why does such stinging contention exist—even among professional composition pedagogues—about how colleges and universities should teach writing? Recognition of good writing changes little; however, writing pedagogy shifts as frequently as the winds of ideological change blow through the cultural landscape. With the composition field in turmoil, now is the time for composition instructors at Christian institutions to develop a biblical framework from which to teach writing.

The Hydra

A hydra is loose on the college campus. This multi-headed serpent haunts the marshes of the English department. The hydra's name? Freshman composition. Each head of the hydra is a competing problem that strikes out at students, composition faculty, and administrators while between attacks, the hydra skulks in English departments, a smelly wraith. The original hydra, a nine-headed watersnakish monster, harassed ancient Greeks. This modern hydra harasses most freshmen among the twenty million students enrolled in the forty-five thousand colleges and universities across the United States.[7]

Hydra Head 1: Public Anger

One head of the hydra is public-clamoring for students spending less time in college and yet writing more effectively in the marketplace.[8] As college costs rise and students drown in debt,[9] public pressure to make college market-worthy increases,

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[7] John Duffy, "Virtuous Arguments," *Inside Higher Ed*, March 16, 2012, https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2012/03/16/essay-value-first-year-writing-courses.

[8] Howard Tinberg, "2014 CCCC Chair's Address: The Loss of the Public," *College Composition and Communication* 66, no. 2 (December 2014): 329-31. See also Chris M. Anson, "2013 CCCC Chair's Address: Climate Change," *College Composition and Communication* 65, no. 2 (December 2013): 324-44; Richard Stengel, "Reinventing College," *Time Magazine*, October 18, 2012, http://nation.time.com/2012/10/18/reinventing-college/; Chase Bollig, "Is College Worth It? Arguing for Composition's Value with the Citizen-Worker," *College Composition and Communication* 67, no. 2 (December 2015): 150-72.

[9] National Center for Education Statistics, "Loans for Undergraduate Students," May 2016, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cub.asp. See also Chris Denhart, who says that student loans

including employers' complaints that college graduates lack writing skills.[10]

Hydra Head 2: Administration Frustration

Higher education is changing under a barrage of problems. Added to the public's demand for educational efficiency, potential students and their parents are re-evaluating if a college education is worth the cost of taking on student debt. Snowballing the problem is the diminishing number of eighteen-year-olds, budget cuts, globalization, Massive Open Online Courses, and other alternative education routes—all causing administrators of undergraduate institutions to rethink curriculum and pressure faculty to be more efficient and effective, including freshman composition faculty.[11]

Institutions respond to the pressures diversely. A few institutions are debating

"now account for the second highest form of consumer debt behind mortgages. With the federal debt at $16.7 trillion, student loan debts measure at 6% of the overall national debt." Chris Denhart, "How the $1.2 Trillion College Debt Crisis Is Crippling Students, Parents and the Economy," *Forbes*, August 7, 2013, http://www.forbes.com/sites/specialfeatures/2013/08/07/how-the-college-debt-is-crippling-students-parents-and-the-economy/#3631159f1a41. Charles Sykes adds, "Increasingly, the economic model of higher education no longer works for many students, who realize belatedly that they have placed themselves in a financial stranglehold for unmarketable degrees." Charles J. Sykes, *Fail U: The False Promise of Higher Education* (New York: St. Martin's, 2016), 14.

[10] Stanley Fish, "A Classical Education: Back to the Future," *New York Times,* June 7, 2010, https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/07/a-classical-education-back-to-the-future/. See also Sean Zwagerman, "Local Examples and Master Narratives: Stanley Fish and the Public Appeal of Current-Traditionalism," *College Composition and Communication* 66, no. 3 (February 2015): 458-82; Stanley Fish, "Tip to Professors: Just Do Your Job," *New York Times*, October 2006, http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2006/10/22/tip-to-professors-just-do-your-job/comment-page-4/?_r=0. According to Kristine Hansen,

Education is increasingly viewed as tantamount to a product to be purchased, rather than as a long-term process that promotes the development of individuals' intellectual, social, and personal abilities, preparing them for the demands of participation in a democratic society. Many students, as well as their parents, and—increasingly—politicians seem to view education as a set of goods to be purchased from the vendor who offers the best price or the quickest and most efficient way to acquire the product. (Kristine Hansen, "Consuming Composition: Understanding and Changing the Marketplace of College Writing," in *Market Matters: Applied Rhetoric Studies and Free Market Competition*, ed. Locke Carter [Cresskill, NJ: Hampton, 2005], 243-44)

[11] Joyce Locke Carter, "2016 CCCC Chair's Address: Making, Disrupting, Innovating," *College Composition and Communication* 68, no. 2 (December 2016): 378-408; Anne Beaufort, *Writing in the Real World: Making the Transition from School to Work* (New York: Columbia University Teachers College, 1999); Anson, "2013 CCCC Chair's Address," 324-44; Stanley Fish, "Higher Education's Future: Discuss!," *New York Times*, December 10, 2012, http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/12/10/higher-educations-future-discuss/?_r=0.

whether to label freshman composition as "remedial" and scrap it as a required general education course. Others outsource paper grading overseas or use computer programs for grading to increase the number of students each section of freshman composition can hold.[12] Frustration in the writing classroom mounts.

Hydra Head 3: Failure to Write Well
in the Workforce

Dr. Doolittle's Pushmi-Pullyu llama, with a head at either end of its body, is a visual image of the third hydra problem. The two llama heads facing opposite directions are like academic writing and nonacademic writing. They share a body of writing techniques but they have different ends in view. Should students be learning to write academic-voiced papers that frown on engaging a reader personally, adopt a distant manner, and demand a variation on the five-paragraph theme? Or, should students learn to write for life after graduation?[13] Writing academically—in a formal tone and essay structure for an audience of one professor or grader—is at odds with what most employers and the general population would call engaging writing. When ninety residential Boyce College (the undergraduate arm of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) freshmen were asked why they thought the institution required them to take freshman composition, they gave predominantly two answers: to learn to "write better" and to "learn to write papers for other classes." Do these freshmen realize those two objectives differ drastically?

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[12] Audrey Williams June, "Some Papers Are Uploaded to Bangalore to Be Graded," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 4, 2010, http://chronicle.com/article/Outsourced-Grading-With/64954/. Anson says administrators justify larger composition class sizes despite the CCCC's recommended cap of twenty students. Anson, "2013 CCCC Chair's Address," 324-44.

[13] Long before books like Helen Sword's *Stylish Academic Writing*, people such as Winston Weathers proposed teaching nonacademic nonfiction to students. See Winston Weathers, *An Alternative Style: Options in Composition* (Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden, 1980). While Sword's work has been well-received, Weathers's was not. Weathers writes, "I must say, though, that *An Alternative Style* is the only work I've published that has generated hate mail, and the only work I've ever done that was attacked at a national meeting by a colleague who knew I was in the audience." Tom Pace, "Style and the Renaissance of Composition Studies," in *Refiguring Prose Style: Possibilities for Writing Pedagogy*, ed. T. R. Johnson and Tom Page (Logan: Utah State University, 2005), 4.

While good writing is valued outside of academia, academic writing is not: "People think good writing is crucial for employment. But it's not usually *our* version of writing. . . . [Yet] How could anyone anywhere along the political spectrum say, 'Let's eliminate writing instruction?'"[14] Is freshman composition supposed to teach students to write for school or prepare students for writing professionally? Can it do both in a semester or two?

Hydra Head 4: Battles in the Field

The fourth head of the hydra spews forth competing pedagogies of how to teach writing and warring ideologies behind those pedagogies.[15] Since the 1960s, the field of composition and rhetoric has been littered with multiple instructional theories. In the 1950s a novel event occurred. Instead of an academic discipline birthing college courses, a course—freshman composition—birthed an academic discipline: composition and rhetoric, the field devoted to teaching writing. Since its inception, composition and rhetoric scholars have generated theories, researched how students write, created journals to publish the research, developed professional organizations to share research and ideas, and built graduate programs to spawn future educators equally devoted to teaching writing. Today, most freshman composition faculty come from one of two places: literature programs and composition/rhetoric programs.

In the last decades, the composition and rhetoric field has splintered into diverse combative camps: those who focus on helping students improve their writing by changing their writing process, emphasizing the experience of writers; those who analyze decisions writers make; those who capitalize on the political nature of writing and push political agendas of various stripes; and others. Whether the emphasis is on the

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[14] Anson, "2013 CCCC Chair's Address," 337.

[15] Derek Mueller, "Grasping Rhetoric and Composition by Its Long Tail: What Graphs Can Tell Us about the Field's Changing Shape," *College Composition and Communication* 64, no. 1 (September 2012): 195-223.

experience of writers, the function of writing, or the social context of writers, a myriad of tents set up camp around the hydra's swamp.[16] Currently, English departments cannot decide whether the hydra needs a Herculean death sentence[17] or a phoenix-rising from ashes.[18]

Hydra Head 5: Unloved Stepchild

Not only are theoretical fistfights flying inside composition and rhetoric's ranks, on many campuses, composition and rhetoric faculty are having to fight to prove their worth as scholars and writing experts.[19] The undervaluing of writing pedagogy is evidenced in many institutions assigning freshman composition classes to graduate students and adjuncts.[20] Despite the plethora of research, voices, and variety of

[16] Jeremy S. Hyman and Lynn F. Jacobs, "10 Ways to Whip the Freshman Composition Requirement," *U. S. News & World Report*, January 19, 2010, http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/professors-guide/2010/01/19/0120guideblog.

[17] Tinberg says, for instance, "Many of us years ago began to question the usefulness of a stand-alone basic writing course. Tinberg, "2014 CCCC Chair's Address," 337. See also Sharon Crowley, *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1998); David W. Smit, *The End of Composition Studies* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2004), 139; Keith Kross, "The End of the Community College English Profession," *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 40, no. 2 (2012): 118-29.

[18] Susan H. McLeod, *Notes on the Heart: Affective Issues in the Writing Classroom* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1997).

[19] Nancy Myers, "The Slave of Pedagogy: Composition Studies and the Art of Teaching," in *Teaching Writing: Landmarks and Horizons*, ed. Christina Russell McDonald and Robert L. McDonald (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2002), 155. See also Crowley, "Terms of Employment: Rhetoric Slaves and Lesser Men," in *Composition in the University*, 118-31.

[20] Carter writes, "Estimates are that perhaps only 17% of writing classes are taught by tenure-track faculty, and many of the rest are taught by instructors who receive no benefits, low pay, last-minute schedules, and no role in shared governance or decision-making within their schools. Carter, "2016 CCCC Chair's Address," 378. Carter adds,

> Our discipline depends on an underpaid, overworked, and unappreciated group of experts, our institutions employing a massive class of part-time specialists, when fulltime commitment is required. . . . So not only does our field face this complex paradox, where we have evolved sophisticated research methods, teaching methods, and approaches to communication that dwarf

pedagogies, composition instructors still face the stigma that freshman composition is the "most despised of all college courses."[21]

Hydra Head 6: Arguments over Alternatives to Freshman Composition

The sixth hydra head gives a nod to finding alternative ways of permeating four college years with writing.[22] With freshman composition's failure to produce stellar writers within nine months, institutions look for other options to improve student writing. Writing Across the Curriculum programs are designed to encourage writing in classes outside the English department. Two tracks run through this movement. First, Writing Across the Disciplines trains students in discipline-specific writing. Some faculty rebel at having to teach writing when it is not their specialty and takes time away from their "real" course content.[23] The other track running through Writing Across the Curriculum is the Write to Learn movement. Instead of trying to improve student writing, it focuses on using writing as a tool for students to process information through short, often

> our field as we understood it at CCCC's founding in 1949, but where our core activities are being undercut by forces well outside of our control. (Carter, "2016 CCCC Chair's Address," 385-86)

For recognizing the importance of full-time faculty teaching core courses to protect the mission of the school, see Gene C. Fant Jr., "The Heartbeat of Christian Education: The Core Curriculum," in *Faith and Learning,* ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 44-45.

[21] Hyman and Jacobs, "10 Ways to Whip the Freshman Composition Requirement."

[22] As early as 1932, Alvin Eurich mentions writing initiatives spanning all four years of college: "[My] plan . . . entails instruction in English composition through the co-operation of all departments within the university. Instead of the formal classes that are now required of Freshman, it is proposed that English be taught in all courses for which the student enrolls but principally in relation to the major subject he has selected." Alvin C. Eurich, "Should Freshman Composition Be Abolished?" *College English* 74, no. 2 (November 2011): 166. Originally printed in Alvin C. Eurich, "Should Freshman Composition Be Abolished?" *English Journal* 21 (March 1932): 215. See also David R. Russell's "American Origins of the Writing Across the Curriculum Movement (WAC)," in *Landmark Essays on Writing Across the Curriculum*, ed. Charles Bazerman and David R. Russell (Davis, CA: Hermagoras, 1994), 6:3-22. Russell shows how schools have adopted Writing Across the Curriculum ideas through reforming curricula, sponsoring faculty workshops on improving student writing in all disciplines, changing the types of freshman composition essays assigned, and funding campus writing centers.

[23] Chris Anson, "Writing Across the Curriculum," in *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age*, ed. Theresa Enos (New York: Garland, 1996), 773.

informal writing like journal articles, reaction papers, letters, project notebooks, and one-line reviews of the previous lesson. Writing Across the Curriculum programs raise questions for institutions: Whose job is it to teach students to write? If it is the whole faculty's job, whose job is it to train non-English faculty in writing pedagogy? Whose job is it to coordinate campus writing efforts?

Hydra Head 7: Technology
Redefining Writing

A seventh problem rears its head: technology redefining what "writing" is as well as shortening readers' ability to follow linear arguments.[24] Complexities in writing pedagogy previously confined to paper or word processors have moved in the last several decades to multimodal pedagogical platforms.[25]

The landscape of culture and communication has changed more dramatically in the last five decades than in any other fifty-year period of world history since Babel. Aristotle defined *rhetoric* as "an ability, in each case, to see the available means of persuasion."[26] Do freshman students in composition classes see all their available means of persuasion in writing? For example, do instructors encourage them to write using multimedia? According to Anson, "Instead of ignoring the access students have to

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[24] Nicholas Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid? Why You Can't Read the Way You Used To," *The Atlantic Monthly* 302, no. 1 (July 2008): 56. See also Chris M. Anson and Robert A. Schwegler, "Tracking the Mind's Eye: A New Technology for Researching Twenty-First-Century Writing and Reading Process," *College Composition and Communication* 64, no. 1 (September 2012): 151-71; Tracey Bowen and Carl Whithaus, *Multimodal Literacies and Emerging Genres* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2013).

[25] Lisa Gerrard, "Writing in Multiple Media," in *Concepts in Composition: Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Writing*, ed. Irene L. Clark, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 409. Shane Hipps argues that a culture's thinking patterns "reflect the form of media with which that culture uses to communicate." Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, the Gospel, and* Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). Hipps proposes that today, as in the medieval era, pictures are taking the place of text as the primary medium. Because people think the way they communicate, the combination today of pictures, text, and sound causes people to think in a three-dimensional web, rather than in the linear thinking pattern of the rational era. Thus, today's writers, Hipps proposes, must learn to write for the current audience, who read "ideographically." Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture*.

[26] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civil Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University, 2007), 16.

limitless information, to new forms of online interaction, those in higher education need to . . . repurpose it [technology] in new and creative ways."[27] Are writing instructors afraid of rethinking writing in a new medium, or are they applying universal truths of good writing in this new dimension? A *Wall Street Journal* article said, "Technology in some ways has taken away our ability to write well."[28] How are writing instructors rising to this added challenge? Could writing faculty "welcome and analyze emerging technologies, and be *excited* about change, and research innovation to be sure we're getting it right, and take the lead in a responsible and principled way"?[29]

Hydra Head 8: A Post-Christian Audience

Christian colleges have another layer of complexity of teaching writing as they equip pastors and Christian workers to communicate with a culture increasingly hostile to their message.[30] To bridge this gap, writing instruction at Christian institutions needs to be more effective than at secular institutions. At The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the mantra for writing instruction is "the greatest truths require the clearest writing."[31] The practical starting point for the greatest truths is at the undergraduate level in the freshman composition course, a course which should be instrumental in helping future pastors and other Christians powerfully articulate the gospel.

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[27] Anson, "2013 CCCC Chair's Address," 339.

[28] Ruth Mantell, "Must-Have Job Skills in 2013," *Wall Street Journal*, November 18, 2012, http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1000142424735104578118902763095818.

[29] Anson, "2013 CCCC Chair's Address," 340.

[30] Adam Banks's CCCC Chair Address in 2015 is an example of the overt enmity between the composition field's largest organization and Christianity. Adam Banks, "2015 CCCC Chair's Address: Ain't No Walls Behind the Sky Baby! Funk, Flight, and Freedom," *College Composition and Communication* 67, no. 2 (December 2015): 267-79. Much of the tone of the address is lost in the text version. A recorded version can be found online: http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Banks%2C%20Adam.%20%22 Funk%2C%20Flight%2C%20and%20Freedom%22%20%20&qs=n&form=QBVR&pq=banks%2C%20ada m.%20%22funk.

[31] Marsha Omanson, Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) meeting, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 2012.

Hydra Head 9: Disgruntled Students

An almost unrecognized hydra head, but perhaps the saddest of all, is the dismal failure of freshman composition to inspire students regularly to be great writers and see the power of writing.[32] Instead, many students view freshman composition papers as irrelevant: "Studies show that students want *agency* and *purpose*. They want their writing to *do* something meaningful."[33] Students write meaningfully outside of composition class, engaging opposing worldviews online, for example.[34]

Thirty years ago, most educators and writing instructors could not have imagined the various types of writing platforms now available to students. The stewardship of training young writers beyond the academic classroom is even more vital, especially in Christian institutions. Students are paying for a "transformational experience," yet they are forced to write in formal, academic voices that fail in the arenas they engage in online as well as those they will be engaged in professionally, unless they become academics. Educators such as Robert W. Pazmiño contend,

> Some aspects of teaching involve training individuals for predictable responsibilities and real-life functions in the wider world. However, the additional element of a transformative purpose is to equip persons for the unpredictable and for creative responses to challenges that have yet to be encountered in the community and society. This requires more than tailoring teaching to easily stated outcomes and

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[32] David Gershom Myers, *Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 32-36.

[33] Anson, "2013 CCCC Chair's Address," 337.

[34] Katherine Blake Yancey says twenty-first century writing

marks the beginning of a new era in literacy, a period I'm calling the Age of Composition, one where composers become composers not through direct and formal instruction alone (if at all), but rather through what we might call an extracurricular *social co-apprenticeship. . . .* In the case of the Web, though, writers compose authentic texts in informal digitally networked contexts where there isn't a hierarchy of expert-apprentice, but rather a peer co-apprenticeship in which communicative knowledge is freely exchanged. In other words, our impulse to write is now digitized and expanded—or put differently, newly technologized, socialized, and networked. (Kathleen Blake Yancey, "2008 NCTE Presidential Address: The Impulse to Compose and the Impulse of Composition," *Research in the Teaching of English* 43, no. 3 [February 2009], 327)

suggests the need for creative exploration of questions and problems that are not subject to easy solutions or quick fixes.[35]

Many discouraged students leave freshman composition without strong writing skills, undermining the field's credibility. The field's inability to produce a mass of stellar writers belies a golden sword, which can whack off the hydra heads and cauterize the stumps.[36]

Chaos in the Hydra's Wake

What is the cumulative effect of these hydra heads? Freshman composition faculty face challenges they did not sign up for in a field blighted with "increasing contentiousness among the points of view [that] have become highly salient and disturbing problems for the profession."[37] Writing instructors face both politicians and a public demanding that college be turned into a cost-effective technical school that offers only classes teaching professional skills necessary for students to land high paying jobs. They face students dissatisfied with the inapplicability of composition courses to the real-world writing they do online and elsewhere. Faculty face these issues in a time when the print medium has given way to digital writing, adding to the complexity of what and how writing instructors should teach. College writing faculty on secular and Christian

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[35] Robert W. Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 142. Tom Kelley and David Kelley of IDEO, an innovation and design firm, claim that college faculty are facing the challenge of training students for jobs not yet created. How can faculty prepare students for rabid change? "One recent IBM survey of more than 1,500 CEOs reports that creativity is the single most important leadership competency for enterprises facing the complexity of global commerce today." Tom Kelley and David Kelley, *Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential within Us All* (New York: Crown, 2013), 4.

[36] Freshman composition has suffered a chronic attack for over eighty years. As one professor in 1937 wrote, "[Freshman composition] serves very well its special purposes in teaching the student to write acceptable 'themes' . . . still it often does not function effectively in improving his writing other than themes." Earl L. Vance, "Integrating Freshman Composition," *English Journal* 26 (April 1937): 318-23, excerpted in "*College English*'s Precursor Excerpts from the *College Edition* of the *English Journal*," *College English* 74, no. 2 (November 2011): 185. In the Greek legend, Hercules cut off the hydra's heads while his nephew cauterized the stumps to keep new heads from sprouting.

[37] Louise Wetherbee Phelps, "Composition Studies," in Enos, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, 126.

campuses battle the hydra, lopping off one head, only for two more to rise from the fresh wound.

Can freshman composition justify its existence with its dismal reputation? What *should* freshman composition in a Christian college or university accomplish? Is it simply a service course? How much of the art of writing can be taught in a semester or two? Should freshman composition be dumped in favor of writing being taught exclusively by professors in other disciplines who have little or no composition theory background?

Hercules killed the hydra by chopping off each of its heads while his nephew burned the stumps, hindering more heads from sprouting. The ninth head though was immortal. Hercules could not kill it, only decapitate it and bury that head under a rock, where it kept breathing. Trying to kill the freshman composition hydra is not the answer because students' need to write well lives on.

Now is the time for Christian composition faculty to change the way in which they teach writing because the current chaos resulting from failed pedagogies provides a vacuum into which Christian voices can speak. Composition instructors at Christian institutions need to equip Christian voices to participate as world-changers wielding the power of words. Many Christian composition classes have been using secular writing pedagogies to teach Christian students to write for the kingdom, but the Herculean task of teaching writing requires a new approach.[38] Is it time to develop a writing pedagogy specifically designed for freshman composition courses at Christian colleges, serving institutions' mission, and teaching students to write for the kingdom's sake? Is it time to craft a research-based, gospel-centric writing model that produces strong writers?[39] Is a

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[38] The integrationist approach to education is the idea that educational philosophies can be corrected biblically and integrated with biblical truth. Problematically, the integrationist approach puts social science on an equal footing with Scripture.

[39] The pedagogical prototype proposed in chaps. 10 through 12 has not yet been quantitatively tested.

Christian composition and rhetoric pedagogy, rooted in Scripture, supported by Christian

education theories and composition and rhetoric research a possibility, or is it as

unattainable as Hercules's sword? Is it time to give up and say, "Hail, Hydra!?"[40]

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[40] Joe Johnston, dir., *Captain America: The First Avenger* (Marvel Studios, 2011).

CHAPTER 3

FRESHMAN COMPOSITION IN AMERICA:
HARBINGER OF THE HYDRA

Few disciplines have the intrigue or bloody history of English departments. The drama began about the time the American colonies became irritated at their colonial status—long before *English* departments were teaching composition. Tracing major changes in writing pedagogies and their ideologies is the first step in reevaluating the deeply held presuppositions about courses: It is time for writing instructors to remind themselves why they teach what they teach.

Enlightenment Roots

When writing was first taught in the American colonies, writing instruction translated to copying "classical models and internalizing the grammatical and rhetorical forms of the classical language."[1] Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek rhetoricians, along with Romans like Cicero and Quintilian, were venerated rhetorical giants; however, by the time revolutionary winds blew, neoclassic rhetoric—argument construction based on ancient Greek and Roman models—was losing favor. Between the period when an embarrassed George Washington resigned his first commission after losing a skirmish against the French (1755) and when he resigned his last commission as an American hero after the Revolutionary War (1783), Scottish Enlightenment ideas had crossed the

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[1] Elizabethada A. Wright and S. Michael Halloran, "From Rhetoric to Composition: The Teaching of Writing in America to 1900," in *A Short History of Writing Instruction: From Ancient Greece to Modern America*, ed. James J. Murphy, 2nd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001), 216.

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Atlantic.[2] By the Revolutionary War period, the hip pedagogy was based on the Scottish Enlightenment ideas[3] of men like John Witherspoon, Adam Smith, David Hume, Hugh Blair, and George Campbell—all church and university authorities.

Prior to the American Revolution, Benjamin Rush traveled to Scotland to beg John Witherspoon (1723-1794) to become president of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton).[4] The only pastor to sign the Declaration of Independence, Witherspoon also wrote the first US text on rhetoric and taught the class to Americans such as James Madison.[5] In America, since English departments did not yet exist, teachers of rhetoric taught the courses that would evolve into English classes. Witherspoon and others understood both the power of language and the times and used one to shape the other.

Outside the classroom, Witherspoon's Enlightenment-influenced ideas of the "classical ties between rhetoric and moral philosophy" shaped American Revolutionary arguments. His sermon, "The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men" (1776) was the most influential message supporting the colonies' "independence to be delivered from an American pulpit."[6]

Witherspoon was a rhetorical force in colonial America, both as a teacher and user of written and verbal arguments. Although he wrote the first rhetoric text, the published transcripts from his lectures, he left the transcripts unedited, and it was left to

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[2] Winifred Bryan Horner, "Eighteenth-Century Rhetoric," in *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age*, ed. Theresa Enos (New York: Garland, 1996), 205-6.

[3] Nedra Reynolds, Patricia Bizzell, and Bruce Herzberg, *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing*, 6th ed. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004), 34.

[4] Princeton University, "The Presidents of Princeton University: John Witherspoon," November 26, 2013, http://www.princeton.edu/pub/presidents/witherspoon/.

[5] Thomas P. Miller, "Witherspoon, John (1723-1794)," in Enos, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, 767-68. See also John Witherspoon's published lecture notes, *Lectures on Moral Philosophy, and Eloquence*, Classic Reprint Series (London: Forgotten, 2017).

[6] Miller, "Witherspoon," 768.

his college classmate in Scotland, Hugh Blair, to write the first popular rhetoric textbook: *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783).[7]

Belles Lettres Pedagogy

The *Belles Lettres* focused on discovering "universal principles that could be applied to all verbal discourse."[8] As scientists during the Enlightenment demonstrated universal laws governing the natural world, people embraced the idea that effective writing also had universal laws with set principles. The result was a body of writing—the *Belles Lettres*.[9] These universal rhetorical ideas were based on "taste," which was considered innate but could be developed by reading good literature: letters, treatises, essays, biographies, poetry, drama, and fiction.[10] One benchmark of taste was the enduring quality of a piece of writing: "that which men persist in admiring is therefore admirable."[11] According to Blair, this excluded the ancient Greeks and Romans because neither their rhetorical style nor their theory meshed with Enlightenment ideas.[12] Rhetoricians of the time also studied how "the aesthetic appeal" of a piece of writing could "influence its persuasive effect."[13]

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[7] Jean Ferguson Carr, Stephen L. Carr, and Lucille M. Schultz, *Archives of Instruction: Nineteenth-Century Rhetorics, Readers, and Composition Books in the United States* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2005), 34. Blair's hugely influential book on writing and speaking was a collection of his lecture notes and his "survey in the *Lectures* of various 'species of composition' (XXXV-XLVII) is a distinctive feature of the book, and a sign of rhetoric's turn from oral to written discourse" (37).

[8] Herman Cohen, "*Belles-lettres*," in Enos, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, 71. Rhetorical studies were profoundly impacted by Enlightenment works, like Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* and *Novum Organum* and John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*.

[9] Cohen, "*Belles-lettres*," 71.

[10] Reynolds, Bizzell, and Herzberg, *Bedford Bibliography*, 33; Robert J. Connors, "The Rise and Fall of Modes of Discourse," *College Composition and Communication* 32, no. 4 (December 1981): 446.

[11] Cohen, "*Belles-lettres*," 72.

[12] Bruce Herzberg, "Blair, Hugh (1718-1800)," in Enos, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, 79-80.

[13] Wright and Halloran, "From Rhetoric to Composition," 224.

Concurrently, the emphasis of rhetoric was changing from speaking to writing. Blair's popular textbook emphasized writing style and looked to literature for excellent examples of eloquent writing.[14] Published in Scotland and used extensively in American colleges, the book championed the belletristic shift in writing instruction from copying classic models to studying literature.[15] Another belletristic champion, George Campbell, authored the landmark work *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Also part of the Scottish Enlightenment, he was a pastor who "sought to combat epistemological and religious skepticism, and his rhetorical writings were primarily aimed at arming ministers and theologians for defending the Christian religion against atheists."[16] Campbell thought the eighteenth-century moderns had gone little further than ancient Greeks and Romans in understanding composition's rules. What was needed was "a true philosophy of rhetoric . . . a study of the principles of human nature that explains why the 'rules' work."[17]

The *Belles Lettres* would be the death-knell of rhetoric-driven writing instruction and would become the morning star of literature study. According to David Myers, "The name of English composition had occasionally been used before the 1880s, but the composition that was previously taught in American colleges was entirely different from the subject that assumed its name. Throughout much of the century,

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[14] Horner writes, "The study of English literature spread as rhetoric turned from a generative to an interpretive study. Finally, rhetoric and criticism became synonymous, and both became sciences with English literature as the observable physical data." Horner, "Eighteenth-Century Rhetoric," 206-7. During this time in the late 1700s and early 1800s, "state universities began to be founded" (1785); the Constitution was written (1789); and Noah Webster, "schoolmaster to America," published his *Webster's Dictionary,* with more copies sold than the population of the U. S. (1828). William H. Jeynes, *American Educational History: School, Society, and the Common Good* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007), 62-66.

[15] Wright and Halloran, "From Rhetoric to Composition," 223. Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was adopted at Brown in 1783, Yale in 1785, and Harvard in 1788, and it became the standard text in most American colleges by 1800.

[16] Dennis R. Bormann, "Campbell, George (1719-1796)," in Enos, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, 93.

[17] Bormann, "Campbell, George," 93.

'composition' was normally understood as referring to Latin composition."[18] Students

wrote papers that followed grammatical rules gleaned from reading classic authors:

> Writing as such was subordinated to grammatical exercises, spelling drills, and the memorization of rhetorical precepts. Even when writing was the main focus of the course, the qualities sought in student compositions were correctness, neatness, promptness, accuracy, and completeness of treatment. Students were not encouraged to risk their ideas or imaginations in a venture of writing, but merely to avoid errors.[19]

Decline of Rhetoric

Edward Channing, Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard, promoted

Blair's belletristic ideas of writing pedagogy and "derived rules for correct grammar,

style, and organization, which were taught more and more prescriptively."[20] Rhetorical

study became literature based, turning composition classes into literary criticism

courses,[21] so that ultimately, "rhetoric and literary criticism became synonymous, and

both became sciences with English literature as the observable physical data."[22]

Channing's successor as Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, Francis Child (1825-1896),

continued the swing from the study of rhetoric to the study of literature.[23]

Child pressured Harvard to create an English department by threatening to

leave Harvard for John Hopkins, which had tried to lure Child away from Harvard with

the carrot of becoming chair of English. Harvard counteroffered and Child became

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[18] David Gershom Myers, *Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 37.

[19] Myers, *Elephants Teach*, 37.

[20] Reynolds, Bizzell, and Herzberg, *Bedford Bibliography*, 4.

[21] Cohen, "*Belles-lettres*," 71.

[22] Horner, "Eighteenth-Century Rhetoric," 206-7.

[23] Harvard University, "Department of English," accessed September 4, 2017, https://english.fas.harvard.edu/about/department-history/. According to Jeynes, "The curriculum of the colonial era included reading the classics in English literature." So, clearly, literature was studied before the Belles Letters time. Jeynes, *An American Educational History*, 34.

Harvard's first English professor.[24] As head of the department, Child ensured the curriculum emphasized the reading of literature, but "He bitterly resented the time he had to spend correcting student compositions" and pawned that duty off to graduate students while increasing literature class offerings.[25] Rhetoric was cast out of the English department, and composition became the unloved stepchild. Child's successor, A. S. Hill, perpetuated "the rule-bound focus on written composition . . . but it was . . . clear that composition was a second-class subject and that rhetoric was hardly mentioned in the English department."[26] Although freshman composition achieved official approval as the only required course when Harvard moved to the elective system, it was despised as a necessary evil. The Harvard model began to spread[27] and the college composition instructor has worked from the dungeon of academia's ivory tower ever since.[28]

Other influences during the nineteenth century demoted composition courses to their current lowly status. American scholars were rare, so writing instruction relied on

[24] Myers, *Elephants Teach*, 21, 42. Myers writes, "The late 1860s to the early 1890s—was the period of the classics' decline and the rise of English in American colleges" (16). Myers adds, "The English course spelled the doom of classical study. . . . The new course was founded upon a confidence in scientific progress and practical utility, which entailed a shift from the study of the past to an absorption with the present (19). See also Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study since 1636* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), 57.

[25] Reynolds, Bizzell, and Herzberg, *Bedford Bibliography*, 4. Today, Myers says, "If course enrollments are any indication the true subject taught by English departments—though some scholars decline to recognize it as a subject at all—is composition." Myers, *Elephants Teach*, 11.

[26] Reynolds, Bizzell, and Herzberg, *Bedford Bibliography*, 4.

[27] Reynolds, Bizzell, and Herzberg, *Bedford Bibliography*, 5. Nancy Myers, "The Slave of Pedagogy: Composition Studies and the Art of Teaching," in *Teaching Writing: Landmarks and Horizons*, ed. Christina Russell McDonald and Robert L. McDonald (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2002), 155-69.

[28] Myers, "Slave of Pedagogy," 155. Ray Kytle explains, "An argument could be made that institutions which allow students to test out of [Freshman Year Writing] and either grant credit or waive the required credit don't value freshman composition courses enough to say that all students must take a course to receive credit . . . and in particular, that they don't value their own courses enough to require them." Ray Kytle, "Slaves, Serfs, or Colleagues: Who Shall Teach College Composition?," *College Composition and Communication* 22, no. 5 (December 1971): 339-41. See also Sharon Crowley, *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1998), 118-31; and Mary Elizabeth Lawrence Breland, "The State of Writing Instruction in Southern Baptist Colleges and Universities" (PhD diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2006), 63.

books, excercises, and drills. The textbook was born, reinforcing people's idea of composition instruction as a set of rules.[29] Additionally, the kind of writing instruction demanded by the public for college students changed. Before the American Civil War, colleges in the United States focused mainly on training aristocrats and ministers, but around the Civil War period, the rising merchant class demanded professionalism through college training.[30] Proper English was valued: "The ideal of 'correctness' in English was essentially an eighteenth-century invention. . . . In the competitive middle-class society of the nineteenth century, speaking and writing 'correct' English took on new importance as a sign of membership in the upper strata."[31] The focus on correctness and structure led to sentence-diagramming—the invention of Alonzo Reed and Brainerd Kellogg, illustrated in their book *Sentence Diagramming* (1875).[32] With the demand for correct English and a public becoming more literate, writing instruction was retooled:

> With writing communicated through the eyes of readers rather than ears of an audience, visual metaphors had to be invented for understanding style and structure. Important among these were words, sentences, and paragraphs understood as "elements" of discourse; the outline format . . . and the very notion of *structure*, which suggests a quasi-architectural three-dimensional ordering of parts.[33]

Rise of the Modes

The shift from small, aristocratic, pre-Civil War colleges to large post-Civil War institutions created the need for efficient writing instruction. As more colleges sprang up after the Civil War to train the emerging middle class, college enrollment

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[29] Keith Hoskin, "The Textbook: Further Moves towards a Definition," Warwick Business School, July 1990, http://faculty.education.illinois.edu/westbury/paradigm/hoskin2.html.

[30] Horner, "Eighteenth-Century Rhetoric," 206.

[31] Wright and Halloran, "From Rhetoric to Composition," 231.

[32] Wright and Halloran, "From Rhetoric to Composition," 231.

[33] Wright and Halloran, "From Rhetoric to Composition," 231.

tripled, and the pedagogical method of reading essays aloud became unmanageable.[34]

Other components of today's composition courses developed in response to the post-Civil War need to manage larger amounts of students: the emphasis on correctness, form, and the four modes of discourse.[35] The modes reflected "the abstract, mechanical nature of writing instruction" during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,[36] demanded by the rising middle class. As the pragmatic nature of the four modes bored themselves into academia, the cultured and aesthetic appeal of belletristic ideas waned.

Alexander Bain's 1866 *English Composition and Rhetoric* taught writing using the modes of composition (exposition, description, narration, argument), establishing him as the father of "current-traditional" rhetoric with its emphasis on clear, logical writing.[37] Bain's text, and other similar texts, included instruction on paragraphs being written with unity and coherence. Three of the four most influential textbook writers—John Genung (Amherst), Adams Sherman Hill (Harvard), and Fred Newton Scott (University of Michigan)—used the modes as the controlling locus of their textbooks.[38] Within three decades, the four modes of discourse effectively replaced belletristic ideas in composition courses. Rhetoric morphed from classically-driven "analysis of argument, eloquence, style, and taste into a discipline much more concerned with forms."[39] With these post-

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[34] Sean Patrick O'Rourke, "Modes of Discourse," in Enos, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, 446; Connors, "Rise and Fall of Modes of Discourse," 444-55.

[35] Connors, "Rise and Fall of Modes of Discourse," 446.

[36] Joseph Colavito, "Narration," in Enos, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, 453.

[37] Jonathan Alexander, "From the Editor," *College Composition and Communication* 66, no. 3 (February 2015): 382.

[38] Connors, "Rise and Fall of Modes of Discourse," 447.

[39] Connors, "Rise and Fall of Modes of Discourse," 444-45.

Civil War changes, writing lost its status as an "art" and degenerated into a prescriptive "science."[40]

Reign of the Modes

In the decades after the Civil War, written composition became nearly synonymous with the modes of discourse. In his 1954 landmark dissertation, *Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1900*, Albert Kitzhaber pinpointed both the reason the modes became popular as well as their weakness: "The forms of discourse were ideally suited to the purpose of instruction in a subject that had been cut off from all relation with other subjects in the curriculum and, in a sense, from life itself. . . . They represent an unrealistic view of the writing process, a view that assumes writing is done by formula and in a social vacuum."[41] Writing instruction no longer taught people to write powerfully for life in a democracy.

By the twentieth century, students in college composition courses were writing essays outside of an ongoing conversation or a real purpose, unlike earlier college days when students prepared weekly debates and class recitations of their writing. Divorced from real contexts, modern twentieth-century college composition was labeled "degrading hackwork, an apprenticeship to higher literary studies."[42] Nevertheless, the modes remained popular until the 1940s when new ideological winds blew, bringing cognitive psychology, expressionism, and social-epistemology swirling into composition classrooms.[43]

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[40] Irving Babbitt, "From Literature and the American College," in *The Great Tradition: Classic Readings on What It Means to Be an Educated Human Being*, ed. Richard M. Gamble (Wilmington, DE: ISI, 2007), 554. Babbitt argues that the study and appreciation of literature needs to be balanced with the assimilation of literature, using it to nurture culture.

[41] Albert R. Kitzhaber, *Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1900* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1990), 220-21.

[42] Connors, "Rise and Fall of Modes of Discourse," 100.

[43] James Berlin, "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," *College English* 50, no. 5 (September 1988): 478.

Rebirth of a Field

In 1949, the National Council of Teachers of English hosted a two-day conference for college composition faculty. Five hundred attended. By November that year, the National Council of Teachers of English birthed the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Less than fifteen years later, C. S. Lewis died at sixty-four; Martin Luther King Jr. cried, "I have a dream!"; Willie Mays signed a $100,000-a-year baseball contract, and the newly minted field of composition and rhetoric demanded equal and separate status from the fields of both literature and speech. The year was 1963. Composition and Rhetoric's declaration of independence was delivered at the annual Conference on College Composition and Communication when Albert Kitzhaber gave his "4C, Freshman English, and the Future" address. Kitzhaber called "for the revival of rhetoric . . . and for research into composition . . . [which] sparked new scholarship in writing."[44] The 1970s and 1980s produced composition and rhetoric graduate programs, composition research, and professional journals, but the new paradigm was built from an awkward triple alliance of ideologies: (1) current-traditionalism's focus on textbooks, exercises, sentence construction, correctness in style and grammar to prepare students for the workforce, (2) neoclassicism's interest in applying classic rhetoric to the twentieth century, and (3) studying writing as a process, "drawing on methodologies and approaches from linguistics, education, and other social sciences."[45] That alliance would quickly fall apart, leaving composition instructors in the nuclear fallout zone of clashing worldviews.

Summary of Composition Skirmishes

In the early 1700s the American colonies absorbed the rhetorical pedagogies of the fathers who spoke and wrote her into existence. Hugh Blair, John Witherspoon, and

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[44] Louise W. Phelps, "Composition Studies," in Enos, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, 124.

[45] Phelps, "Composition Studies," 124.

Charles Child, highly influenced by the Enlightenment philosophy, wrote and developed Belletristic ideas, re-coining rhetoric as a science to be studied. In so doing, however, they anesthetized the mystic creature of rhetoric in order for students to study her in greater detail. The subsequent decades led to the further petrification of rhetoric pedagogy as composition faculty became curators of a mummy rather than stewards of the dynamic organism of rhetoric. Students were taught to appreciate literature rather than create it. The Civil War period further degenerated rhetoric from an art form into a utilitarian means of correct communication with the rise of the modes and middle class in the burgeoning business world brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the end of a predominantly agrarian society. In the 1940s, America's composition instruction was once again altered by war, and vacillating worldview ideologies including cognitive psychology, expressionism, and social epistemology. The Cold War era ushered in a new age of uncertainty and abandonment of previously held beliefs. Since that time, postmodernism has clutched the generalship of composition and rhetoric pedagogy. The creation of the CCCC was an attempt to revitalize the instruction of writing pedagogy, but instead, the CCCC now inflicts its own political and ideological agendas upon hapless freshman. Once again, the new writing pedagogy has failed to inspire, foster, and most importantly, *teach*.

Today the average dungeon-dwelling composition instructor typically assigns five papers with multiple drafts. A class of twenty-five students will turn in 250 papers in a semester. The writing professor is expected to give meaningful feedback on each of those and prepare students in one or two semesters to write polished papers for classes as well as write skillfully for their chosen careers. To cope, composition instructors are left to choose a hodgepodge of pragmatic pedagogies, not fully realizing that those pedagogical strategies are ideologically driven—ideologies that often conflict with a biblical worldview. Looking to the past to what has been done before is not going to help.

No solutions lie there. There are no "glory days" in composition pedagogy's past. The hydra has eaten everyone. It is time for a new strategy.

CHAPTER 4

SECULAR STRATEGIES TO FIGHT THE HYDRA

Battling the hydra takes skill and cunning. Contemporary theorists recommend composition faculty use various strategies and weapons. Before composition instructors can decide on a course of action, they need to evaluate dispassionately where the writing truths they hold to be self-evident originate. Each composition pedagogy is a product of a worldview.[1] Pedagogies are like waves powered by winds of worldview. When the worldview winds change, the pedagogies lose momentum and a new pedagogy wave is energized by a trendier wind. Sometimes the worldview winds change direction, taking the composition pedagogy with them. So, the sea of composition is filled with pedagogies of all varieties, all powered by worldviews.[2] Composition instructors at Christian institutions need to investigate what worldview is the driving force behind their pedagogy.[3] Although the following overview is not meant to be an exhaustive history of

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[1] Doug Wilson makes the case that education is failing in the US because education cannot happen in a moral vacuum. He insists education is built on worldview and that learning to write requires the ability to ask basic questions about life. Doug Wilson, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning: An Approach to Distinctly Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991).

[2] "No rhetoric . . . is permanent," claims composition theorist James Berlin. James A. Berlin, *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1984), 1. Historically, new rhetorics emerge with each worldview shift. Each of those writing pedagogies has "epistemological assumptions" embraced because they reflect the "prevailing mood and temperament of a particular era." Louise W. Phelps, "Composition Studies," in *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age*, ed. Theresa Enos (New York: Garland, 1996), 130.

[3] Jonathan Alexander, "From the Editor," *College Composition and Communication* 66, no. 3 (February 2015): 380. One secular voice in the field, Steve Parks, says, "For many working in our field, writing and literacy education are political acts, even activist ones. They see our disciplinary calling as focused on preparing people for literate participation in pluralistic democracy." Alexander, "From the Editor," 382.

composition pedagogies,[4] evidence abounds that waves of teaching composition rise,

crest, and break only to be replaced by the next wave of ideologically-driven pedagogy.[5]

In ancient Greece, the home of Hercules's hydra was the marshes of Lerna,

situated on a lake. Waves from the lake would have lapped over the hydra's lair.

Likewise, over the last one hundred years, three major waves have landed on the beaches

of composition.

Strategy 1: Current-Traditionalism

Current-traditionalism dominated composition after World War II to about

1975, "emphasizing academic writing in standard forms and 'correct' grammar."[6] The

current-traditional wave focused on the *finished* product of writing. Advocates

emphasized organizing arguments around a thesis, moving from general to specific

support. Generating well-written sentences was the gold standard, and classic models

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[4] Prominent histories of the field include James Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1984); John Brereton, *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925: A Documentary History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1996); Robert J. Connors, *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1987); Sharon Crowley, *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1998); Joseph Harris, *A Teaching Subject: Composition Since 1966* (Logan: Utah University, 1997); and Stephen North, *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field, 1987* (Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1987). Since the 1950s and 1960s when composition emerged as a professional field with graduate programs, journals, and conferences, research in writing pedagogy has flourished.

[5] Maxine Hairston, "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing," *College Composition and Communication* 33, no. 1 (1982): 76-88; David Gold, "Remapping Revisionist Historiography," *College Composition and Communication* 64, no. 1 (2012):15-34; Diane Lapp and Douglas Fisher, *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[6] Chris Burnham and Rebecca Powell, "Expressive Pedagogy: Practice/Theory, Theory/Practice," in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, ed. Gary Tate et al. (New York: Oxford University, 2014), 113. Bruce McComiskey mentions other groupings of composition pedagogies, including "Richard Fulkerson's (mimetic, expressive, formalist, and rhetorical) and James Berlin's major pedagogical theories (current-traditional, expressivist, cognitivist, and epistemic)." Bruce McComiskey, *Teaching Composition as a Social Process* (Logan: Utah State University, 2000), 5-6. In addition, as McComiskey points out, theorists may be a blend of more than one category. For example, Linda Flower "calls her study a 'social cognitive' theory of writing, and Gradin refers to her work as 'social expressionist.'" McComiskey himself divides composition studies into "levels of composing: textual, rhetorical, and discursive." McComiskey, *Teaching Composition*, 5-6.

were often used to improve student writing. The familiar college essays modes[7]—

narration, exposition, description, and argument—echoes of Greek forms labelled by

Aristotle flowed into current-traditionalism.[8] Although current-traditionalism has lost its

mid-twentieth century popularity, it survives through vocal advocates like *New York*

Times columnist Stanley Fish.[9]

As an answer to college students' inability to write effectively, Fish, literary

theorist, professor, and journalist, argues for a return to the current-traditional approach.

In his summer 2009 *New York Times* series of articles "What Should Colleges Teach?" he

laments that freshman composition classes have turned into places pushing political

agendas with "essays on a variety of hot-button issues—racism, sexism, immigration,

globalization."[10] Additionally, Fish warns that all the emphasis on the *process* of writing

has taken away the importance of an error-free, effective *product*.

Fish and others like Verlyn Klinkenborg*,* author of *Several Short Sentences*

about Writing, advocate a current-traditionalist pedagogy, focusing on the sentence level

of writing to produce a stylistically elegant and errorless product.[11]

Other academics agree. Steven Pinker, a Harvard psychology professor,

authored *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century.*

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[7] Michael Prince argues that colleges teach students "'writer-based' forms such as narration, description, and personal narrative. Then introduce 'reader- based' modes such as argument, analysis, and research. . . . The trouble is that in school and in life, people don't write descriptions, narrations, or pure analysis." Michael B. Prince, "A New Beginning in College Writing," *Journal of Education* 188, no. 3 (September 2007): 4.

[8] Crowley, *Composition in the University*, 156.

[9] Stanley Fish, "What Should Colleges Teach?" *New York Times*, August 24, 2009, http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/24/what-should-colleges-teach/comment-page-25/?_r=0; Sean Zwagerman, "Local Examples and Master Narratives: Stanley Fish and the Public Appeal of Current-Traditionalism," *College Composition and Communication* 66, no. 3 (February 2015): 458-82.

[10] Fish, "What Should Colleges Teach?" While composition and rhetoric pedagogues responded to Fish's articles with accusations that he was not a composition teacher, he has in fact taught freshman composition courses at the University of California, Berkeley, and writing courses at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Illinois, Chicago.

[11] Verlyn Klinkenborg*, Several Short Sentences about Writing* (New York: Vintage, 2012).

Although his expertise is psychology, Pinker weighs in on academic writing. He effectively analyzes good writing at the sentence level. Fish, Pinker, and Klinkenborg make excellent and helpful points for sentence-level editing, but sentence-level editing is effective only after a well-organized, persuasive argument is constructed. Higher order concerns of writing must be dealt with before sentence-level editing makes sense.

Strategy 2: Expressivism

The dominant current-traditional wave crested in the fifties and early sixties and was overtaken by the wave of humanistic-driven expressivism that gained momentum through the 1966 Dartmouth Seminar. James Moffett, Ken Macrorie, James Britton, Janet Emig, Peter Elbow, Donald Murray, and others surfed the expressivism wave. Expressionism espoused self-expression and the writing *process* over a finished product, which led to cognitive research on how students compose by Sondra Perl, Nancy Sommers, Linda Flower, and John R. Hayes.[12]

Strategy 3: Social Constructionism

The wave led by expressivism and writing as cognitive process lost some momentum as it crashed on the beach of social change with the 1974 Conference of College Composition and Communication resolution on students' right to their own languages and Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations*.[13] Shaughnessy argued that students' home languages should be valued instead of forcing them to use standard

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[12] Robert J. Connors, "Introduction to D. Gordon Rohman's 'Pre-Writing: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process,'" in *Teaching Writing: Landmarks and Horizons*, ed. Christina Russell McDonald and Robert L. McDonald (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2002), 3-4.

[13] Kurt Schick writes,

Rejecting the strict textualism of current-traditional rhetoric, a variety of postformal pedagogies have deemphasized both formalism (the written product as opposed to the writing process) and formality (compulsory compliance with conventions). Postformal compositionists have argued successfully that traditional pedagogy's overemphasis on standards and correctness was antidemocratic, effectively creating a mechanism for exclusion, discrimination, or 'gatekeeping' through forced conformity to a dominant discourse. (Kurt Schick, "Valuing Academic Writing," in McDonald and McDonald, *Teaching Writing*, 230)

English. The response to the resolution was immediate and loud—both in praise and

horror:

> The fall-out was tremendous. Stringent, vociferous objections were put forth. There were calls for the resolution to be rescinded and the background document recalled. Some blasted CCCC for abdicating its responsibility and pandering to 'wide-eyed' liberals in the field. Others accused CCCC of a "sinister plot" to doom speakers of 'divergent' dialects to failure in higher education by telling them that their stigmatized language was acceptable. A few simply said that CCCC had done lost they cotton-pickin minds.
>
> On the other hand, there were many who embraced the spirit of the resolution. They thanked CCCC for the supporting document, which many found extremely helpful, even as they acknowledged its flaws. Some complimented the organization for its "moral and professional courage." . . . A few simply asked CCCC why it took yall so long.[14]

The ideological shift espoused by Shaughnessy and others from the 1974

CCCC Annual Convention blossomed at the same time writing experts were developing

ways to help students gain academic writing proficiency through cross-disciplinary

programs like Writing Across the Curriculum.[15] The shift provided the undertow for the

new wave.

Some of expressivism's hallmark tenets, writing as a process and narrative, for

example, rolled from theory into assumption and melded into the social constructivist

wave: "Find the person's narrative, and you'll find the person's conception of truth."[16]

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[14] Geneva Smitherman, "CCCC's Role in the Struggle for Language Rights," *College Composition and Communication* 50, no. 3 (February 1999): 362.

[15] David R. Russell, "American Origins of the Writing Across the Curriculum Movement," in *Landmark Essays on Writing Across the Curriculum*, ed. Charles Bazerman and David R. Russell (Davis, CA: Hermagoras, 1994), 6:3-22.

[16] Robert J. Nash, *Liberating Scholarly Writing: The Power of Personal Narrative* (New York: Teachers College, 2004), 33. The process movement has become "post-process," which McComiskey defines as not a "radical rejection" of process but "extension" of process. McComiskey, *Teaching Composition*, 47. Eli Goldblatt enumerates expressivism's lasting influence on writing pedagogy after expressivism fell out of favor. Eli Goldblatt "Don't Call It Expressivism: Legacies of a 'Tacit Tradition,'" *College Composition and Communication* 68, no. 3 (February 2017): 438-65.

Currently, social constructivism dominates the field[17] and emphasizes that writing is done within a community context.[18] Writing is "socially and culturally shaped and individually and socially purposeful."[19] This pedagogical wave is not about expressing personal story so much as personal story encased in a community's story, writing as a "relationship between writers, texts, and readers."[20] Social constructionist proponents value discourse theory especially minority discourse, over "standard" English. Socialism

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[17] John Trimbur writes that social constructionism is a "cover term that refers to a number of related intellectual currents, ranging from poststructuralism and neopragmatism to Marxism and feminism, that have sought to redescribe the relations among mind, language, and reality in ways that resist earlier empiricist and idealist accounts." John Trimbur, "Social Construction," in Enos, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, 675. Locke Carter adds, "Much of the theory underlying composition studies, technical communication, rhetoric, and college English in general comes from a decidedly socialist perspective, one that espouses strong anti-capitalist, anti-competitive sentiments." Locke Carter, ed., *Market Matters: Applied Rhetoric Studies and Free Market Competition* (Cressill, NJ: Hampton, 2005), viii. The prevalence of this social constructionist view is evident. One of the break-out sessions in the 2016 CCCC conference was "Rhetoricians for Peace: Political Literacy for First-Year Students," described in the conference program:

> Rhetoricians for Peace is dedicated to public activism and political literacy for the purpose of advancing peace and equity in the world. For this year's session, we will debate the best ways to translate this mission into pedagogical practice for the first- year composition classroom. Some voices in the field feel that political advocacy does not belong in the first-year classroom, that such pedagogy intimidates and even indoctrinates students while taking the focus off writing. We feel this characterization of our aims is inaccurate and serves a political purpose of quietism and political ignorance. ("Rhetoricians for Peace: Political Literacy for First-Year Students,") [break-out session at CCCC Annual Convention Program, Houston: April 6-9, 2016], 30, http://www.ncte.org/library/ NCTEFiles/Groups /CCCC/Convention/2016 /Program/2016Program.pdf.

[18] McComiskey says, "Composing processes remain the focus of these pedagogies, but composing is always situated within particular socio-political contexts rather than within autonomous individuals or structured minds." McComiskey, *Teaching Composition*, 3. Trimbur describes social construction:

> The central proposition of social construction holds that individuals do not encounter the world directly and then use language to describe these encounters . . . statements that are accorded the status of truth are matters neither of matching language to the world in accurate representations nor of applying philosophical method successfully but instead are . . . "socially justified beliefs." That is, the available means of validating statements reside not in the correspondence of ideas to objects and events or in the internal workings of the mind but instead in the persuasiveness of statements within particular communities. (Trimbur, "Social Construction," 675)

[19] Melanie Sperling, "Revisiting the Writing-Speaking Connection: Challenges for Research on Writing and Writing Instructions," *Review of Educational Research* 66, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 55.

[20] Sperling, "Revisiting the Writing-Speaking Connection," 55.

underlies much of this wave's theory.[21] Proponents also question whether writing can or should be taught in freshman composition. The answer is typically "no."[22]

The Rippling Effect of Secular Strategies

Because writing instruction is specific to various disciplines, some composition theorists argue writing should be taught in the context of those disciplines:[23] general writing skills instruction divorced from field context reduces students' chance of transferring writing knowledge to other writing situations.[24] Some institutions require freshman courses followed by advanced writing courses in their disciplines.[25] Others

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[21] Melanie Sperling and Anne DiPardo, "RTE from 2003 to 2008: The View from Our Editors' Perch," *Research in the Teaching of English* 50, no. 4 (2016): 480; Carter, *Market Matters,* viii. William (Rick) Yount describes constructionism as referring to "the process of constructing public knowledge in the academic disciplines. . . . Constructionism is concerned more with public policy than individual learning. . . . Since this viewpoint considers all knowledge as socially constructed, it presents an extreme view of relativism, in which all knowledge and beliefs are equal." William R. Yount, *Created to Learn: A Christian Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 249.

[22] Robert J. Connors, "The Abolition Debate in Composition: A Short History," *Composition in the Twenty-First Century: Crisis and Change*, ed. Lynn Z. Bloom, Donald A. Daiker, and Edward M. White (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1996), 47-63.

[23] *College English* published excerpts taken from 1928-1939 issues of its predecessor, the College Edition of the *English Journal* begun in 1912. Even by this time English professors advocated that writing instruction be included in other disciplines also. Alvin Eurich's article "Should Freshman Composition Be Abolished?" in 1932 said, "The plan that the writer wishes to submit entails instruction in English composition through the co-operation of all departments within the university. Instead of the formal classes that are now required of Freshman, it is proposed that English be taught in all courses for which the student enrolls but principally in relation to the major subject he has selected." "*College English*'s Precursor: Excerpts from the College Edition of the *English Journal*," *College English* 74, no. 2 (November 2011): 166.

[24] David Russell argues for the ineffectiveness of freshmen composition teaching a "Universal Educated Discourse" or to teach writing "in general." He also argues for the ineffectiveness of freshmen composition teaching a "Universal Educated Discourse" or teaching writing "in general." David Russell, "Activity Theory and Its Implications for Writing Instruction," in *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction*, ed. Joseph Petraglia (Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum, 1995), 66.

[25] Cornell University's Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines is one example. The institute offers courses in multiple disciplines throughout the undergraduate years. "From the First-Year Writing Seminar Program to Writing in the Majors, the Knight Institute promotes writing in over thirty-five academic departments." Cornell University, "John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines," accessed July 8, 2106, http://as.cornell.edu/special-academic-resources.

argue for composition as a place for students to start thinking about writing, now referred to as Writing about Writing (WaW) and then learning to write in a chosen discipline.[26]

A Christian Response to the Chaos

What other options do Christian college composition instructors have when teaching students to write? The composition field is a jumbled mess of pedagogical paradigms, flowing from various ideologies and philosophies. Few agree on best practices or even on a single interpretation of the history of the field:

> A better metaphor for a discipline that has been unable and increasingly unwilling to fix its self-understanding or settle on a singular history may be the flow of a river fed by many streams, with converging and diverging tributaries and branches, a river in which composition studies is one current intermingling with others. Reconstructing precisely the history and origins of that current is meaningless in classical causal terms (as is even the notion of a "mainstream"); what is called for is something more like chaos theory, a way of identifying recurrent patterns.[27]

Does a field that requires chaos theory for self-understanding sound sustainable? The composition and rhetoric field does realize the time to change is now: "There is a growing sense that, in a disciplinarity so unstable, scholars must construct the field anew."[28]

Adding to the challenge of searching for an instructional model in a sea of pedagogies void of Christian ideology is the lack of an existing coalition of Christian writing instructors. Where can they find current resources and research amenable to the Christian worldview? No coalition exists where research and concerns specific to teaching writing at Christian schools, colleges, and universities can be shared. Can Christian writing instructors survive by gluing together what they find works in the

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[26] Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle, "Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning 'First-Year Composition' as 'Introduction to Writing Studies,'" *College Composition and Communication* 58, no. 4 (June 2007): 552-84. Others join Downs and Wardle in proposing replacing freshman composition with a new course. See Matthew Sumpter, "Emerging Voices: Shared Frequency: Expressivism, Social Constructionism, and the Linked Creative Writing-Composition Class," *College English* 78, no. 4 (March 2016): 340-61.

[27] Phelps, "Composition Studies," 130.

[28] Phelps, "Composition Studies," 130.

classroom with a favorite theory or two? Is having a thoroughly Christian ideological

engine drive writing pedagogy even important?

No evidence-based pedagogy is universally heralded as successful in training

students to be good craftsmen of the written word. Rather, theories driven by ideology

abound while the voices of practitioners in the field cry out, "This isn't working!"

Composition instructors in secular institutions recognize the field needs to be engaged in

new research to develop new pedagogies:

> Today, in the 21st century, people write as never before—in print and online. We
> thus face three challenges that are also opportunities: developing *new models of
> writing*; designing a *new curriculum* supporting those. This is a call to action, a call
> to research and articulate new composition, a call to help our students compose
> often, compose well, and through these composings, *become* the citizen writers of
> our country, the citizen writers of our world, and the writers of our future models;
> and creating *models for teaching* that curriculum. [29]

The need for new pedagogies is evident.

What is a composition instructor in a Christian college to do? Sigh and slink

back to the dank dungeon? Writing instructors at Christian colleges have even more

issues to consider with freshman English than their secular counterparts. Is freshman

composition distinctly Christian other than praying in class, using Christian examples,

and assigning Christian topics? On Christian campuses is freshman composition

capturing this unique moment in history where composition instructors have the chance

to work with students to exploit technology and package the gospel in powerful ways?

Dungeon slinking is not the best option: "Too many Christian professors have

pursued essentially secular understandings of their disciplines rather than making the

attempt to develop Christian approaches."[30] Christian professors have adopted existing

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[29] Kathleen Blake Yancey, "Writing in the 21st Century," Report from the National Council of Teachers of English (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, February 2009), 1.

[30] Robert Harris, *Integration of Faith and Learning: A Worldview Approach* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 280.

models instead of working to develop new ones.[31] As Timothy Paul Jones says, "When you're borrowing a system from the world, you're borrowing more than you know."[32]

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[31] Harris, *Integration of Faith and Learning,* 280. Linda Kathleen Urschel in her 1992 dissertation claims that in thirty-one colleges and universities in the coalition, placement methods, textbooks, and course goals were the same as those in secular institutions. Linda Kathleen Urschel, "A Descriptive Study of Basic Writing Instruction in the Christian College Coalition" (PhD diss., Ball State University, 1992), cited in Mary Elizabeth Lawrence Breland, "The State of Writing Instruction in Southern Baptist Colleges and Universities" (PhD diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2006), 10.

[32] Timothy Paul Jones, "Theological Foundations for Educational Research," lecture notes for 92000 (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, July 2015).

CHAPTER 5

A CHRISTIAN THEORY OF COMPOSITION

How can Christian college writing instructors help their students write effectively for academia and for future professions in a post-Christian culture? Do they choose one hydra head, pull out their vorpal swords and snicker-snack?[1] Can Christian writing instructors flourish by gluing together sugar stick lessons with a favorite theory or two? Is having a thoroughly Christian ideological engine driving writing pedagogy even important?

The Charge

Beyond the changes the electronic medium brings to writing, beyond pedagogies that fail to create powerful writers, beyond student and public dissatisfaction with writing instruction, the most compelling reason for rethinking pedagogy is the lack of a viable, effective, explicitly Christian writing pedagogy rooted in Scripture. While scholars in fields related to composition and rhetoric (literature and hermeneutics, for example) have investigated how their fields converge with the Christian faith, the composition field has yet to deeply explore how Christianity and writing pedagogy intersect.[2] If teaching writing is ideologically based, if "the greatest truths require the clearest writing,"[3] if composition

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[1] Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871; repr., Orinda, CA: Seawolf, 2018), 11-12.

[2] In books on integration of faith and learning, literature as a discipline is often discussed but not composition. See for example David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury, eds., *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundations of Christian Higher Education* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002).

[3] Marsha Omanson, Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) meeting, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, 2011.

instructors are committed to training students to engage the culture effectively with the gospel, then now is the time for such a pedagogy.

On July 1, 1776, in Philadelphia, the Second Continental Congress delegates argued about whether the American colonies should declare independence from Britain and officially ignite a war whose first shots had already been fired and whose rebel force's commander-in-chief was already in action. The congressional record shows that one delegate argued the colonists were "not ripe for revolution." John Witherspoon, Princeton's president as well as a New Jersey delegate to the Congress, replied, "In my judgment, sir, we are not only ripe for the measure, but in danger of rotting for the want of it!"[4] The time has come for Christian composition faculty to revolt from impotent writing pedagogies with secular philosophical roots and craft a pedagogy before God, through Scripture, "for glory and for beauty" (Exod 28:2). The time is ripe.

Two Hazards for Building a Christian Writing Pedagogy

Composition instructors face two landmines when building a Christian composition pedagogy. The first danger is constructing a pedagogy that merely layers a veneer of Christian ideas atop secular theories. Something stronger than a tepid Christian-flavored theory is needed to battle the freshman composition hydra.[5] Nicholas Wolterstorff says, "To make some comments at the beginning of a biology course to the effect that all biological reality has been created by God suggests nothing at all by way of

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[4] "1776: Witherspoon, Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men (Sermon)," Online Library of Liberty, April 10, 2014, http://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/1776-witherspoon-dominion-of-providence-over-the-passions-of-men-sermon.

[5] Robert Harris insists that integrating faith and learning is "a process that will produce a unified, coherent system, an interrelationship, a holistic understanding, a seamless landscape of truth where the physical, spiritual, and rational all combine into one realm. In other words, integration is about the building of one's worldview, not simply learning about something in a Christian way." Robert A. Harris, *The Integration of Faith and Learning: A Worldview Approach* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2004), 227.

any research program within biology. It consists merely of . . . 'setting within a Christian context.'"[6] More than a nod to biblical ideas is needed to create a Christian pedagogy.

Christian-coating secular theory is perilous because it insidiously sabotages the Christian college's mission. Philosopher Alvin Plantinga writes, "Attempting to graft Christian thought [onto ideas antithetical to Christianity] will be at best an unintegral pastiche; at worst it will seriously compromise, or distort, or trivialize the claims of Christian theism. What is needed here is more wholeness, more integrality."[7] An aspect of a Christian college or university's mission is for students to grow in their faith and to be transformed into the image of Christ. That transformation is significantly stunted when the philosophical core of the pedagogy is secular.

The second danger of creating a Christian composition pedagogy is ensuring the new model is educationally excellent. Ted Ward, who taught education at Michigan State University for thirty years before becoming a Professor of Christian Education and Mission at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, warns against the lack of academic quality in some models of integrating faith and learning: "Christian education is *neither*. In far too many cases, Christian education is neither thoroughly Christian nor soundly educational."[8] Some might argue a balance needs to be struck between sound theology and educational theory, a tension of producing strong Christians and strong writers, like a tightrope walker keeping his balance rather than falling off the wire to the left or right. Yet, that tightrope tension is the wrong picture for pedagogy developers. Instead, the educational theory should flower from theology like fruit from a tree.

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[6] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 105.

[7] Alvin Plantinga, *The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader*, ed. James F. Sennett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 229.

[8] Ted Ward, "Facing Educational Issues," in *Reader in Christian Education Foundations and Basic Perspectives*, ed. Eugene Gibbs (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 333.

A Christian writing pedagogy producing excellent writers benefits both the Christian community and the global community.[9] According to philosophy professor and Director of Kirby Laing Centre for Christian Ethics (KLICE) at Tyndale House in Cambridge, Craig Bartholomew,

> John Henry Newman argues that "excellence needs a centre," and, we confess, that center is Christ. Our challenge today is the production of scholarship that genuinely stems from that center which is Christ and as a result enhances Christ's reputation in his world and enables the commons of our cultures to flourish *for all*. Such scholarship will therefore need to be biblical.[10]

A Christian pedagogy needs to be Christian and excellent. The cumulative danger, then, is that a Christian writing pedagogy if implanted wrongly could fail to grow students as both writers *and* Christians.

The Growing Threat

The menacing freshman composition hydra continues to grow in size and strength: Pressured administrators pressure faculty to prove freshman composition's worth; the public demands better results for their investment in higher education; technology redefines "writing"; writing faculty argue what content should be taught and whether writing can even be taught; and writing professors in various political camps see freshman composition as a Trojan horse to infiltrate freshmen ranks. The wild-eyed hydra hisses incessantly as it surges forward.

Many composition theorists have sought to plant a flag of lasting pedagogical success on the beachhead of the composition classroom, yet the efficacy of the weapons used to foster that prevailing success have lacked sustaining firepower. Writing pedagogies of the past failed to defeat the hydra in their own time, and writing instructors cannot look to them to foil the hydra in the present (see chap. 2). A study of 32,000

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[9] Augustine writes about the dichotomy between the Christian community and the secular society as two cities. Augustine, *The City of God by Saint Augustine*, trans. Marcus Dods, Modern Library Series (New York: Random, 1950), 478-520.

[10] Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 474.

students found that "four in 10 of U.S. college students graduate without the complex reasoning skills to manage white-collar work. . . . many . . . graduate *without the ability to . . . construct a cohesive argument or identify a logical fallacy.*"[11] The currently popular postmodern strategies for teaching writing (like social constructionism) are Herculean swords, attacking one hydra head only to have more heads spring forth (see chap. 3). As culture continues to shift at increasing tempos, so too do the nuanced methods of writing instruction. What weapon remains untried? Is there a pedagogy that can transcend the swirling sands of culture and academic popularity? Is there a pedagogical weapon welded from materials that are not only sustainable, but more importantly, reflect the mind and heart of the Creator?

Operation Hydra: Crafting a Writing Pedagogy

One carefully guarded military secret during World War II sat deep underground on the island of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea just south of Sicily and north of the North African coast. The Lascaris War Rooms, a secret labyrinth of underground chambers connected by narrow tunnels, headquartered Britain's Mediterranean military operations. From Lascaris, the Allies coordinated defense of Malta from thousands of Axis bombings. In July of 1943, General Eisenhower and his Supreme Commanders used the War Rooms for Operation Husky—the invasion of Sicily.[12] Likewise, assembling strategic voices around the table in the war room for Operation Hydra is vital for victory. Those voices include experts in Christian education theory, literature and composition, philosophy, hermeneutics, theology, biblical counseling, and human development.[13]

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[11] Charles J. Sykes, *Fail U: The False Promise of Higher Education* (New York: St. Martin's, 2016), 17.

[12] "Lascaris War Rooms," Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna, Malta Heritage Trust, accessed December 16, 2016, http://www.lascariswarrooms.com/history.html.

[13] These voices will be introduced throughout chaps. 4-12.

Christian Voices around the Table

The success of Operation Hydra depends on the launch location of the attack: "The search for knowledge can go wrong," depending on where it starts.[14] Leland Ryken of Wheaton College recounts how the starting place of the quest for faith intersecting with academic disciplines can change the outcome. His early ideas about integrating faith and literature began where composition instructors need to begin—with a question:

> If we begin with the premise that we need to bring literature and Christianity together, the next question is where to start. Do we start with literature and then explore how it intersects with Christian doctrine and experience, or do we start with biblical revelation and its doctrines and allow them to set the agenda for integrating faith and literature, and to lend shape to that integration? For a half a century, I have started with literature.[15]

Ryken's decision to start with literature rather than Christian doctrine was influenced by T. S. Eliot's ideas:

> Eliot theorized as follows: "What I believe to be incumbent upon all Christians is the duty of maintaining certain standards and criteria of criticism over and above those applied by the rest of the world; and that by these criteria and standards everything that we read must be tested." . . . Eliot's proposed sequence of starting with a work of literature and receiving what it stands to offer and then relating that data to Christianity is entirely logical.[16]

Eliot's idea of starting with a piece of literature and then relating it to Christianity, unfortunately, gives literature preeminence rather than Christian doctrine and theology, says Ryken.[17] Through the years, Ryken's opinion on where to begin meshing Christianity and literature changed:

> Over the course of half a century I have seen the same pattern with new Ph.D.'s as they have joined my department. They come fresh from graduate school with the latest approaches to literature forming their basic template. Having entered the Christian academy where the discussion is all about the integration of faith and literature, they are thrust into a new world that requires them to ask how their

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[14] Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1972), 67.

[15] Leland Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship: Toward a New Paradigm" (paper presented at the Radical Christian Scholarship Conference, Houston, February 22-24, 2017), 1.

[16] Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship," 4. Ryken kindly provided me with a copy of this unpublished paper.

[17] Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship," 5.

chosen approach to literature intersects with their Christian faith. Notice where they start: with their contemporary approach to literature absorbed in the secular climate of graduate school. The Christian half of the equation is often accorded the status of an add-on. The tendency is strong to bend Christian doctrine to fit certain chosen aspects of literary theory. The resulting paradigm tends to be weighted in the direction of the contemporary literary theories.[18]

Ryken now advocates reversing Eliot's order. Christian doctrine becomes the starting place "to understand and approach literature from a Christian viewpoint."[19] Thus, Christian doctrine and theology are used to analyze literature rather than literature being the maypole around which Christian ideas dance and weave.

Scholars in other fields have come to similar conclusions.[20] The starting place for any discipline needs to be Scripture, doctrine, and theology.[21] For example, Harris says,

Evangelicals have come of age and it is not unusual to have faculty who have studied at the premier secular universities of our day but who lack intimate knowledge of Scripture, let alone knowledge of how Scripture functions authoritatively in their discipline. . . . The million-dollar question that follows from the above is *how* Scripture functions authoritatively in relation to academia and particular disciplines. This, if you like, is the hermeneutical question, and it is here that major work needs to be done.[22]

Christian scholars need to recover a vision for Christian scholarship, writes George Marsden, author of *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*.[23] Christian scholars who train secularly and then take positions at Christian schools have germinated in

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[18] Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship," 6.

[19] Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship," 8.

[20] "The renaissance of Christian philosophy needs to be complemented by a similar renaissance in all the other disciplines." Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 476.

[21] Harris expounds, "Instead of viewing integration as largely a reactive process of bringing the faith to the discipline, integration should become proactive, working to shape the discipline itself or at least to pursue disciplinary learning (the creation of new knowledge and interpretations) from a Christian perspective." Harris, *Integration of Faith and Learning*, 241.

[22] Craig Bartholomew, "The Bible and the University" (paper presented at the Radical Christian Scholarship Conference, Houston, February 22-24, 2017), 4.

[23] George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University, 1997).

academic soil laced with pesticide aimed at Christian ideas and have been fertilized by

secular mentors.

Plantinga diagnoses the problem of Christian scholars graduating from secular

institutions:

> [They] continue to think about and work on . . . topics [deemed important to the field]. And it is natural, furthermore, for her [a secularly trained Christian philosopher] to work on them in the way she was taught to, thinking about them in the light of the assumptions made by her mentors and in terms of currently accepted ideas as to what a philosopher should start from or take for granted, what requires argument and defense, and what a satisfying philosophical explanation or a proper resolution to a philosophical question is like.[24]

Since Christian scholars from secular institutions approach their disciplines the way they

were taught, secularly trained Christians "will be uneasy about departing widely" from

the topics and presuppositions of their fields, "feeling instinctively that any such

departures are at best marginally respectable."[25] Plantinga concedes this natural hesitancy

is understandable yet "profoundly unsatisfactory": "Christian philosophers, however, are

the philosophers of the Christian community; and it is part of their task as Christian

philosophers to serve the Christian community. But the Christian community has its own

questions, its own concerns, its own topics for investigation, its own agenda and its own

research program."[26] Plantinga's point that Christian scholars need to rethink the

underbelly of their field—what is worth studying and how study is conducted—applies to

the field of composition.[27] For example, many practitioner scholars in the field of

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[24] Alvin Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 1, no. 3 (July 1984): 255.

[25] Plantinga, *Analytic Theist*, 298.

[26] Plantinga, *Analytic Theist*, 298.

[27] David Dockery urges, "As Christians, we must engage the issues of our day in the various areas of learning, while recognizing that God, the source of all truth, is central in every academic discipline and every sphere of life. Bringing the Christian faith to influence our learning is the most distinctive task of Christian thinking. . . . We can see God behind it all and over it all, whether in math, art, science, literature, or other fields of study." David S. Dockery, "Introduction—Faith and Learning: Foundational Commitments," in *Faith and Learning: A Handbook for Christian Higher Education*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 19-20. Others have voiced the same issue: "New theoretical and interpretive

composition currently assume a deconstructionist viewpoint and do not believe findable, objective truth is a reality. On the other hand, Christian composition scholars recognize truth exists outside themselves, and it can be known.[28] What can be known about writing and teaching writing? The questions Christian composition scholars ask differ significantly from their secular counterparts' questions.[29] This following research proposes a way for Christian writing faculty to think about and teach freshman composition from a distinctly Christian perspective.[30]

What follows is an apologetic to encourage writing teachers at Christian institutions to shift their perceptions of the basic composition course from a perfunctory skills and service class to engaging their students in an eternally-significant vision of the power of the pen in the hands of a faithful follower of Christ. If faculty members at Christian institutions can help raise an army of writers who realize that effective communication through the written word is not only divinely modeled, but that it is also essential for human flourishing, the impact on college campuses, the larger academic

schools are always arising in the academy. Why shouldn't some of those be distinctively Christian ones? Why wait to react to still another Freudian psychological theory, or another Marxist view of history?" Harris, *Integration of Faith and Learning*, 244.

[28] Union University professor Brad Green writes, "Education is an *intellectual* task. But if 'intellectual' comes from the Latin *intellectus,* which means understanding, true education must posit that there truly is something *there* to be understood. And moving one step further, the Christian must affirm that the thing there *can* be understood." Brad Green, "Theological and Philosophical Foundations," in Dockery and Thornbury, *Shaping a Christian Worldview*, 78-79.

[29] In her dissertation, Mary Breland writes, "Because writing is such an integral part of learning and scholarship, directors of writing programs at colleges which have goals for integration of faith and learning should consider giving attention to how the integration of faith and learning and the encouragement of Christian scholarship might be fostered through writing instruction on their campuses." Mary Elizabeth Lawrence Breland, "The State of Writing Instruction in Southern Baptist Colleges and Universities" (PhD diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2006), 10.

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community, and the church could be significant. The structure of this Christo-centric writing theory is dually aimed at both the writing pedagogue, by providing the resources from which the teacher can develop an instructional pathway, and the student writer, by providing the resources from which the learner develops functional writing strategies encased within a biblically-grounded motivation for writing. Rooted in Kevin Vanhoozer's Trinitarian Theology of Communication, this Christian writing pedagogical theory unfolds through a series of triune-based, triangularly shaped structures that move from theological formation to methodological practice.

Prototype for a Christian Writing Model

Figure 1 visually represents the initial prototype of the writing model unfolding throughout chapters 6-13.[31]
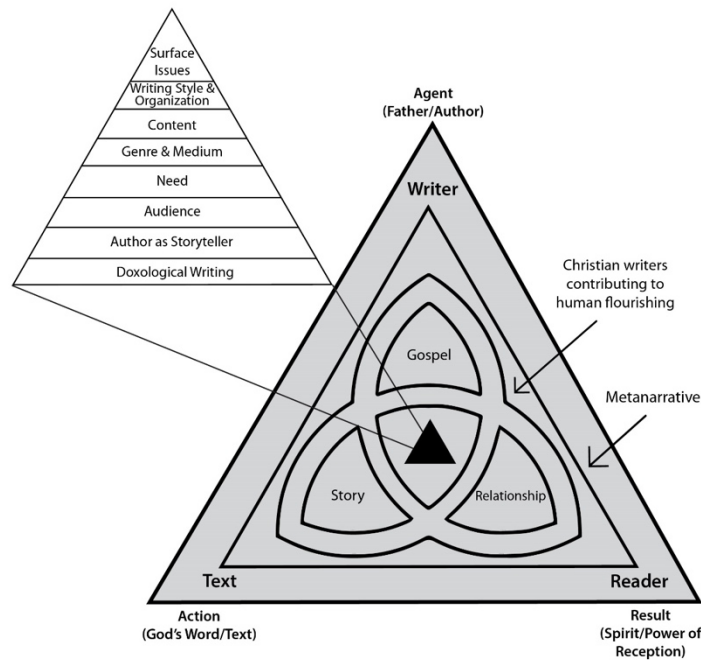
Figure 1. Prototype for a Christian writing model

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[31] Chapter 16 develops the second iteration of the writing model.

CHAPTER 6

DESIGNING A PEDAGOGY: THE METHOD

"Christian scholarship will be a poor and paltry thing, worth little attention, until the Christian scholar, under the control of his authentic commitment, devises theories that lead to promising, interesting, fruitful, challenging lines of research."[1]

**Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge
Applied to Composition**

"Nothing is as practical as a good theory."[2] How can Christian writing faculty develop writing theory from a Christian infrastructure rather than scavenging for pragmatic solutions among secular theories? Philosophers Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen propose faculty tread in

> the Augustinian tradition of Abraham Kuyper and his followers. Central to this tradition is the view that redemption involves the recovery of God's purposes for all of creation and that no area of life . . . is neutral and exempt from religious presuppositions. In our view, it is a serious mistake to try and do philosophy [or composition theory] on the basis of autonomous human reason. Rather, we should employ the full resources of our faith—revelation *and* reason—in order to develop a Christian philosophy.[3]

Only by drilling into the depths of Scripture can the composition theorist mine the "full resources of our faith."[4] Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge shows how academic disciplines connect through shared soil, root system, trunk, and branches. Bartholomew

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[1] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 106.

[2] Kurt Lewin, "The Research Center for Group Dynamics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology," *Sociometry* 8, no. 2 (1945): 129.

[3] Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 24.

[4] Craig Bartholomew, personal interview, Houston, February 24, 2017.

calls his trans-disciplinary tree an "ecology of Christian scholarship" because the dynamic interaction and shared environment function like an ecosystem rather than a linear path.[5] For writing faculty on Christian campuses, his tree offers a method for unearthing the scriptural root of the composition field.[6]

According to Bartholomew, Christian scholarship in any field is rooted in the soil of faith, the "direction of the heart toward either the true God or an idol." [7] Despite the charge of secular academics that *Christian scholarship* is an oxymoron, "academic study is never religiously neutral."[8] For the Christian scholar, faith "gives a major epistemological edge, as does Scripture, and. . . . faith and Scripture ought to be fully employed . . . in the Christian university. With conversion comes a trust in Scripture as God's Word, and Scripture casts its authoritative light over the whole of creation including academia"[9] and thus composition.

Scripture is every field's life-giving source; thus, it functions as the "mother board" of connectivity between disciplines (figure 2).[10] This shared root structure of Scripture de-silos fields at their deepest level, revealing the mutual nature, the interlacing, among fields because "for the Christian there is a unity to all truth."[11]

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[5] Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 474-75.

[6] The purpose of this prototype is to ignite a conversation among Christian writing faculty and to offer a prototype, not a definitive, unalterable model. The key idea is that human writing is an "image" of triune communication. I am indebted to Kevin Vanhoozer for reading chaps. 4-9 and offering the notes quoted here and elsewhere. Kevin Vanhoozer, notes from dissertation review, May 2017.

[7] Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 475.

[8] Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 474.

[9] Craig Bartholomew, "The Bible and the University" (paper presented at Radical Christian Scholarship Conference, Houston, February 22-24, 2017), 3. For an extended discussion of faith, see Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 241-89.

[10] Bartholomew, "Bible and the University," 9.

[11] Brad Green, "Theological and Philosophical Foundations," in *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundations of Christian Higher* Education, ed. David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 79.

Tree of Knowledge

History
Physics
Chemistry
Computer Science
Performing Arts
Psychology
Economics
Political Science
Mathematics
Christian Philosophy
Theology
Literature

A Christian Worldview

Biblical Theology

Scripture

Faith = Direction of the heart toward either the true God or an idol
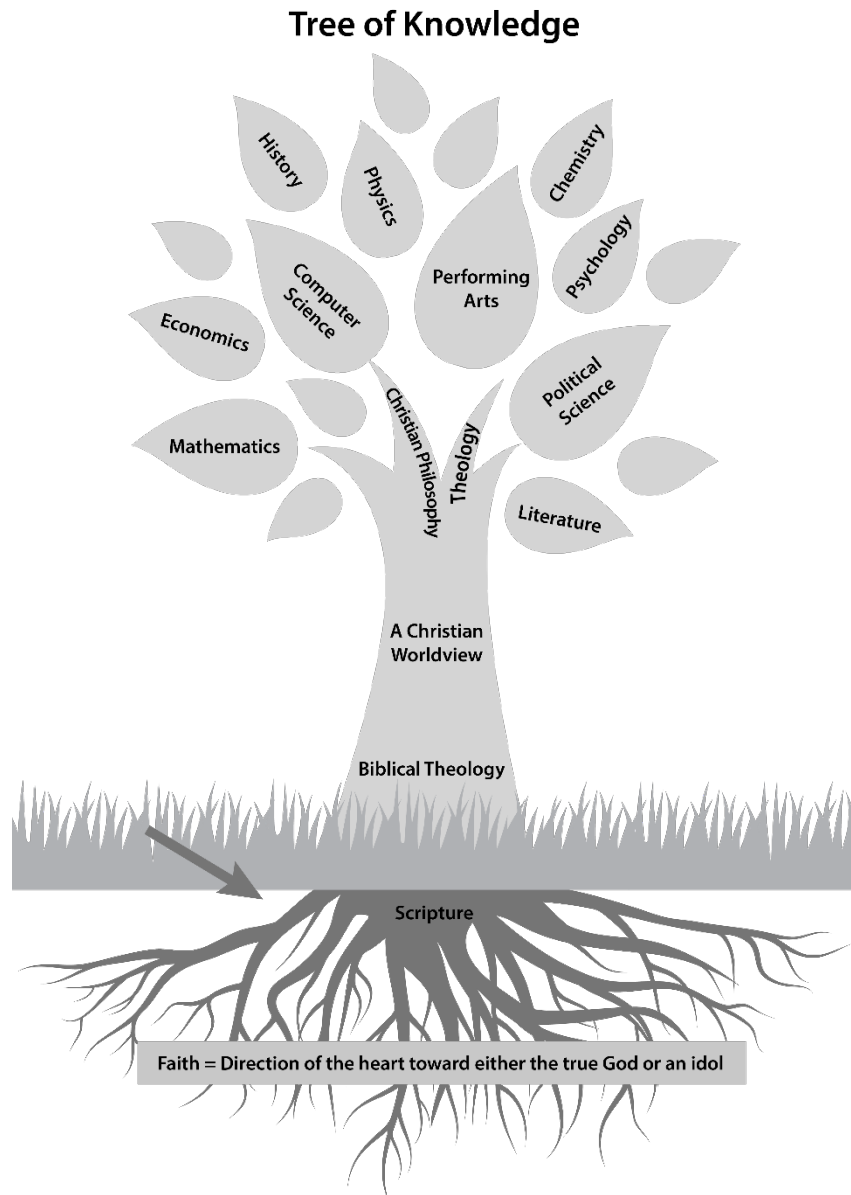
Figure 2. Craig Bartholomew's ecology of Christian scholarship:
The Tree of Knowledge

Scripture as the Root of All Knowledge

"Without the Bible as the foundation and core . . . there can be no true Christian education."[12] The Bible must serve as the ultimate authority for any pedagogy. "Certainly, if you hope to reform . . . an academy, you will need a standard to go by, and

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[12] Roy Zuck, *Spiritual Power in Your Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 5.

the highest and best standard for reforming all of life, so Calvin and others believed, is the written Word of God."[13] If Scripture fails to define the field, something else will. Wolterstorff writes in *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, "The Christian scholar ought to allow the belief-content of his authentic Christian commitment to function as [the] control within his devising and weighing of theories."[14] Scripture acts in Christian pedagogy as a car's engine, not the hubcaps. John Piper says,

> Christian scholarship is not threatened but served when it is permeated by spiritual affections for the glory of God in all things. . . .Without a spiritual wakefulness to divine purposes and connections in all things, we will not know things for what they truly are. . . . One might object that the subject matter of psychology or sociology or anthropology or history or physics or chemistry or English or computer science is not about "divine connections and purposes" but simply about natural connections. But that would miss the point: to see reality in the fullness of truth, we must see it in relation to God, who created it, and sustains it, and gives it all its properties, relations, and designs. Therefore, we cannot do Christian scholarship if we have no spiritual sense or taste for God—no captivity to apprehend his glory in the things he has made.[15]

Jonathan Pennington, New Testament scholar at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, argues one reason Scripture is critical to academic disciplines is because scholarship should ultimately result in students and scholars growing in Christlikeness: "The Bible presents God as engaging with humanity in a developmental way, bringing individuals and humanity in general to a place of complete maturity and wisdom, to the *telos* or goal for which God created the universe, with humanity as its crowning jewel (Gen 1)."[16]

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[13] The roots of Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge are Scripture, but he insists that Scripture is not considered and then left behind in the model: "Like a fountain, the higher levels also feed back into the other levels, and we do *not* think that once one has articulated a worldview that Scripture gets left behind. In our view a good philosophy and a good theology will lead back into *greater* engagement with Scripture rather than away from it." Bartholomew and Goheen, *Christian Philosophy*, 21-22.

[14] Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 76.

[15] John Piper, *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 168-69.

[16] Dru Johnson and Jonathan Pennington, "The Role of the Bible as Wisdom for the Education of Individuals and Society" (paper presented at the Radical Christian Scholarship Conference, Houston, February 22-24, 2017), 7.

The Bible is a Christian's authority; it infuses every academic microfiber with life and purpose, but it does not micromanage the disciplines' technical language, areas of study, or questions.

> Exactly how Scripture informs every area of study needs further exploration . . . [nevertheless] we must not shrink back at the start from the bold claim that Holy Scripture sees itself as playing a role not as an encyclopedia of all knowledge (how could it?) but as the fundamental starting point—the home base, the foundation, the Mayflower Compact, the by-laws, the playbook, the script—for all knowledge for the purpose of forming individuals and society.[17]

The Bible often gives scholars principles rather than specific content about a discipline:[18]

> There are many areas of life Scripture does not discuss and here and elsewhere its *orienting function* is critical. Gordon Spykman, for example, points out that while Scripture does not provide us with a scientific anthropology, it orients us authoritatively in our understanding of what it means to be human, an orientation that all subjects in the university ought to take seriously.[19]

The Bible does not, for instance, specify the best methods for teaching a freshman composition student to avoid split infinitives or use commas correctly, but Scripture has much to say about language itself—the means by which God forged mountains, sculpted cedars, ignited stars, melded molecules, and captivates the souls of men.

Scripture Affirming Language as Meaningful

Despite deconstructionism and postmodernism's premise that language is meaningless, Scripture asserts that to be human, made in the image of God, is to be language-full, having the ability to communicate meaningfully with God and others through language: "Language, I submit, is a gift of God, to be used gratefully and responsibility as we communicate with others. . . . Language is a God-given capacity that enables human beings to relate to God, the world, and to one another. . . . Language . . . should be seen as the most important means and medium of communication and

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[17] Johnson and Pennington, "Role of the Bible as Wisdom," 9.

[18] Bartholomew, "Bible and the University," 4-5.

[19] Bartholomew, "Bible and the University," 6.

communion."[20] Deconstructionism, on the other hand, contests language's "very concepts of meaning and of form. It queries the possibility of any significant relations between word and world. It exalts the myths of theory above the facts of creation."[21] Current writing pedagogies stained with deconstructionism were foreshadowed in the opening clauses of John's Gospel as the beloved disciple articulates the friction between the power of the living Word and the world:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (John 1:1-5)[22]

In this age of deconstructionism, not only is Scripture mocked, but words themselves are devalued: "The darkness did not comprehend it."

The next issue is "*how* Scripture functions authoritatively in relation to academia and particular disciplines."[23] Composition faculty are typically not trained theologians, so for those convinced of the need to base pedagogy on Scripture, one danger is throwing individual Scripture passages at a curriculum, like paint balls shot at a target, hoping to splatter Christianity over the writing pedagogy. To avoid that temptation, the wide-angle lens of biblical theology is needed.

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[20] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 205. George Steiner makes a similar point: "Man is the 'language-animal' as he is defined in both the Hebraic and the Greek vision." George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991), 59. He later uses the phrase "the utter centrality of language-acts within the humaneness of what is human," emphasizing the language-ness of humans (84).

[21] Steiner, *Real Presences*, 86-87.

[22] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

[23] Bartholomew, "Bible and the University," 4-5.

CHAPTER 7

TREE OF KNOWLEDGE APPLIED TO COMPOSITION:
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

If Scripture is the root of all Christian scholarship, biblical theology is the base
of its trunk.[1] For Bartholomew, biblical theology is the progressive redemptive history
unfolding throughout the Bible and "seeks to articulate the unity of Scripture using
categories central to Scripture itself."[2]

Perry Downs articulates that "educational practice and structures worthy of the
adjective *Christian* must be rooted in theological frameworks, and be guided by
theological perspective."[3] Yet how does *theology* impact *composition theory*?

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[1] Craig Bartholomew defines *systematic theology* as "the study of individual doctrines, or other sub-disciplines falling under the umbrella of 'theology.'" Craig Bartholomew, "The Bible and the University" (paper presented at the Radical Christian Scholarship Conference, Houston, February 22-24, 2017), 5. In his Tree of Knowledge model, Bartholomew addresses biblical theology at the base of the tree's trunk and theology farther up the trunk as a metadiscipline impacting all other disciplines. Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015)*,* 476-77. Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, professors at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, describe *systematic theology* as follows:

> Systematic theology leads to worldview formation as we seek to set the biblical-theological framework of Scripture over against all other worldviews and learn "to think God's thoughts after him," even in areas that the Bible does not directly address. In this important way, systematic theology presents a well-thought-out worldview, over against all of its competitors, as it seeks to apply biblical truth to every domain of life. (Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015], 24)

[2] Michael Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 26.

[3] Perry G. Downs, "Theology and Education," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 696. James Estep, professor of Christian education at Lincoln Christian University, says the crux essential for Christian education is its theological foundation: "Theology is ultimately the core determinant of Christian education." James R. Estep Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison, *A Theology of Christian Education* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 299-300. Estep's insight reflects a previously articulated concern: When secular pedagogies form the core of Christian writing teaching and practice in the composition classroom, that core ignores Christian theology. Estep, Anthony, and Allison, *A Theology of Christian Education*, 299-300.
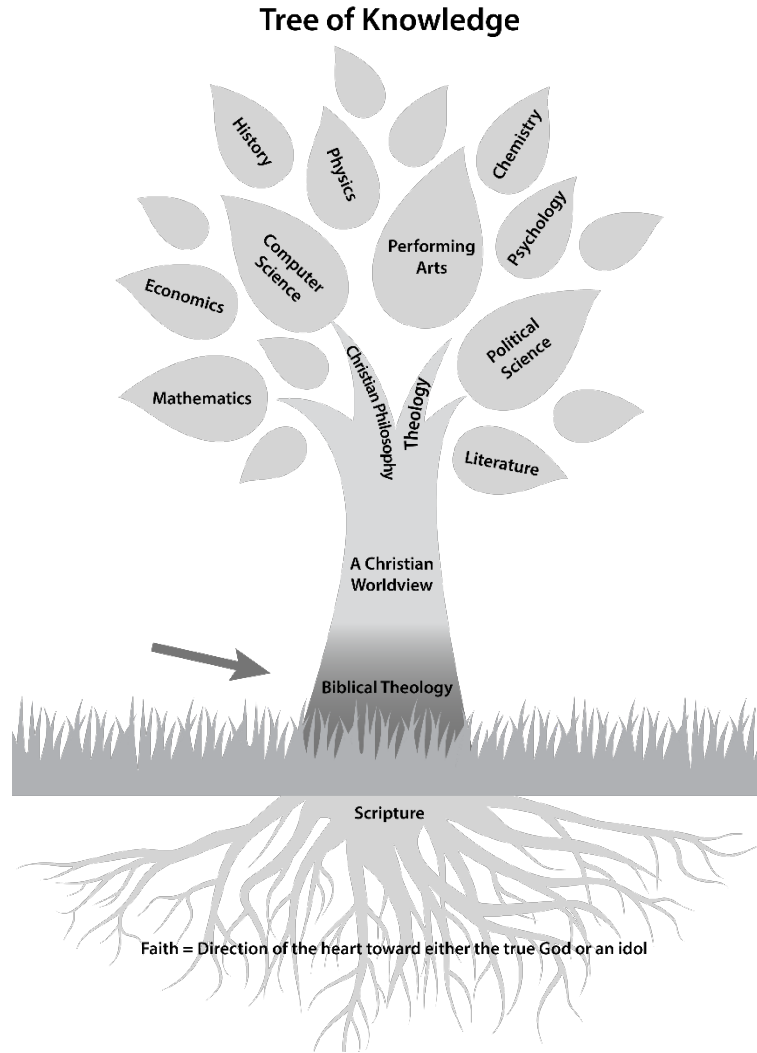
Tree of Knowledge

Figure 3. Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge: Biblical theology

Communication Triad

When people write, there are at least three elements present: (1) the writer, (2) the message communicated, and (3) the impact on the reader.[4] That triad is the finite,

[4] K. Allan, "Speech Act Theory: Overview," in *Concise Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Language*, ed. Peter V. Lamarque (Oxford: Pergamon, 1997), 454-55. J. L. Austin's speech act theory proposes that communication has three parts: (1) the locutor/locution, the speaker (or writer) and his/her intended meaning; (2) illocution, what the speaker *does* by speaking or writing, (i.e., "states a fact . . . confirms or denies something, makes a prediction, a promise, a request, offers thanks or an invitation"); and (3) perlocution, how the listener (or reader) receives the message or the words' effect. Vanhoozer uses speech act theory to explain communication in the Trinity:

God is a speaking God. . . . Most of what God does—creating, warning, commanding, promising, forgiving, informing, comforting, etc.—is accomplished by speech acts. . . . Speech act theory serves

human image[5] of something spectacular: the three persons of the Trinity reveling in one another: "God the Father and the Son have had an eternal joy in each other's excellence that carries so fully what they are that another Person stands forth, the Holy Spirit—distinct as the Father and Son's delight in one another, yet one in divine essence."[6]

Yet God does not Scroogishly revel alone. The exuberant delight of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is so great that the Trinity made man and revealed God to him in order that man share in the reveling of God through the revelation of God.[7] "'*God* reveals Himself [to people]. He reveals Himself *through Himself.* He reveals *Himself.*' God is the subject, object and means of revelation."[8] God's purpose is "not just knowledge *about* God but knowledge *of* God."[9] In other words, God is not revealing Himself for people to mentally acknowledge Him. Knowledge *of* God is an invitation from God to participate

as handmaiden to a Trinitarian theology of communication. If the Father is the locutor, the Son is his preeminent illocution. Christ is God's definitive Word, the substantive content of his message. And the Holy Spirit—the reason that his words do not return to him empty (Isa. 55:11). The triune God is therefore the epitome of communicative agency: the speech agent who utters, embodies, and keeps his Word. Human speakers, created in God's image, enjoy the dignity of communicative agency, though as sinners their speech acts (and interpretations) are subject to all the imperfections and distortions that characterize human fallenness. (Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 457)

[5] Kevin Vanhoozer, professor of theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, says, "This finite human image is grounded in Trinity but is not a human version of Trinity." Kevin Vanhoozer, notes from dissertation review, May 2017. See also Robert W. Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 147.

[6] John Piper, *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 34-45.

[7] Michael Reeves writes, "If God had not a communicative, spreading goodness, he would never have created the world. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were happy in themselves, and enjoyed one another before the world was. Apart from the fact that God delights to communicate and spread his goodness, there [would have] . . . never been a creation or redemption." Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 48.

[8] Mark D. Thompson, "The Trinity and Revelation," in *The Essential Trinity: New Testament Foundations and Practical Relevance*, ed. Brandon D. Crowe and Carl R. Trueman (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 257.

[9] Thompson, "The Trinity and Revelation," 257. Vanhoozer writes, "God is in himself essentially a communicative agent (we don't call the 'Son' the *Logos* for nothing!)." Vanhoozer, notes.

in the reveling communion of this three-in-one Trinitarian dance[10] of knowing and loving and communicating. As a result of this royal invitation from the triune God, Cinderellan humanity is able to communicate and commune both with God and, subsequently, with others . . . in a fallen, finite way, obviously, but still, reflective of the Trinity's modeling and enabling.

Trinitarian Core of Communication

Communication is a cold word,[11] but the Trinitarian essence that warms communication is *relationship*.[12] Communication is not just a means of dispensing information but a relationship that transforms. Jonathan Edwards conveys the Trinity's reveling and revelation like this:

> In communicating Himself to their [people's] hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying, the manifestations which He makes of Himself. . . . God is glorified not only by His glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in. When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it. His glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart.[13]

The Trinity is the common life of Father, Son, and Spirit: communicator, communication, and communicatedness.[14] A biblical communication theory, says Kevin Vanhoozer of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, must be *Trinitarian*.[15]

The preeminent medium through which God chose to communicate and

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[10] The use of the term "dance" in this context is for the purpose of imagery only and not as a model or metaphor for the Trinity itself. Church fathers using the term *perichoresis* were not referring to dancing. Some modern writers have wrongly associated *perichoresis* as the origin of the word *choreography*. See also Larry Perkins, "The Dance is Not Perichōrēsis," Northwest Baptist Seminary, April 6, 2007, https://www.nbseminary.ca/the-dance-is-not-perichrsis#_ftn5.

[11] *Communication* is a nominalization of the verb commune. Helen Sword labels nominalizations as vampires "sucking the energy out of writing." *Communication* is cold because it is an empty corpse. Helen Sword, *Stylish Academic Writing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2012), 61.

[12] Thompson adds, "We speak of divine revelation as irreducibly *relational*." Thompson, "The Trinity and Revelation," 259.

[13] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, *The Miscellanies: a-500*, ed. Thomas Schafer (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1994), 495.

[14] Vanhoozer, notes.

[15] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 161, 456. See also Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 110-11.

through which He calls people into relationship is *writing*. Father God expresses the Word via the Holy Spirit in the canonical Scriptures.

What Vanhoozer says about divine speakers applies to human writers also: "Human speakers, created in God's image, enjoy the dignity of communicative agency, though as sinners their speech acts (and interpretations) are subject to all the imperfections and distortions that characterize human fallenness."[16]

Students in secular composition classrooms learn writing as a skill, or a set of rules, or a way to express themselves, or as a way to construct their own reality, resulting in man-centered writing models lined up like zombies, with the hollow form of humanness minus essence. Writing pedagogues must transplant their discipline from fleeting cultural philosophies to the eternal realities of the communicative agency inherent in the Trinity.[17]

> Writing is essentially interpersonal (even if you write to yourself you're writing to a person!). What makes the Christian God different from all the other gods is that the Christian God is one yet tripersonal (i.e., interpersonal). I see texts as written discourses, where discourse is "something someone says to someone (note the interpersonal element here) about something in some way for some purpose." The point is that discourse, whether oral or written, is something persons do.[18]

Lack of a Trinitarian core is the missing key to a lasting writing pedagogy. Vanhoozer adopts Immanuel Kant's notion of transcendental condition to help articulate the vital essence of the Trinity serving as the substructure for all communication: "*The Trinity thus serves the role of what Kant calls a 'transcendental condition': a necessary condition for the possibility of something humans experience but cannot otherwise explain, namely, the experience of meaningful communication.*"[19]

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[16] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 457.

[17] Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University, 200), 243.

[18] Vanhoozer, notes.

[19] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 456. Crowe and Trueman add,

Other gods, from Allah to Zeus, and from Baal to Yama, are all said by their worshippers to have spoken. That is not at all the point. In the triune [G]od we find a God who *cannot be Wordless.* 'In

Trinitarian Theology of Communication

Vanhoozer coined the phrase "Trinitarian theology of communication."[20] The phrase and its meaning provide the substructure of the writing pedagogical model. Illustrated, Vanhoozer's Trinitarian theology of communication could look like figure 4. God the Father is the voice, the author, and the speaker. God the Son is "the substantive content of God's message," and the Holy Spirit enables people to receive God's message.[21] Pennington defines Scripture as "the Father speaking about the Son, illuminated by the Spirit."[22] As in everything else God does, communicating is the work of all three persons, each acting "in different ways that suit the persons they are."[23] Vanhoozer articulates the role of the Trinity in the following way:

> In light of the Christian confession of God as creator, redeemer, and sanctifier, we may say that God is the one who communicates himself—Father, Son, and Spirit—to others. . . . *The triune God is communicative agent (Father/author), action (Word/text), and result (Spirit/power of reception).* I propose that we take God's Trinitarian self-communication as the paradigm of what is involved in all true communication. Scripture certainly portrays God, in contrast to dumb idols, as a speaking God.[24]

the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God' (John 1:1-2). Before all things, before anything was 'made through him'. . . God had a Word to speak. The Word was God. He is a God who does not *happen* to speak; by his very nature he *is* a speaking God. (Crowe and Trueman, *Essential Trinity*, 290).

[20] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 457.

[21] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 457.

[22] Dru Johnson and Jonathan Pennington, "The Role of the Bible as Wisdom for the Education of Individuals and Society" (paper presented at Radical Christian Scholarship Conference, Houston, February 22-24, 2017), 9. George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991), 3. Steiner says that Nietzsche and others of his ilk claim, "Where God clings to our culture, to our routines of discourse, He is a phantom of grammar, a fossil embedded in the childhood of rational speech"; however, Steiner argues the opposite is true: "Any coherent account of the capacity of human speech to communicate meaning and feeling is, in the final analysis, underwritten by the assumption of God's presence." Steiner, *Real Presences*, 3.

[23] Vanhoozer states, "This indissoluble collaboration of the Persons of the Trinity is referred to as 'the doctrine of inseparable operations.'" Vanhoozer, notes.

[24] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 199, emphasis original.

For the writing pedagogue, an understanding of the dynamic connection between the eternal activity of the Trinity and the writing process could prove transformational; writing becomes a reflection of the Trinity's activity and engagement within the Godhead.

Agent
(Father/Author)

Action
(God's Word/Text)
"The substantive content
of God's message."

Result
(Spirit/Power of Reception)
"The condition and power
of receiving the sender message."
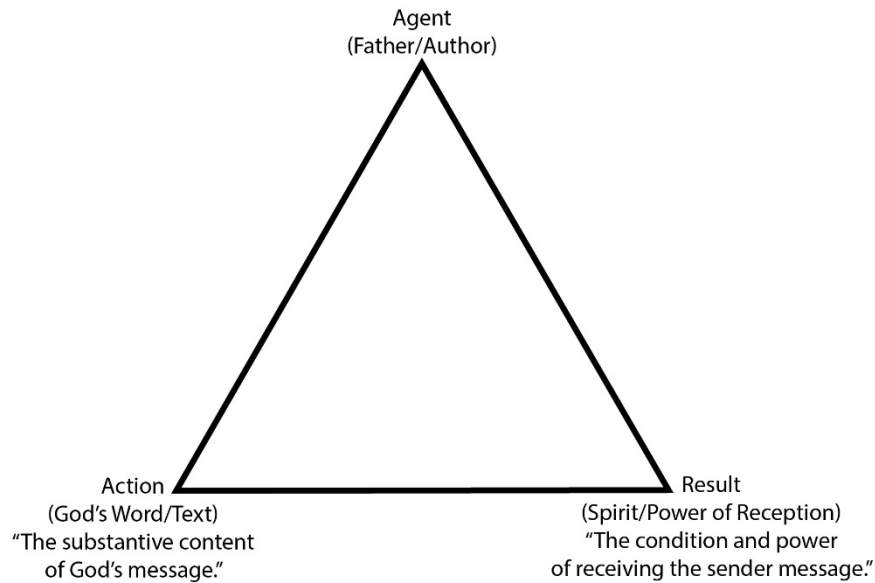
Figure 4. Vanhoozer's Trinitarian theology of communication

Trinitarian Theology of Writing

Teachers of writing no longer need to communicate the foundational purposes for writing from a purely functional and pragmatic platform. Something much greater, much more eternally significant is at stake for students and their future audiences; thus, writing instructors must show students that writing is anchored in the very nature of God Himself: "A text is a complex communicative act with *matter* (propositional content), *energy* (illocutionary force), and *purpose* (perlocutionary effect)."[25] In other words, "God

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[25] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 228. Steiner's discussion of what interpreters do reflects the Holy Spirit's role as perlocutor. Steiner, *Real Presences*, 7-8. For more on the Speech Act Theory from which these terms are taken, see Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, xx; John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, 2nd ed. (Boston: Harvard

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is the communicator, communication, and communicatedness. The triune God is the agent, act, and effect of his own self-communication,"[26] and students' writing can also include matter, energy, and purpose. Although the sin-ridden stain on pages written by human authors will always be visible, the imprint of Trinitarian communication laces every inked word.

Communication among the Godhead spills over into communion with people and among people. Kevin Vanhoozer writes,

> What here comes to the fore is the sheer generosity of the triune God in the free determination to include human creatures as recipients of the Father's love in the Son through the Spirit. The good news is that Father and Son agree to share the loving communion that is the perfection of their own life with others. . . . Election is thus the free and joyful collaboration of the three persons to initiate a relationship with the human creature, to identify with the human creature, and to consummate the relationship with the human creature. *The God of the Christian gospel is the Father, Son, and Spirit working in perfect communion for an even greater communion.*[27]

God reveals Himself so that others can revel in Him. Thus, the ultimate purpose of the writer is to reveal God so others may revel in Him.

> What the Trinity undergirds is the possibility of interpersonal communion. What precisely is at stake is how one person shares himself or herself with another person in and through writing. The Father does this through the Son by the Spirit. Human writers' words are less potent, and they cannot send the Spirit to ensure their right reception, but writers should do everything they can to share (make common) their communicative intent. Writing is essentially interpersonal; even someone journaling for his or herself is writing to a person. I see texts as written discourses, where discourse is "something someone says to someone [note the interpersonal element here] about something in some way for some purpose." The point is that discourse, whether oral or written, is something persons do.[28]

University, 1975); John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1959).

[26] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion and Authorship* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 2010), 261.

[27] Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 258-59.

[28] Vanhoozer, notes.

Students steward the language of Truth to be communicated both within Christian community and the larger context of the world.
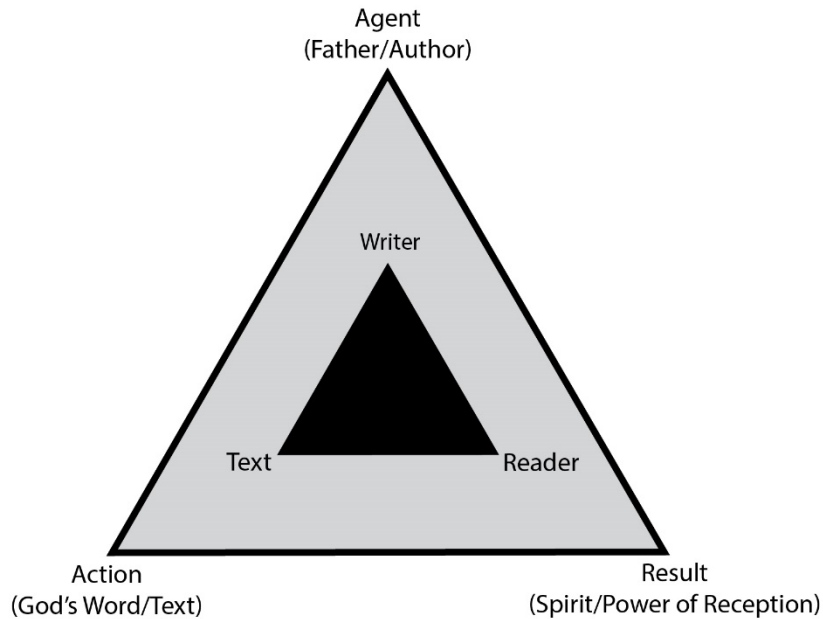
Figure 5. Adoption of Vanhoozer's ideas: Trinitarian theology of writing

Trinitarian Community and Writing

The pictorial representation of Vanhoozer's theory illustrates how written communication between human beings is a finite analogy of the Trinity. In figure 5 a second triangle is inserted within the Trinitarian triangle as a human reflection (or image or analogy) of the Trinitarian Theology of Communication—God speaking, the Son as the Word in action, the Holy Spirit inciting the Word's reaction in people—is reflected in writing. The author as subcreator has a message to which the reader responds.

This inner triangle is the familiar writer-text-reader relationship as well as Aristotle's rhetorical logos, pathos, and ethos. For Christians, ethos is the writer's credibility within the Trinitarian theology of communication. Ethos aligns with God the Father's corner of the triangle. For the Christian writer, ethos is based on living out faith consistently: "Amid the malaise of pluralism and postmodernism, we should make the

goal of our scholarship to *tell the truth*. In order to do this, we also need to live *in the truth,* ever more deeply into Christ."[29]

The corner of the Trinitarian triangle occupied by Christ corresponds to Aristotle's logos, the logic and organization of the written text: "Christ himself is the Word, and we can believe that our words can be meaningful because they are ultimately rooted in the reality of Christ himself, the eternal and divine Word."[30]

Aristotle's pathos, the reader's emotional response to a text, corresponds to the Holy Spirit's corner of the triangle. For student writers, "Participation in God is ultimately a matter of 'fitting' into forms of triune communicative activity."[31]

Vanhoozer's Trinitarian model is recognizing that all communication, written or otherwise, is rooted in the communal nature of the Trinity.[32]

> There are "theological" issues involved in disputes over the nature of texts, language, and meaning in general . . . language is neither an impersonal structure, nor a personal plaything, neither something simply abstract nor simply expressive, but rather an intersubjective phenomenon and medium of interpersonal interpretation—a social lubricant: "A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another."[33]

Communication, and therefore writing, is relational. Communication happens first in the Trinity,[34] then in a vertical relationship between the Creator and His creatures, and finally horizontally from one created person to another:

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[29] Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 484.

[30] Brad Green, "Theological and Philosophical Foundations," in *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundations of Christian Higher Education*, ed. David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 84.

[31] Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 272.

[32] Vanhoozer says, "The triune God enjoys life-fully realized communicative activity-*in se*, quite apart from any relation to creation." Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 254.

[33] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 3-4.

[34] Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 48. Reeves shares Puritan preacher Richard Sibbes's view on the Trinity's intra-communication flowing over to people:

> Sibbes clearly saw the triune God as winning, kind and lovely: he spoke of the living God as a life-giving, warming sun who "delights to spread his beams and his influence in inferior things, to make

From a Christian perspective, God is first and foremost a communicative agent, one who relates to humankind through words and the Word. Indeed, God's very being is a self-communicative act that both constitutes and enacts the covenant of discourse: speaker (Father), Word (Son), and reception (Spirit) are all interrelated. Human communication is a similarly covenantal affair, though we cannot pour ourselves into our communicative acts and ensure their effects as God can through his Word and Spirit. Humans have the dignity of communicative agency, though not its perfection.[35]

The relationships created by writing, born from Trinitarian community, are fundamental to Christian authorship.

Trinitarian Community versus Anthropocentric Individualism

Writers and readers of the deconstructionism ilk insist the meaning of any piece of writing comes from the *reader,* not the writer. "If the meaning comes only from the reader as deconstructionists argue, then there is no communion with the author–no making common, no genuine interpersonal relation."[36] This lack of relationship is antithetical to the Trinity: "What makes the Christian God different from all the other gods is that the Christian God is *one* yet *tripersonal* (i.e., interpersonal)."[37] The Trinity shares a never-ending interpersonal conversation, "a communion of three communicants; the eternal delight of the dialogical dance of call, response, acknowledgement, and affirmation."[38]

Vanhoozer's Trinitarian communication theory serves as an effective antidote to the snake venom of deconstructionist theories of language and meaning: Writing is

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all things fruitful. Such a goodness is in God as is in a fountain, or in the breast that loves to ease itself of milk." That is, God is simply bursting with warm and life-imparting nourishment, far more willing to give than we are to receive. (Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 48)

[35] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 456-57.

[36] Vanhoozer, notes.

[37] Vanhoozer, notes.

[38] Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 258-59.

void of any meaning until a reader engages the text.[39] Philosopher Jacques Derrida argued language is merely an arbitrary social construction.[40] Vanhoozer points out that if writing has no meaning other than what the reader gives it, the Bible has no authority.[41] In other words, "The belief that there is something 'in' the text, a presence not of the reader's own making, is a belief in transcendence."[42] Deconstructionists following in Derrida's wake deny any transcendent presence, and literary theorists working from Derrida's ideas oppose Christian orthodoxy. Consequently, the writer is dead; the text is irrelevant;[43] only the reader matters. If a text has no meaning in itself, "then there is nothing to be known and nothing for which interpreters are responsible. As a result, the author is pronounced 'dead' on the reader's arrival."[44] Scripture stakes a different claim on the banks of the writer-text-reader issue. The Bible is "the Father speaking about the Son, illuminated by the Spirit."[45] The Writer is alive and the Message has meaning. In a continually unraveling post-Christian culture, students in faith-based institutions will need apologetic vocabulary to dismantle deconstructionist philosophies.

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[39] Vanhoozer cites Stanley Fish as someone holding this deconstructionist view: "According to Fish, there is no such thing as a meaning 'in' the text 'outside' the reader. Meaning is not prior to, but a product of, the reader's activity" Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 24. Vanhoozer goes onto say, "The hermeneutical nonrealist (e.g., Derrida, Fish) denies that meaning precedes interpretive activity; the truth of an interpretation depends on the response of the reader" Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 26. Vanhoozer discerns, "For writing in general, if the meaning comes only from the reader, then there is no communion with the author—no making common, no genuine interpersonal relation. Again, what the Trinity undergirds is the possibility of interpersonal communion." Vanhoozer, notes.

[40] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 198.

[41] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 24.

[42] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text*?, 455.

[43] "The text is 'indeterminate,' and it is this indeterminacy that serves as the playground for the reader." Vanhoozer notes.

[44] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 457.

[45] Johnson and Pennington, "The Role of the Bible," 9. Vanhoozer's definition of the Bible is similar: "The Father speaking about the Son by the Holy Spirit (this makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is both inspirer of biblical authors and illuminator of human readers). Remember the line about the Spirit from the Nicene Creed: 'who spoke by the prophets.' The Spirit is the perlocutionary power and perfection of the Father's Word." Vanhoozer, notes.

As Vanhoozer points out, the deconstruction approach makes "the text an idol whenever they see in it only what they themselves have produced. . . . What the idol images is ultimately its maker—its reader-god. The idol acts 'as a mirror, not as a portrait.'"[46] The reader sees only himself, not anyone else. For deconstructionists, the rhetorical triangle is narcissistic, a mirror of oneself; there is no "other." No relationship between persons is established. Arming students to counteract deconstructionist theories requires impressing students with the idea that they write relationally within and for a community.

Writing students at Christian colleges desperately need to see themselves belonging (through Christ) to the dynamic community of the Trinity and their writing flowing from their own engagement with the triune God. If Christian composition instructors cast an initial vision of Trinitarian engagement with their students beyond course grades and class requirements, the result will be young writers seeing their place as heralds of the story of truth for the glory of God.[47]

Winston Churchill and Adolf Hitler both told their people stories during World War II.[48] Churchill told the British

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[46] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 459.

[47] Vanhoozer remarks, "For Augustine, the purpose of the city of language is to lead one to the city of God. . . . The highest end of human beings is enjoying God. Language, when rightly used, is one of the chief means that lead to this joy." Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 202.

[48] Michael McGuire, "Mythic Rhetoric in Mein Kampf: A Structuralist Critique," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 63, no. 1 (February 1977): 13. One of the most profound and devastating examples of a leader who used narrative and its concrete language to convince his readers of his political ideologies and visionary plans was Adolf Hitler in his autobiography, *Mein Kampf*. Michael McGuire, a *Mein Kampf* literary analyst, describes the mythic rhetoric in Hitler's work: "[*Mein Kampf*] is set in the past in its narrative origins but extends into the future and explains both, like a model. It is the story of a hero superior in kind to us who nonetheless is a real person acting in a real social setting, not a fictional universe." McGuire, "Mythic Rhetoric in Mein Kampf," 13. If *Mein Kampf* were replaced with "the Bible" in this quotation, it would be appropriate (Jesus is the undisputed hero of Scripture). *Mein Kampf* was a world-shaking and world-shaping book because its author masterfully connected his readers to the metanarrative he contrived. If Christian faculty do not draw their students into the truth and safety of the gospel's metanarrative, they will be lured into the untruth of another "metanarrative" in which they find themselves to be a part of the story.

over and over again that they were part of a great national drama, participants in a story that was already centuries old—a story of honor and duty, of sacrifice and freedom. In Germany a very different man was telling a very different story. Adolf Hitler was telling the German people a story of Teutonic conquest, racial superiority, and blitzkrieg. Churchill's story was true, while Hitler's story was false, and the future of the human race depended on the right story prevailing.[49]

The same battle of story is being waged in composition classrooms. Deconstructionists tell the story of meaninglessness; Christian composition instructors tell the story of meaningfulness, an invitation to join in the everlasting community of the Trinity. The future of the human race has always depended on the right story prevailing. It all begins with the Trinity.

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[49] R. Albert Mohler Jr., *The Conviction to Lead* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany, 2002), 39.

CHAPTER 8

TREE OF KNOWLEDGE APPLIED TO COMPOSITION:
WORLDVIEW

In her dissertation from Miami University, Vail McGuire articulates the

antagonism between the composition field and Christianity:

> The discipline of composition and rhetoric and the discipline of theology,
> particularly Christian theology, are two areas which have often found themselves
> distanced from one another, especially as they are positioned both within the
> academy and the composition classroom. Because the epistemological orientations
> of these two disciplines are often perceived as so dissimilar, the discipline of
> composition and rhetoric has been remarkably disinclined to include theology and
> religion among its many theoretical tributaries. In addition, composition pedagogy
> often conduces to a more liberal sociopolitical orientation.[1]

Christian ideas and Christian students are often unwelcome anathemas in secular

composition classrooms, like drivers going fifteen miles below the speed limit on the

interstate, legal but ridiculed.[2] While Christian theories are barred from secular

composition classrooms, secular theories are frequently embraced in the Christian

composition classrooms, typically without thought, let alone question or concern. This

oblivion permits composition pedagogy—a vehicle transmitting the purposes for writing,

the methods of writing, and the assumptions about writing—to infiltrate Christian

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[1] Vail McGuire, "Unlikely Connections: The Intersection of Composition, Rhetoric, and Christian Theology" (PhD diss., Miami University, 2007), abstract.

[2] Jeffrey Ringer writes, "Elizabeth Vander Lei has argued that the incorporation of religious discourse in academic writing often prompts writing instructors to enact 'intellectual violence' against the students who produce it . . . whether by formulating harsh responses . . . or barring religious discourse from the classroom altogether." Jeffrey Ringer, "Working with(in) the Logic of the Jeremiad: Responding to the Writing of Evangelical Christian Students," *College Composition and Communication* 68, no. 4 (June 2017), 630. See also Jeffrey M. Ringer and Michael-John DePalma, eds., *Mapping Christian Rhetorics* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Elizabeth Vander Lei et al., eds., *Renovating Rhetoric in Christian Tradition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2014); Elizabeth Vander Lei and Bonnie Lenore Kyburz, eds., *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2005).

classrooms with secular or anti-Christian worldviews. Bartholomew depicts the

supporting role worldview plays in pedagogy (figure 6).[3]

Tree of Knowledge

History Physics Chemistry

Computer Science Performing Arts Psychology

Economics

Christian Philosophy Theology Political Science

Mathematics

Literature

A Christian Worldview

Biblical Theology

Scripture

Faith = Direction of the Heart Toward either the True God or an Idol
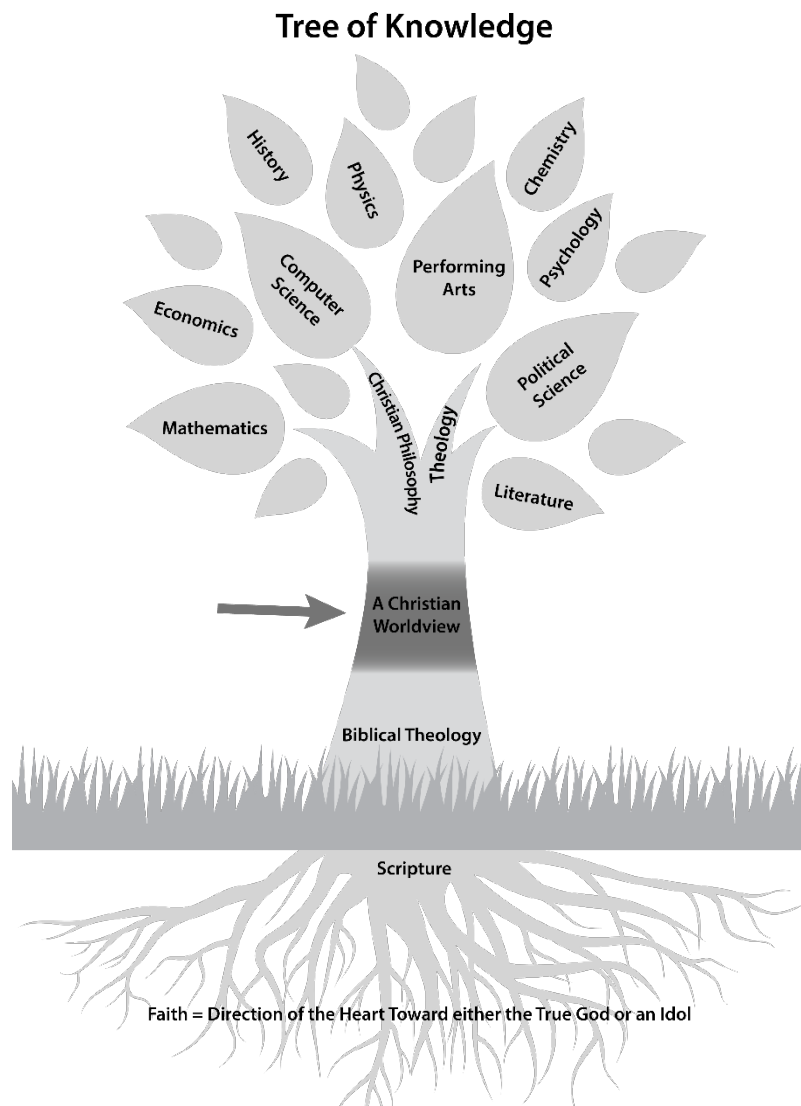
Figure 6. Craig Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge: A Christian worldview

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[3] Bartholomew's labeling of specific subjects in the leaves of the tree reflect no specific order as to their placement on the tree other than to indicate that all academic disciplines find commonality in the trunk, roots, and soil.

Worldview drives all writing pedagogy.[4] If an institution's core mission is to produce Christian thinkers and writers, then faculty building their writing instruction out of pedagogies fabricated from secular worldviews unwittingly work at cross purposes with their institution's primary objective. The intersection between composition pedagogy and the Christian classroom is not only a theological concern but a worldview one.

James Sire and Craig Bartholomew
Define Worldview

Philosopher Craig Bartholomew defines worldview as "basic beliefs embedded in a shared grand story . . . rooted in a faith commitment . . . which give shape and direction to the whole of our individual and corporate lives."[5] Worldview is constructed not from reason, but from the gut: "World-views are not products of thought. They do not originate from the mere will to know."[6] James Sire agrees, "A worldview involves the mind, but it is first of all a commitment, a matter of the soul."[7] Worldview is "a spiritual orientation," lying "deep in the inner recesses of the human self."[8] Both Sire and Bartholomew's definitions share basic elements as shown in table 1.

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[4] For a more complete discussion on the controversies surrounding how theology and philosophy or worldview and philosophy/theology relate, see Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 17-27.

[5] Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015)*,* 477. James Sire defines worldview as "a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being." James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 5th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 20.

[6] Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, trans. H. P. Rickman (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976), 141.

[7] Sire, *Universe Next Door*, 20.

[8] Sire, *Universe Next Door*, 20.

Table 1. Synthesis of worldview definitions

James Sire's Definition of Worldview	Craig Bartholomew's Definition of Worldview	Synthesis of Sire and Bartholomew
A commitment, orientation of the heart	[Beliefs] rooted in a faith commitment	A heart-held
that can be expressed as a story or set of presuppositions held[9]	embedded in a shared grand story	story
about reality		about reality
providing the foundation for how we live.	which give shape and direction to the whole of our individual and corporate lives.	that drives people's lives.

In other words, worldview is a heart-held story about reality that drives people's lives.

"A worldview . . . is situated in the self—the central operating chamber of every human being. It is from this heart that all one's thoughts and actions proceed."[10] Therefore, every writing pedagogy reflects the worldview of its designer. Social constructionism, the prevailing writing pedagogy in secular institutions today, originates from the worldview that denies meta-stories, whether Christianity, Communism, Marxism, Capitalism, or any other overarching story;[11] however, social constructionists naturally operate out of their *own* heart stories. Sire articulates how worldview is essentially story:

> When I reflect on where I and the whole of the human race have come from . . . my worldview is being expressed as a story. One story told by science begins with the big bang and proceeds through . . . evolution. . . . Christians tell the story of

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[9] Sire writes, "The presuppositions that express one's commitments may be true, partially true or entirely false. . . . A chair remains a chair whether we recognize it as a chair or not. Either there is an infinitely personal God or there is not. But people disagree on which is true. Some assume one thing; others assume another." Sire, *Universe Next Door*, 21.

[10] Sire, *Universe Next Door*, 20.

[11] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 93. Gentry and Wellum include Brian Walsh's description of postmodern culture's aversion to metanarratives, quoted from Brian Walsh, "The Church in a Postmodern Age: Ten Things You Need to Know," in *Good Idea! A Resource Sheet on Evangelism and Church Growth 3/4* (Toronto: Wycliffe College Institute of Evangelism, 1996), 1-5.

creation, Fall, redemption, glorification—a story in which Jesus' birth, death and resurrection are the centerpiece. Christians see their lives and the lives of others as tiny chapters in that master story. The meaning of those little stories cannot be divorced from the master story.[12]

Writing teachers miss pivotal points of shaping students' view of writing when they fail to help students connect their individual stories with the biblical meta-story.

Worldview Embedded in the Trinitarian Communication Model

People have no access to the Trinity except through Jesus Christ and His gospel, the unfolding plan of redemption, the story of all stories. Vanhoozer says,

God creates and enters into time in order communicatively to relate to creatures. Does it follow, then, that humans participate in God simply by being in time?. . . . This sort of participation involves only the metaphysical presence of God the Creator (i.e., omnipresence), not the saving personal presence of God the covenant Lord. For life with God means being in his presence not merely as a created entity, but as a friend. To come into the presence of the holy God in this latter way is possible only if one is in Christ, a participant in *his* history.[13]

Vanhoozer adds that humans participate in the history of the world ("cosmic time") only in God's unfolding story of redemption ("covenant time"): "It is one thing to be on stage, quite another to participate in the action."[14]

God alone is outside time and history, yet every piece of writing is produced inside the context of His being and within history. For Christian composition faculty and their students, the metanarrative bridges the Trinity and the writer-text-reader (figure 7).

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[12] Sire, *Universe Next Door*, 20-21.

[13] Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), 272.

[14] Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 272.

Agent
(Father/Author)

Writer

Metanarrative

Text   Reader

Action   Result
(God's Word/Text)   (Spirit/Power of Reception)
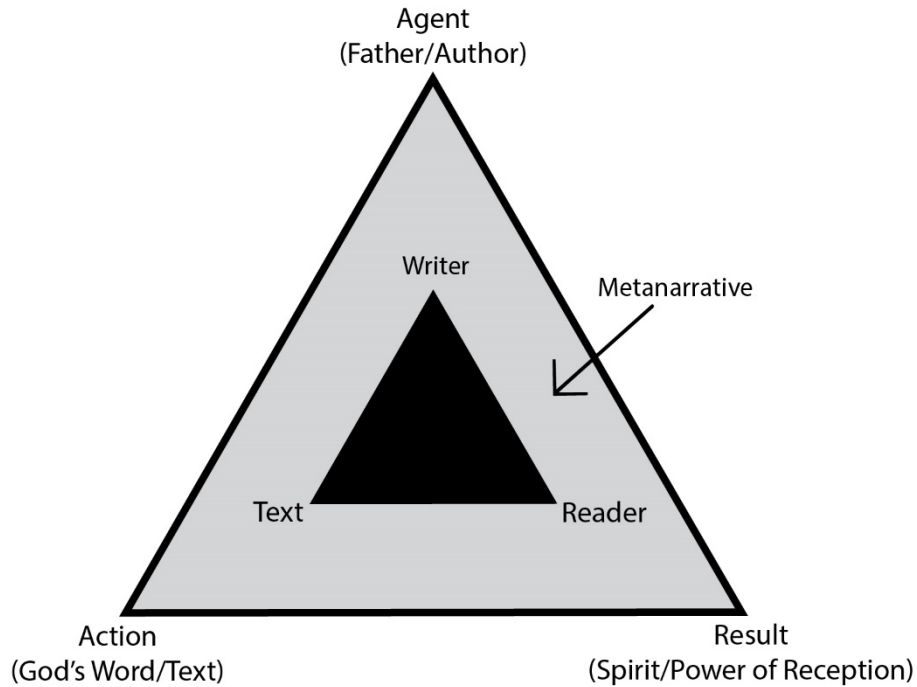
Figure 7. Trinitarian theology of writing: Metanarrative

The metastory (the gospel of Jesus Christ) enfolds the traditional communication

triangle of writer/text/reader.[15] As Brad Green argues, "The Christian affirms that

ultimately the world created by God is a world that is moving in a certain direction, under

the sovereign hand of a loving and just God, and that there is a larger story and purpose

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[15] Perry G. Downs, "Theology and Education," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 693-96. Scholars define the metanarrative differently. Perry Downs claims for education to be truly Christian, it must be designed with the biblical metanarrative plot points (creation, fall, redemption, consummation) impacting pedagogy. Other scholars argue for variations of these four, claiming the four-fold—creation, fall, redemption, consummation—excludes too much of the Old Testament. For example, Vanhoozer says, "[N.T.] Wright's suggestion of a five-act play has proved . . . influential, spawning several variations: (1) Creation, (2) Fall, (3) Israel, (4) Jesus, (5) Church." Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 96. On the other hand, Gentry and Wellum argue that the "backbone" of the metanarrative is six covenants: "The Covenant with Creation," "The Covenant with Noah," "The Covenant with Abraham," "The Covenant at Sinai," "The Covenant with David," and "The New Covenant." They say, "Biblical theology attempts to give a theological reading of Scripture . . . that grasps 'the whole counsel of God' in terms of its redemptive-historical progression. Scripture consists of many literary forms . . . but underneath all of these literary forms is a storyline, beginning in creation and moving to the new creation, which unfolds God's redemptive plan." Gentry and Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants*, 31.

to life, and all of our reading, learning, and studying are to be related to, and ultimately should serve, these sovereign purposes."[16]

Christians Engage with the Composition Field

This dissertation is not a call for Christian composition faculty to isolate themselves from "mainstream discussions,"[17] but a rally cry to urge believing academics to engage in those discussions, with the added willingness to function autonomously from the field.[18] Plantinga says, "What is needed is for genuine Christian faith to be at the heart of the intellectual task, and for students and scholars to constantly seek to allow their faith commitments to inform and drive their intellectual endeavors."[19] As Bartholomew says, "Scripture orients us to the world in a particular way." Writing faculty must be able to tell the story of their discipline from a Christian perspective.[20]

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[16] Brad Green, "Theological and Philosophical Foundations," in *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundations of Christian Higher Education,* ed. David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 88. Vanhoozer puts time into perspective like this: "The time or life of the creature is in one all-important respect distinct from that of the Creator. For human beings, to exist is to have life, and to live is to have time. When one is alive one has the potential to exercise one's communicative capacity." Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 254. Alvin Plantiga writes, "I deeply believe that the pattern displayed in [the field of] philosophy is also to be found in nearly every area of serious intellectual endeavor. In each of these areas the fundamental and often unexpressed presuppositions that govern and direct the discipline are not religiously neutral; they are often antithetic to a Christian perspective." Alvin Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers (with a special preface for Christian thinkers from different disciplines)," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*, accessed February 8, 2017, http://www.faithandphilosophy.com/article_advice.php.

[17] Bartholomew and Goheen, *Christian Philosophy*, 200.

[18] Plantinga exhorts, "It is up to Christians who practice the relevant discipline to develop the right Christian alternatives." Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers," 2.

[19] Green, "Theological and Philosophical Foundations," 83. George Marsden proposes that mainstream American higher education should be more open to explicit discussion of the relationship of religious faith to learning. Scholars who have religious faith should be reflecting on the intellectual implications of that faith and bringing those reflections into the mainstream of intellectual life. Although scholars of no faith or of other faiths may strongly disagree on the particular issues involved, all should participate on equal terms in academic dialogue. (George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* [New York: Oxford University, 1997], 3-4)

[20] Bartholomew, "Bible and the University," 8.

CHAPTER 9

TREE OF KNOWLEDGE APPLIED TO COMPOSITION:
PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

Designing a distinctly Christian writing pedagogy requires a scriptural root system. From those roots grow theology, leading to worldview, people's deeply embraced beliefs held together by a meta-story about reality. The trunk of the Tree of Knowledge splits into the two main branches of philosophy and theology from which all other disciplines stem (see figure 8).
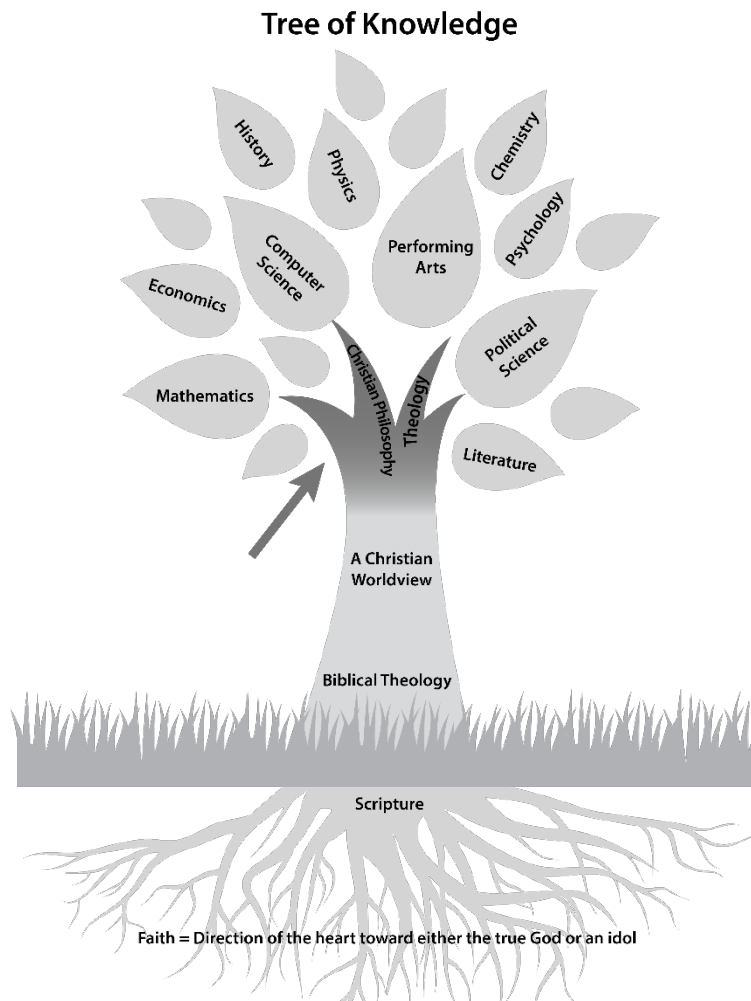
Tree of Knowledge

Figure 8. Craig Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge: Philosophy

Because these two branches influence all other fields, Craig Bartholomew and Eric Johnson designate these two as *metadisciplines*.[1] Nicholas Wolterstorff adds, "Christian philosophy and theology are at the center, not because they are infallible (obviously they're not), but because it is in these two disciplines that the Christian scholar engages in systematic self-examination."[2]

Metadiscipline No. 1: Philosophy

Our "reasoning always emerges *out* of our worldview"[3] because worldview is "deeper than either philosophy or science," affirm Bartholomew and Goheen.[4] Jonathan Pennington says,

> The Bible does not merely offer a "worldview" . . . but much more, it demands an active role in the shaping of persons in community in order to apprehend the created world correctly. A Christian understanding of scholarship and learning must entail more than adding biblical truths to any existing worldview or area of study, but rather a biblically and theologically rooted metaphysic that gives coherence to every area of knowledge.[5]

Whereas worldview is a set of beliefs buried so deeply in the soul it is sometimes not even consciously recognized, philosophy attempts "to discern the structure of the order of creation, and to describe systematically what is subject to that order. The difference that a

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[1] Eric L. Johnson and Craig Bartholomew, "Transdisciplinarity: A Proposal for the Renewal of Christian Scholarship in the 21st Century," The Paideia Centre for Public Theology, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.christianpsych.org/media/transdisciplinarity.pdf.

[2] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 108.

[3] Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 19. Bartholomew and Goheen discuss five theories of how worldview and philosophy relate. This project assumes their view is accurate: worldview yields a philosophy (17-20).

[4] Bartholomew and Goheen, *Christian Philosophy*, 19.

[5] Dru Johnson and Jonathan Pennington, "The Role of the Bible as Wisdom for the Education of Individuals and Society" (paper presented at Radical Christian Scholarship Conference, Houston, February 22-24, 2017), 9.

Christian philosophy makes is that the whole of life, apart from God, is studied as *creation*."[6]

Created Order: Writing

The Bible says God created and ordered the world in a certain way (Gen 1-3). Bartholomew and Goheen write, "Philosophy is precisely the quest for that *detailed analysis* of the order of creation as it relates to the many different aspects of life under the sun."[7]

Bartholomew argues God's order is evident in

- what it means to be human;
- history and historical development;
- culture, in the sense of how we organize the societies we are part of;
- art;
- business and economics;
- politics;
- sport and leisure;
- friendship.[8]

Writing plays an integral part of each of these bullet points as well as being its own category entirely, but writing instructors may fail to link the practical functionality of writing to philosophy or theology. As Wolterstorff explains,

> Many of us know far too little of Christian theology and of Christian philosophy. Consequently, we fail to see the *pattern* of our authentic commitment and its wide ramifications. We see only pieces and snatches and miss the full relevance of our Christian commitment to our devising and weighing of theories. Or our scholarship becomes eccentric. We mistake and misinterpret the belief-content of our authentic commitment, we misplace emphases, alter the structure, distort.[9]

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[6] Bartholomew and Goheen, *Christian Philosophy*, 3.

[7] Bartholomew and Goheen, *Christian Philosophy*, 5. Perry Downs adds, "Every discipline should be examined as a means of engagement with the created order, and as a means of participating in its restoration to its proper use and function, all to the glory of God." Perry Downs, "Theology and Education," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 696.

[8] Bartholomew and Goheen, *Christian Philosophy*, 4.

[9] Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 108.

Writing instructors rethinking freshman composition need a philosophical understanding of writing:

> Philosophical scaffolding is always in place when academic construction is being done, even if scholars are not aware of it: always an epistemology is assumed, always some ontology is taken for granted, always some view of the human person is in mind. . . . Many contemporary scholars seem blissfully unaware of philosophy behind their own work.[10]

Because of philosophy's influence on composition and rhetoric, composition instructors must ask questions about how writing is a part of the created order:

1. What is a philosophy of writing?[11]

2. What are the important issues in composition and rhetoric research?

3. How does writing fit into the created order?

4. What are God's purposes for writing?

5. What is the purpose for freshman composition at Christian colleges and institutions?

6. How should Christians engage their culture through writing and in what kind of culture will students be engaging?

7. What genres of writing should be taught at universities?

These questions crystalize necessary philosophical issues easily overlooked among Christian composition faculty. The biblical revelation of God's created order deeply affects writing and teaching writing despite philosophical denials of that order. For example,

> Nietzsche held that, in the absence of a Creator, it was up to human beings to impose meaning and order on the world: 'Ultimately, man finds in things nothing but what he himself has imported to them.' Truth is no longer the deliverance of the priest who handles revelation, nor of the teacher who has mastered reason; truth is

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[10] Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 216. George Guthrie writes, *"*Whether a person approaches research as a pragmatist, hedonist, naturalist, behaviorist, Marxist, Christian, or one with no readily identifiable worldview, presuppositions are in place and have a profound effect on the way one thinks about research and conclusions." George H. Guthrie, "The Authority of Scripture," in *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundation of Christian Higher Education*, ed. David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 21.

[11] Bartholomew and Goheen give examples of other types of philosophies, like a "philosophy . . . [of] health care" or a "philosophy of sport," so a philosophy of writing is entirely reasonable. Bartholomew and Goheen, *Christian Philosophy*, 9-10.

rather the creation of the artist. The world is a picnic to which the interpreter brings the meaning. Language is the means humans use creatively to colonize a meaningless world. Words do not refer to the world so much as remake it, masking the absurdity of life with the rouge of rhetoric.[12]

Christian writers' agenda is not masking absurdity but unmasking truth.[13]

The Created Order: Antidote for Deconstructionism

Writing pedagogues have a responsibility to develop their students as positive cultural contributors in a society rife with worldviews antithetical to Christianity.[14] In these contemporary worldviews, anyone's interpretation of a text, anyone's interpretation of what is good, true, or beautiful is as valid as anyone else's. Philosophers like Derrida question "Who . . . is in a position to know what humanity means or which human qualities should be cultivated? Why watch Shakespeare rather than TV sitcoms, or read Milton rather than Marvel comics? Why poetry rather than pornography?"[15] Vanhoozer concludes,

> Decisions about meaning, about how to interpret a text, are inextricable from questions about what it is to be human. The face of hermeneutics and humanity alike stand or fall together. As the authors of *The Meaning of Meaning* articulate, language is "the most important of all the instruments of civilization." If there is nothing in what we say to one another, however, we lose the primary means for cultivating humanity.[16]

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[12] Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 21.

[13] Johnson and Pennington say,

Holy Scripture presents itself as revelatory divine wisdom that provides the foundational *metaphysical view* of the universe physically, socially, and anthropologically. We call this a metaphysic because it is more than a description of the physical cosmos and its functioning (*physics*), but is an understanding of the fundamental forces by which *all* things are held together and occur, whether social, political, physical, psychological, and relational. (Johnson and Pennington, "Role of the Bible as Wisdom," 5-6)

[14] Bartholomew writes, "When we are thinking about Christian scholarship, we are not . . . thinking about scholarship done only for the Christian community, although that clearly has its place, but of scholarship that genuinely contributes to the commons." Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 469.

[15] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 22.

[16] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 22.

Communication—how people communicate, what people communicate, to whom people communicate, and for what purpose people communicate are all God's indelible thumbprints of divine order. Writing pedagogues have the potential to impact generations of writers and readers, especially when they teach from a philosophical premise that writing is a vital instrument in cultivating a flourishing society.

Created Order: Birth of Student Formation

The second way the created order intersects with writing pedagogy is in student development.[17] Writing pedagogy is an education plan, and education is not *information* as much as it is *formation*:

> Christian education has absorbed a philosophical anthropology that sees human persons as primarily thinking things. The result has been an understanding of education largely in terms of *in*formation rather than formation; more specifically, the end of Christian education has been seen to be the dissemination and communication of Christian *ideas* rather than the formation of a peculiar people.[18]

A Christian writing pedagogy must start with Scripture and end with the goal to use writing "to influence people to grow in holiness and passionately promote the extension of God's kingdom on the world."[19]

Roy B. Zuck, former professor of Bible exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary and editor of *Bibliotheca Sacra,* says, "Evangelical Christian education is the Christ-centered, Bible-based, pupil-related process of communicating God's written Word through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of leading pupils to Christ

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[17] Stephen Fowl writes, "While Paul's demand to take every thought captive to Christ is incumbent on all Christians, the ecclesially based university provides a distinct context within which Christians can be introduced to the habits, practices, and dispositions that will enable them to think Christianly across the entire spectrum of knowledge. There is no aspect of knowing that Christians can rule out of bounds." Stephen Fowl, "The Role of Scripture in an Ecclesially Based University," in *Conflicting Allegiances: The Church-Based University in a Liberal Democratic Society*, ed. Michael Budde and John Wesley Wright (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004), 172.

[18] James K. A. Smith, "Beyond Integration: Re-Narrating Christian Scholarship in Postmodernity," in *Beyond Integration*, ed. Todd C. Ream, Jerry Pattengale, and David L. Riggs (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University, 2012), 20.

[19] Don N. Howell Jr., *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 3.

and building them up in Christ."[20] William (Rick) Yount adds that educators are

disciplers of their students.[21] Christian teachers are *transformers* of students rather than

just *transmitters* of information.[22]

Thus far, the developing writing pedagogy has followed this progression:

1. rooted in the Scripture,

2. developed in biblical theology,

3. embedded in the metanarrative worldview of the gospel, and

4. activated in a philosophy that fosters a flourishing society and student formation through the created order.

Metadiscipline No. 2: Theology

Theology[23] is philosophy's twin branch connecting the trunk of worldview to

the offshoots of the disciplines in Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge (figure 9).[24]

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[20] Roy Zuck, *Spiritual Power in Your Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 9.

[21] William R. Yount, *Created to Learn: A Christian Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 5-31. Yount uses the term "discipler" to emphasize Christian teachers are transformers of students, not just transmitters of information.

[22] Yount, *Created to Learn*, 15.

[23] Bartholomew uses the term "theology" in his tree, he describes "theology" on the metadiscipline branch to be "understood in terms of the *theological encyclopedia*, which includes biblical studies as well as church history, systematic theology, practical theology, missiology, theological ethics, and so forth. A model has its limits, and it is possible that theology should also be positioned in the foliage of the tree!" Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 476. Thank you to Vanhoozer for his comments on doctrine here:

> I see doctrine as direction for discipleship. Doctrines tell us how things are (who God is; what God has done; what the new reality is "in Christ") and urge us to live lives that conform to this (new) reality. . . . [In] my *Faith Speaking Understanding* . . . I claim that "persons are answerable agents in covenant relation with others." You can see how composition fits in well with this definition of what it is to be a person. (Vanhoozer, notes)

[24] Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 476.

Tree of Knowledge

History · Physics · Chemistry · Computer Science · Performing Arts · Psychology · Economics · Mathematics · Christian Philosophy · Theology · Political Science · Literature

A Christian Worldview

Biblical Theology

Scripture

Faith = Direction of the heart toward either the true God or an idol
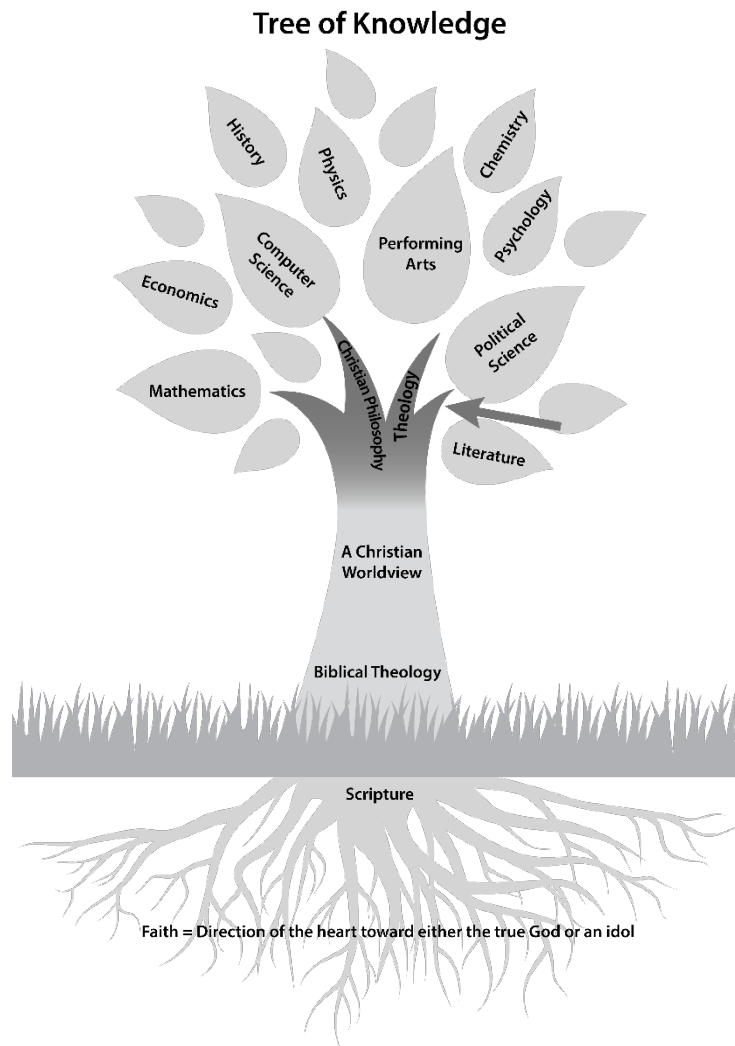
Figure 9. The Tree of Knowledge: Theology

As noted earlier, writing curricula that lack a philosophy rooted in the metanarrative of the gospel exposes freshmen writers and teachers to the fluctuations of current cultural pedagogical paradigms. Likewise, a writing curriculum absent of doctrinal support snaps under cultural pressure. An effective writing pedagogy must germinate from applicable doctrine. Vanhoozer defines doctrine as "direction for discipleship. Doctrines tell us how things are (who God is; what God has done; what the new reality is 'in Christ') and urge us to live lives that conform to this (new) reality."[25]

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[25] Kevin Vanhoozer, notes from dissertation review, May 2017.

Rebuilding the Composition Field:
Applicable Doctrines

Leland Ryken, professor emeritus at Wheaton College, says at least seven doctrines inform Christian thinking and teaching about literature:

1. the doctrine of Scripture

2. the doctrine of creation

3. the doctrine of *imago Dei*

4. the doctrine of the fall

5. the doctrine of incarnation

6. the doctrine of redemption

7. the doctrine of common grace[26]

Since literature is the epitome of writing, the doctrines useful in building a theology of literature are effective in building a theology of writing as well.

Doctrine 1: Scripture

"The doctrine of Scripture . . . forms the groundwork for our thinking about how to integrate literature with the Christian faith" because "the Bible is the official repository of doctrines that apply to literature and its study."[27] As Ryken considers the Bible "the primary text for my work as a literary scholar,"[28] so scholars teaching the production of writing should view the written Word as their primary text: "By being a literary book, the Bible affirms not simply the legitimacy of literature . . . but the necessity of it,"[29] not simply the legitimacy of writing, but the necessity of it.

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[26] Leland Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship: Toward a New Paradigm" (paper presented at Radical Christian Scholarship Conference, Houston, February 22-24, 2017).

[27] Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship," 5.

[28] Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship," 5.

[29] Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship," 5.

Doctrine 2: Creation

Valuing Scripture as authoritative means valuing Scripture's assessment of God's creation and its order.[30]

> While man is certainly given dominion over the world in Genesis 1:26-30, he is given dominion over something that already *is*. He is not called to manipulate things into any shape he wishes. Rather, he is called to work with and shape and rule over something that is already structured in a certain way. . . . Thus, . . . human beings find themselves in relation to the rest of the created order, . . . a structure we must recognize and respect.[31]

Truths about writing exist; they are not manufactured by pedagogues, but uncovered: "When Christians . . . affirm that God is a *speaking* God who has created man as *knowing* creatures, there is powerful theological grounding for education. Christian writing teachers rest in the knowledge that literature and writing spring from the created order. God made man to communicate through words and writing."[32]

Ryken argues that a second implication of the doctrine of creation is that the created order is not only "functional and utilitarian" but also "beautiful and pleasurable." Writing that is good, true, and beautiful is writing that recognizes Christ's dominion over language: "The doctrine of creation legitimizes the concern of literature and the arts with beauty, form, and artistry, and the refreshment that they contribute to human life."[33] The careful and creative production of written words is a holy pursuit.

Doctrine 3: *Imago Dei*

The Creator made people in His image (Gen 1:26-27). Because He communicates through writing, people do too: "God's act of creating the world helps to

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[30] Brad Green, "Theological and Philosophical Foundations," in Dockery and Thornbury, *Shaping a Christian Worldview*, 4. Graeme Goldsworthy says, "God made every fact in the universe and he alone can interpret all things." Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1991), 56.

[31] Green, "Theological and Philosophical Foundations," 63.

[32] Bartholomew and Goheen, *Christian Philosophy*, 4. Goldsworthy says, "God made every fact in the universe and he alone can interpret all things." Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 56.

[33] Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship," 7.

explain why we are entranced by human creativity, and assures us that our reverence for it is warranted."[34]

The inner triangle of the Trinitarian theology of writing reflects the creator/subcreator relationship of communication.[35] In a writing classroom, students and faculty are image bearers in relationship with God, each other, and readers.[36] These multiple relationships in a writing classroom reflect the aspects of *imago Dei* described by Old Testament scholar Peter Gentry and systematic theologian Stephen Wellum. They write that the image of God in people has two features: (1) God created people for relationship with Him (a vertical relationship) and (2) God created people to be vicegerents, or servant-leaders, tending the garden of God's created order (horizontal relationships).[37] Students must be shown they write at the crossroads of these vertical and horizontal relationships.

Student recognition of *imago Dei* relationships begins with the writing faculty's viewing students through the whole metanarrative (creation, fall, redemption,

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[34] Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship," 7.

[35] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine, 1978), 71. The term "sub-creator" was coined by J. R. R. Tolkien. Vanhoozer says, "God is in himself essentially a communicative agent. . . . I would say that humans created in the image of God have, to adapt Pascal, 'the dignity of communicative causality' or, in a word, 'the dignity of composition' (Pascal's original phrase is 'the dignity of causality'). The idea is that, like God, humans have the privilege of being sub-composers and sub-authors, communicative agents 'like' God." Vanhoozer, notes.

[36] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 443. *Imago Dei* means people were crafted in God's image, "to be like" God and "to represent" God.

[37] Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 200. A further explanation is offered in Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 69-92. Gen 1:26 "defines a divine-human relationship with two dimensions, one vertical and one horizontal. . . . The relationship between humans and God is best captured by the term 'sonship.' The relationship between humans and creation may be expressed by the terms 'kingship' and 'servanthood,' or better, 'servant kinship.'" Gentry and Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants*, 83.

consummation), seeing students as they were meant to be, as they are, as they are becoming, and as they will be.[38] The stewardship for the writing instructor is immense.

The doctrine of *imago Dei* also changes how many faculty view themselves. Since writing faculty recognize that writing has changed the history of the world and played an integral part in preserving and passing on the Christian faith, they need to value what they do: "God is unfolding the great Story, and he has invited us to take our places in that story."[39] Writing instructors are not dungeon dwellers in academia's ivory tower, but white knights forging a sword, a weapon of mass glory. The teaching of writing is a sacred task. Writing teachers stand among the cloud of witnesses with Basil the Great, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Edwards, John Owen, Spurgeon, Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, and others passing down scriptural truth through written words.[40]

Doctrine 4: Fall

Neither students nor faculty are as creative, as smart, or as good as God designed them to be. Although people bear God's image, the image is blurry.[41] Any writing instructor grading student papers has abundant evidence of the fall. Comma

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[38] David Heywood warns, "A theology that ignores creation and begins with an image of people as sinners in need of grace rather than as created human beings having a common human nature is clearly inadequate not simply for Christian education but as theology." David Heywood, *Divine Revelation and Learning: A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004), 170.

[39] Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve King, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 17.

[40] In a Christian freshman composition course, the capstone goal is for students to embrace a vision for becoming stellar Christian writers for the kingdom and to be working toward that goal. Planting a kingdom vision for writing in students' hearts is essential to Christian schools' mission. The church is passed on to the next generation by leaders who write, says president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, R. Albert Mohler: "Leaders write because words matter and the written word matters longer and reaches farther than the words we speak." R. Albert Mohler Jr., *The Conviction to Lead* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany, 2002), 172.

[41] Theologian Millard Erickson writes, "Every single human being, no matter how much the image of God is marred by sin, or illness, or weakness, or age, or any other disability, still has the *status* of being in God's image and therefore must be treated with the dignity and respect that is due to God's image-bearer." Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 473.

splices, dangling modifiers, and unclear sentences egregiously show the fallenness of humanity and its inability to communicate well.

The fall twisted good into evil: "The fall into sin opened up the catastrophic possibility of humans *misdirecting* God's good order for creation."[42] For example, humans have the God-given ability to write novels, plays, film scripts, nonfiction books, and love letters, contributing to humans' delight and human flourishing. But writing can also misdirect God's order in language and be pornographic, "legislate the death camps and chronicle the torture chamber," establish corrupt governments, legalize slavery, and promote other evils. [43] In the Christian freshman composition class, "genuine Christian education must recognize sin's impact on the noetic faculties [the mind knowing] and provide a context in which the student is encouraged to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29)."[44]

Doctrine 5: The Incarnation
of Jesus Christ

As Ryken notes, Jesus's incarnation gives value to human experience.[45] Literature "incarnates its meaning and ideas in the concrete form of images, stories, and visions. C. S. Lewis wrote that literature 'is a little incarnation, giving body to what had been before invisible and inaudible.'"[46] Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh, so "we can believe that our words can be meaningful because they are ultimately rooted in the reality of Christ himself, the eternal and divine Word."[47] Students can learn to treasure being word stewards—guardians, curators, keepers of words.

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[42] Bartholomew and Goheen, *Christian Philosophy*, 4.

[43] George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991), 59.

[44] Green, "Theological and Philosophical Foundations," 67.

[45] Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship," 11.

[46] Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship," 11.

[47] Green, "Theological and Philosophical Foundations," 84.

Doctrine 6: Redemption

The doctrine of incarnation shows the validity of writing; the doctrine of redemption shows the purpose of writing this side of the fall. Ryken reveals writing mired in fallenness loses its redemptive potential:

> I have often received the impression when reading Christian literary theory that in following the alleged pattern of Jesus, I am expected to accept and affirm all of the depravity that a realistic writer puts into a work of literature. My reply to this line of thought is that Jesus did not come to earth only to *immerse* himself in human experience but also to *judge*, *reform*, and *redeem* it. Jesus rejected as well as affirmed earthly life. If Jesus came down to earth, he also ascended above it. If Jesus accepted life in the earthly order, he also transcended it, along the lines of the command in Colossians 2:3 to "set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."[48]

Christian students must understand what sets their writing apart from their secular peers' is the crescendo of the cross, the force of nails piercing through fallenness into the redemption won by Christ's blood.

Doctrine 7: Common Grace

The three waves of writing pedagogy (current-traditional, expressivism, and constructionalism) mentioned in chapter 4 exemplify common grace. The three theories are tributaries flowing from non-Christian worldview sources, but each unwittingly spotlights scriptural issues, each unintentionally highlights a Christian truth.[49]

Current-traditionalism. The current-traditional approach emphasizes logic, precision, and appreciation for rules and forms. Concepts like logos, critical and creative thinking, clarity and coherence, and punctuation as a set of rules all reflect the truth that writing is intended to send specific, clear messages. To create a polished product, clear

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[48] Ryken, "Christian Literary Scholarship," 11, bold in original.

[49] Augustine used Exod 3:21-22 and 12:35-36 to compare the Israelites' plundering the Egyptians' wealth to Christians plundering secularists' ideas and using them. Augustine said that if secular thinkers "have said anything that is true and in harmony with our faith, we are not only not to shrink from it, but to claim it for our own use" (book 2, chap. 40). (Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. J. F. Shaw (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2009), 75-76.

thinking is required. Current traditionalism thus inadvertently reflects the writer corner of the inside triangle in figure 10.

Agent
(Father/Author)

Writer

Text   Reader

Action   Result
(God's Word/Text)   (Spirit/Power of Reception)
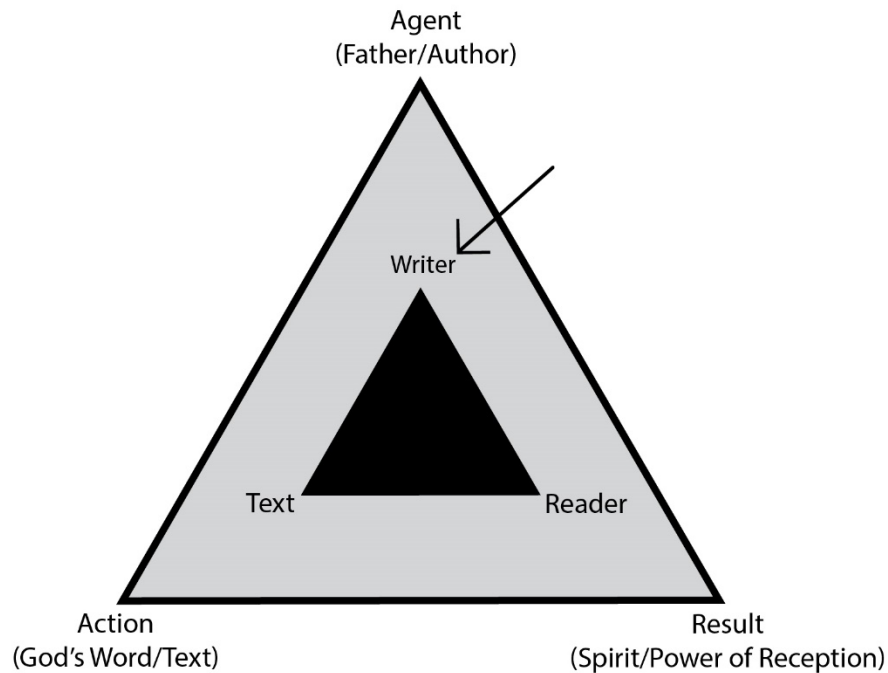
Figure 10: The writer and agent corners correspond

Expressivism. Expressivism celebrates each person's story as significant. It also spotlights the writing process, and punctuation becomes an art form rather than canonical law. The way a message is delivered—through story, through process—takes center stage.[50] Expressivism's fuzzy-hearted "Tell me your story" is general revelation about story and process. Thus, expressivism rests in illocution (figure 11).

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[50] Donald Murray, "The Interior View: One Writer's Philosophy of Composition," *College Composition and Communication* 21, no. 1 (February 1970): 23-25.
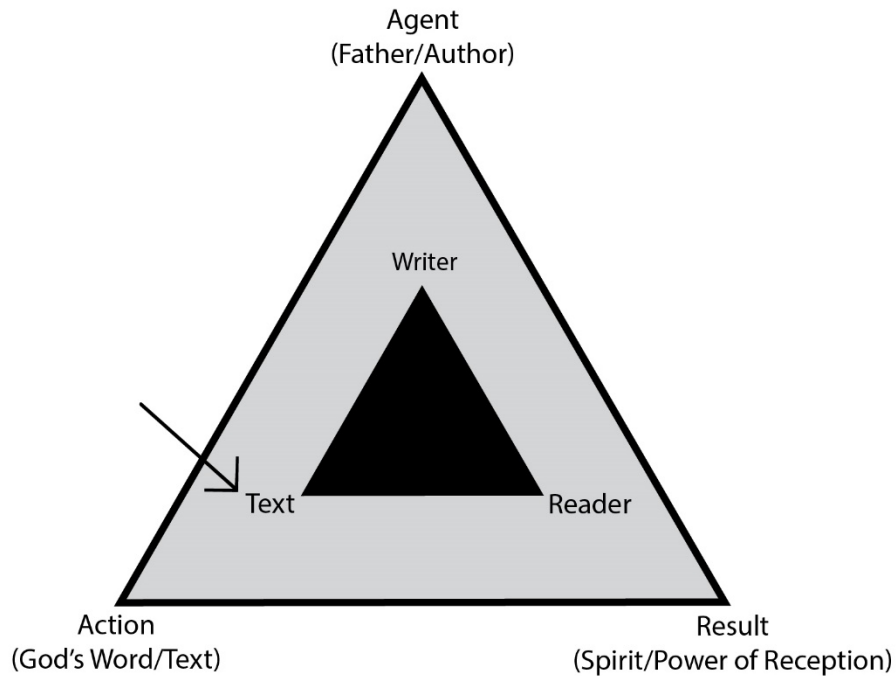
Figure 11. The message and action corners correspond

Social constructionism. Current traditionalism is logos-centered, corresponding to the top corner, "agent" and "author." Expressivism is ethos-centric, corresponding to the left corner, "action" and "God's Word." Social constructionism leans toward pathos. Social constructionism and radical constructivism are antagonists of the gospel; truth is rejected as people create their own reality. Yet, the biblical shadows of community and the value of minorities fall on social constructionism. Common grace reveals through social constructionism that community matters. Christians treasure community and see themselves throughout the ages as a community, a "relay team."[51] Thus, the writer-reader relationship corresponds to the "result," "Power of Reception," far-right corner (figure 12).

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[51] Gerald Sittser's term in *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007).

Agent
(Father/Author)

Writer

Text   Reader

Action   Result
(God's Word/Text)   (Spirit/Power of Reception)
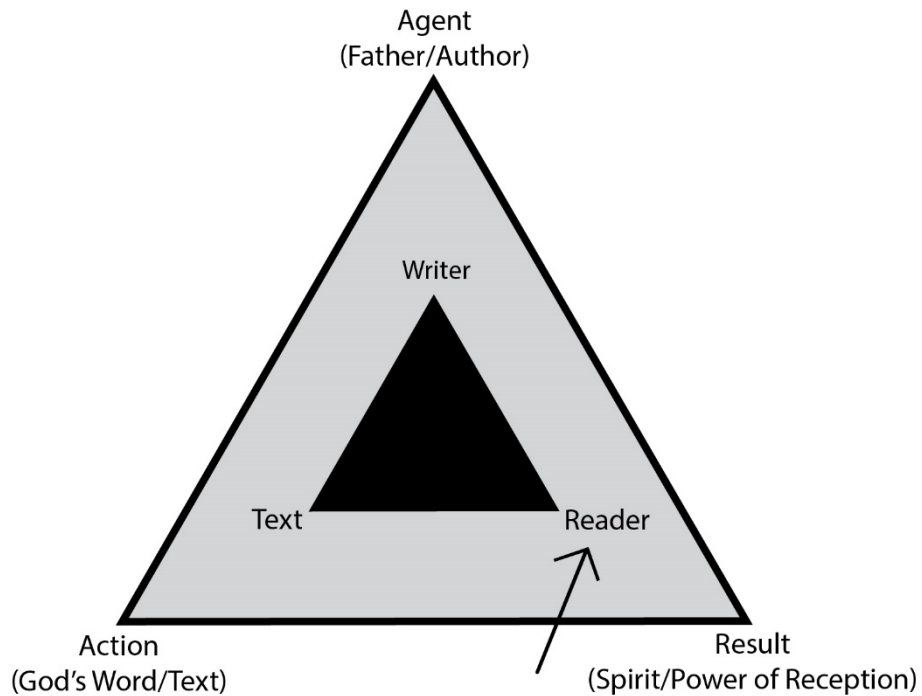
Figure 12. The reader and result corners correspond

The doctrine of common grace is like a back-up camera revealing blind spots of Christian writing faculty. Christians "who exhibit authentic commitment are [not] thereby guaranteed of arriving at a wholly satisfactory body of theories."[52] Christian composition scholars need to be aware of other scholars' work in the field: "In many, many subjects, non-Christians are brighter and more insightful than most Christians. With Augustine, Christian scholarship recognizes all truth is God's truth and remains open to learning from any and all. What cannot be conceded, however, is the starting point in Christ."[53]

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[52] Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 98-99.

[53] Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 471.

The battlefield of the fight for academic freedom is strewn with casualties: Harvard,[54] Yale, Dartmouth, Princeton, William and Mary, Howard, the University of Chicago, unburied corpses of schools founded to educate Christians, instead taken prisoner by secular philosophies and the allure of humanist theories. Ignoring doctrinal fidelity on the macro level destroys institutions. Ignoring doctrinal fidelity on the micro level of a freshman composition class destroys vision and training for Christian writers. "It's not enough that we do our best; sometimes we have to do what's required."[55]

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[54] Mohler writes, "Harvard's founding statement, known most commonly as 'New England's First Fruits' (1640): *'[What] we longed for and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present ministers shall lie in the dust.'"* R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Harvard University's Founding Vision and Mission—A Timely Reminder," February 22, 2006, http://www.albertmohler.com/2006 /02/22/harvard-universitys-founding-vision-and-mission-a-timely-reminder/, emphasis original.

[55] Winston Churchill, 1930 speech to the House of Commons, in *The Forbes Book of Business Quotations: 10,000 Thoughts on the Business of Life*, ed. Ted Goodman (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 2007), 168.

CHAPTER 10

TREE OF KNOWLEDGE: MOVING UP INTO
THE BRANCH OF COMPOSITION

The battle against the freshman composition hydra will not won by scratching the class from the college catalog and turning writing instruction over to professors in other departments: "Wars are not won by evacuation."[1] A successful campaign against the hydra requires a *Macbeth*ean twist: Craig Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge needs to march into the English department.

As depicted by figure 13, the branch of composition has equal importance to literature, history, psychology, and all others.[2] The marching orders emanate not only from composition's own educational merits, but more importantly to the Christian educator, from the interconnectedness to the other disciplines within the substructure of the Trinity.[3]

How does the Trinitarian foundation of the writing model for freshman composition become pedagogy in action?

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[1] "Dunkirk," Winston Churchill.org, accessed July 12, 2017, https://www.winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/war-leader/dunkirk.

[2] In act 4, scene 1 of *Macbeth*, the three witches summon an apparition who prophesizes that Macbeth will be safe until Birnam Woods moves to Dunsinane Hill. In act 5, Malcolm's army cuts down branches from the trees in Birnam Woods to disguise the army's size as it marches to attack Macbeth's castle. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, in *The Globe Illustrated Shakespeare: The Complete Works Annotated,* ed. Howard Staunton (New York: Gramercy, 2002), 2028.

[3] Craig Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge does not include a specific branch designated "composition," but the implication of the tree is that all disciplines have a branch. Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 475.

Tree of Knowledge

History · Physics · Chemistry

Economics · Computer Science · Performing Arts · Psychology

Mathematics · Christian Philosophy · Theology · Political Science · Composition

Literature

A Christian Worldview

Biblical Theology

Scripture

Faith = Direction of the heart toward either the true God or an idol
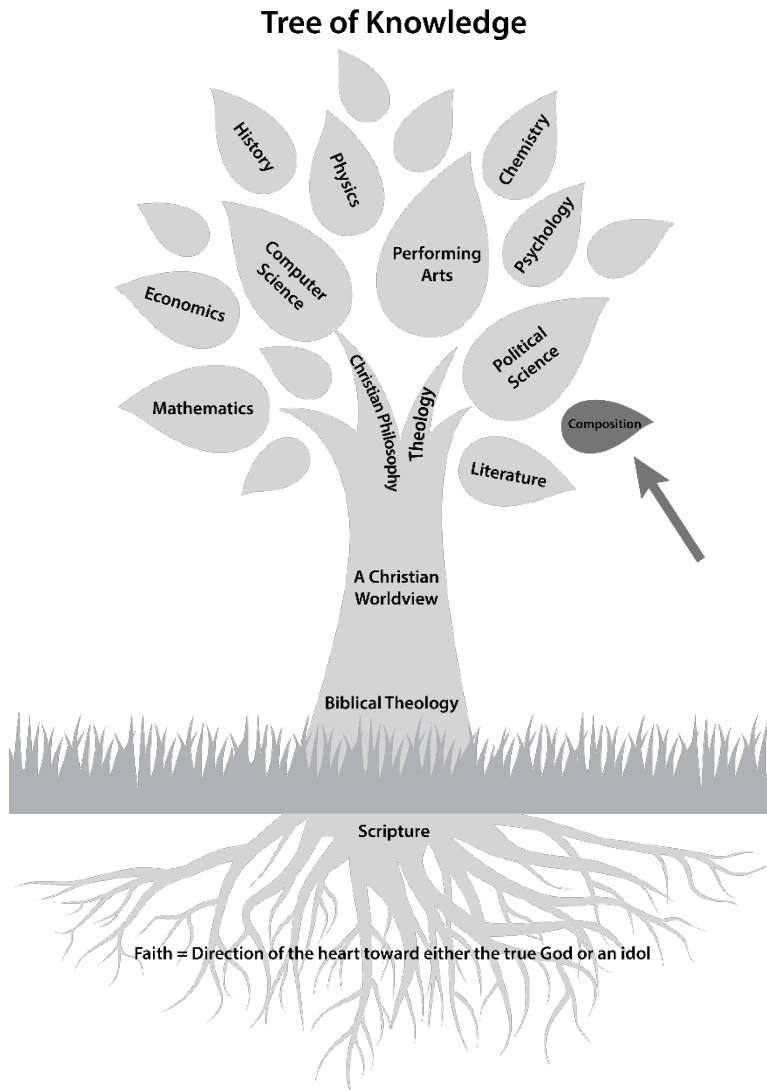
Figure 13. Craig Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge: Composition

Inside the writer-text-reader triangle of the writing model is a triquetra, the Irish Trinity Knot. This triquetra functions like a triple Venn diagram, where three sets of ideas intersect: (1) the gospel, (2) story, and (3) relationship. As these three ideas converge, a synergy bursts forth—*a nexus dance,* creating a distinct place and stance from which only Christians can write.
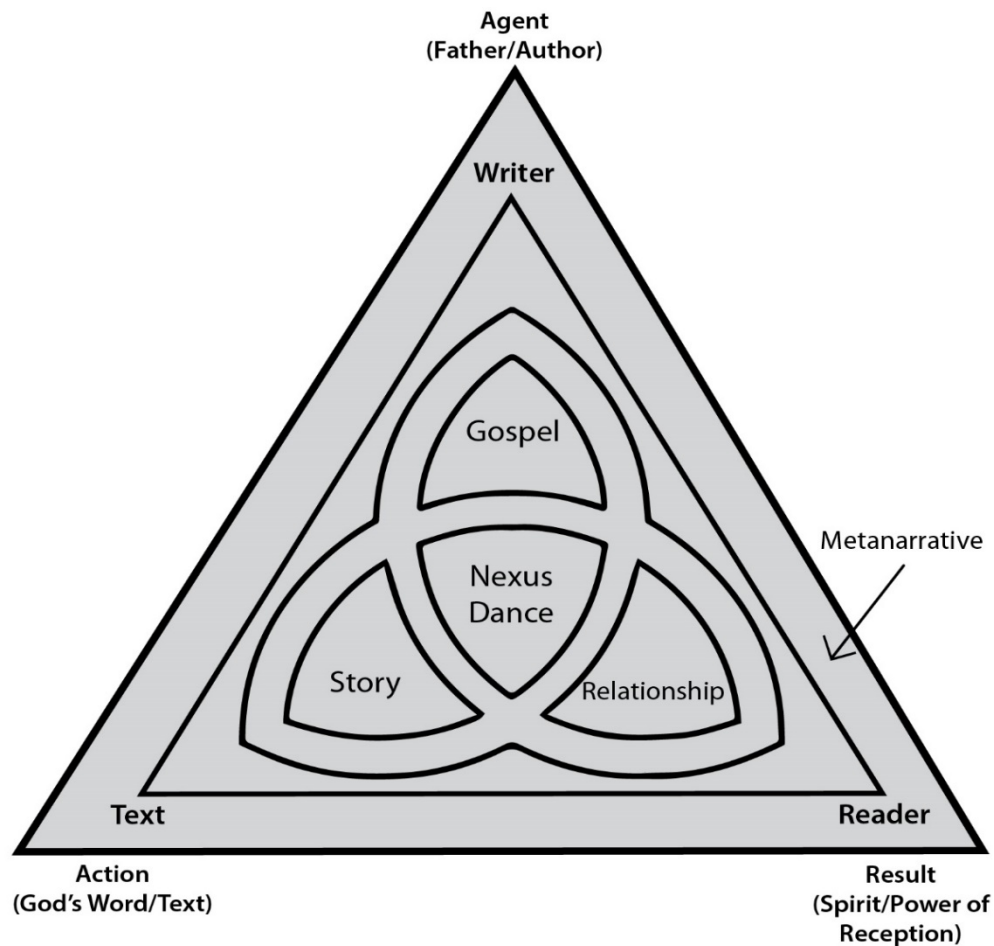
Figure 14: The Christian writer's triquetra: The nexus dance

The nexus dance of the Christian writer springs into action by the reverberating soundwaves of Trinitarian delight. In the outer triangle (shown in figure 14), the Trinity enjoys

> a communion of three communicants; the eternal delight of the dialogical dance. . . . What was God doing before creation? Communicating light, life, and love between Father, Son, and Spirit. . . . Jesus' appearance in history was neither a surprise nor a contingency measure but the result of a joyful collaboration conceived in eternity between the Father and the Son. That the most important intra-Trinitarian work is the so-called plan of salvation, in which a mediator is appointed to make common or share God's life with that which is not God. . . . The gospel . . . is the execution in time of God's eternal self-determination to communicate his light and life to what is not God: the human creature whom the Father elects in the Son (Eph 1:4-5).[4]

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[4] Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), 258-59. A Trinitarian structure has been applied to Christian

Christian writers, made in God's image, have been embraced by the Father through the

Son in the Holy Spirit to join that dance. The believing writer's response to this God-led

dance?[5] Worship.

> As we worship God, just how close are we to Him? The work of the Trinity helps us realize that we stand exceedingly near. The Spirit has sealed in believers not a side-by-side tethering to Christ but an interwoven union in Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). Believers don't worship at a distance, far removed from the Godhead. To the contrary, we find ourselves, in Christ, right in the middle of the Trinitarian Persons' mutual delight and self-giving. . . . Our union with Christ through the Spirit helps us make sense of Peter's statement of our shockingly close proximity to God: "He has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4).[6]

Because of the Trinity, written messages emerge from the writer's gospel-governed life

(Phil 1:27),[7] through the vehicle of story, powered by the engine of eternally significant

relationships: The great calling of the Christian writing instructor then is electrifying

student understanding of communication with the pulsating power of the Trinitarian

relationship.[8]

> Authors are agents of communicative activity who do various things by means of spoken and written discourse. To communicate (Lat. *communicare*) is to "share" or "make common." In the discipline of communications studies, the emphasis is often on sharing or transferring information only. . . . God uses words to create worlds, convey truth, console the poor and suffering, reconcile sinners, and judge justly. God is God in large part because his communicative capacity far outstrips that of humans. In particular, God has the ability to "communicate" his own life to others,

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education previously by others, including Robert Pazmiño: "My idea of an educational trinity [content, persons, and context] affirms a rootedness in divine trinitarian life with a corresponding concern for orthodoxy in educational thought." Robert W. Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 12. For a full discussion of his application of Trinitarian structure to Christian education, see Robert W. Pazmiño, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002).

[5] As noted in chap. 6, the term *dance* is used as imagery, not as a model or metaphor.

[6] Zac Hicks, "The Worship Leader and the Trinity," in *Doxology and Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader*, ed. Matt Boswell (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 64-65.

[7] "Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel" (HCSB).

[8] Vanhoozer writes, "God in himself . . . enjoys never-ending, fully realized interpersonal communication: communion." Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 244.

through Word and Spirit, thereby establishing communion and fulfilling his word to Israel: "I will be your God and you will be my people."[9]

When people write, they reflect (although imperfectly) the Trinity's communication. The Father has a message to share (Gen 1:27); likewise, the human writer has an intended message to share with the reader. In any discipline at a Christian institution, spiritually-rooted discourse (oral or written) is a relational "activity" that has the ultimate potential of fostering awareness of, and cooperation with, the triune God. In developing a writing model that births this kind of significant discourse, a trio of concepts pulsates the heart of the model. At the intersection of (1) gospel, (2) story, and (3) relationship lies the nexus dance, where specific writing methodologies meet under Trinitarian grace.
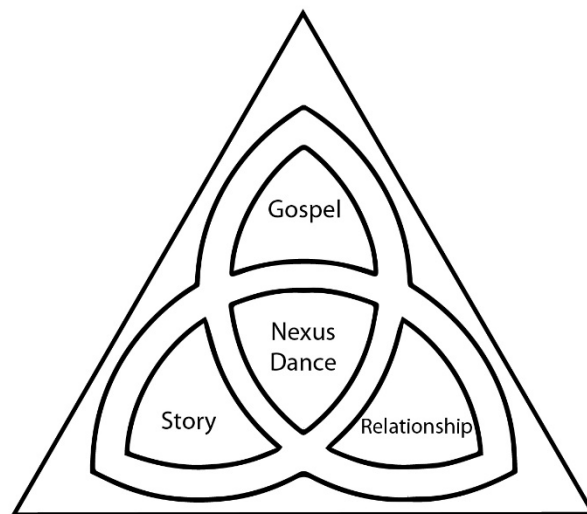
Figure 15. The writing model's triquetra

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[9] Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 206-7.

CHAPTER 11

THE WRITING MODEL'S TRIQUETRA: THE GOSPEL

Scripture is the life-giving sap throughout the Tree of Knowledge, continually nourishing the trunk of worldview, the twin branches of philosophy and theology, and all the leaves of academic disciplines; therefore, the aortic artery of the triquetra is the gospel.[1] In this way, Scripture does not stagnate at the roots of the Tree of Knowledge, but courses into students' lives, galvanizing their desire to articulate messages consistent with scriptural truth. The gospel section in the triquetra refers to a writer's intentional desire to articulate a message grounded in, or consistent with, the truths of Scripture, a message backed by the Christian writer's life (Phil 1:9-11, 27).[2] Emphasizing the inseparable link between living in harmony with biblical truths and the effectiveness of writing is typically ignored when faculty teach the writing process,[3] but this should not be the case at Christian colleges and universities. Writing faculty can use freshman composition to encourage godly living as the atmosphere in which effective, eternally significant writing takes place. Teaching the writing process becomes a means of reinforcing students' understanding of "who God is, what God has done, and what the new reality of their being 'in Christ' means," motivating them to live lives conforming to

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[1] Bartholomew and Goheen, *Christian Philosophy*, 21-22.

[2] Christian writers seek to live their lives (as well as write) in accordance with doctrine, the "synthesis of Christian teaching" and "generally refers to the accepted body of beliefs held by the Christian church." Tremper Longman III, ed., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), s. v. "doctrine." Albert Mohler adds, "Specifically, doctrine refers to Christian teaching and most specifically to Christian teaching about God, the gospel, and the comprehensive pattern of Christian truth. The word itself means 'teaching' and generally refers to the accepted body of beliefs held by the Christian church." R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Doctrine," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand (Nashville: Holman, 2015), 435.

[3] Mary Elizabeth Lawrence Breland, "The State of Writing Instruction in Southern Baptist Colleges and Universities" (PhD diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2006), 118.

that reality.[4] The potential for impact through the effective writing of young men and women dedicated to Christ is immeasurable because the doctrinal truths upon which their writing rests are "wildly untamable, explosively uncontainable, and electrically future-creating realities."[5] As a result of writing from a Trinitarian understanding, students explore how to extend that Trinitarian community through writing.

Freshman composition can be more than a service course to prepare students to write academically. Christian colleges offer

> what everybody else is desperate to have: a way of talking about and educating the human person in a way that integrates faith, emotion, and intellect. You have a recipe to nurture human beings who have a devoted heart, a courageous mind and a purposeful soul. Almost no other set of institutions in American society has that, and everyone wants it.[6]

Students can learn to transmit truth in the light of the Trinity and enable others to see their place in the grand story of the metanarrative, moving from "tension to resolution, from ambiguity to clarity, from what seems to be to what is, from guilt to grace, from death to life."[7] Doctrine must come alive as a tool for *discipleship*, as a path for pursuing

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[4] *Doctrine*, as defined by Kevin Vanhoozer, "is who God is, what God has done, and what the new reality is 'in Christ.' Doctrine urges us to live lives that conform to this (new) reality." Kevin Vanhoozer, notes from thesis review, May 2017. Parker Palmer defines teaching as "create[ing] a space in which obedience to truth is practiced." Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), xi-xii. What definitions of Christian learning have in common is the emphasis on the gaining knowledge resulting in obedience to Christ. As Gary Parrett and Steve Kang write, "Knowledge is never the goal in and of itself, not even knowledge of the Truth. Obedience to that Truth is required." Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 270.

[5] John Piper, *Doctrine Matters: Ten Theological Trademarks from a Lifetime of Preaching* (Minneapolis: Desiring God, 2013), 3.

[6] David Brooks, quoted in Dru Johnson and Jonathan Pennington, "The Role of the Bible as Wisdom for the Education of Individuals and Society" (paper presented at the Transdisciplinary Conference, Houston, February 23, 2017), 9.

[7] Fred B. Craddock, "Story, Narrative, and Metanarrative," in *What's the Shape of Narrative Preaching?*, ed. Mike Graves and David J. Schlafer (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008), 88. Christopher Beeley says, "The prayerful study of Scripture and our manner of life are of the utmost importance if people are going to listen to us and obey what we say," even when our audience rejects biblical truth. Christopher A. Beeley, *Leading God's People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 125.

God; thus, the first part of the writing model's triquetra is the gospel.[8]

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[8] R. Albert Mohler Jr., *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany, 2012), 39.

CHAPTER 12

THE WRITING MODEL'S TRIQUETRA: STORY

The second section of the triquetra is the *vehicle* upon which the gospel is transported in writing: story. Story is acutely necessary for student Christian writers to master because it is the root of all other genres; without understanding story (and the meta-story) as the context of all the modes of discourse, students miss the generating power of narrative through discourse. Story's structure provides the wings upon which the gospel flies to the minds and hearts of a student writer's audience: "Stories change the world."[1] This world-changing means of communication is universal and student writers' capacities are stunted if they do not have a clear understanding of its trans-temporal and transcultural nature. Story is also fundamentally relational as it connects people to other people, and ultimately, people to God. Narrative is vital in the pedagogical process of helping students develop more complex levels of discourse and mastery as they engage in other writing genres. As students comprehend and utilize the fundamental concepts of narrative, they can begin to harness its power.

The Power of Story

Story as a vehicle for gospel truths has a V-8 engine, powerful because all narratives connect to the driveshaft of the biblical meta-story: "The Bible is not just a book of stories. It reveals one grand narrative from beginning to end. Many Christian scholars now speak of the Bible's metanarrative—its all-encompassing story line. In the Bible, God has revealed the story that underlies every true story, and in which every other true story

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[1] N. T. Wright, *The Original Jesus: The Life and Vision of a Revolutionary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 36.

finds its meaning."[2] The metanarrative is a divinely drawn map of human history and serves as a "frame of reference" for the big picture.[3] The map reveals humanity's past, its present, its future, and most importantly, its purpose: "to glorify God by enjoying Him forever"[4] in a perfect relationship with Himself.[5] The metanarrative (creation, fall, redemption, consummation) is exposed in all sixty-six books of the Bible[6] and serves as the truthful and definitive storyline, not only of humanity, but of each individual human being. Every life derives its meaning from this metanarrative, and because it is the meta-story that matters, freshman composition faculty can teach their students to recognize their place in the metanarrative and live and write in the light of the truth it sheds: "We are not only stewards of stories; we are the stewards of *the* story,"[7] "the story of God's determination to glorify himself by saving sinners through the atonement accomplished by his own Son."[8] As all stories are derived from the metanarrative, freshman composition faculty should strive to help their students become writers who steward the story, the most powerful means writers have to connect their readers to God.[9]

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[2] Albert R. Mohler Jr., *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany, 2012), 40.

[3] Fred B. Craddock, "Story, Narrative, and Metanarrative," in *What's the Shape of Narrative Preaching?*, ed. Mike Graves and David J. Schlafer (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008), 90.

[4] John Piper, *Desiring God* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2011), 18.

[5] Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics, "Westminster Shorter Catechism," accessed December 10, 2015, http://www.reformed.org/documents/wsc/index.html?_top=http://www.reformed.org/documents/WSC.html.

[6] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 108.

[7] Mohler, *Conviction to Lead*, 40.

[8] Mohler, *Conviction to Lead*, 39.

[9] Robert Pazmiño says, "Christian education can be viewed as fostering the intersection of Christian story with both personal and communal stories. . . . The telling, retelling, and reshaping of faith stories with others provides a bond for Christian community across the generations." Robert W. Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 154.

Story's Structure

Part of mastering story is understanding its structure. The metanarrative sets the structure—the story arc—for all narratives: rising action, crisis, climax/resolution, and falling action, corresponding directly to the biblical metanarrative's creation (rising action), fall (crisis), redemption (climax-resolution), and consummation (falling action or dénouement).[10] All stories follow this same contour: "The reason people enjoy movies or novels is because of their recognizable shape. They lead the reader through . . . a plot with beginning, middle, and ending. At last, the reader is satisfied with a sense of final resolution, stated or implied."[11]

Every story is a tiny piece of the narrative arc of God's meta-story. Many current television shows illustrate this meta-story/mini-story alliance. Each episode includes its own narrative arc and can stand alone, yet each episode adds another piece to the frame story, just as Chaucer's individual tales contribute to the larger story of an eclectic group of travelers on a pilgrimage. Similarly, every plot has a place in the scheme of God's frame story, the metanarrative. As students see the fundamental nature of story and its indelible link to all writing, they will realize narrative is not simply a genre, but a foundational key in connecting their readers to the bigger story: "Narrative is a kind of back door into something very deep inside us."[12]

Story's Universality

Humans are "the keepers of stories. We cannot even tell each other who we are without telling a story, nor should we try."[13] In fact, the universal language of humanity is

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[10] Craddock, "Story, Narrative, and Metanarrative," 89.

[11] Craddock, "Story, Narrative, and Metanarrative," 89.

[12] Ira Glass, quoted in Jack Hart, *StoryCraft: The Complete Guide to Writing Narrative Nonfiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2011), 136. Ted Cheney adds that narrative "doesn't just report the facts—it delivers the facts in ways that move people toward a deeper understanding of the topic." Theodore A. Rees Cheney, *Writing Creative Nonfiction: Fiction Techniques for Crafting Great Nonfiction* (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed, 2001), 1.

[13] Mohler, *Conviction to Lead*, 37. Christian Smith concurs, offering a secular sociologist's perspective on narrative:

narrative.[14] "To be human one must have a story," attests Nigerian author and Brown University professor Chinua Achebe.[15] Story drives history, and every culture acknowledges this by embracing them. Something innately Christian gleams through story in both its structure and purpose: "The Big Story of the Bible . . . is so pervasive, so all-encompassing of our world, that we can't help but echo it . . . when we're telling other stories."[16]

Narrative is one of the most profound common denominators among all of humanity, crossing all races, cultures, beliefs: "We see our lives as a kind of narrative. Storytelling has such wide application because, at its root, it serves universal human needs. Story makes sense out of a confusing universe. . . . And it helps us discover the universals that bind us to everything around us."[17] Narrative is "an irreducible form of understanding,"[18] the atom of human existence. Therefore, Christian writers can reach an unbelieving culture through narrative because it is built into human DNA, but whether the tale is ancient, medieval, postmodern, or something else, the purpose for story is relationship.

But more than that, we not only continue to be animals who make stories but also animals who are *made by* our stories. . . . We, every bit as much as the most primitive or traditional of our ancestors, are animals who most fundamentally understand what reality is, who we are, and how we ought to live by locating ourselves within the larger narratives and metanarratives . . . that constitute what is for us real and significant. (Christian Smith, *Moral, Believing Animals* [Oxford: Oxford University, 2003], 64)

[14] Charles L. Rice, "A More-or-Less Historical Account of the Fairly Recent History of Narrative Preaching," in Graves and Schlafer, *What's the Shape of Narrative Preaching*, 8.

[15] Dana Gioia and R. S. Gwynn, *The Art of the Short Story: 52 Great Authors, Their Best Short Fiction, and Their Insights on Writing* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006), 3.

[16] Mike Cosper, *The Stories We Tell: How TV and Movies Long for and Echo the Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 13.

[17] Hart, *StoryCraft*, 5. Mark Stibbe adds, "A man's sense of identity seems largely determined by the kind of story which he understands himself to have been enacting through the events of his career, the story of his life." Mark W. G. Stibbe, *Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 52. See also Smith, *Moral, Believing Animals*, 67.

[18] Louis O. Mink, "Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument," in *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, ed. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1978), 132.

Story's Relationality

God transacts relationships through stories. God is a storytelling God, and people, made in His image, are storytellers.[19] Writing faculty have the joy and privilege of not only helping students find their place in the God-authored metanarrative but also in encouraging their students to connect others with God's story through their writing. The Gospel of John is held as the least narrative of the Gospels, a hybrid Gospel-epistle, and as a result, is an ideal example to which writing instructors can point their students. Additionally, the Gospel of John, the only explicitly evangelistic book in the Bible, uses the thread of story to unite people to God.

Story Connects People to God

The apostle employs the universal language of story to engage people with God, harnessing the power of narrative to illuminate the metanarrative. With painstaking intentionality, John records the various responses of the biblical audience to Jesus, providing a spectrum of belief in which every reader of the fourth Gospel may find himself mirrored. For instance, John gives multiple examples of people in the Gospel's story who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and were saved (John 20:31): Nathanael (1:49), the Samaritans (4:42); the blind man (9:33, 35-38); Martha (11:27); the disciples (16:30); and Thomas (20:24-29). N. T. Wright exclaims about the story of Mary anointing Jesus's feet (John 12:1-8), "It is one of those scenes which positively shouts at the reader, 'Where are *you* in this picture?'"[20] Each of John's *micro*narratives leads readers closer to believing in Jesus themselves.[21] "These [*stories*] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have

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[19] Cosper, *Stories We Tell*, 28.

[20] N. T. Wright, *John Is for Everyone, Part Two: Chapters 11-21* (London: Westminster John Knox), 23.

[21] Colin G. Kruse, *The Gospel according to John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 96-97. For more on the necessity of the New Testament's narratives, see Jonathan Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 36-49.

life in His name" (John 20:31). Stories herald the metanarrative, and writing pedagogues are training future heralds.

Writing Reaches Future Generations

Story is perennially current and consequently gives transcendence to writing. For example, John deploys story throughout his Gospel not only for people in the infant church but for all Christians downstream. Johannine scholar John Stibbe marvels at the apostle's ability in his Gospel to write simultaneously for present and future audiences and attributes John's success to his deft use of narrative:

> The story [John] creates out of his sources is one which manages to fuse the two horizons of the past history of Jesus and the present history of the community by exploiting the social function of narrative discourse. In achieving this, John configures time into a plot which succeeds in evoking the true significance of Jesus of Nazareth both for his own generation and the generations to come. This is, by any standards, a quite brilliant literary achievement.[22]

Like John, students may be writing for Christians to come (John 20:29),[23] affecting future generations.[24] Writing in light of the metanarrative makes writing relevant and relational regardless of context.

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The Story and Discourse Fountain

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Another power of the narrative technique is the ability to make invisible spiritual realities visible.[25] Just as people have physical and nonphysical components— body and spirit—likewise, good writing has a similar dichotomy: concrete concepts and

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[22] Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 199.

[23] Second Tim 2:1-2 says, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others well."

[24] As the psalmist pens, "This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD" (Ps 102:18).

[25] Craddock writes, "A story may function to bring home in concrete terms a point that, without the story, might be clear to the listener's mind, but theoretical or ideational." Craddock, "Story, Narrative, and Metanarrative," 87.

abstract ones. One narrative tactic is the "ladder of abstraction," the idea that everything can be placed on a rung of a ladder according to its level of abstractness.[26]

The top of the ladder is the realm of abstract ideas, like mercy, justification, and sanctification. The bottom of the ladder includes anything "taste-able, touchable, seeable, smell-able, hearable."[27] The bottom of the ladder "involves the senses. You can do things with it. Put it against a tree to rescue your cat VooDoo. The bottom of the ladder rests on concrete language. Concrete is hard, which is why when you fall off the ladder from a high place, you might break your foot. Your right foot. The one with the spider tattoo."[28] In order to grasp the higher rungs of abstruse thoughts, one must first step onto the bottom rungs of the known and obvious.

Ladder of Abstraction

When a paper towel is dipped into water, the water defies gravity by climbing up the paper towel. This gravity-mocking movement is called capillary action.[29] Like capillary action propels water molecules upwards, stories tug people from a concrete sidewalk to the heavenly realms. Story lives at the bottom of the ladder, but discourse rests upon its shoulders. Like a water fountain spraying water into the air, stories thrust readers' minds to the abstract heights of discourse they could not reach on their own. Meanwhile, discourse gracefully falls back to the lap of story to repeat the cycle. Writers

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[26] Roy Peter Clark describes the ladder of abstraction idea used by S. I. Hayakawa in his 1939 book, *Language in Action:* "The ladder has been adopted and adapted in hundreds of ways to help people ponder language and express meaning." Roy Peter Clark, *Writing Tools: 55 Essential Strategies for Every Writer*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Little, Brown, 2016), 107. See also Jack Hart, *A Writer's Coach: An Editor's Guide to Words That Work* (New York: Pantheon, 2006), 169-75.

[27] John Piper, "Expressing Truth" (commencement address, Bethlehem College and Seminary, Minneapolis, May 16, 2014), accessed May 1, 2015, https://thebethleheminstitute.org/index.php/news/item/expressing-truth.

[28] Clark, *Writing Tools*, 107.

[29] Capillary action is the force of cohesion (water molecules sticking together) and adhesion (water molecules sticking to the paper towel).

are not limited to story but use story to lead to discourse, while discourse leads back to story.
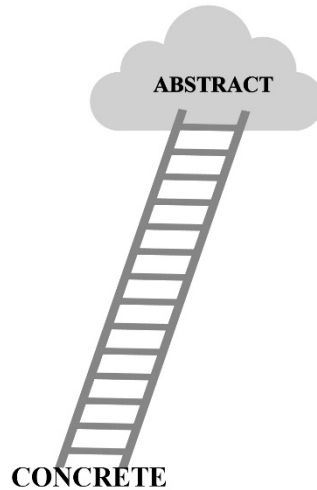
Figure 16. Ladder of abstraction

Biblical Use of the Ladder of Abstraction

John models for young writers the need for theology (abstract ideas) to be clothed in word pictures. Timothy Laniak writes,

> One of the marks of this Gospel is that the weightiest doctrines are often delivered in the simplest words. This could not get simpler—and it could not get weightier. The Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us, Jesus Christ, was and is God."[30] Jesus is God (abstract) coming to man (concrete) as man (concrete). In other words, "We need metaphors if we are to understand God.[31]

John recognizes that the ladder of abstraction must be climbed.[32] For example, in John's Gospel, Jesus uses water to help the Samaritan adulteress grasp the concept of

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[30] John Piper, "In the Beginning was the Word" (sermon at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, September 21, 2008), accessed November 4, 2015, http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/in-the-beginning-was-the-word.

[31] Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart* (Wheaton, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 35.

[32] Clark, *Writing Tools*, 107.

eternal life. Water unites the "two levels of meaning" in the story.[33] John uses the ladder of abstraction to show this story is both historically accurate and symbolic of a deeper truth.[34] This narrative device, concretizing the transcendent, is a writing tool composition students can employ effectively.

Anchoring language at the bottom of the ladder on the concrete, John empowers readers to embrace the reality of transcendent truth (John 1:14,18).[35] Through John's potent writing technique, Jesus forever gifted the church with portraits of Himself.[36] The incarnation is the epitome of God making the abstract tangible: "Christ is the visible image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15).[37] Student writers need to heed John Piper's advice: "Don't do an end run around concrete language on the way to the eternal. You won't get anybody with you."[38]

In the early centuries, the Gnostics (the "false prophets" of whom John warned against in his first epistle) widely circulated the false teaching that Jesus did not come or

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[33] Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 19.

[34] Kruse includes a section on R. Alan Culpepper's view that John should be read as literature, using narrative theory and literary criticism. While Kruse disagrees with Culpepper's rejection of the historicity of the Gospel, Kruse does agree that Culpepper's reading of the Gospel of John as a narrative is important: "Culpepper's approach helps today's readers to understand the narrative of the Fourth Gospel, and should be used along with other critical tools in the study of the Fourth Gospel. For Culpepper, however, truth is not dependent upon the historical reliability of the storyline. A novel can convey 'truth' even if it is fictional." Colin G. Kruse, *John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 37.

[35] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 35.

[36] Stibbe writes, "The fourth evangelist throughout the gospel connects concrete images with abstract meanings." Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 19. John uses seven "I am" metaphors to reify Jesus: "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35); "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12); "I am the door" (John 10:9); "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11); "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25); "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6); and "I am the true vine" (John 15:1). In each of the "I am" instances, John's writing technique solidifies doctrine in the minds and hearts of the young church with concrete language.

[37] Piper asks, "*Why did he [John] choose to call Jesus 'the Word'?* [John 1:1]. . . . Jesus himself—in his coming, and working, and teaching, and dying and rising—was *the final and decisive Message of God*. Or to put it more simply: *What God had to say to us was not only or mainly what Jesus said, but who Jesus was and what he did*. His words clarified himself and his work. But his self and his work were the main truth God was revealing." Piper, "In the Beginning Was the Word."

[38] Piper, "Expressing Truth."

die in the flesh. The great church father Athanasius (AD 325) and others turned to John's Gospel—replete with examples of the humanity of Christ—to refute the "antichristal" gnostic teachings.[39] So while the ladder of abstraction serves story for the purpose of opening people up to gospel, it also safeguards doctrine.

Story Embedded in Other Genres

Narrative's predominance in Scripture highlights its importance, but Scripture models many other genres also, and writing teachers will teach more than narrative.[40] Yet even non-narrative genres rely on narrative, making it not an isolated genre but a cross-genre. Poetry contains splashes of narrative; prophecy is full of narratives of what will happen; history is pure narrative; wisdom literature uses specific narrative examples as do the epistles; and the gospel genre is essentially biography, a narrative.[41]

Additionally, non-narrative genres in Scripture are undergirded by narrative, the metanarrative structure of Scripture: "Underneath all of these literary forms [of Scripture] is a storyline, beginning in creation and moving to the new creation, which unfolds God's redemptive plan."[42] For example, the lists of people in First Chronicles sounds the bell tolling of names, reminding God's people of His covenant with Abraham through many generations—in other words, a story. Likewise, Paul's letter to the Romans would be incomprehensible without the context of the creation and the fall—story. Just as the biblical metanarrative provides the corner and edge pieces of the scriptural puzzle, so too it provides the framework for all stories and discourse. Although not all writing

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[39] Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 210.

[40] Tom Nettles, personal interview, LaGrange, KY, February 2017.

[41] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 106. Köstenberger writes that the early church, not the Gospel writers, attached the genre designation of "gospels" onto the four Gospels. Scholars have argued about what genre "gospel" is a subgenre of: biography, folktale, memoir, comedy or tragedy, aretalogies, Jewish theodicy, or christological narratives; however, the common thread running through all these is narrative.

[42] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 31.

instruction methodologically centers on teaching students to write in the narrative mode, Christian composition pedagogues provide essential conceptual frameworks for young writers by exposing their students to the indispensable elements and power of story.[43]

The Triquetra: Overlap of Gospel and Story

The overlap between the first two sections of the triquetra shows how the gospel (the first section in the triquetra) is served by story (the triquetra's second section). While postmoderns reject metanarratives, postmodern culture is entranced with story.[44] People walking into Five Guys hamburger restaurants are greeted with blackboards announcing the backstory of the potatoes for the day's french fries. Trader Joe's grocery chain accompanies new items with the products' stories. Story pervades the culture. Thus, students are best equipped when writing faculty show students how story works

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[43] The only one who exists outside the metanarrative is God. Even so, Jesus enters the metanarrative in the form of a story. God is both the author of the metanarrative and its hero. The metanarrative is for Him, through Him, to Him (Rom 11:36). God is the locutor (for Him), Jesus is the illocution (through Him), and the Holy Spirit is the perlocutor, helping others respond and give glory to God (to Him).

[44] One example of postmodern culture's preference for story is the popularity of creative nonfiction. As Lee Gutkind writes,

> Creative nonfiction has become the most popular genre in the literary and publishing communities. These days the biggest publishers—HarperCollins, Random House, Norton, and others—are seeking creative nonfiction titles more vigorously than literary fiction and poetry. . . . Even small and academic (university) presses that previously would have published only books of regional interest, along with criticism and poetry, are actively seeking creative nonfiction titles. . . . In the academic community generally, creative nonfiction has become the popular way to write. . . . Creative nonfiction is the dominant form in publications like *The New Yorker*. . . . the front page of *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. (Lee Gutkind, "What Is Creative Nonfiction," Creative Nonfiction: True Stories, Well Told, accessed September 16, 2016, http://www.creativenonfiction.org/online-reading/what-creative-nonfiction)

Narrative nonfiction is also used in the Bible. For example, Johannine commentators recognize that John's narrative is not comprised of accurate chronology; rather, his narrative serves as the backdrop for his theological premises. C. K. Barrett argues that John's re-arrangement of the events he records does not undermine "the existence of valuable historical material in John; but the material has been digested and expressed organically in an organism which is primarily theological." C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 1960), 14. Stibbe concurs, praising the fourth Gospel as "more than any of the others an artistic and imaginative whole." As the Gospel of John demonstrates, creative non-fiction may de-science a narrative while leaving the truth of the narrative intact and even more clearly exposed than before. The metanarrative-driven writing of John's Gospel is remarkably relevant for Western twenty-first century culture. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 14.

and why it works. Faculty need not transform freshman composition into a course on narrative writing to accomplish this goal, but rather than serving narrative as a mode of discourse hors d'oeuvre once a semester, they could escort narrative—the substructure of discourse—to its seat at the head of the composition table.[45]

Some academics may argue narrative is not the right servant for academic discourse. Story is too basic, too childish. Stephen Brookfield rebuts this idea in his book *The Skillful Teacher*:

> I grew up suspicious of the use of narrative, of storytelling, as I would have described it. Storytelling was something that was entertaining but essentially fictional. It was most certainly not academic, chiefly because it was clearly subjective and a-theoretical. It has taken me a long time to realize that narrative is one of the most compelling pedagogic approaches I can use. Nothing draws people more quickly into considering challenging information and perspectives than a personal story, and dissertations that are scholarly personal narratives . . . are often far more likely to influence practice than research reports written in the third person.[46]

Christian writers can forge relationships with an unbelieving culture through story as truth often penetrates the barriers of resistance best packaged in story. As narrative forms the connective tissue from student writer to the gospel, the power in story also grafts student writers to readers through relationship. Stories are transacted through relational currency: "Frankly, there isn't anyone you couldn't learn to love once you've heard their story."[47]

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[45] While narrative nonfiction (creative nonfiction) courses are becoming more prevalent, the freshman composition course should be neither totally a narrative nonfiction course nor reduce narrative methodology to the teaching of the narrative paper.

[46] Stephen Brookfield, *The Skillful Teacher: On Technique, Trust, and Responsiveness in the Classroom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2015), 116. See also Helen Sword, *Stylish Academic Writing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2012), 87-98; Kati Macaluso, Mary Juzwik, and Ellen Cushman, "Editor's Introduction: Storying Our Research," *Research in the Teaching of English* 50, no. 1 (August 2015): 9-10.

[47] Mr. (Fred) Rogers, the PBS children's television program host, carried this quotation in his wallet. Andrew Stanton "The Clues to a Great Story," TED Ideas Worth Spreading, accessed August 1, 2017, https://www.ted.com/talks/andrew_stanton_the_clues_to_a_great_story/transcript?language=en. Christian writers can write truthfully and compellingly at the intersection of gospel and story. Here the deepest truths come alive. The combination of truth and story is the mechanism used to write truth compellingly, for well-written stories are always compelling.

CHAPTER 13

THE WRITING MODEL'S TRIQUETRA:
RELATIONSHIP

Packing the truth of the gospel in story is ineffectual unless readers are present; therefore, the third component of the triquetra is relationship: "I know that many people reduce communication to the transmission of information, but I think that if we take our cue from the Trinity, we see that communication is 'sharing or making common light (knowledge) and love (relationship).'"[1] Language is "the preeminent instrument for cultivating personal relationships, between one human and another and between humanity and God. As such, language is a kind of semantic sacrament."[2]

Christian students write in relationship with God and others. God's reveling in the relationship of Father-Son-Spirit spills forth as an invitation to His creatures to revel with Him through the gospel. For writing teachers and students, the work of thinking and writing happens as a worshipful response to the triune God. "God made the world that He might communicate, and the creature to receive, His glory, and that it might [be] received both by the mind and heart. He that testifies his having an idea of God's   glory . . . [doesn't] glorify God so much as he that testifies also his approbation of it and his delight in it."[3] Writing is relational—the writer reaches out to the reader, mirroring God's use of the written Word to provide a means for relationship. Relationship is not the bridge between minds only but spans the chasm between hearts: "The apex of glorifying God is

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[1] Kevin Vanhoozer, notes from dissertation review, May 2017.

[2] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 31.

[3] Jonathan Edwards, *The Miscellanies: a-500*, ed. Thomas Schafer, vol. 13, of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: CT: Yale University, 1994), 495.

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enjoying him with the heart. But this is an empty emotionalism where that joy is not awakened and sustained by true views of God for who he really is. This is mainly what the mind is for."[4]

Relationship is the third cloverleaf of the triquetra because writing and reading is a two-person waltz. The writer desires to convey a message, but unless the writer is equally intent on relationship—understanding, not overriding the reader—writing will fail to share the Trinitarian invitation to community. When the gospel has become the enemy of so many, logical arguments alone fail to create communing unity—community—among diverse people. Story as truth's capsule is vital, but a third element is essential in the current climate: desire for relationship. If story is the vehicle for truth, relationship is the fuel, closing the distance between writer and reader. Where gospel, story, and relationship meld, symbiosis erupts.

The Nexus Dance

Craig Bartholomew enfolds all three components of the triquetra as he describes how God invites people to become characters in the metanarrative: "Scripture tells us the true story of the world [gospel] and calls us to indwell that story and become an active participant [relationship] in God's purposes for his creation."[5] Writing students

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[4] John Piper, *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 37.

[5] Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 474. Bartholomew also writes,

> The Jewish philosopher Will Herberg, who advocates a similar approach, draws on Kierkegaard in his evocative statement: "It is as though we sat witnessing some tremendous epic drama being performed on a vast stage, when suddenly the chief character of the drama, who is also its director, steps forward to the front of the stage, fixes his eye upon us, points his finger at us, and calls out: 'You, you're wanted. Come up here. Take your part!'" Approached in such a way, Scripture functions as a hermeneutic for life and history and enables us to see where we fit in to the *Missio Dei*. Scripture is listened to as the true story of the whole world and we are enabled to find our place in the biblical drama. We are also enabled to see how Scripture tells a distinctive story of our world which overlaps but, more importantly, competes with the other metanarratives alive in our culture and seeking our allegiance. Mission - holistically understood, takes place at the intersection of the biblical story and the story/ies of our culture/s. Academic work, teaching, and learning become a way of responding to God's call and taking our place in God's epic drama. (Craig Bartholomew, "The

made effectually aware of the invitation and subsequent participation in the grand story have a stronger theological and philosophical foundation on which to be guided through a pedagogical writing model.

The innermost triangle of the model lies at the juncture of gospel, story, and relationship, what I am calling *the nexus dance*. In figure 17, the nexus dance is shown as a triangle inside the triquetra. The shape of this innermost piece of the writing model—a triangle—reminds students of the Trinitarian context of everything they write. As students engage in writing, they see in the nexus dance triangle eight progressive segments designed to help them analyze various aspects of their own work.

The bottom four layers of the nexus dance are relational, depicting the network of God, believers, truth, story, and readers. All these relationships weave a pattern, a choreographed dance. The first step of this dance begins with students seeing their writing as an act of worship.[6] Fundamentally, viewing writing as an act of worship is consistent with the comprehensive response of faith described in the New Testament: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship" (Rom 12:1). Writing and communicating truth to others is made possible by the mercies of God through Christ and enacted by the Spirit of God in the lives of students who understand that their work is a sacrifice of praise to His glory. v

Bible and the University" (paper presented at the Transdisciplinary Conference, Houston, February 22, 2017), 5-6.

[6] Timothy Paul Jones, "92050 Human Development" (lecture, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, July 2016). In his model of human development, Jones, a professor of Christian Family Ministry at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, labels the pinnacle of education "doxological" and defines *doxological* as "bringing glory to God." For Christian writers, the doxological component of writing is made possible when writers see their relational connection to both the triune God and their own audience. Eric Johnson, in his model of human development, calls the highest strata "spiritual" because for Christians "this order is realized exclusively through the work of the Holy Spirit." Eric Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2007), 345.
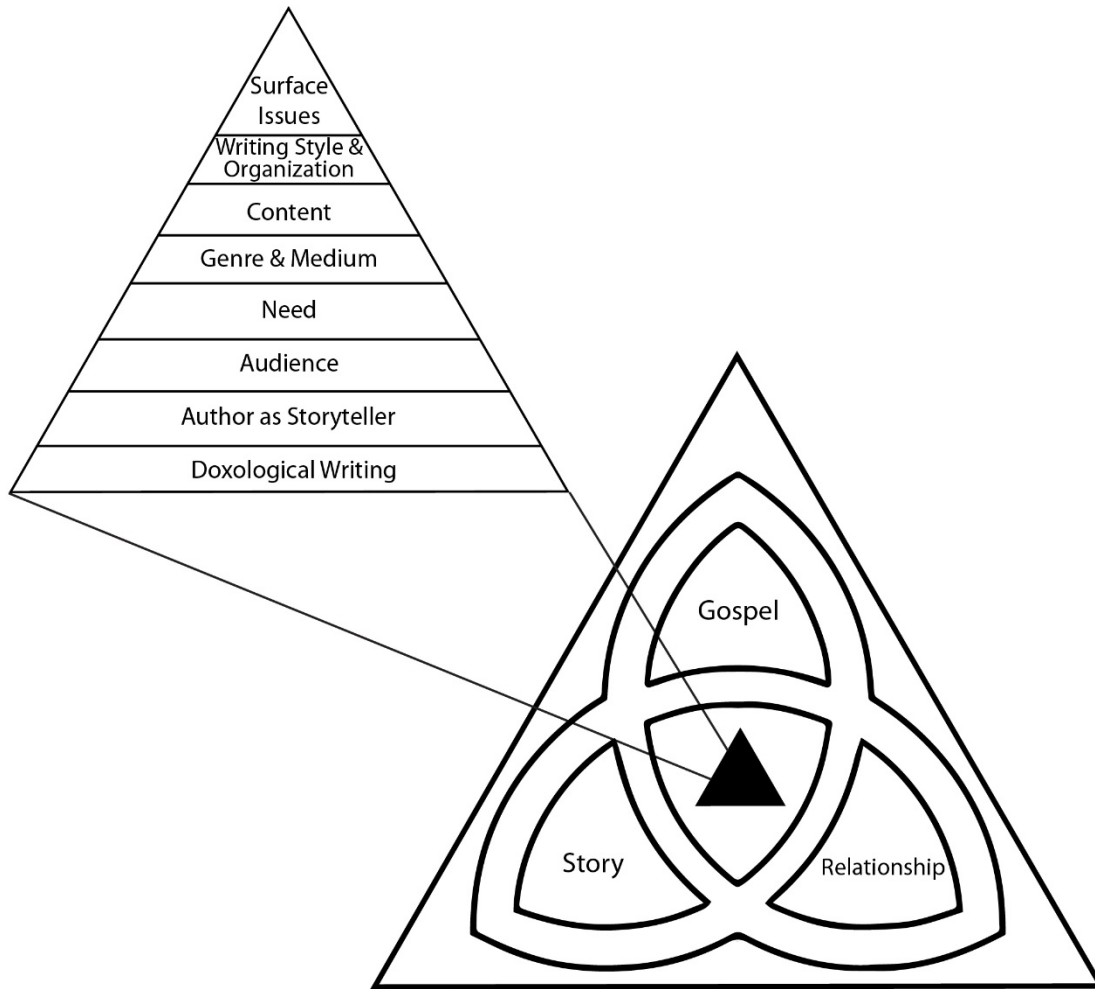
Figure 17. The nexus dance

Layer 1: Doxological Writing

The bottom stratum of the innermost triangle is doxological: writing for the glory of God. Every piece students write ultimately reflects how they relate to God, others, themselves, and the world. In a writing process based on a Trinitarian form of communication, students are positioned to encounter the two-fold purpose of writing: (1) writing with a redemptive intent (otherward) and (2) writing as an act of worship to God (Godward). Through this encounter with the writing model, students learn to use their

writing for kingdom purposes. The methodology of writing instruction must be rooted in the context of doxology, which itself is rooted in the whole Trinitarian theology of writing.

Layer 2: Author as Storyteller

Nowhere in the college curriculum, aside perhaps from college algebra, offers more room for positive attitudinal change than freshman composition. In fact, students often view writing as a general education "yuck" rather than a vital element of success for all their academic endeavors. This layer in the nexus dance (author as storyteller), provides a platform upon which students cultivate an authentic affection and esteem for written communication as they see themselves as effective storytellers. Writing is not something limited to an academic task, it is a reflection of who they are. As writing teachers enthusiastically teach and model the practice of writing as an art form, a kingdom mindset (storytellers of eternal truths) among the students has at least the potential to develop. In the "author as storyteller" phase of the nexus dance, students begin to reflect the reality of valuing kingdom writing and writing for the kingdom.[7]

Students need to do more than value writing though; they need to engage the power of narrative and see themselves as storytellers: "We need story, poetry, play, and song to replenish the wellsprings of imagination, to feed the spirit, to foster compassion.

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[7] Does it really matter how students' feelings about writing change during the course of a class? Some faculty are suspicious of emotions, considering them inferior to thinking, or even detrimental to clear thinking. In his teaching model called "The Disciplers Model," William (Rick) Yount weighs affective change in students equally as important to change in students' thinking. William R. Yount, *Created to Learn: A Christian Teachers Introduction to Educational Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 15-18. Master teacher Howard Hendricks agrees, "Teaching that impacts is not head to head, but heart to heart." Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives: Seven Proven Ways to Make Your Teaching Come Alive* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 1987), 129. See also Susan McLeod's discussion on "Why Do Teachers of Writing Need to Know about Theories of Emotion?," in Susan H. McLeod, *Notes on the Heart: Affective Issues in the Writing* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1996), 22-24. Andreas J. Köstenberger's *Excellence: The Character of God and the Pursuit of Scholarly Virtue* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 44-45. Köstenberger says people's end goal needs to be their starting line. The end goal of writing instruction, as with everything in the lives of believers, is revealing and reveling in God's glory (2 Pet 1:3), possible only when believers participate with God in His plans and purposes (2 Pet 1:4, 8). Thus, the foundation of the writing model is also its end goal. "'Excellence' is the first virtue of Peter's list [2 Pet 1:5-7]. All of life is to be lived for the glory of God. Undergirded by moral excellence and godly character, all of our work should be performed with distinction and excellence." Köstenberger, *Excellence*, 44-45.

Indeed, I would go so far as to claim that there are certain kinds of understanding that we have no access to except by means of story."[8]

Writing teachers have the incredibly meaningful task and stewardship of helping students connect their own life stories to the grand story of God and ultimately their readers to the life-changing story of the gospel:

> God is telling the world a story. It begins in eternity past and stretches into eternity future. It climaxed two thousand years ago when God entered into his creation in a new way. It could reach its temporal conclusion today—or in five thousand years. The theme of the story is *shalom*: all things in their created place doing what they were created to do in loving relationship with their creator. And, amazing grace, it is a story into which God invites you and me as characters.
>
> Human beings are story-shaped creatures. We are born into stories, raised in stories, and live and die in stories. Whenever we have to answer a big question—who am I, why am I here, what should I do, what happens to me when I die?—we tell a story. . . . Your life task is to be a character in the greatest story ever told. It is what you were created for.
>
> If faith were primarily an idea, the intellect alone might be adequate for dealing with it. Since it is instead a life to be lived, we need story. Story, as does life, engages all of what we are—mind, emotions, spirit, body. Faith calls us to live in a certain way, not just to think in a certain way. It is no surprise, then, that the central record of faith in human history opens with an unmistakable story signature: 'In the beginning. . . .'[9]

Stories that transform are powered by the storyteller generating them. As Christopher Beeley says, "The prayerful study of scripture and our manner of life are of the utmost importance if people are going to listen to us and obey what we say."[10] Author and writing instructor Roy Peter Clark articulates how the writer's life impresses itself on the reader: "When we peer out a window onto the horizon, we don't notice the pane, yet the

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[8] Marilyn McEntyre, *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 112-13. For more on the affective domain's importance in a Christian human development theory, see James Estep, "Moral Development and Christian Education," in *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology & Human Development*, ed. James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 136-37; and Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*, 71-72; Ruth Beechick, *A Biblical Psychology of Learning: How Your Mind Works* (Denver: Accent, 1982), 769-71.

[9] Daniel Taylor, "Story-Shaped Faith," in *The Power of Words and the Wonder of God*, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 105-6.

[10] Christopher A. Beeley, *Leading God's People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 125.

pane frames our vision just as the writer frames our view of the story."[11] When students

have something to write, they must consider the kind of windowpane their readers will

peer through. The windowpane is their own life story, and as students see the significance

and potential of connecting others through their writing, the task and work of writing

moves from an academic burden to a gift from God to steward. The world needs writers

who can authentically, clearly, and artfully convey their stories: The contemporary

philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre argues that stories from many sources tell children what

life is like and what role they are to play in it. "Deprive children of stories," he claims,

"and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words."

Stories teach us our lines.[12]

Layer 3: Audience

Great writing changes readers.[13] God intends His words to have an effect (Isa

55:11), and while human words work on a mortal plane, they reflect the Trinity's

communication; therefore, students need to know their audience and work to impact

them. Student writing improves when students write envisioning their audience.[14] Many

academic writing exercises are assigned and produced in an antiseptic space with blurry,

faceless audiences. Writing to faceless readers results in writing that may be accurate but

unengaging. Educator William (Rick) Yount claims when people convey information

mentally, excluding emotions, the result is "dry, cold, idealistic intellectualism."[15] To

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[11] Roy Peter Clark, *Writing Tools*: *55 Essential Strategies for Every Writer* (New York: Little, Brown, 2016), 103.

[12] Taylor, "Story-Shaped Faith," 115.

[13] Willam P. Germano, *From Dissertation to Book* (Chicago: Chicago University, 2012), 146. See also Mike Cosper, *The Stories We Tell: How TV and Movies Long for the Echo of the Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 28.

[14] Steven Pinker, "The Source of Bad Writing," *The Wall Street Journal (Online)*, September 27, 2014.

[15] Yount, *Created to Learn*, 343.

avoid producing dry, cold, intellectual writers representing Christianity to the church and culture, writing teachers must provide their students with vivid portraits of readers. When audience is clarified, student writing becomes relational, putting student writers on a pathway to engage their readers' minds, hearts, and values: "People change what they do less because they are given *analysis* that shifts their *thinking* than because they are *shown* a truth that influences their *feelings*."[16]

This issue of audience causes student writers other problems too. Because writing is relational, students struggle with the artificiality of writing papers for an audience of one—the grader or professor, with possibly a peer review group thrown in.[17] When students write an assigned paper, the Trinitarian relationship is sometimes skewed; students often feel the audience (professor/grader) in this situation has the message to convey; whereas, the conveyor of the message (student writer) is more of a parrot, trying to please the authoritative audience. This denuding of relationship in students' minds demotes writing to drudgery.[18] Writing teachers may need to help their students see papers like musicians spending time in a practice room. Performing artists need practice, lots of it, but they also need real-time performances in front of listeners in a recital hall. Writing faculty may create this performance immediacy by linking students both to the future realities their writing will one day bring into being *and* the potential their writing has to bring about transformation in the present. Unsurprisingly, this bridge is built on the buttress of relationships in the writing classroom: (1) relationships between students fostered by working in teams, (2) relationships with readers, whether they be inside or

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[16] John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen, *The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 2002), 1.

[17] See Bruce Wilkinson's discussion on the importance of applicability of information on student learning. Bruce H. Wilkinson, *The 7 Laws of the Learner*, textbook ed. (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1992), 119-38.

[18] Academics like Helen Sword, and many before her, argue for academics to write more relationally. Helen Sword, *Stylish Academic Writing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2012).

outside the classroom, (3) relationships with other authors whom they read, and (4) relationships with the stream of Christian writers through history, whose mighty company students train to join.

Part of the academy's job is to raise up future academicians who will write like academics for academia. Yet, one book on the state of education claims, "As it has done for more than half a century, the professoriate and its academic enablers justify abandonment of the undergraduate classroom and the beclowning of the curriculum in the name of research. . . . The result is a tidal wave of unread, unreadable junk scholarship that fills library shelves but adds little to the sum of human knowledge."[19] Future scholars do need to learn to write well academically, but part of writing well is relating to their audiences, including readers outside the academy:

> We allow many of the brightest among us to isolate and insulate themselves behind walls of technical, professional, and academic jargon. Higher education and academic degrees don't necessarily equip leaders to sustain functional democracy by speaking to the people with clarity, precision, and accuracy. Rather, they often become preoccupied with conversations conducted within and for the benefit of an exclusive guild. Lamenting the ways such jargon divides the experts into camps and destroys communication with the wider community, John McWhorter comments, "As long as their colleagues understand them, it wouldn't occur to the postmodernist scholar that there could be anything inappropriate in academic prose so demanding that no one can learn from it beyond their coterie, and so utterly unconcerned with euphony, rhythm, or style." . . . We need the instruction and precise understanding that scholars and experts provide. We need, as a public hoping to be an informed citizenry, to hold them accountable by demanding . . . information and instruction that is both precise and accessible. . . . "Accessible" is not the same as "dumbed-down."[20]

For students not aspiring to academia as a profession, academic voice is another hurdle to face. The chasm between student writers and their artificial audiences widens by the exiling of second person pronouns, yet second person is the author openly acknowledging relationship with a reader. First person in academic papers is sometimes

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[19] Charles J. Sykes, *Fail U: The False Promise of Higher Education* (New York: St. Martin's, 2016), 18.

[20] McEntyre, *Caring for Words*, 14-15.

permitted, with a sniff.[21] When students are required to sever their writer-reader relationship by avoiding personal pronouns, their academic papers often sound stilted. "By definition, institutional writing discourages voice."[22] Is sounding academic worth "stripping humanity from content"?[23]

Throughout the Bible, writers wrote for the purpose of "igniting and tending the divine spark in people."[24] Freshman composition students must keep an intentional audience in mind with the caveat that their intentional audience is not their full audience. The church's memory is preserved through her writers passing off the baton to the next generation: "Leaders write because words matter and the written word matters longer and reaches farther than the words we speak."[25] Writing faculty must raise up writers to affect future generations of readers.

Layer 4: Readers' Needs

The next level on the triangle of the nexus dance is readers' needs. Understanding words' capacity to impact others enables writers to read the life stories of their readers and thereby recognize their needs. When students consider the needs of others, they begin to think more earnestly about the writing process and the potential

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[21] Joseph Williams and Gregory Colomb argue, "Deleting an *I* or *we* does not make the science objective; it makes reports of it only seem so. We know that behind those impersonal sentences are flesh-and-blood researchers doing, thinking, and writing." Joseph M. Williams and Gregory G. Colomb, *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 10th ed. (New York: Longman, 2010), 1.

[22] Jack Hart, *StoryCraft: The Complete Guide to Writing Narrative Nonfiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2011), 64.

[23] Hart, *StoryCraft*, 65.

[24] This phrase is attributed to many people.

[25] R. Albert Mohler Jr., *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany, 2012), 172. As 2 Tim 2:1-2 says, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others well." There is only one who is transcendent and the Canon is closed, but we are still reading Augustine, Calvin, Edwards, Spurgeon, etc. May it be that future generations would be reading our students who write in view of the transformative truths of the gospel.

impact their writing has for the kingdom of God.[26] Discovering real and immediate needs in the lives of a writer's audience helps provide focused writing with the potential for kingdom influence: "Your task as a communicator is not to impress people, but to *impact* them; not just to convince them, but to *change* them."[27]

Layer 5: Genre/Medium

After studying their readers, the writer is prepared to choose a weapon wisely from the arsenal of genre which will best penetrate the reader's heart.[28] While the first four levels of the nexus dance are more relationally-motivated between writer and reader, the upper four levels can be considered the vehicles upon which the writer/reader relationship ride. In most freshman composition classes, papers are assigned so students learn to navigate the variegated nuances of multiple genres: book reviews, personal reflections and responses, research papers, blogs, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, journal entries, etc.

With technology changing rapidly, media will change, but genre-specific and medium-specific writing needs to be included in collegiate writing training, and writing faculty should consider how to co-teach courses, integrating writing expertise with media expertise: "Hypertext links, mouse-overs, text wrapped around images, scrolling text rather than pages, print linked to sound—these and many other features we use daily on the Internet and in electronic presentations all suggest the need for multimedia writing

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[26] Journalist and editor Marvin Olasky writes,

> The effect of Luther's theses and his subsequent publications is well known but what often is missed is that Luther's primary impact was not as a producer of treatises, but as a very popular writer of vigorous prose that concerned not only theological issues but their social and political ramifications. Between 1517 and 1530, Luther's thirty publications probably sold well over 300,000 copies, an astounding total at a time when illiteracy was rampant and printing still an infant. (Marvin Olasky, "A Theological and Journalistic Reformation," *World Magazine*, October 31, 2015, https://world.wng.org/2015/10/a_theological_and_journalistic_reformation)

[27] Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*, 55.

[28] Guy Lidbetter, "The Speed and Future of Technology Change," *Huffington Post*, September 10, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/guy-lidbetter/the-speed-and-future-of-t_1_b_1667215.html.

instruction."[29] Will students be trained in media classes, in content courses, or in both? Will composition faculty be utilized to co-teach writing through media? To limit a theologically-based writing curriculum to standard historical genres and print media only is to limit the potential impact of communication rooted in the substructure of the Trinity.

Layer 6: Content

Like the roots of an iceberg, the five layers underneath the content segment of the nexus dance triangle are substantial, but felt more than seen. They are the substructure supporting the upper three layers: content, writing style/organization, and surface issues.

The previous layers of the nexus dance function like the bummock of an iceberg (its underwater mass), exerting underlying strength but typically unperceived by casual observers. The top three layers, however, are visible to every reader (see figure 18). Writing faculty can help their student writers forge vital connection points between writing for God's glory (level 1—doxological), the student as a storyteller (level 2), linking their story to a real audience (level 3), assessing their audience's needs (level 4), all on the wings of genre and medium (level 5), supporting content worth writing about (level 6).

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[29] Brooks Landon, *Building Great Sentences: How to Write the Kind of Sentences You Love to Read* (New York: Plume, 2013), 252-53. See also Richard Lanham who writes, "What happens when words move from printed page to electronic screen? What's next for text?" Richard Lanham, *The Economics of Attention: Style and Substance* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006), xi. Robert Pazmiño notes, "The issue of changing technologies relates to the task of proclamation and the call to present the gospel with integrity through new forms and media." Robert W. Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 147.

Figure 18. Innermost triangle as an iceberg

Layer 7: Writing Style/ Organization

The writing style and organization layer in the model refers to the syntax of sentences and alignment of ideas. Ultimately, eternally significant ideas are transferred from writer to reader through the Holy Spirit, but pen-ultimately, *style* butlers ideas to the entrance of the human heart. Although writing style (like content) is contextually specific to each unique instructional setting and assignment, this seventh level of the nexus dance warrants greater emphasis and more detail in this discussion because of the incredibly powerful weight it impresses on meaning and impact.[30] For example, "Long sentences

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[30] Lanham, *The Economics of Attention*, xi-xii. Lanham writes,

We live in an "information economy." But information is not in short supply. . . . We're drowning in it. What we lack is the human attention needed to make sense of it all. . . . Attention is the commodity in short supply. . . . The devices that regulate attention are stylistic devices. Attracting attention is what style is all about. If attention is now at the center of the economy rather than stuff, then so is style. . . . In an economy of stuff, the disciplines that govern extracting material from the earth's crust

ask us to dwell in a thought rather than come to the point. They invite us to relax into a slow syntactical tour, like wandering the halls of a museum, rather than hastening onward to the verb, the object, and out the door."[31]

Writing style in this layer refers to rhetorical devices, not grammar: "Studying grammar is more than a little bit like counting the spines on a dead fish. . . . Rhetoric, unlike grammar, has to do with both motive and impact, the reasons why we use language to accomplish certain goals, and the extent to which it accomplishes them."[32] Had Winston Churchill stood up in 1941 and said, "We must not quit no matter what!" his words would have been forgettable and forgotten. Instead, he said, "This is the lesson: never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy."[33] Unforgettable.

Style: Serving Meaning

"The virtue of what is said is often lost when it is enfeebled in the hearts of the audience because the speech was offered hastily or carelessly," said Gregory the Great.[34]

Style infuses motion and energy into meaning; it engages emotion and conveys a message in a piercing way. For this reason, a theologically based writing pedagogy must include strong emphasis on writing style, not to teach students to manipulate meaning or people, but to teach them how to convey truth so as to bring about

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and making stuff out of it naturally stand at the center: the physical sciences, engineering, and economics. . . . But in an attention economy, the two change places. The arts and letters now stand at the center. They are the disciplines that study how attention is allocated, how cultural capital is created and traded. Lanham, *The Economics of Attention*, xi-xii.

[31] McEntyre, *Caring for Words*, 129.

[32] Landon, *Building Great Sentences*, 21.

[33] Martin Gilbert, ed. *Churchill: The Power of Words, His Remarkable Life Recounted through His Writings and Speeches* (Boston: Da Capo, 2012), 288. This excerpt is from Churchill's speech at Harrow School on October 29, 1941.

[34] Beeley, *Leading God's People*, 111.

transformation in the lives of their readers.[35] Richard Graves, retired Auburn professor of curriculum and teaching, writes that many composition instructors "would likely agree . . . style is the 'shadow of a personality'; and so there are as many 'styles' as there are personalities. Faced with such diversity, who would dare to presume that any one style is better than another?"[36] Yet, Graves insists, writing style "is not mere decoration, nor is it an end to itself; it is rather a way of finding and explaining what is true. Its purpose is not to impress but express."[37]

Style: Serving Trinitarian Theology

The Trinity is not three persons exchanging information in computer code, but three persons delighting in one another, in conversation rich and meaningful, full and fragrant with words "inexpressible and full of glory" (Rom 8:26) and in "groanings too deep for words" (1 Pet 1:8). Style is the clear conduit by which words create community. Words organized to sound enchanting as they are read, chosen carefully for their own merit and the enhancement of their neighbors, paint portraits of meaning, conduct symphonies

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[35] N. D. Wilson and Douglas Wilson, *The Rhetoric Companion: A Student's Guide to Power in Persuasion* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2011).

[36] Richard Graves, "A Primer for Teaching Style," *College Composition and Communication* 25, no. 2 (May 1974): 186. Many writers assert that style is not merely a vehicle for content; but that style *is* content. The writing model is divided into eight strata for the purpose of investigating each layer systematically. The differentiating lines in the layers are bridges, not blockades. Thus, while style is mentioned separately from content, this is not to suggest style is not content. The writing model, like the block-balancing game Jenga, falls apart if just one piece is removed, or, just as the color green can be differentiated but never divorced from yellow, so style can be distinguished but never separated from content. Perhaps the effervescent nature of content pulsing through the veins of style's translucent flesh is what gives style its singularly alluring—and puissant—quality. Style is at once both artistically delicate and solidly muscular. See, for example, Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 3, trans. H. E. Butler (London: William Heinemann, 1922), 185-89.

[37] Graves, "Primer for Teaching Style," 189-90. Just as any good thing can be used for nefarious purposes, so writing style has the potential for great good or evil. At its best, it adds a laser quality to give words penetrating power. At its worst, it can be used to manipulate. Teaching writing style lost popularity in the last decades of the twentieth century when it was associated with current-traditional pedagogy, but it has experienced a recent resurgence. See, for example, Paul Butler, *Style in Rhetoric and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010), 2; Paul Butler, *Out of Style: Reanimating Stylistic Study in Composition and Rhetoric* (Logan: Utah State University, 2008), 7-19; Scott F. Crider, *The Office of Assertion: An Art of Rhetoric for the Academic Essay* (Wilmington, DE: ISI, 2005); and Richard Lanham, *Style: An Anti-Textbook*, 2nd rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Paul Dry, 2007).

of understanding, and in so doing massage meaning into hearts, penetrating the entire cardiovascular system of the soul. Stale facts may with diligence and repetition manage to stay lodged within the cranium, but they will never grip the cardia.[38] Wendell Berry adds,

> When we reflect that "sentence" means, literally, "a way of thinking" . . . [which] comes from the Latin *sentire,* to feel, we realize that the concepts of sentence and sentence structure are not merely grammatical or merely academic—not negligible in any sense. A sentence is both an opportunity and the limit of thought—what we have to think with, and what we have to think in. It is, moreover, a *feelable* thought, a thought that impresses its sense not just on our understanding, but on our hearing, our sense of rhythm and proportion. It is a pattern of felt sense.[39]

At many schools, writing instruction little emphasizes writing style. Because students' attempts at academic writing are stilted, drearily barren of content, and loquacious in a stream of consciousness, faculty pound on crisp clarity. Yet,

> our valorization of clarity at the expense of style is nothing less than a disaster. . . . Contemporary writing instruction with its hyperemphasis on clarity drains all the pleasure out of writing. "We pare away all the sense of verbal play, of self-satisfying joy in language, then wonder why American students have a motivation problem and don't want to write. . . . Prose written without joy can only be read in the same spirit."[40]

Style: Acting as a Weapon for Good or Evil

In 1 Corinthians 2:1-2, Paul writes, "When I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom." Is Paul arguing style sets a trap for writer and reader alike? John Piper says no. "The eloquence Paul is rejecting is not so much any particular language conventions but the exploitation of language to exalt self and belittle or ignore the crucified Lord."[41] A thought's body is language, and therefore, writing style

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[38] McEntyre warns, "I do not believe we steward language well without some regular practice of *poesis*—reading poetry, learning some by heart, and writing—if not verse as such, at least sentences crafted with close attention to cadence and music and the poetic devices that offer nonrational, evocative, intuitive, associative modes of understanding." McEntyre, *Caring for Words*, 145.

[39] Wendell Berry, *Standing by Words: Essays by Wendell Berry* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 1983), 53.

[40] Landon, *Building Great Sentences*, 249.

[41] John Piper, "Is There Christian Eloquence?," in Piper and Taylor, *Power of Words*, 74.

determines how people think about something: "Since thought is based on language, different styles, designed for specific purposes and to achieve specific effects, 'will inevitably perpetuate the forms of thoughts associated with them'. . . . style can shape our beliefs . . . [we have] responsibility of mastering style 'lest we are mastered by it.'"[42]

Like all good gifts, writing style's greatest strengths come with a dark side, a Harvey Dent-ian potential. Writing style can be used for great good or for evil, for pointing people to godly communion or self-communion. Because well-crafted sentences have the power of life and death (Both Churchill and Hitler were skilled in word craft.), writers do well to heed Jonathan Edwards' warning against emotionalism ungrounded in truth (eloquence without substance): "As on the one hand, there must be light in the understanding, as well as an affected fervent heart; where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in that heart."[43] But writers must likewise attend to the second admonition Edwards couples with the first: "So on the other hand, where there is a kind of light without heat, a head stored with notions and speculations, with a cold and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light, that knowledge is no true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart."[44] Woe to the writer who raises the emotions of readers without pointing them to Christ. Woe to the writer who points to Christ but with soggy words devoid of warmth and splendor so as to squelch the reader's desire for Christ before any spark of love for Him is kindled.

> The attempt to craft striking and beautiful language makes it possible that the beauty of eloquence can join with the beauty of truth and increase the power of your words. When we take care to create a beautiful way of speaking or writing about something

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[42] Landon, *Building Great Sentences*, 249.

[43] Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2013), 49.

[44] Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 49-50.

beautiful, the eloquence—the beauty of the form—reflects and honors the beauty of the subject and so honors the truth.[45]

The artistic rendering of words does pose a danger, for style possesses the ability to capture hearts, sway nations, and govern the tides of history; nevertheless, or rather, because of this reason, Christian instructors are behooved to train their students in the art of style for promoting the gospel.[46] "Oratory," said Plato, "is the art of enchanting the soul."[47] In fact, the Holy Trinity invites individuals to eloquent expression:

> Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word. That word in the Bible is pervasively eloquent—words are put together in a way to give great impact. And God invites us to create our own eloquent phrases for his name's sake, not ours. And in the mystery of his sovereign grace, he will glorify himself in the hearts of others in spite of and because of the words we have chosen. In that way, he will keep us humble and get all the glory for himself. Amen.[48]

Style: Quickening Student Affection for Writing

The writing style layer of the model adds yet another relationship—the fellowship between students and language itself. In a lecture on Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, Peter Kreeft, philosophy professor at Boston College, said there are many

> things in *The Lord of the Rings* that reflect . . . glory. They include exalted, Elvish things, but they also include humble, Hobbit-like things. But it takes words and language to reveal them. Without language, there's no light shining on that glory. Language doesn't just express the glory, language somehow incarnates the glory, so much so that it's not clear whether it's the glory of the things that justifies the glory of the words, or vice versa: the glory of the words that justifies the glory of the things. It can be shown but not demonstrated.[49]

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[45] Piper, "Is There Christian Eloquence?" 80. Many books discuss rhetorical devices, some include Mark Forsyth, *The Elements of Eloquence: Secrets of the Perfect Turn of Phrase* (New York: Berkeley, 2013); Ward Farnsworth, *Farnsworth's Classical English Rhetoric* (Jaffrey, NH: David R. Godine, 2010); Virginia Tufte, *Artful Sentences: Syntax as Style* (Cheshire, CT: Graphics, 2006).

[46] Wilson and Wilson teach, "'A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver' (Prov. 25:11). . . . For the believer, manipulative sophistry is clearly out of bounds. But putting careful thought into what constitutes pleasant and appropriate words is not." Wilson and Wilson, *The Rhetoric Companion*, 14.

[47] Plato, *Phaedrus*, ed. Benjamin Jowett (Champaign, IL: Project Gutenberg, n.d.), 64, eBook.

[48] Piper, "Is There Christian Eloquence?" 80.

[49] Peter Kreeft, "Language of Beauty," Trinity Communications, accessed October 8, 2015, http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=9845.

Kreeft's phrase that writing style "can be shown but not demonstrated" illuminates the dreadful delight instructors experience in teaching style. In the college composition classroom, writing faculty long to share with their students the goodness, the truth, the beauty, the power and sheer delight of writing. But the closer they fly to the warmth of words' essence and what makes them work, the faster their wings melt and they fall with a clunk on a desk about the fourth row back, and faculty are left to commiserate with poet laureate Billy Collins describing poetry the way they would describe the beauty of prose:

> I ask them to take a poem
>
> and hold it up to the light
>
> like a color slide
>
> or press an ear against its hive.
>
> I say drop a mouse into a poem
>
> and watch him probe his way out,
>
> or walk inside the poem's room
>
> and feel the walls for a light switch.
>
> I want them to waterski
>
> across the surface of a poem
>
> waving at the author's name on the shore.
>
> But all they want to do
>
> is tie the poem to a chair with rope
>
> and torture a confession out of it.

> They begin beating it with a hose
>
> to find out what it really means.[50]

Like Billy Collins, writing faculty often come out of freshman composition courses feeling like they have pinned words' fragile wings on plywood instead of letting them settle on their finger to hold up the living and breathing language with its fragile glory for students to creep forward and hold out their fingers.

Teaching style is like that.

Layer 8: Surface Issues

The 1972 resolution of the CCCC's "Students' Right to Their Own Language" challenged what should be upheld as standard English:[51]

> We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.

> And many of us have taught as though the function of schools and colleges were to erase differences. Should we, on the one hand, urge creativity and individuality in the arts and the sciences, take pride in the diversity of our historical development, and, on the other hand, try to obliterate all the differences in the way Americans speak and write? Our major emphasis has been on uniformity, in both speech and writing; would we accomplish more, both educationally and ethically, if we shifted that emphasis to precise, effective, and appropriate communication in diverse ways, whatever the dialect?[52]

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[50] Billy Collins, "Introduction to Poetry," Poetry Foundation, accessed June 23, 2016, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/46712.

[51] "NCTE Position Statement: Resolution on Affirming the CCCC 'Students' Right to Their Own Language'" (National Council of Teachers of English *2003 Annual Business Meeting, San Francisco, 2003*), accessed July 6, 2017, http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/affirmingstudents.

[52] "Students' Right to Their Own Language: Explanation of Adoption," *College Composition and Communication* 25: special issue (Fall 1974), accessed June 8, 2017, http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Groups/CCCC/NewSRTOL.pdf.

Surface issues and clarity in communication need not instigate cultural battles. Nor should skirmishes over punctuation be raged in defense of unique voices and audiences. The bummock layers of writing lying beneath surface issues in the writing model's iceberg triangle determine "proper" dialect choice. Who is the audience? What need is being met? The context of any piece of writing determines the most efficacious dialect, whether that be "standard," Ebonics, pidgin, New York dialect, Received Standard, or any other.

Surface issues are more than tiresome rules, a plague of red ink on student papers. "With the loss of . . . careful grammatical distinctions (slippage in subject-verb agreement, misplaced apostrophes, inconsistency of tenses—mistakes that undermine clarity), we become more confined to the kinds of broad strokes that make us careless and so make us care less."[53] Surface issues may be the least important quality of a piece of writing, but like a person's clothing, they portray the writer's values, hinder or forward the content, and generally function like an annoying series of speed bumps or a well-waxed pair of snow skies, making gliding over a mountain slope a pleasure. While writers and teachers of writing may correctly argue style is content, temporarily evaluating each of the upper three layers independently (content, writing style, and surface issues) as separate entities gives students three surgical places from which to edit.

Human Flourishing

The interstitial space between the inner triangle and the triquetra represents Christian writers contributing to human flourishing in a way uniquely Christian. Training students to communicate biblical truth to the culture clearly and compellingly—through writing—is surely one desired end of teaching writing in Christian colleges and

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[53] McEntyre, *Caring for Words*, 12. McEntyre's first chapters explore the unsustainability of current language use.

universities. Since communication is relational, engaging the culture is a relational

exchange.[54]
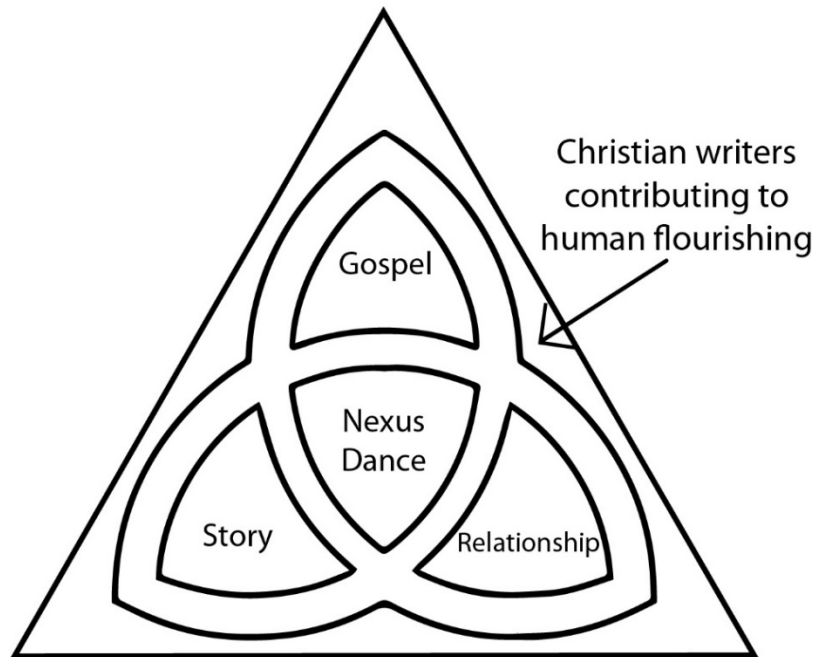
Figure 19. Christian writers contributing to human flourishing

Education is more than preparing students for the workforce; it is preparing

them to create a better society:

> Knowledge, skills and experiences are acquired through an education. But the
> utilitarian nature of education and schooling is not foremost in the minds when good
> educators are educating students. . . . This is particularly true for Christian educators
> who operate on the principle that truth, goodness and beauty are central aims of
> learning. . . . It is the idea of becoming a better person through the development of
> knowledge, skills, sentiments, virtues and wisdom. The aim (loosely) is the properly

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[54] Cornelius Plantinga Jr. writes, "What we must see, now, is that successful living in God's
world depends not only on taking responsibility for our own realm and preserving it if we can. Success also
depends on meshing our kingdom with the kingdom of others—learning to share living space." Cornelius
Plantinga Jr. *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids: Wm.
B Eerdmans, 2002), 106. Johnson adds, "The birth of ethical being entails the emergence and awareness of
a host of new obligations to one's neighbor, a sense of duty to family, country and humanity, and standards
that one be just in one's dealings with others and care for those less fortunate." Johnson, *Foundations for
Soul Care*, 342.

functioning human being, where processes of development and flourishing account for universal and particular information.[55]

Contemplating the "utilitarian nature of education," Lewis writes, "In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful."[56] Education is not simply the instruction of subject content; education forms the mind, teaching students to think, and therefore, to become. Students choose to attend college for a myriad of reasons: parents' expectations, a way to extend adolescent freedom, training for a career, rather than students desiring to be transformed. Curricular design reinforces the pervasive utilitarian nature of education. Pazmiño discloses,

> A survey of most printed curricula reveals that the vast majority specify what students are to know, feel, or do as a result of a particular class or course. This derives from emphasizing behavioral objectives in teaching and learning. Clarity and specificity in relation to purposes, goals, and objectives are to be affirmed, but a larger vision is suggested by exploring biblical models.[57]

For Christians, education is more than a future job and paycheck; it is a calling to be salt. Salting society as Christians (Matt 5:13) means, in part, creating a better society for all:

> We are suggesting that the goal of Christian education and scholarship must not be only the production and transference of information rooted in a Christian understanding, but formation of whole persons in community, thus offering to the world more than an understanding, but a flourishing community into which all are welcome to enter.[58]

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[55] Paul D. Spears and Steven R. Loomis, "Social Ethics and the Institution of Education," in *Education for Human Flourishing: A Christian Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 176.

[56] C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2001), 26.

[57] Robert W. Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 248. Pazmiño gives Titus as an example:

> Titus is encouraged to teach various groups *to be* something or other. No doubt knowing, feeling, and doing are implied in the call to be, but a concern for being implies a larger purpose, a larger vision. Titus is to be concerned with character formation, the values persons are embracing and living out. Good works and conduct flow from sound doctrine and from a person's being in a right relationship with God and others. Christian educators must be concerned for Christian values and virtues, which persons are called upon to embody in their very lives. (249)

[58] Dru Johnson and Jonathan Pennington, "The Role of the Bible as Wisdom for the Education of Individuals and Society" (paper presented at the Transdisciplinary Conference, Houston, February 23,

Writing courses rooted in the substructure of the Trinity that engage students through an instructional paradigm fostering kingdom purposes contribute not only to the spiritual and devotional development of the student, but also the audiences for whom they write.

Summary of the Nexus Dance

Student writers in Christian institutions training to become experts in their field need to master writing. Freshman composition is designed to continue students' development as writers, but too often freshman composition seems like a skills course students are motivated to test out of rather than a life-changing course worth investing in. Students need to realize writing is not just a necessary academic and professional skill, but an expression of their faith and worship of God as Christians. The eternal communion of communication transpiring within the Trinity forms the context and purpose of all written communication.

From an understanding of Trinitarian communication and relationship with the triune Author, the student writer needs to consider his or her place as a sub-author and storyteller in relationship with readers through the text. This writer-reader rapport occurs within the metanarrative's story, so students' writing is set in and points back to the metanarrative, whether the reader accepts that worldview or not.

Burrowing into the pragmatic from the theoretical means considering three aspects of writing unique to Christian writers: (1) tapping into biblical truth from a life that embraces the gospel, (2) harnessing the power of stories, and (3) forging relationships with readers. The choreographed intersection of these three is the nexus dance—the nucleus of the writing model prompting students to remember the layers of writing. Writing assignments are not limited to the width and length of a piece of paper but include the depth of at least eight layers: doxology, author as storyteller, audience,

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2017), 9. Johnson and Pennington go on to expound, "The development of the whole person intellectually, habitually, affectionally, and in values, goals, and desires (*paideia*) enables scholarship that employs the foundational metaphysical view of Scripture to serve broader courses of inquiry in the humanities, sciences, engineering, and beyond" (9).

needs and context, genre and medium, content, writing style and organization, and surface issues. The foundational layer of this icebergal triangle is the doxological element of writing, writing as ultimately an act of worship in response to the triune God. This foundational layer is a microcosmic reminder of the entire model.

The second layer from the bottom is the narrative arc and the metanarrative from which it is derived. Student writers using the writing model next consider their audience: Who is the audience? How do they think? What is their worldview? What moves them? What motivates them? What are their core values? This layer narrows to one specific aspect of the audience, forming the next layer: What need of these readers will this piece of writing attempt to meet?

What context will best transport the message to readers? Knowing what they know about their readers, how will the message best be received? Is this piece of writing going to be a scholarly article? A children's book? A business proposal? A mystery novel? A script? A blog? In the twenty-first century, writing for various media is becoming an increasingly important writing consideration.

A piece of writing is like an iceberg with only the top portion penetrating the water's surface. All of the previous layers shape writing, but the most visible parts of any written work are (1) content, (2) writing style and organization, and (3) surface issues. The content layer is concerned with what the writing needs to say. While *what* is said is vital, *how* something is said—the writing style and organization of content—will determine the content's impact and even affect meaning. Kreeft argues for the necessary marriage between content and writing style: "Content without its clothing of writing style loses its splendor."[59]

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[59] Kreeft, "Language of Beauty." C. S. Lewis beautifully sums up the idea of style:

The modern habit of doing ceremonial things unceremoniously is no proof of humility; instead, it proves the offender's inability to forget himself in the rite. . . .We moderns may like dances that are hardly distinguishable from walking, and poetry which sounds as if it might be uttered *ex tempore*. Our ancestors did not. They liked a dance which was a dance, and fine clothes which no one could mistake for working clothes, and feasts that no one could mistake for ordinary dinners, and poetry

The top layer of the writing triangle is surface issues, including spelling, punctuation (although for more advanced writers, punctuation is a writing style issue also), and required style guides (Turabian, APA, MLA, for example), and institutions' individual style guide requirements.[60] These surface issue details form the tip of the triangle. They proclaim more about the author's writing mastery, desire to conform to standards, or attention to detail than they do how cogent and compelling a message the writer has to convey. The surface issues layer may be the least eternally significant aspect of any piece of writing, yet execution here—clean or sloppy—is like walking barefoot down a gravel trail through lush woods; the foot pain causes the hiker to focus solely on what is wrong instead of the beauty of the scene. The gravel is inconsequential to the grandeur, but its power to distract is mammoth. Here at the tip of the iceberg where student groans and faculty sighs frequently coincide is a reminder that each aspect of the writing model reflects Trinitarian action, plans, and purposes.

Ultimately, the eight-layered iceberg demonstrates how the Trinitarian writing model impacts student learning at the cellular classroom level. The theory behind the writing model galvanizes classroom application. Archimedes valued the theory of pure science above practical science: "In each case, his practical contributions sprang from a theoretical explanation."[61] He calculated the mathematical ratios of levers and showed that the heavier an object is that needs to be lifted, the longer the lever must be and the closer the fulcrum needs to sit to the object. With that knowledge, he is credited with

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that unblushingly proclaimed itself to be poetry. What is the point in having a poet inspired by the muse, if he tells the stories just as you or I would have told them? (C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* [Edinburgh: CrossReach, 2016], 19)

[60] Noah Lukeman, *A Dash of Style: The Art and Mastery of Punctuation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006). See also chap. 5, "Punctuation Today," in Edgar H. Schuster, *Breaking the Rules: Liberating Writers through Innovative Grammar Instruction* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), 151-92.

[61] "Archimedes and the Simple Machines That Moved the World," *Encyclopedia.com.*, accessed July 7, 2017, http://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/archimedes-and-simple-machines-moved-world. Archimedes was a third century BC physicist, mathematician, engineer, and inventor.

claiming, "Give me a place to stand and I will move the world."[62] Likewise, writing faculty need to recognize utilitarian "what-works-in-the-classroom" will have greater efficacy if it is based on solid theory. The nexus dance at the center of the writing model gives Christian writers a place to stand to move the world.

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[62] Serafina Cuomo, *Pappus of Alexandria and the Mathematics of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000), 117.

CHAPTER 14

SLAYING THE HYDRA

Hercules and his nephew solved the hydra problem in ancient Greece by a sword and a flaming torch. Whack, sizzle. Whack, sizzle, on through each hydra head until Hercules dug a hole and flung in the final decapitated, un-killable head, covering it with dirt. It is easy to imagine the hydra head buried deep underground, a heavy boulder rolled atop the grave, still there, a hissing sound marking the spot.[1]

The freshman composition hydra does not need the whack-sizzle solution. Each head is a symptom that grew monstrously from the freshman composition problem: Most students are fairly lousy academic writers and graduate into mediocre writers in their professions.[2] One by one the hydra heads rise up as accusers charging collegiate writing instruction of failing.

The Hydra Solution

The Trinitarian model of writing casts the vision for freshman composition as the rocket booster for the four-year academic journey of producing proficient writers.

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[1] Virgil describes the hydra's hissing: "The beast of Lerna, Loathsome and hissing." Seamus Heaney, *Aeneid Book VI: A New Verse Translation*, bilingual ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), 31.

[2] One recent report claims, "Most engineers can't write a single coherent sentence, never mind string together a paragraph. Poor documentation is the bane of my existence." Bernard Meisler, "The Real Reason Silicon Valley Coders Write Bad Software," *The Atlantic*, October 9, 2012, https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/10/the-real-reason-silicon-valley-coders-write-bad-software/263377/. See also Jeffrey Selingo, who writes, "One test . . . administered to 32,000 students at 169 colleges and universities . . . found that 40 percent of college seniors fail to graduate with the complex reasoning skills needed in today's workplace. The test, the Collegiate Learning Assessment Plus, is given to freshmen and seniors and measures the gains made during college in critical thinking, writing and communication, and analytical reasoning." Jeffrey J. Selingo, "Why Are So Many College Students Failing to Gain Job Skills before Graduation?," *Washington Post,* January 26, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2015/01/26/why-are-so-many-college-students-failing-to-gain-job-skills-before-graduation/?utm_term=.06fc143e2fdb.

Institutions need a NASA-like commitment to launch these kingdom writers; at the moment, however, Christian colleges and universities echo, "Houston, we have a problem!"[3]

Hydra Heads 1 and 2: Disgruntled
Public and Administration

By implementing a theologically driven writing model starting in freshman composition and infiltrating the Christian university, students can graduate as strong writers: the first hydra head of public anger disappears. Parents and students interested in Christian colleges and universities expect excellent education in a Christian environment with biblical values and ideas. Freshman composition can become part of the uniquely Christian package parents are seeking. When the vision and implementation for freshman composition is presented to students as an essential key for their development as kingdom writers and as a means for improving their performance in other classes, once frustrated administrators (Hydra head 2) become gratefully enthusiastic for the new instructional paradigm.

Hydra Heads 3 and 4: Debates over
Academic/Nonacademic
Writing and Pedagogy

When students see writing as preparation for their chosen fields, they are motivated to invest in learning to write well. As student writing improves, faculty in other disciplines can focus on helping students write effectively in various subjects instead of having to drill students on basic writing skills. As student writers gain proficiency, the chasm between academic and nonacademic writing narrows. Academic writing, often equated with a stilted, formal, unemotional style gives way to an engaging writing style utilizing strong arguments. Hydra head 3 dissolves.

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[3] "Houston, we've had a problem" were Apollo 13 astronaut Jack Swigert's words to NASA Mission Control, April 13, 1970. James A. Lovell, "Apollo Expeditions to the Moon, chapter 13.1," accessed September 8, 2017, https://history.nasa.gov/SP-350/ch-13-1.html.

Hydra head 4—arguments over how to teach writing—is fueled by freshman composition's failure to produce strong writers. If Christian institutions can produce results using a Christian pedagogy, they have much to offer the composition field.

Hydra Heads 5 and 6: Ideological Battles and the Unloved Course

Few secular writing tools adequately suit Christian writing instruction, and none are designed for it, leaving Christian composition faculty with compelling convictions forced to mold their students with tools created by secular writing pedagogues promoting their own ideologies. A theologically driven pedagogy frees Christian composition faculty to teach using tools made of biblical mithril[4] steel that flawlessly correspond with the believing pedagogue's doxological life purpose: "The intellectual task of Christian education is the engagement of every field of study, to influence its use for the glory of God and the good of all mankind."[5] Thus, the calling of composition instructors is to leverage their influence for Trinitarian glory and human flourishing, even in a postmodern culture.[6]

Hydra head 6 is freshman composition as the unloved course: pawned off on the least-of-these graduate students or faculty while scholars in other content areas offer thanks that they are not like them. Yet, instead of freshman composition being the ugly

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[4] Mithril is the most precious metal in Tolkien's Middle Earth and has the appearance of silver but is stronger and lighter than steel.

[5] Perry G. Downs, "Theology and Education," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 696.

[6] Brian Walsh writes,

Postmodern culture is a post-rational culture. Simply stated, while the modernist penchant for seeking rational justification for all beliefs and actions lives on in some segments of our culture, it is all but dead in the street and in the real lives of people as they make economic, political, cultural, and religious choices. Notice, for example, that few products are sold on television these days on the grounds that they are "scientifically proven." That doesn't impress the postmodern consumer. On the contrary, we are all too aware that science can prove whatever we want it to, and that rational argumentation can be used for all kinds of terrible causes. (Brian Walsh, "The Church in a Postmodern Age: Ten Things You Need to Know," in *Good Idea! A Resource Sheet on Evangelism and Church Growth* ¾ [Toronto: Wycliffe College Institute of Evangelism, 1996], 7, original emphasis bold)

changeling residents in the ivory tower get used to tripping over, ignoring, or kicking out of the way, it could become the campus launch pad for four solid years of writing instruction. Freshman composition cannot turn immature, bad writers into Nathaniel Hawthornes, Jonathan Edwardses, Tolkiens, or Spurgeons, but it can begin the process and pass the baton to others in a well-planned, homogenously Trinitarian strategy.

Intending to reinforce writing well past freshman composition, many colleges, both Christian and secular, have used Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing Across the Disciplines models for decades. Yet without an ideologically shared vision and approach amongst faculty, the results are less than optimal. The details of how this Trinitarian writing model could generate a Writing Across the Curriculum plan is outside the scope of this dissertation, yet the desired end of writing courses at Christian colleges is to accomplish the institution's purpose of raising up Christian leaders in ministry and other fields and will require a campus-wide strategic plan.

Such a plan will also reinforce faculty enriching their own fields and educational practices through de-siloing information, an approach schools, businesses, and communities are using.[7] "The danger in our teaching efforts is becoming context-bound without the facility of faculty to see beyond our immediate setting. This leads to a contextualism that fails to learn from others and to see new possibilities of what God can bring to pass. Our God beyond us provides a transcendent perspective as an alternative to contextual boundedness."[8]

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[7] Craig Bartholomew says, "A legacy of the German philosophy of the university is separate and separated disciplines, but the great need of our day is for connectivity." Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015)*,* 482.

[8] Robert W. Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 144.

One movement afoot is "makerspaces," places entrepreneurs meet to share and synthesize ideas.[9] These makerspaces (also referred to as hackerspaces, fab labs, and tech shops) let people's ideas brew with others' ideas, so new combinations emerge, along with new theories, products, services, and approaches, benefitting all the contributors. Likewise, academic disciplines benefit from cross-pollination. Scholars at Christian institutions benefit doubly when they develop makerspace-type environments—first from shared interdisciplinary ideas and second from a shared Christian substructure. Collaboration happens in the branches, trunk, and roots of the academic tree. The resulting interconnection is a tree full of disciplines (figure 20) all rooted in Scripture: "As scholars and teachers, we are called to witness to Christ *in our teaching and scholarship*. Scripture needs to become that story in which we are deeply at home so that we can begin to discern the crossroads at which the biblical story and our cultural/disciplinary story intersect."[10] John Henry Newman writes, *"*I have said that all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and the work of the Creator."[11]

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[9] Chris Anderson, *Makers: The New Industrial Revolution* (New York: Crown, 2012).

[10] Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 480-81. Dru Johnson delves into an extensive explanation of Jesus's indictment against siloing: "Scripture both indicts the siloing of our skilled knowing and prescribes communities of knowers who fully integrate the biblical story with present realities and causal relationships." Johnson adds that more specifically, "The kind of intellectual community described and prescribed throughout Scripture is one that looks beyond the surface in order to understand causal relationships that explain the Kingdom of God." As Johnson pointed out, the role of the contemporary Christian faculty is clear:

> With Solomon as Israel's über-mensch of integrative knowing, God instructs Israel to discern her cosmos by integrating these various disciplined perspectives of the world and that kind of discernment is what we are calling "transdisciplinarity." Israel seeks to understand the natural order of reality under the aegis of God, but God also demands a community who can integratively see the theological significance of these diverse symptoms and signals in the cosmos—the invisible features beyond a superficial understanding. (Dru Johnson and Jonathan Pennington, "The Role of the Bible as Wisdom for the Education of Individuals and Society" [paper presented at the Radical Christian Scholarship Conference, Houston, February 22-24, 2017], 3-4)

[11] John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ed. Frank M. Turner (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1996), 76.

Tree of Knowledge

History

Physics

Chemistry

Computer Science

Performing Arts

Psychology

Economics

Mathematics

Christian Philosophy

Theology

Political Science

Composition

Literature

A Christian Worldview

Biblical Theology

Scripture

Faith = Direction of the heart toward either the true God or an idol
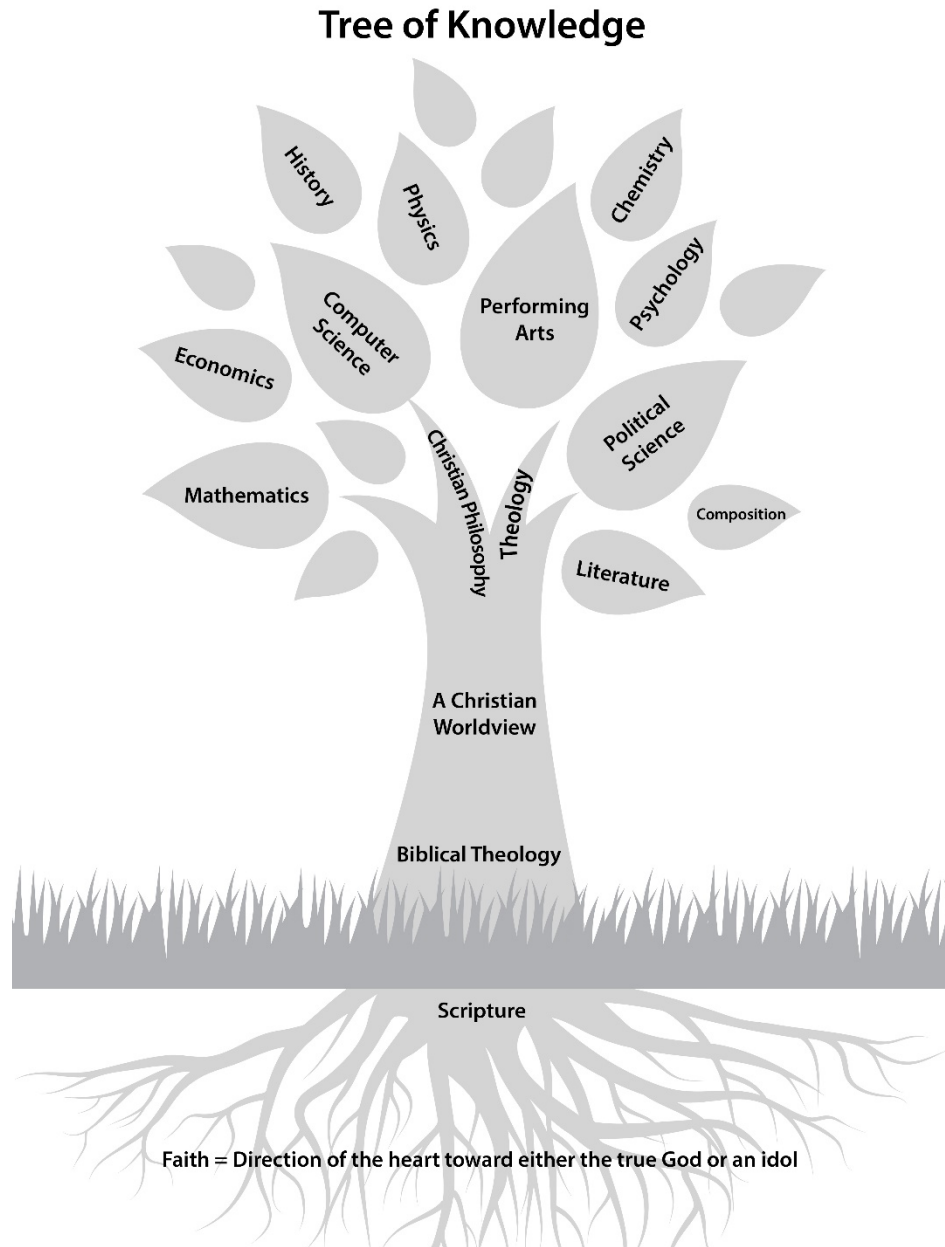
Figure 20. Craig Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge

Using the Trinitarian model, freshman composition's ideology supports the institution's mission instead of fighting against it by utilizing secular pedagogy. Writing instruction is essential to this institutional goal because great leaders are great communicators. Hydra heads 5 (battles in the field) and 6 (unloved stepchild)—poof.

Hydra Heads 7 and 8: Writing in New
Media to Reach a Post-Christian
Audience

When writing faculty collaborate with faculty in other areas, like technology and media, an interdisciplinary-sword whacks away at Hydra head 7 (technology redefining writing).

Christian writing faculty are acutely aware they are preparing students to proclaim the gospel to readers drunk on the poison of postmodernism. A Christian writing pedagogy, stocked with its arsenal of antidotes for the postmodern arsenic is at the disposal for Christian writing instructors preparing their students to enchant souls to Christ through the truth of the gospel ferried by narrative technique and the Trinitarian call to community.

Hydra Head 9: Student Dissatisfaction

With Hydra head 8 gone, the last hydra head, the least intimidating yet the most difficult to conquer, is left. Student dissatisfaction arises from antipathy for the non-existent, plastic readers who will never respond to students' writing and irritation at the speed bump of freshman composition slowing their collegiate journey with negligible rewards to show for the effort.[12] So what if they learn to use commas that are losing literary prestige or to write an example paper? Are they walking out of freshman composition more equipped for future classes, future jobs, or their future selves? The hydra head of student dissatisfaction may only be conquered one class at a time. This hydra head does not perish with one fell swoop because freshmen keep coming back; they are the one head instructors do not want to cauterize.

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[12] Charles Sykes claims, "Parents [and students] will have to hold colleges to a higher standard by asking what exactly their children are getting in return for their tuition dollars." Charles J. Sykes, *Fail U: The False Promise of Higher Education* (New York: St. Martin's, 2016), 251.

Hydra and Captain America

A modern cinematic retelling of the hydra myth casts Captain America as Hercules and a global terrorist syndicate as the Lernaean hydra.[13] The Hydra's counterpart, S.H.I.E.L.D., seeks to end Hitler's Hydra domination—or does it? Captain America ultimately defeats Hydra by unmasking neo-Nazi agents wormed within S.H.I.E.L.D.'s infrastructure. Christian writing faculty run the risk of being unwitting moles in the Christian S.H.I.E.L.D. operation by using weapons crafted by the enemy to defeat the enemy. These believing pedagogues may feel the secular tools they use to equip students are not ideal, but they have nothing stronger to offer. Like Captain America, Christian writing faculty must hunt down the hydra approaches to teaching writing embedded in their curriculum and replace them with a theologically powered pedagogy.

Just as the martial arts of taekwondo, krav maga, and jujutsu are the unique expressions of their respective Korean, Jewish, and Japanese cultures and worldviews, even so the constructionist, feminist, and deconstructionist (etc.) methods of teaching writing stem from their own pagan origins and worldviews. Why should Christians depend on their secular counterparts for writing instruction tactics when language—and certainly its verbal and written forms—is the birthright of the believer whose God is the Word and Author of the Word? This Scripture-saturated, unequivocally Trinitarian writing pedagogy is a prototype suggesting a means by which students are instructed in the art and artillery of writing from the Word, through the Word, and to the Word.[14]

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[13] Joe Johnston, dir., *Captain America: The First Avenger* (Marvel Studios, 2011); Anthony Russo and Joe Russo, dirs., *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (Marvel Studios, 2014).

[14] Creativity gurus Tom Kelley and David Kelley promote the importance of developing prototypes that could go through successive generations quickly:

> The most promising ones are advanced in iterative rounds of rapid prototypes—early, rough representations of ideas that are concrete enough for people to react to . . . exploring a range of ideas without becoming too invested in only one. . . . More and more companies in every industry are beginning to launch new products, services, or businesses in order to learn. They live in beta, and quickly iterate through new in-market loops that further refine their offering. (Tom Kelley and David

This prototype is a re-visioning of a controversial, unbeloved service course, a rethinking of writing pedagogy as a way to encourage freshman composition students and faculty to impact their world through writing. Christian composition instructors do not want their students' influence on culture restricted to a Christian audience only. Instead, writing faculty envision training students to reach new generations through writing. The difference in these two focuses—applying a Band-Aid solution so freshman composition can limp along trying to help students learn to write *or* recreating freshman composition to become a theologically fueled powerhouse producing kingdom writers—is illustrated by the Gettysburg addresses.

Redeeming Freshman Composition

On the morning of November 19, 1863, fifteen thousand people streamed onto the Gettysburg battlefield to be part of the dedication ceremony of a military cemetery. The crowds came to hear Edward Everett, a scholar, former Greek literature professor and Harvard president, governor of Massachusetts, member of Congress, and spellbinding dramatist who enthralled audiences with his carefully crafted speeches. This master rhetorician gave his Gettysburg address, comparing the battle of Gettysburg, not to a Herculean task, but to the Athenian soldiers who died at the battle of Marathon. Everett cast his spell comparing the Gettysburg battlefield-turned-cemetery to the Greek battlefield-turned-burial ground. He had chosen the perfect model for his speech— Pericles' famous funeral oration given after the first battles of the Peloponnesian war.

"As the battle fought upon the event of that day whether Greece should live, a glory and a light to all coming time, or should expire like the meteor of a moment; so the honors awarded to its martyr-heroes . . . were entombed upon the spot which they had

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Kelley, *Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential within Us All* [New York: Crown, 2013], 23-24)

The authors add this characteristic about good prototypes: "Good prototypes tell a story, and if you can get the audience to become part of that story, the prototype can be even more persuasive" (136).

forever rendered famous."[15] Everett's purpose was to transplant Greek ideals into American soil at Gettysburg, to give Americans a vision for the importance of what had taken place on that spot and what it represented. He infused Greek glory into American Gettysburg.

Everett wove logic, emotion, and a sense of community together in two hours and 13,000 words. His speech still stands at the pinnacle of a writing style he had helped make famous. A hymn played. Abraham Lincoln rose. "Lincoln brought nothing of Everett's superb background to this charged event. True, his sense of style in words was far greater than his feel for the ornaments on his Greek Revival house, but he was not aiming at Periclean effect. Yet his speech is now at least as famous as the Athenian's. That is because Lincoln was an artist, not just a scholar. Classicism of Everett's sort looks backwards; but the classic *artifact* sets standards for the future—for a whole rank (*classis)* of efforts it makes possible."[16]

Instead of portraying Gettysburg as a field where the battle was finished, Lincoln spoke of an ongoing battle—a battle to see if words like liberty could endure: "Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. . . . It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us . . . that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth." In three minutes and 272 words Lincoln forged a new type of rhetoric—crisp, terse, American.

People like Lincoln who use language effectively craft writing to *do* something.

> Lincoln does not argue law or history. . . . He *makes* history. He does not come to present a theory, but to impose a symbol, one tested in experience and appealing to

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[15] Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 214.

[16] Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 52.

national values, with an emotional urgency calmly expressed in calm abstractions (fire in ice). He came to change the world, to effect an intellectual revolution. No other words could have done it. The miracle is that these words did. In his brief time before the crowd at Gettysburg he wove a spell that has not, yet, been broken—he called up a new nation out of the blood and trauma.[17]

Are Christian institutions training students to be Everetts—fine-tuning a classicism that looks backwards instead of teaching students to write forwards, creating "classic artifacts" that set "standards for the future—for a whole rank (*classis*) of efforts it makes possible"? Are we encouraging Everetts or are we raising up Lincolns and Luthers?

Throughout this dissertation, war words and imagery are prevalent for we live on a battlefield—a battle Satan began with words about words, "Has God really said?," a battle that will be won by the One whose "name is called The Word of God" (Rev 19:13). The battle against the freshman composition hydra looks like a small skirmish in the scope of a cosmic war. But, here on this site—the classrooms of freshman writing instruction—larger battles will be won or lost. Not the final battle; its outcome is fixed, but the many battles that will be fought until then. Will Christian institutions equip Lincolns, for whom "words were weapons . . . even though he meant them to be weapons of peace in the midst of war"?[18] We long for peace because we live on the battleground of a cosmic war, and "the whole earth is the sepulcher of illustrious men."[19]

In this battle-weary world, waves of hydra-like conflicts and ideologies will come and go. Now is the time for reinvigorating writing training on Christian college campuses because the culture is desperately in need of writers and pastors and speakers to fight on the battlefield of ideas not for a mythological hero, but for the true, eternal King and His everlasting kingdom. May Christian writing faculty achieve through their

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[17] Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg,* 174-75.

[18] Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg,* 174.

[19] This phrase of Pericles's is one Everett used in his Gettysburg Address. Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg,* 246-47.

students what Winston Churchill did while leading England in World War II: "He mobilized the English language and sent it into battle."[20]

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[20] Gary Shapiro, "How Churchill Mobilized the English Language," *New York Sun*, June 12, 2012, http://www.nysun.com/new-york/how-churchill-mobilized-the-english-language/87862/. Edward Murrow said this on November 30, 1954, in a CBS Broadcast. John F. Kennedy borrowed the line.

CHAPTER 15

CHRISTIAN WRITING PEDAGOGY BEYOND
FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

Armed with the research that produced the writing triquetra and the nexus dance, I marched into the battlefield of freshman composition with a renewed vision and purpose. The original model I proposed, called the writing triquetra (chapters 6-13), showed the undergirding theological and philosophical possibilities of writing instruction and attempted to push that theory into classroom practice with the "nexus dance," the layered iceberg in the middle of the model (see figure 153 in chapter 13).[1]

In the five years since completing chapters 2-14, I have become more and more convinced that the need to create a Christian writing pedagogy, not merely a theological and philosophical foundation for teaching writing is vital to develop Christian writers *and* thinkers. My consistent first-day-of-class exhortation that "writing is a doxological activity with a theological foundation" ultimately lacked traction as I tried to connect the model to the curriculum I used for the rest of the semester. The first iteration of the research begun in 2015 that focused on the theological and philosophical writing triquetra simply did not flow effectively to course content for the rest of the semester. More research was needed to move the model from the abstract to the concrete. In working through the research doctoral seminars at The Southern Baptist Theological

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[1] Jonathan Pennington, who at the time I finished chaps. 1-14 in 2017 served as director of Research Doctoral Studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, invited me to a conference on "transdisciplinarity," a term Eric Johnson and Craig Bartholomew coined to describe an alternative to integration, rebuilding disciplines from a biblical and theological base. Jonathan Pennington, Dru Johnson, Kevin Vanhoozer, Eric Johnson, Craig Bartholomew, and others were exploring avenues of Christian scholarship moving beyond integration of faith and learning, and I wondered whether that kind of rebuilding could be done with writing, the field of composition and rhetoric. Their work was instrumental to me in developing the writing triquetra, introduced in chap. 6, "Designing a Pedagogy: The Method."

Seminary, I began to understand how to push theory into practice as I revisited the applicability of doctrines like *imago Dei* and included other ones I had not previously considered, like embodiment (thanks to Gregg Allison at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary).

As opportunities arose to work collaboratively with academics interested in researching innovative Christian pedagogy,[2] I became doubly energized to apply what I was learning with them about innovation in education to writing pedagogy specifically. As we worked together examining the theological and philosophical underpinnings of innovation, I chiseled away at the question of how the writing triquetra I had proposed could translate into training Christian writers more effectively and at multiple levels of expertise.

The collaboration with innovative educators generated the idea of a multi-dimensional writing model, and I wondered if it would be possible to crawl inside the writing triquetra, my original prototype. What could be seen from the inside looking out that I was missing looking at the two-dimensional model on paper? My daughter had told me that when she struggled with the concept of T chair conformation, which are rings of carbon atoms, her biochemistry professor told her that she was missing the concept because she was looking at it two-dimensionally instead of three-dimensionally. He built a colorful, three-dimensional model, using a LEGO-like biochemistry kit, and the concept became quite obvious. What if, likewise, the writing triquetra could be multi-dimensional and colorful, opening up new possibilities for thinking about writing pedagogy?

What follows is the next step in the progression of developing a writing pedagogy designed for professors who teach writing courses as well as those who coach

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[2] This cross-disciplinary group of Christian academics working on innovative education together included Jonathan Arnold, Kylah Clark-Goff, Jenn Kintner, Shane Parker, Zach Souter, Terri Stovall, Jaquelynn Pleis, Michael Wilder, and Trevor Yoakum. Jonathan Pennington, Dru Johnson, Craig Bartholomew, Gregg Allison, and others, gave invaluable insights in person and via Zoom sessions. Anthony Foster supplied enormous assistance in exploring extant literature.

writers at all levels. Some of those professors have much more theological training than I have and others less, but the following chapter is written for those writing professors and coaches who have not deeply considered how Christian theology and philosophy impact writing pedagogy.[3]

While my research completed in 2017 (chapters 1-14) analyzed the state of freshman composition courses and then offered a theological foundation for a writing pedagogy, the research in chapter 16 is aimed at writing instruction from undergraduate to doctoral levels, from freshman composition classes to PhD seminars, from remedial writing to dissertation coaching.

Also included in chapter 16 is a revised version of the writing triquetra, a more three-dimensional version, but this time, I am not convinced it is a finished model, but the latest iteration, ready to be test-driven, improved, and road-tested again.

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[3] I have been working on a specific writing curriculum for students called *Pencil's Progress*, emerging from this writing model research I have been doing the last decade. The final pages of the dissertation serve as an explanation of how *Pencil's Progress* curricularizes this dissertation research.

CHAPTER 16

OF GLASS AND GLORY: HOW TRINITARIAN
DOCTRINE ILLUMINES THE ART
OF WRITING

Newest Iteration of the Triquetra Model

I was saved at an early age, but not until I was providentially introduced to the giants—those mighty Christians who chronicled their spiritual courses and the glories they beheld by gazing upon Jesus in their earthly races—did I begin to pursue Christ in earnest. The giants' pages became the pavement of my Christian walk, and I longed to enlist in the ranks of these titans and inspire others to follow the path of the faithful to the Faithful One.

Becoming an English and writing professor at Christian institutions seemed like an ideal setting. Afterall, students would go on to become professional Christian communicators, so teaching them was an opportunity for me to call others to join the giants. But my "inspirational teaching" felt much more like instruction on how to formulate messages, preserve them with packing peanuts of correct punctuation, ready to be shipped error-free for grading, and much less like my hope of motivating students to see their writing as a way of contributing to human flourishing.

I first heard the phrase "integration of faith and learning" in 1990. I had been trained at secular institutions and as a relatively young believer in Jesus, I was idealistic about what it would be like to teach at a Christian institution. I was energized by the vision of inspiring the next generation of professional Christian communicators.

I started questioning my teaching methodology and tried to incorporate more creativity and different assignments in the classroom. These tactics aided student

engagement, but the sense that I was missing the point as a Christian writing educator only intensified. I began looking past my pedagogical methodology to its philosophy. Like other Christian graduate students who attend secular schools and go on to become faculty at Christian institutions, I taught my discipline—its content, assumptions, pedagogy—the way I was taught, passing on the secular version of writing instruction to my students but in a "Christian" classroom on a Christian campus.[1] The problem, Alvin Plantiga points out, is that instead of producing Christian scholarship, I was integrating Christian faith and with secular learning, essentially passing on a secular version of the field in a Christian setting.[2]

I began asking whether writing—everything from freshman composition to doctoral dissertations—could be taught at Christian institutions in a significantly different way than at secular institutions. Is there more to Christian writing courses than praying at the start of class, using Christian terms, encouraging Christian views in papers, and possibly giving grace on assignments submitted late?

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[1] Craig Bartholomew claims, "It is not unusual to have faculty [at Christian institutions] who have studied at the premier secular universities of our day but who lack intimate knowledge of Scripture, let alone knowledge of how Scripture functions authoritatively in their discipline. . . . The million-dollar question that follows from the above is *how* Scripture functions authoritatively in relation to academia and particular disciplines." Craig Bartholomew, "The Bible and the University" (paper presented at the Radical Christian Scholarship Conference, Houston, February 22-24, 2017), 4. Alvin Plantinga identifies the problem of Christian scholars graduating from secular institutions:

> [They] continue to think about and work on . . . topics [deemed important to the field]. And it is natural, furthermore, for her [a secularly trained Christian philosopher] to work on them in the way she was taught to, thinking about them in the light of the assumptions made by her mentors and in terms of currently accepted ideas as to what a philosopher should start from or take for granted, what requires argument and defense, and what a satisfying philosophical explanation or a proper resolution to a philosophical question is like. (Alvin Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 1, no. 3 [July 1984]: 255)

[2] Plantiga writes,

> I deeply believe that the pattern displayed in [the field of] philosophy is also to be found in nearly every area of serious intellectual endeavor. In each of these areas the fundamental and often unexpressed presuppositions that govern and direct the discipline are not religiously neutral; they are often antithetic to a Christian perspective. . . . It is up to Christians who practice the relevant discipline to develop the right Christian alternatives. (Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers," 2).

How can Christian professors teach writing *Christianly* instead of relying on secular methods springing directly from secular philosophies unconscious of the gospel at best and antagonistic to it at worst?[3]

While wrestling with this question, I met a professor from a large evangelical university responsible for helping all his colleagues on campus integrate faith and learning into their classes. Here was an expert who was coaching faculty about the very thing I wanted to do. I asked him how he helped writing professors to integrate faith and learning.

"I don't," he answered. "Writing is a skill; you can't integrate faith and learning when you're teaching a skill."

He turned away as bumfuzzled by my question as I was by his answer.

Most educators and educational institutions agree with that professor. Unlike other disciplines that can be reconsidered from a Christian theology and philosophy,[4] writing is merely a skill, albeit a necessary one, which helps students organize ideas and communicate information. Writing is therefore a competency needed for college courses as well as jobs after graduation. Professors, who are professional academic writers, think more pragmatically about academic writing as a means of sharing ideas with others in

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[3] Bartholemew writes, "Philosophical scaffolding is always in place when academic construction is being done, even if scholars are not aware of it: always an epistemology is assumed, always some ontology is taken for granted, always some view of the human person is in mind. . . . Many contemporary scholars seem blissfully unaware of philosophy behind their own work." Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 216. George Guthrie explains, "Whether a person approaches research as a pragmatist, hedonist, naturalist, behaviorist, Marxist, Christian, or one with no readily identifiable worldview, presuppositions are in place and have a profound effect on the way one thinks about research and conclusions." George H. Guthrie, "The Authority of Scripture," in *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundation of Christian Higher Education*, ed. David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 21.

[4] Craig Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge offers a model for how scholars in all disciplines can rethink their fields from a Christian perspective. The Tree shows how all academic disciplines share a common root (Scripture), trunk (biblical theology and Christian worldview), and two major branches (Christian philosophy and systematic theology), which serve as metadisciplines impacting all other disciplines. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 476-77.

their field. To launch new ideas into their field's arena requires delivering those ideas in some written form—a conference paper, a journal article, lectures notes, or a book.

When viewed as only a skill, writing is simply a means of delivering ideas from Person A to Person B, an Amazon box, the utilitarian purpose of which is to ship ideas—clearly, succinctly, and intact—without those ideas being misconstrued. Writing becomes *information transportation*. The faster and more efficiently a writer delivers a box of information the better. Once the box does its job of keeping its content—the real stuff—organized, undamaged, and efficiently delivered, it heads to the recycle bin, and the process starts over again. If Christian writing professors' goal is to develop competent writers and those writers are Christians and out of the overflow of the heart the hand types, is there any real problem with teaching writing as a skill?

But what if the integration of faith and learning consultant with whom I spoke was wrong and there is more to Christian writing instruction than developing competent writers? While the Amazon box may work as a metaphor for a secular view of writing, for Christians, whose God is the Word, writing is the most sacred of arts. For Christians, writing is not a recyclable Amazon box, it is a jewel case. The loveliness of the box honors the treasure it holds, much like the Sainte-Chapelle chapel in Paris, monikered "the jewel box" (see figures 21 and 22).

King Louis IX built this jewel box between 1242–1248 to house Christ's crown of thorns and twenty-one other holy relics.[5] The jewel box is a two-storied chapel, and Louis could walk directly from his royal apartments along a corridor to enter the upper chapel, but today visitors to the Sainte-Chapelle climb a spiral staircase from the lower chapel where palace staff worshiped to the upper level of the chapel that resembles

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[5] Laurence de Finance, *The Sainte-Chapelle Palais de la Cite*, *editions du patrimoine* (Paris: Centre des Monuments Nationaux, 1999), 5. In 1239, Louis IX purchased from the Emperor of Constantinople what was believed to be Jesus's crown of thorns, hoping to turn Paris into the "New Jerusalem" with the purchase of the crown and other Passion relics. He then built the Sainte-Chapelle as a reliquary to house the crown and other relics. Jerzy Pysiak, "Saint Louis as a New David and Paris as a New Jerusalem in Medieval French Hagiographic Literature," in *The Character of David in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Marzena Zawanowska and Mateusz Wilk (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 163-64.

"paradise."[6] King Louis IX's "contemporaries described walking into it as if they were being 'introduced into one of Heaven's most beautiful rooms.'"[7] The chapel's footprint is not much bigger than a college basketball court,[8] yet stained-glass windows soar up five stories from the floor "creat[ing] a feeling of entry into the new Heavenly Jerusalem, bathed in light and colour."[9]
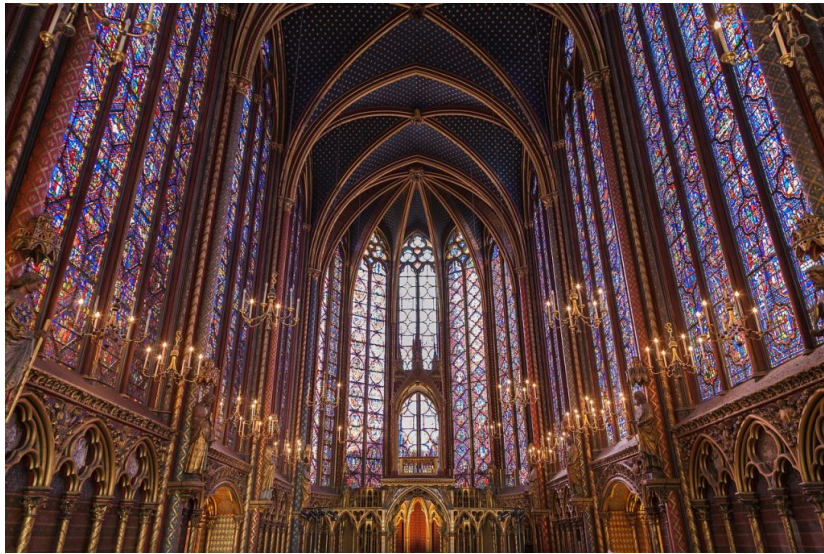
Figure 21. The Sainte-Chapelle in Paris (upper chapel)[10]

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[6] In 1323, "Jean de Jandun compared the building to Paradise itself." Meredith Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy: Royal Architecture in Thirteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Cambridge University, 2015), 66.

[7] *Sainte-Chapelle Palais de la Cite*, 2.

[8] A college basketball court is 94' long by 50' wide; the chapel is 118' long by 56' wide. *The Sainte-Chapelle Palais de la Cite*, 6.

[9] Centre des Monuments Nationaux, "Sainte-Chapelle," accessed February 19, 2023, https://www.sainte-chapelle.fr/en/.

[10] Centre des Monuments Nationaux, "Sainte-Chapelle."

Figure 22. The Sainte-Chapelle (lower chapel)[11]

Entering the jewel box of the Sainte-Chapelle, worshipers are ensconced by an unfolding story—stained glass windows narrate over 1,134 intricate scenes from Genesis to Revelation, meant to be read from the bottom up, so that one's gaze—and heart—are continually pulled heavenward.[12]

By fashioning an extraordinary jewel box for the jewelless crown, the craftsmen of the Sainte-Chapelle created a space to foster contemplation of Christ's atoning work (see figure 23 below). Likewise, are Christian writing professors training students to craft jewel boxes reflective of the most precious and sacred truths they contain or to assemble information storage containers?

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[11] Guilhem Vellut, photograph, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sainte-Chapelle#/media/File:Statue_of_Saint-Louis_@_Chapelle_Basse_@_Sainte-Chapelle_@_Paris_(29950007012).jpg.

[12] De Finance, *Sainte-Chapelle Palais de la Cite*, 5. De Finance writes, "The atmosphere of a cathedral or church was meant to draw people toward a higher realm." Christopher A. Tiegreen, "Heaven on Earth in Medieval Europe: Material Expressions of an Immaterial Realm" (PhD diss., Georgia State University, 2021), 1. Tiegreen adds, "This journey toward heaven-like experiences was not merely a matter of the visitor's own construction. It was crafted by centuries of semiotic evolution in which all sorts of symbols—visual, auditory, tactile, most of them thoroughly sensory and experiential—expressed heavenly themes" (2).

Figure 23. Visitors of the Sainte-Chapelle gaze heavenward toward stars on the blue night sky of the ceiling above.[13]

Figure 24: Construction of a medieval cathedral[14]

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[13] Mitya Ivanov, photograph, May 3, 2019, http://unsplash.com/s/photos/saint-chapelle?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditCopyText.

[14] Getty Images, artwork.

Every writer's work is a space into which readers enter, and spaces crafted with intentionality and care transform the reader within their pages. Christians should strive to have their work reflect the treasure their writing honors—Christ. Christians do well when their content is Christ-honoring; they do better when their means of conveying that content is honoring to him as well. We do not want to merely teach students to build Christian-labeled Amazon boxes. The means by which Christians approach writing should be different than their secular counterparts, and that difference is comprised of nine Trinitarian-based principles which can guide Christian writers in creating written works that are distinctly Christian. Like the medieval cathedral craftsmen who built sacred spaces which even today tug people's eyes and hearts heavenward, Christian authors can use nine Trinitarian principles based on God's character, God's Word, and God's authority to craft sacred spaces in which readers engage with God.

Writing Principles Based on God's Character, Word, and Authority

Nine writing principles can be drawn from the Trinitarian nature of God at the heart of the Christian gospel. The fact that God is One in three persons is the identifying mark of Christianity. The three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit— have for all eternity reveled in relationship with each other, and out of the overflow of that relationship, God shares relationship with others.[15] Thus, all relationships are rooted in the Trinity's community and communication.[16] God's communication "is necessarily

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[15] Michael Reeves writes, "If God had not a communicative, spreading goodness, he would never have created the world. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were happy in themselves, and enjoyed one another before the world was. Apart from the fact that God delights to communicate and spread his goodness, there [would have] . . . never been a creation or redemption." Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012)*, 48.

[16] Kevin J. Vanhoozer explains,

From a Christian perspective, God is first and foremost a communicative agent, one who relates to humankind through words and the Word. Indeed, God's very being is a self-communicative act that both constitutes and enacts the covenant of discourse: speaker (Father), Word (Son), and reception (Spirit) are all interrelated. Human communication is a similarly covenantal affair, though we cannot pour ourselves into our communicative acts and ensure their effects as God can through his Word and Spirit. Humans have the dignity of communicative agency, though not its perfection. (Kevin J.

and completely trinitarian,"[17] and therefore human communication is too.[18] Figure 25 illustrates vital connection points between God's character, Word, and authority with the communication triad of writer, text, and reader.[19]

Tucked inside the inner triangle is the Irish Trinity knot, the triquetra, where God's character, Word, and authority converge to inform how the Trinity affects writing and how it is possible to teach writing Christianly.

Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998], 456-57)

[17] Michael Reeves, "The Trinity and Preaching," in *The Essential Trinity: New Testament Foundations and Practical Relevance*, ed. Brandon D. Crowe and Carl R. Trueman (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2016), 293.

[18] Vanhoozer articulates the role of the Trinity in communication: "God is the one who communicates himself—Father, Son, and Spirit—to others. . . . *The triune God is communicative agent (Father/author), action (Word/text), and result (Spirit/power of reception).* I propose that we take God's Trinitarian self-communication as the paradigm of what is involved in all true communication. Scripture certainly portrays God, in contrast to dumb idols, as a speaking God." Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in Text?*, 199.

[19] K. Allan, "Speech Act Theory: Overview," in *Concise Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Language*, ed. Peter V. Lamarque (Oxford: Pergamon, 1997), 454-55. J. L. Austin's speech act theory proposes that communication has three parts: (1) the locutor/locution, the speaker (or writer) and his/her intended meaning; (2) illocution, what the speaker *does* by speaking or writing—"states a fact . . . confirms or denies something, makes a prediction, a promise, a request, offers thanks or an invitation"; and (3) perlocution, how the listener (or reader) receives the message or the words' effect. Vanhoozer uses speech act theory to explain communication in the Trinity:

> God is a speaking God. . . . Most of what God does—creating, warning, commanding, promising, forgiving, informing, comforting, etc.—is accomplished by speech acts. . . . Speech act theory serves as handmaiden to a Trinitarian theology of communication. If the Father is the locutor, the Son is his preeminent illocution. Christ is God's definitive Word, the substantive content of his message. And the Holy Spirit—the reason that his words do not return to him empty (Isa. 55:11). The triune God is therefore the epitome of communicative agency: the speech agent who utters, embodies, and keeps his Word. Human speakers, created in God's image, enjoy the dignity of communicative agency, though as sinners their speech acts (and interpretations) are subject to all the imperfections and distortions that characterize human fallenness. (Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in Text?*, 457)
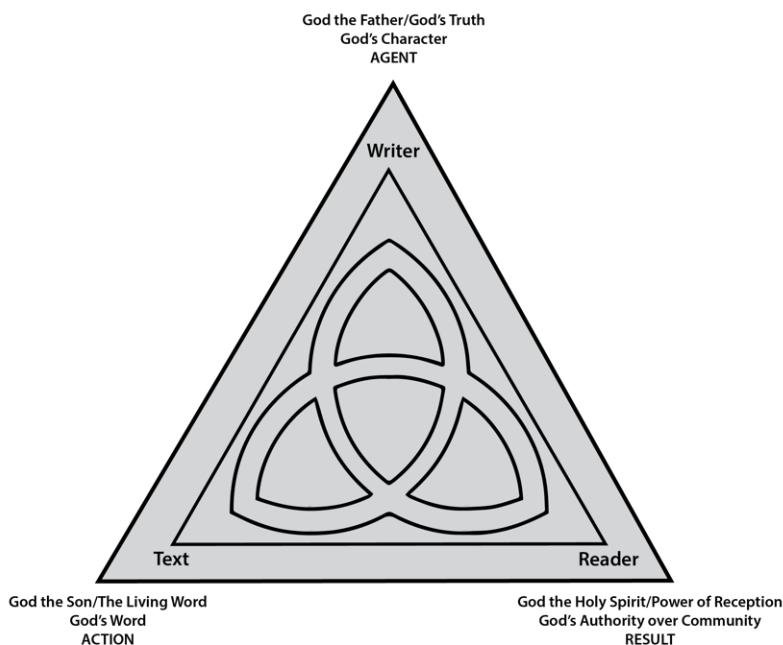
Figure 25. God's character, Word, and authority converge
to inform Christian writing

Because writing reflects Trinitarian activity,[20] the art and craft of sculpting

words and sentences into paragraphs and pages that ultimately point to the "author and

perfector of our faith" (Heb 12:2) is to "participate in the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4) and

revel in who He is.[21] "God chooses to use words as a fundamental means of relating to

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[20] Vanhoozer writes, "Language . . . should be seen as the most important means and medium of communication and communion." Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in Text?*, 205. George Steiner makes a similar point: "Man is the 'language-animal' as he is defined in both the Hebraic and the Greek vision." . George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991), 59. Steiner later uses the phrase "the utter centrality of language-acts within the humaneness of what is human," emphasizing the language-ness of humans (84). The triquetra uses equilateral triangles because "equilateral triangles were a symbol of the Trinity." Otto von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1988), 18.

[21] Vanhoozer says, "What here comes to the fore is the sheer generosity of the triune God in the free determination to include human creatures as recipients of the Father's love in the Son through the Spirit. The good news is that Father and Son agree to share the loving communion that is the perfection of their own life with others." Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*: *Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (New York: Cambridge University, 2010), 272. He adds, "participation in God is ultimately a matter of 'fitting' into forms of triune communicative activity" (272). The wording "author and perfector of our faith" is from Heb 12:2 (NASB). Michael Reeves explains how preachers participate in the divine nature: "As Luther put it, God the Father is an eternal preacher, and thus preaching finds its ultimate rationale and shape in the very nature of God. . . . When by the Spirit a preacher holds out God's Word, he proclaims more than a message: he participates in the divine life, wielding the very power of God to raise dead sinners to enjoy the loving life of God." Reeves, "The Trinity and Preaching," 307. Applying

us, we must presume, because the kind of relationship he chooses to establish cannot be established without them," writes Ward.[22] Therefore, the first leaf of the triquetra encourages writers to exercise their craft in light of God's character as it is revealed in the transcendentals of goodness, beauty, and truth. God's character of goodness inspires writers to be "living letters." God's character of beauty inspires writers to explore the fusion of simplicity and complexity. God's character of truth inspires writers to be creative within orthodoxy (see figure 26).

Leaf No. 1: The Writer's Life
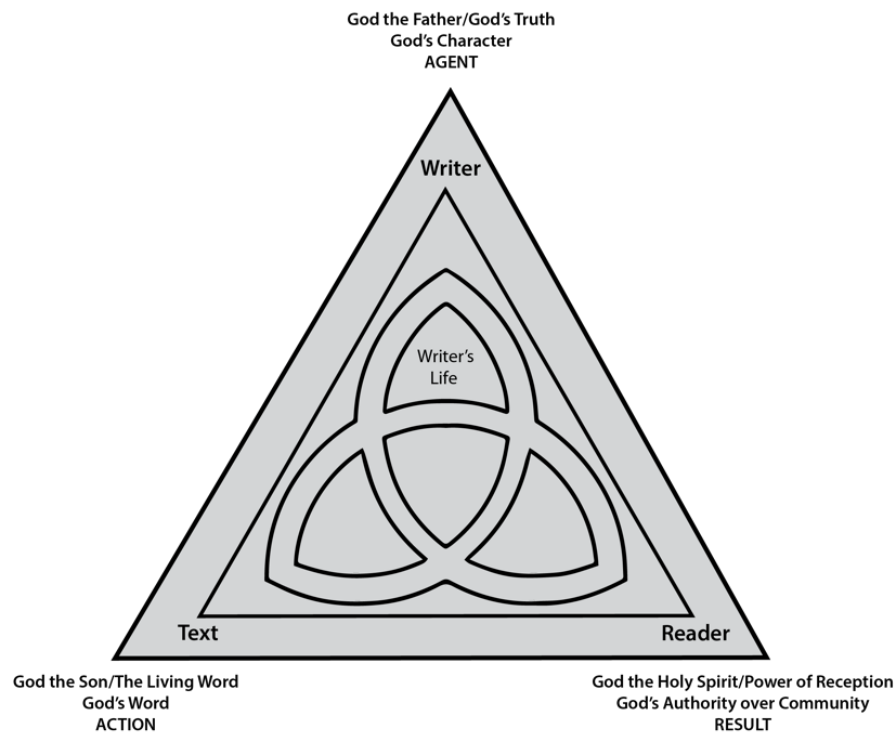
Figure 26. The writer's life reflects goodness, truth, and beauty

Reeves's idea to writers, God the Son is the eternal Word, and thus writing finds its ultimate rationale and shape in the very nature of God . . . . When by the Spirit a writer holds out God's Word, he proclaims more than a message: he participates in the divine life. Reeves, "The Trinity and Preaching," 307.

[22] Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 31. Conversely, people communicate with or about God using words. People "cannot do without words in commending Christ." John Piper, *Seeing Beauty and Saying Beautifully: The Power of Poetic Effort in the Work of George Herbert, George Whitefield, and C. S. Lewis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 18.

"This hill though high I covent ascend;
The difficulty will not me offend;
For I perceive the way of life lies here.
Come, pluck up, heart; let's neither faint nor fear."

The Pilgrim's Progress[23]

The first writing principle in leaf no. 1 is represented in figure 27.

Figure 27. Icon representing writing principle 1

Writing Principle 1: The Writer's Life

Encircling the Sainte-Chapelle's roof and steeple are alternating pinnacles and gables designed to look like a crown, providing "a visual cue for the royal relic," the royal treasure, the chapel was built to house.[24] Similarly, Christian writing should give cues to the treasure of Christ and His reign in the writing and in the writer's life: "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are Christ's letter . . . written . . . with the Spirit of the living God" (2 Cor 3:2). Writing Christianly begins with the writer tapping into biblical truth from a life reveling in the Godhead.

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[23] John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress: From This World to That Which is to Come*, ed. Roger Pooley (London: Penguin, 2008), 46.

[24] Cohen, *Sainte-Chapelle and Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 67.

Figure 28. The pinnacles and gables alternate to form a crown[25]

For those who write to inspire and teach others to do the same, a profound awareness and priority of the writer abiding in Christ (John 15:45) and walking with Him in a manner worthy of the gospel (Phil 1:27) is essential in pointing readers to God's character, truth, and authority.[26]

Figure 29. Icon representing writing principle 2

[25] Hannah Wilson, photograph, https://www.parisperfect.com/blog/2017/07/sainte-chapelle-stained-glass/.

[26] Jeremy Begbie lectured on how Bach created rich complexity from simplicity. Jeremy Begbie, "Bach: Simplicity, Diversity, and the Trinity," New College Lecture Series 2010: Music, Modernity and God, New College, University of New South Wales, Sydney, September 14, 2010, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-QZgH8-64g. Roy Zuck states, "Evangelical Christian education is the Christ-centered, Bible-based, pupil-related process of communicating God's written Word through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of leading pupils to Christ and building them up in Christ." Roy Zuck, *Spiritual Power in Your Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 9. Stephen Fowl writes that "the ecclesially based university provides a distinct context within which Christians can be introduced to the habits, practices, and dispositions that will enable them to think Christianly across the entire spectrum of knowledge. There is no aspect of knowing that Christians can rule out of bounds." Stephen Fowl, "The Role of Scripture in an Ecclesially Based University," in *Conflicting Allegiances: The Church-Based University in a Liberal Democratic Society*, ed. Michael Budde and John Wesley Wright (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004), 172.

**Writing Principle 2: The Beauty of Fusing
Linear Simplicity and Mosaic
Complexity in Writing**

The second principle of writing belonging under God's character is beauty, specifically the beauty created when linear simplicity and mosaic complexity are combined.[27] Writing courses in Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries typically focus on developing logical arguments. While effective argumentation provides academic writing with essential structure and coherence, readers are often left unaffected because the power of the argument hides behind stilted language devoid of engaging beauty. In contrast, the Sainte-Chapelle combines structural precision with complex aesthetics, so much so that as architects and artists synthesized their crafts at the Sainte-Chapelle, "this aesthetic preference led to daring solutions,"[28] like replacing stone walls with tall stained-glass windows. While the footprint of Notre Dame Cathedral is over ten times the size of the Sainte-Chapelle's footprint, the Sainte-Chapelle's upper chapel, the "jewel box," houses more than six times the amount of stained glass in Notre Dame.[29] The Sainte-Chapelle is visible evidence of engineers designing a masterpiece with formulaic precision in which craftsmen unfurled the biblical stories with unhindered artistic complexity.

Although academic writing instruction focuses on engineering clear arguments, neuroscience and the Bible both demonstrate people learn through more than logical arguments alone. Iain McGilchrist in his seminal work, *The Master and His Emissary*,

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[27] Giorgio Vasari explains, "The Divine Architect of time and nature, Himself all-perfect, designed, to instruct us . . . in the true method of attaining perfection, by repeatedly diminishing and adding to; as the best sculptors and painters are wont to do." Giorgio Vasari, "Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects," in *The Bloomsbury Anthology of Aesthetics*, ed. Joseph Tanke and Colin McQuillan (New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), 85.

[28] Cohen, *Sainte-Chapelle and Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 67, 75.

[29] "Sainte Chapelle, Paris," *Art Encyclopedia*, European Architecture Series, accessed February 28, 2023, http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/architecture/sainte-chapelle.htm. Centre des Monuments de Nationaux, "Sainte-Chapelle by Eric Whitacre," accessed March 31, 2023, https://www.sainte-chapelle.fr/en/News/Sainte-Chapelle-by-Eric-Whitacre.

argues the two sides of the brain offer uniquely different perspectives on the world.[30] The left hemisphere is like a tower viewer in a national park overlook—it blocks out the wider periphery, allowing viewers to zoom in on a specific area of interest. Where the left hemisphere zooms in for a closer look and analyzes smaller pieces, the right hemisphere zooms out to gain a big perspective, to make a mosaic, a meaningful whole. Expanding on McGilchrist's idea, Eleonore Stump personifies the brain's left and right hemispheres by comparing them with a medieval priest and a medieval friar—Dominic and Francis. Dominic, who history and legend remember as one who favored logical argument to reveal truth, dissected theological ideas to find their logical structure.[31] Francis is revered for his means of conveying truth through story and metaphor.[32]

The Dominican thought process builds boundaries and paves roads by erecting logical constructs and cutting out ambiguous forms so that others can follow the trail of thought easily and effortlessly. The Franciscan way of thinking creates big-picture significance. It relies on stories and pictures to convey meaning and has great power to be "evocative, memorable, and illuminating."[33]

The Franciscan thought process is much less a series of connected, logically planned roads and side-rails and much more like a forest ecosystem in which bees and

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[30] Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, new expanded ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2019), 3. McGilchrist argues the two sides of the brain offer uniquely different perspectives on the world. Jonathan Pennington explains that McGilchrist "argues that our brain hemispheres are different but not in making us logical or creative personality types, but in what kind of attention we give to the world. In all people the two hemispheres of our brain attend to the world in different ways: the left brain focuses on analysis and details while the right brain is where our minds make sense of the whole, creating a picture of understanding." Jonathan Pennington, "McGilchrist, Our Brain Hemispheres, and Neuro-Pedagogy," guest lecture notes for Theology, Philosophy, and History of Pedagogy (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ft. Worth, TX, January 6-7, 2022), 2.

[31] Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2012), 43.

[32] Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 44.

[33] Jonathan T. Pennington, "A Gospels-Centric Rhizomatic Approach—A Thought Experiment" (unpublished article, n.d.), 7.

flowers and trees and streams are all interconnected in one glowing, glorious whole but in which no lines of delineation are apparent. Jonathan Pennington clarifies,

> These two ways of knowing [Dominican and Franciscan] are complementary and both are beneficial. The basic point is that while we need both kinds of knowing, paradoxically and unexpectedly from an analytic (and especially modern) perspective, the vague but intuitive Franciscan approach can be more accurate . . . than the Dominican, in the case when the thing being characterized is not amenable to crisp definition and precision (such as with the problem of suffering).[34]

These two ways of knowing, of relating truth, are both used extensively and in rich layers throughout Scripture. For example, in the book of Acts, the new convert, soon to become known as Paul, relies heavily on this type of Dominican thought in his preaching: "[Saul] proclaimed Jesus saying, 'He is the Son of God,'. . . . and confounded the Jews . . . by proving that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 9:19, 22 ESV). John the apostle has the same goal and states that his letter "is written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God," yet he takes a more Franciscan route to reveal this truth by offering readers the meat of metaphor seasoned with story and giving intriguing affective glimpses into the person of Jesus as well as the emotional responses of those encountering him. Conversely, Paul also uses Franciscan weaponry in his writing arsenal, and John recounts Christ's life with marked strains of Dominican logic, showing biblical authors employed both types of thinking (and writing) to convey truth and persuade readers to trust God. Christian writers today are compelled to do the same.

In a culture which relies heavily on the Dominican pattern of thinking,[35] believing writers must be attentive to forage in the Franciscan forest for metaphors, stories, similes, and other means of engaging readers' hearts and imaginations as well as

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[34] Pennington, "A Gospels-Centric Rhizomatic Approach," 7.

[35] McGilchrist argues that the left-hemisphere is acting as the emissary in Western culture instead of serving its role as servant to the right-hemisphere perspective. McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*, 14.

their minds.[36] In other words, Christian writers have the delight of planting a Franciscan forest with an array of dizzying colors and dimensions that surprise, astound, and move readers all the while guiding them on a paved Dominican trail, helping them stay tethered to orthodoxy.[37]

These two ways of knowing—Dominican and Franciscan—need not compete; instead, they can interpenetrate, as the Sainte-Chapelle's architecture illustrates. The Romans used rounded arches, but Gothic architects innovatively increased the height of the arch by changing the rounded top to a pointed one, allowing for larger spaces. Since the flying buttresses and stone vaulting of medieval architecture shouldered the immense weight of buildings, the walls were almost superfluous. The Sainte-Chapelle's architect experimented with how much wall could be removed and replaced with stained-glass windows.[38]

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[36] Scott Kay explains,

Imagination brings you inside a story, a scene, a situation, a concept, an idea so that you can bring it alive, participate in it, interact with it, experience it first hand, see things from another perspective, from beneath the surface, as a means of gaining insight and understanding, and of discerning and responding appropriately to the reality or fiction of it. Imagination assists understanding as well as faith, and is often preparatory for it, in ways that bare intellectual argument cannot, carrying a person into a truth more effectively than a direct line of reason" (Scott Kay, interview by author, Prosper, TX, February 19, 2023).

[37] As Stump explains, "Narrative has a role to play in the discussion of certain philosophical issues, and what it contributes is not reducible to non-narrative philosophical explanation or expressible in non-narrative philosophical prose." Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 21. She adds, "There are things that we can know that are philosophically significant but that are difficult or impossible to know and express apart from stories" (40). Begbie resonates with the Franciscan/Dominican idea. He says we consider disorder as destructive and order as fruitful. But Begbie suggests a third option he calls "non-order" or "the jazz factor," a term he borrows from an uncited source. He defines it as "something that is unpredictable and not regular but is nonetheless nondestructive." Jeremy Begbie, "Jeremy Begbie: Theology through the Arts," *Leadership Education at Duke Divinity*, accessed March 23, 2023, YourTube, 5:54-6:38, https://youtu.be/UlR3bOsoAdA.

[38] Jonathan Jones writes,

Although made of stone, a Gothic church is actually a structure of arched scaffolding with walls slung between it—the walls carry no weight. A final touch of genius is the use of exterior flying buttresses, again using the principle of the arch, to permit even more daring extensions of height. All this is visible in its most pristine form at Saint-Chapelle. Here, the architect . . . experiments boldly. If the walls can be perforated with huge areas of stained glass, why not take that as far as it can go?" (Jonathan Jones, "Saint-Chapelle's Miracle of Light," *The Guardian,* March 11, 2009, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2009/mar/11/saint-chapelle-paris-gothic-architecture)
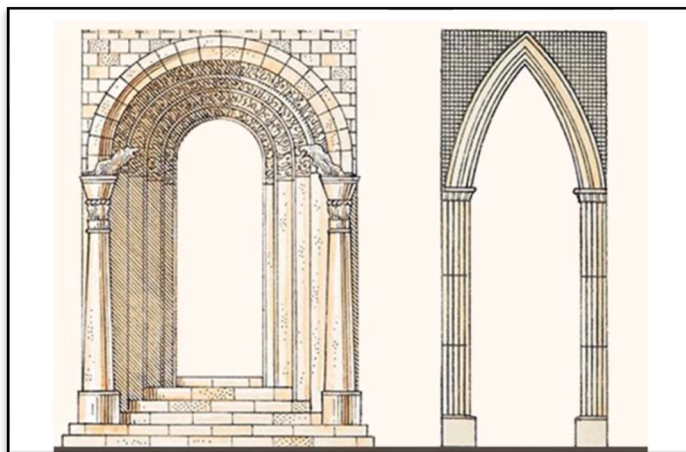
Figure 30. Roman rounded arch (left) and Gothic pointed arch (right)[39]

The external arched buttresses and interior slender support columns are like an argument's outline, its logic, giving structure to writing.[40] The innovative Gothic engineering of the stone arches create soaring space for stained-glass mosaics to dance with sunlight in storied truth.

In writing, beautifully engineered logic creates space for knowing through metaphors, pictures, and stories.[41] Christian writers can invite readers into Sainte-Chapelles of writing, bathed in the light of truth and the glory of God through both structural clarity and artistic expression. The Bible is the ultimate picture of beauty in structural simplicity

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[39] P. Nafisi Poor and P. Javid, "Philosophy, Geometry, and Purpose in Islamic and Philosophy, Geometry, and Purpose in Islamic and Gothic Architecture as Two Religious-Based Styles," *Engineering and Technology International Journal of Architectural and Environmental Engineering* 15, no. 2 (2021): 91.

[40] In the Sainte-Chapelle, the twelve slender interior support columns had carved images of the twelve apostles, the pillars of the church.

[41] Iain McGilchrist states, "For reasons of survival we need one hemisphere [the left] . . . to pay narrow attention to detail, to grab hold of things we need, while the other, keeps an eye out for everything else. The result is that one hemisphere is good at utilizing the world, the other better at understanding it." Iain McGilchrist, *Ways of Attending: How Our Divided Brain Constructs the World* (New York: Routledge, 2018), vii. "Metaphor *embodies* thought and places it in a living context. . . . Where the right hemisphere [of the brain] can see that metaphor is the only way to preserve the link between language and the world it refers to, the left hemisphere sees it either as a lie (Locke, expressing Enlightenment disdain, called metaphors perfect 'cheats') or as a distracting ornament." McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*, 118. The study of metaphor has gained traction since the publication of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980). See also Ian Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 387-402.

(the metanarrative) and overwhelming complexity (rich interconnectedness of all of Scripture).[42]

When postmodern philosophers sneered at the idea of the universe telling a grand story—a metanarrative meaning of life—Christian theologians picked up and brushed off the term and used it as shorthand for God's story of mankind—creation, mankind's fall, Christ's redemption of mankind, and Christ's future return to set all things right. The metanarrative plot points simplify the rich complexities of the Bible to give readers a map and sense of direction as they navigate through the passageways and portals of fish bellies, palace prisons, and empty tombs.[43]

Much Christian writing, especially academic writing, uses this mapmaking reductionistic approach, scraping away everything unessential to an argument's skeletal outline. The skeleton is essential but not sufficient. The Bible is both a linear metanarrative and a rich mosaic. When we chisel away complexity to reveal simplicity, we have converted story to a formula, which is helpful in seeing the cohesive thread through the grand whole. But the impact of story is greater than its plot. There is a difference between reciting the metanarrative's plot points and standing in the middle of the Sainte-Chapelle on the hard stone floor, gazing at brilliantly colored storied windows, hearing the cloud of witnesses worshiping and the imminent hoofbeats announcing the pale horse's arrival— all portrayed in over thirteen hundred biblical scenes.

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[42] Begbie explores how the idea of "extreme unity" and "extreme complexity" works in music. Begbie, "Bach, Simplicity, Diversity and the Trinity."

[43] Pennington uses "rhizomatic," to describe how the four gospels "should serve as the centering point for a multi-layered and thickly inner-canonical, theological reading of the NT through constructing a rhizomatic NT theology." Pennington, "A Gospels-Centric Rhizomatic Approach," 2. The metanarrative offers readers a cohesive understanding of Scripture, a beautiful thread binding the sixty-six books of the canon but the rich interconnectedness and complexity of rhizomatic roots locking underground is lost in the process.

The Passion of Christ

Saint John the Evangelist and the Childhood of Christ

Saint John the Baptist and the Book of Daniel

The Book of Isaiah and the Jesse Tree

The Book of Ezekiel

The Book of Judges

The Books of Jeremiah and Tobias

The Book of Joshua

The Books of Judith and Job

Numbers

The Book of Esther

Exodus

The Book of Kings

Genesis

The history of the relics of the Passion

The Apocalypse

Figure 31. Fifteen linear stained-glass windows and the Western Rose window depict over a thousand biblical scenes from Genesis to Revelation.[44]

Figure 32. Icon representing writing principle 3

[44] "Sainte-Chapelle: A Gem of High Gothic Architecture," image, Centre Des Monuments Nationaux (Sainte-Chapelle guide booklet), https://www.sainte-chapelle.fr/en/Prepare-for-your-visit/Practical-information#visite_file. Madeline H. Caviness, "Three Medallions of Stained Glass from the Sainte Chapelle of Paris, *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 62, no. 294 (July-September 1967), https://doi.org/10.2307/3795149.

For writers to engage the multi-dimensional personhood of readers, they need to craft writing that paves a logical Dominican path for the mind to tread in the midst of a fantastical Franciscan forest for the imagination to explore.[45]

Writing Principle 3: Staying within Orthodoxy

The third icon in this leaf is a compass pointing north because writers must stay within the bounds of orthodoxy, trusting God's character and remaining under the authority of His Word and His Spirit. When writers refuse to let Scripture be their authority, they become their own authority and truth leaks away; beauty is used for evil; and the good life is redefined unbiblically.

We are limited in our understanding of truth, so we need guardrails to keep us within orthodoxy as we explore creative complexities and innovation in our writing. Our finiteness makes us dependent on God and His Word. We are limited in spiritual insight, so we need Trinitarian guardrails—the Father's Word of truth, the Son as our living Word, and the Holy Spirit's guidance of the church through the ages.

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[45] There is a difference between reciting plot points on the metanarrative and standing in the middle of the Sainte Chapelle in Paris and experiencing the rich, multi-dimensional, filled space and becoming part of it.

Figure 33. Leaf no. 1 of the writing triquetra showing the three icons of writing principles 1, 2, and 3 leading to doxological writing.

Leaf No. 2 of the Writing Triquetra:
Incarnational Writing
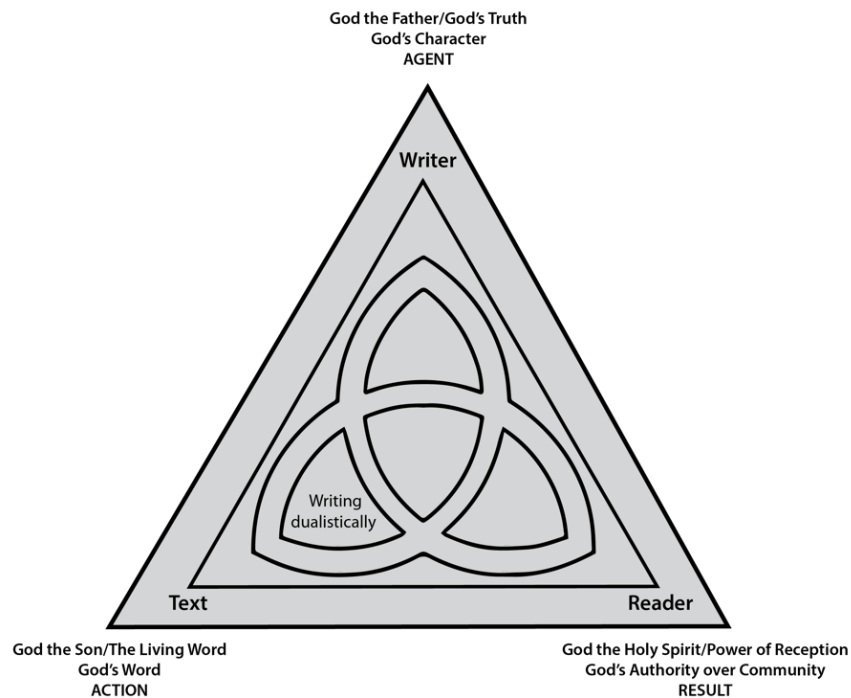
Figure 34. Leaf no. 2 of the writing triquetra

"You see the ways the Fisherman doth take
To catch the Fish; what Engines doth he make?
Behold! How he engageth all his wits;
Also his snares, lines, angles, hooks, and nets:
Yet Fish there be, that neither Hook nor Line,
Nor Snare, nor Net, nor Engine can make thine:
They must be grop'd for, and be tickled too,
Or they will not be catched, what e'er you do."

The Pilgrim's Progress[46]

The second leaf of the triquetra burrows into three writing principles based on the incarnation of Jesus, the Living Word. Is it possible that Christian writers have allowed themselves to lapse into a spectator's view of the incarnation—essential and necessary for our salvation and foundational for our faith—and yet distanced from what could be a present and pulsating vibrancy in our own writing? Through His incarnation, God

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[46] Bunyan, "The Author's Apology for His Book," in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 5.

becoming man, three principles illuminate: (1) making the invisible visible, (2) utilizing body/soul duality, and (3) employing the power of story.

Figure 35. Icon representing writing principle 4

**Writing Principle 4: Making the
Invisible Visible**

Essentially, God is invisible, but as John Frame articulates in his *Systematic Theology*, "God's glory, as a divine attribute, is related to his visibility."[47] God makes himself visible in specific ways: through creation (Gen 1; Ps 19; Rom 1); through His written Word (Isa 40:8; John 1); through the church (Eph 1:22–23); and through the Son, Jesus Christ: "He (Jesus) is the *image of the invisible* God" (Col 1:15), and "the Son is the radiance of God's glory and the *exact expression* of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Heb 1:3). As writers and teachers of writing, we have the stewardship of making the invisible visible. As Mark Noll articulates, Christian scholars "have every reason to expect breakthroughs in scholarship, insofar as they allow crucial christological convictions to guide their scholarly perspectives."[48] Jesus Christ is the Word so we "believe that our words can be meaningful because they are ultimately rooted in . . .

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[47] John Frame, *Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 386-98.

[48] Mark A. Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011), 46.

Christ himself, the eternal and divine Word."[49] We dare not miss the ways in which God becoming one of us illumines the way in which we write for others of flesh and bone.

Figure 36. Icon representing writing principle 5

**Writing Principle 5: Writing Dualistically
for Body and Soul**

The Sainte-Chapelle jewel box is a five-minute walk from Notre Dame. Today, Notre Dame is a recognizable landmark, but the jewel box is hidden away within the grounds of the Palace of Justice, which squats above the dungeons where French aristocrats were imprisoned before being sent to the guillotine during the French Revolution.[50]

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[49] Brad Green, "Theological and Philosophical Foundations," in Dockery and Thornbury, *Shaping a Christian Worldview*, 84. Vanhoozer adds, "God is the one who communicates himself—Father, Son, and Spirit—to others. . . . I propose that we take God's trinitarian self-communication as the paradigm of what is involved in all true communication." Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?*, 199.

[50] Cecilia Rodriguez, "Paris's 770-Year-Old Sainte-Chapelle Restored to Its Gothic Glory by Laser Technology," *Forbes*, Lifestyle/Arts, August 26, 2015, https://www.forbes.com/sites/ceciliarodriguez/ 2015/08/26/pariss-stunning-sainte-chapelle-restored-to-gothic-glory-by-laser-makeover/?sh=34419ce226d3.

Figure 37. Maps of the *Île de la Cité* (Island of the City)[51]

The island on which both the Sainte-Chapelle and Notre Dame sit, *Île de la Cité*, is in the middle of the Seine. Maps of Paris, whether from the Middle Ages or the twenty-first century, show the *Ile de la Cité* as the heart of Paris.

While the outer edge of the *Ile de la Cité* is now reinforced with concrete, in the thirteenth century, the river flowed past the natural riverbank on both sides of the island.[52]
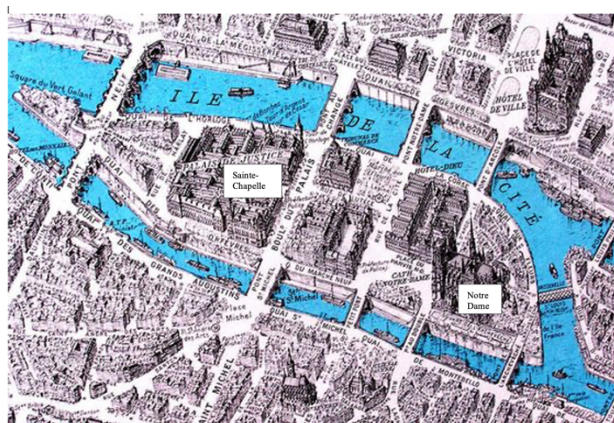
Figure 38. The Sainte-Chapelle and Notre Dame on the *Ile de la Cité*

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[51] The Sainte-Chapelle and Notre Dame on the *Ile de la Cité*, map, The Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas, Austin.

[52] Simone Zurawski, "Saint-Lazare in the Ancient Regime: From Saint Vincent DePaul to the French Revolution," *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 26; Cohen, *Sainte-Chapelle and Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 2.

The space where the water of the Seine and the *Ile de la Cité* riverbank overlap is called the foreshore. Christian writers can consider language as a place where both the spiritual (water) and the embodied aspects of mankind (shore) are evident simultaneously (Jer 23:29; Heb 4:12).[53] The water and the sand move together, interacting and colliding, describing the collision and collusion of the spiritual and physical in language.

Thus, the second icon illustrates the fifth writing principle: utilizing body/soul duality.[54] God gave people bodies to live in the physical world and souls to dwell in the immaterial world.[55] People are, in Aquinas's phrasing, "metaphysically amphibian."[56] This union of body and spirit is perfectly seen in Christ, who is fully God and fully man. Because written language shares body/spirit duality, language is "central to what it is to be human. . . . the phenomenon that defines us as humans."[57]

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[53] John Kilner explains, "*Imago Dei* has primarily to do with human identity reflected in *creaturely* and *divine* ways [emphasis mine]." John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 186.

[54] Anthony Hoekema prefers labeling this spiritual and physical duality *psychosomatic unity* rather than dualism, dichotomy, or duality because "this expression . . . does full justice to the two sides of man, while stressing man's unity." Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 217.

[55] Gregg Allison states, "The church has historically maintained that human nature is complex, a composite of material and immaterial elements." Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 321. C. S. Lewis writes, "God never meant man to be a purely spiritual creature. . . . He likes matter. He invented it." C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2001), 64. In an earlier iteration of the triquetra, I labeled the left leaf "story" because we are storied beings. Jesus's incarnation was God entering time and place and story, becoming one of us so we could be one with him.

[56] Eleonore Stump describes Aquinas's view of human souls as "the amphibians of this metaphysical world, occupying a niche in both the material and the spiritual realm." Eleonore Stump, "Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism without Reductionism," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 12, no. 4 (1995): 514. Christina Van Dyke gives some historical context to the metaphor: "The metaphor of human beings as amphibians has a rich history, reaching back into the 15th century and prevalent in the Renaissance." Christina J. Van Dyke, "Metaphysical Amphibians: Aquinas on the Individuation and Identity of Human Beings" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2000), 1n.

[57] David Nunan, *What Is This Thing Called Language?*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 5. Ben Faber notes, "Language is an essential aspect of being made in the image of God [who is spirit]." Ben Faber, "Covenant and Pedagogy," *International Journal of Christianity & Education* 24, no. 3 (2020): 261. Language also depends on embodiment, as James K. A. Smith explains, "Language is incarnational through and through . . . it never escapes incarnation as its paradigm and condition of

Considering language from humanity's dual nature can help Christian writers, writing professors, and student writers wield written language more effectively. Words are the connection between heaven, the abstract cloud of ideas, and earth, the concrete pavement upon which human beings live out their stories.

Writing has the power to transport intellects to higher spheres of thought, but it requires duality. The more abstract an idea, the more rebar and concrete scaffolding writers need to hoist readers up to reach those abstractions. Academic writing's purpose is to reveal truth, but all too often it flies at too high an altitude for the typical ground-dwelling human to glimpse. Writers can be not merely informative but transformative for readers and themselves when they write for their readers' dual natures.

Poet Malcolm Guite explains, "It's just as well he [Jesus] dared . . . to come out of the invulnerable realm of ideas and into the bloody theatre of history, that he might change and redeem it from within."[58] Language, like Christ, in order to be transformative, must itself be enfleshed in concrete language. Writing, even academic writing, cannot live exclusively in the world of abstraction and be transformative. It too requires embodiment.

While God *spoke* the rest of creation into being, He "*formed* animals and man of the dust of the ground" (Gen 2:19). Why would Christian writers not do the same when writing, employing language that evokes concrete—literally ground or dirt images—that resonate with readers' minds, which are themselves comprised of dust? To survive, human brains daily need sodium, potassium, magnesium, zinc, selenium—all dirt particles.[59] In

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possibility." James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 164.

[58] Malcolm Guite, *Waiting on the Word: A Poem a Day for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany* (London: Canterbury Norwich, 2015), 72.

[59] "Supporting Brain Function with Minerals," Balchem, February 26, 2021, https://balchem.com/human-nutrition-health/blog/supporting-brain-function-with-minerals/. Kris Swartzendruber, "Brain Nutrition is Food for Thought," Michigan State University Extension, April 6, 2013, https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/brain_nutrition_is_food_for_thought.

fact, Adam means dirt man.[60] God formed man from the ground, which emphasizes his "earthiness,"[61] and Jesus used earthiness to teach and transform.

When Jesus taught, He employed imagery so evocative, it pierced imaginations with the strength of iron and the ease of oil: a mustard seed, living water, a good shepherd. When He was teaching His disciples, He was passing the fig tree and tasting figs. Peter was in the act of catching fish when Jesus commanded him to become a fisher of men. Jesus made the ordinance of the Eucharist an act of physical engagement with taste, smell, touch, sight, and sound. In other words, when God created, He used words and dirt. When Jesus taught, He used words and dirt. Christian writers too should use words and dirt, words as solid as concrete and thick as mud. The more writers compel language to take on aspects of embodiment, the better readers will connect and respond to it because it is more like them. Embodiment matters: "As God the Son was embodied and is re-embodied, so too we are embodied and will be re-embodied. The proper state of human existence—both now and then—is embodiment."[62] And our writing likewise needs to be embodied.

To be potent arrows and a penetrating sword, words must be dipped in the steel of metaphor and sharpened on the anvil of simile as Hebrews 4:12 attests: "The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart."[63]

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[60] Hebrew *Adamah*, means "of dust." Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 74.

[61] Gregg Allison, unpublished class notes for Theological Anthropology & Human Development 97000 (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, December 2022).

[62] Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021), 206.

[63] David Smith and Susan Felch illustrate the power of metaphor in David L. Smith and Susan M. Felch, *Teaching and the Christian Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016).

George Herbert shows the unique responsibility of Christian writers:

Of all the creatures both in sea and land
Onely to Man thou hast made known thy wayes,
And put the penne alone into his hand,
And made him Secretarie of thy praise.[64]

When Christ, the Word, became flesh. . . . we observed his glory (John 1:14). Thus, the duty of the Christian communicator includes enfleshing words to display the glory of Christ, just as Christ enfleshed glorified the Father. Christian scholars' vocation is greater than merely adding new information to a discipline: they have a doxological charge as do all Christian writers.

When writing appeals to the mind alone without considering people holistically as embodied beings—truth limps.[65] Writers in genres other than academic writing recognize the spirit/body duality: "To paint a picture or to write a story or to compose a song is an incarnational activity. . . . I believe that each work of art, whether it is a work of great genius or something very small, comes to the artist and says, 'Here I am. Enflesh me. Give birth to me.'"[66] If academic writers can be encouraged to conceive and develop their work beyond the confines of abstract linear arguments and birth their writing in the dually-enfleshed arms of soul/body unity, their work will have greater impact on the audiences they hope to influence.

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[64] George Herbert, *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007), 415.

[65] John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989), 11. Dualism for Augustine means that "human beings are composed of spirit and matter intimately conjoined so that the soul permeates and animates the entire body." Allison reminds educators that the Christian educational triad of "orthodoxy, orthopraxis, and orthopatheia" aligns with the three domains of learning. Gregg Allison, "Salvation and Christian Education," in *A Theology for Christian Education*, by James R. Estep Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 226.

[66] Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith & Art* (New York: Convergent, 2016), 8. C. S. Lewis wrote that poetry (i.e., writing) "is a little incarnation, giving body to what had been before invisible and inaudible.'" C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958), 5.

Many other writing techniques add flesh to language by appealing to humans' senses: acrostics, alliteration, allusion, anadiplosis, anaphora, anthropomorphism, apostrophe, assonance, asyndeton, chiasmus, epistrophe, hyperbole, idiom, imagery, metaphor, merism, metonymy, numerology, paradox, parallelism, personification, pun, repetition, simile, symbolism, synecdoche, type, wordplay, and others, including perhaps most powerfully—story.

Figure 39. Icon representing writing principle 6

Writing Principle 6: Writing for Story

The stories encased in fourteen of the fifteen long windows of the Sainte-Chapelle are biblical stories (with the addition of Tobias and Judith from the Apocrypha), but the fifteenth panel of stained glass recounts how Louis IX purchased the relics and brought them to Paris (see figure 41 below). Some historians claim he was a "shrewd" politician, but others that he was also a religious monarch, who started a hospital for the blind and fed the poor at his table daily.[67] While it is easy to despise Louis IX for cryogenically freezing himself into the glass for posterity, he represents every person's

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[67] Cohen, *Sainte-Chapelle and Construction of Sacral Monarchy*, 2. "Stories about the holiness and justice of St. Louis IX, the famed good king of France, have become legendary. . . . He had a passion for justice, transforming the king's court into an efficient and organized court for justice. He was careful to protect subordinates from their feudal lords." "Faith ND: St. Louis of France," University of Notre Dame, 2023, https://faith.nd.edu/s/1210/faith/interior.aspx?sid=1210&gid=609&pgid=21630&cid=42153&ecid=42153&crid=0&calpgid=10817&calcid=24284.

individual story as a part of the biblical metanarrative depicted in the Sainte-Chapelle's glass. It is appropriate his story is the last depicted in the tall windows before people's gaze looks up to the Western Rose window depicting Revelation and Christ's return as everyone's story is in the "last days" before Christ's return.

Figure 40. Window depicting Louis IX bringing the crown of thorns to Paris.[68]

Figures 41. The Western Rose window with its eighty-nine illuminated panels creates a mosaic foreshadowing Christ's return and the final judgment depicted in Revelation.[69]

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[68] Lawrence OP, photograph, https://www.flickr.com/photos/paullew/7856545356.

[69] Hannah Wilson, photograph, "The Dazzling Stained Glass Windows of Sainte-Chapelle," Paris Perfect, July 28, 2021, https://www.parisperfect.com/blog/2017/07/sainte-chapelle-stained-glass/.

Story is the universal language found in all cultures throughout history.[70] To be embodied means to be storied, says Gregg Allison.[71] "We know reality storiedly," adds James K. A. Smith.[72] But story depends on embodiment too. Stories include the elements of characters, time, setting, plot, conflict, point of view because people operate in time, occupy a place,[73] relate to each other and the world via their bodies, move from point A to point B, experience friction, and see things from their own perspectives. People make sense of their lives and communities through story.[74]

Story is so essential that when a person cannot tell about his embodied experience as a story, he is emotionally crippled.[75] Wholeness and story are inseparable because "the triune God created us to share *in his drama* [story], not in his essence."[76] Smith says, "What we do is driven by who are, by the kind of person we have become. And that shaping of our character is, to a great extent, the effect of stories that have captivated us, that have sunk into our bones. . . . We live *into* the stories we've absorbed."[77]

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[70] Charles L. Rice, "A More-or-Less Historical Account of the Fairly Recent History of Narrative Preaching," in *What's the Shape of Narrative Preaching?*, ed. Mike Graves and David J. Schlafer (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008), 8.

[71] Allison, *Embodied*, 65.

[72] James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, Cultural Liturgies 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 14.

[73] Bartholomew explains, "Place is so fundamental to human existence and so ubiquitous that, paradoxically, it is easy to miss." Craig G. Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 2.

[74] Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 132.

[75] Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 221, 234, 238, 249.

[76] Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 44.

[77] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 32. He says, "And such stories capture our imagination precisely because narrative trains our emotions, and those emotions actually condition our perception of the world" (32).

Helen Sword argues that story in the form of a narrative arc belongs in academic writing too: "Stylish writers know the importance of sustaining a compelling *story* rather than merely sprinkling isolated anecdotes throughout an otherwise sagging narrative. A book or article that supplies no suspense, no narrative . . . will not hold the reader's attention nearly as effectively as an article plotted, even at the most subtle level, like a good thriller."[78]

Could Christian academic writing push beyond Sword's encouragement to be interesting and move to embrace a theological understanding of duality and story, writing ontologically for the entire person instead of merely the ten-pound brain above the shoulders?[79]

Academic writing communicates ideas and research to the academic community. Academic writing is logical, thesis-driven, structured, precise, objective, evidence-based, formal, and written for academics. Yet, Sword argues through empirical evidence that academics prefer *engaging* academic writing.[80] Academic writing needs to tell the truth with vigor and vividness.[81] Can academic writing embrace truth *and* beauty?

Students get so bogged down in learning to compose a logical argument that they seldom learn to engage readers holistically. Now is the time for a more fully orbed

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[78] Helen Sword, *Stylish Academic Writing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2012), 87. See also Marilynn McEntyre, *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 111-26.

[79] Van der Kolk argues for learning requiring more than the intellect. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps Score*, 88. Gregg Allison, Gracilynn Hansen, Peter Gentry, and Stephen Wellum, etc., argue for *imago Dei* being holistic or ontological. Allison, "Humanity, Sin, and Christian Education," 180; Gracilynn Hansen, "Establishing a Framework for Female-Gendered Embodiment in a Redemptive Context" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022), 69; Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 185, 188, 200.

[80] Sword surveyed over seventy academics and analyzed a thousand pieces of academic writing considered exemplary. Sword, *Stylish Academic Writing*, 7-8.

[81] Leland Ryken, *The Heart in Pilgrimage: A Treasury of Classic Devotionals on the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 15, 18. Ryken says Spurgeon "was dismayed by [devotionals'] dullness, predictability, monotony, and lack of fresh insight and expression," but he does not cite the primary source from which that information came.

view of writing pedagogy that shows scholarly writing as a discipline requiring faith: "Scholars, far from being able to do without faith, must begin being rich in that faith if they are ever able to feel their heart stir with the holy impulse that drives them to engage in true scholarship."[82] When Christian writing coaches think of pedagogy—the art and science of teaching and learning—do they consider teaching how to make the invisible visible, soul/body unity, and story? On the surface, pedagogy is a set of methods, but the methods are driven by philosophy, which is driven by biblical theology. When Christian educators fail to consider students holistically, they miss an opportunity for pedagogy to line up (and thus be effective) in how God designed people.

Christians can view writing as vital craftsmanship where two worlds collide— the soul and the body—the sweet spot of personhood, language, and spiritual formation— because "education is most fundamentally a matter of *formation,* a task of shaping and creating a certain kind of people."[83] Christian writing, even academic writing, whether written by students or professors, becomes transformative, not merely informative, when it harnesses people's soul and body duality and uses story.[84]

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[82] Abraham Kuyper, quoted in Craig Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017), 298. Originally published in Abraham Kuyper, *Scholarship: Two Convocation Addresses on University Life*, trans. Harry van Dyke (Grand Rapids: Christian's Library, 2014), 11-13.

[83] Van der Kolk says, "Sadly, our educational system . . . tend to bypass this emotional engagement system and focus instead on recruiting the cognitive capacities of the mind." Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps Score*, 88. Noll, *Jesus Christ and Life of Mind*, 167. See also Trevor H. Cairney, "Seeking Unity of Faith, Pedagogy and Transformation," *International Journal of Christianity & Education* 24, no. 3 (2020): 247-50. Smith writes, "Christian education has absorbed a philosophical anthropology that sees human persons as primarily thinking things. The result has been an understanding of education largely in terms of *in*formation rather than formation; more specifically, the end of Christian education has been seen to be the dissemination and communication of Christian *ideas* rather than the formation of a peculiar people." James K. A. Smith, "Beyond Integration: Re-Narrating Christian Scholarship in Postmodernity," in *Beyond Integration*, ed. Todd C. Ream, Jerry Pattengale, and David L. Riggs (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University, 2012), 20.

[84] Allison notes, "All image bearers are living in this world and working to develop society so that every person can flourish." Allison, unpublished lecture notes. Pennington and Johnson add, "The Bible presents God as engaging with humanity in a developmental way, bringing individuals and humanity in general to a place of complete maturity and wisdom, to the *telos* or goal for which God created the universe, with humanity as its crowning jewel (Genesis 1)." Jonathan Pennington and Dru Johnson, "The Role of the

Designing writing along these lines would mean including affective elements as the soul is not merely the seat of cognition but of emotions as well.[85] In the introduction of *The Heart in Pilgrimage: A Treasury of Classic Devotionals on the Christian Life*, Leland Ryken explains that different writing genres aim for different "effect[s] on a reader." He offers the example of a book on theology appealing to the brain rather than the heart while a devotional's purpose, he argues, "is not to inform or educate but to embrace godliness in daily life."[86] While his comparison is traditionally accepted, Christian writers can write for information *and* transformation.[87] Thus, Christian academic writing should appeal to the head, heart, and hands instead of the head alone because as Hoekema insists, "One of the most important aspects of the Christian view of man is that we must see him in his unity, as a whole person . . . [instead of] separable 'parts'"[88] Christian writing needs to capture writers' and readers' imagination.[89] See figure 42.

Bible as Wisdom for the Education of Individuals and Society," (paper presented at the Radical Christian Scholarship Conference, Houston, February 22-24, 2017), 7.

[85] Hoekema points out that the Greek word *psyche* or "seat of the inner life of man," includes "feelings and emotions." Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 213.

[86] Ryken, *The Heart in Pilgrimage*, 14.

[87] Ryken, *The Heart in Pilgrimage*, 14.

[88] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 75.

[89] James K. A. Smith says,

We are so prone to associating education with the cognitive stuff of ideas that it's difficult for us to imagine education as a more formative, affective matter. Our imaginations get stuck in a rut, and it becomes difficult to get out of them to imagine things differently. When that happens, theoretical dissertations aren't effective in destabilizing these habits of imagination: providing an argument for education as formation—the sort of thing that targets our cognitive head—often fails to touch our more ingrained imagination, whose center of gravity is closer to our bodies. To jolt the imagination, we need more affective pictures. (James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Cultural Liturgies 1 [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009], 29)

See also Robert W. Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 147.

Figure 42. Leaf no. 2 of the writing triquetra: Making the invisible visible, writing for duality, and writing for story, all contributing to doxological writing.

**Leaf No. 3 of the Writing Triquetra: Building
from History, Creating for the Present,
and Sounding forth for the Future**

The third and final leaf of the triquetra illumines the authoritative role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian writer. The word authority, indeed, has the word *author* as its root. For all things of eternal value and significance, Christians can point to the Holy Spirit as *the* Author.

God the Father/God's Truth
God's Character
AGENT

Writer

Writer's
Relationships

Text   Reader

God the Son/The Living Word   God the Holy Spirit/Power of Reception
God's Word   God's Authority over Community
ACTION   RESULT
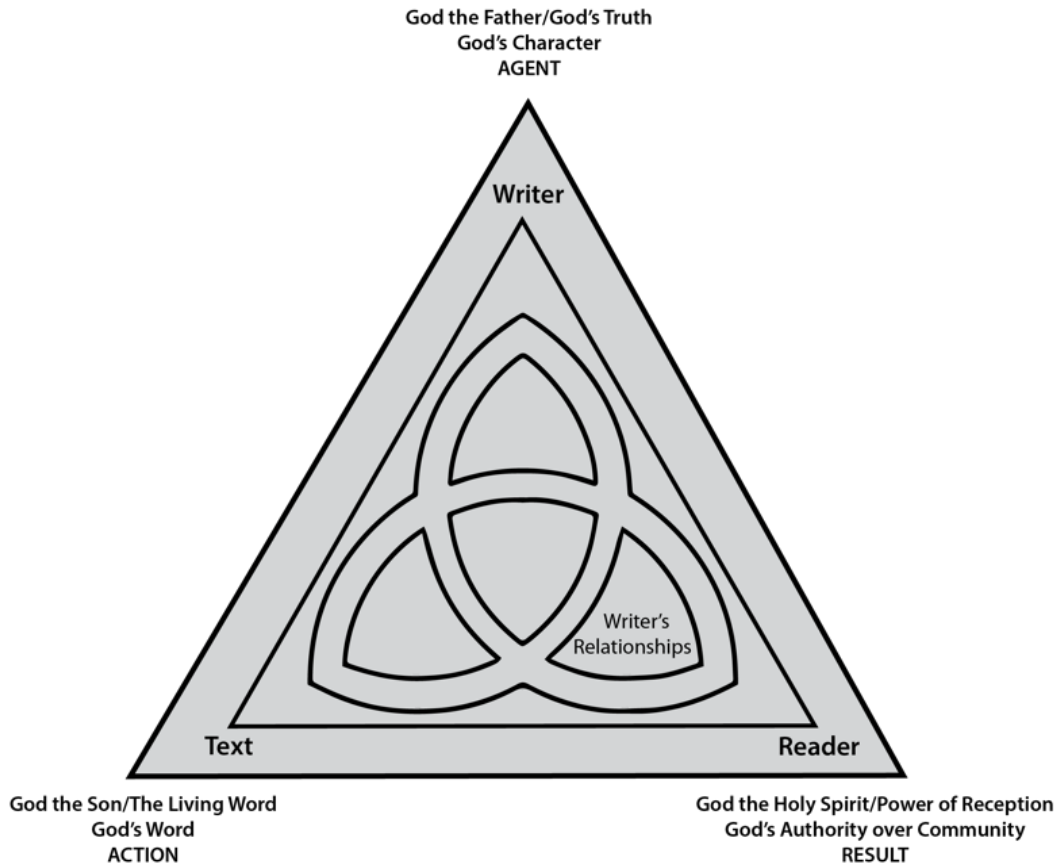
Figure 43. Leaf no. 3 of the writing triquetra

In more than Twenty things, which I set down:
This done, I twenty more had in my Crown;
And they again began to multiply,
Like sparks that from the coals of fire do fly.[90]

The Pilgrim's Progress

As the writer considers the potential influence of their work a vision for the purpose of writing begins to emerge in (1) carrying the baton of compelling writing to the future church, (2) embracing the improvisational work of the Holy Spirit,[91] and (3) using writing to serve as a bridge to spiritual formation and human flourishing.

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[90] Bunyan, *"*The Author's Apology for his Book," 3.

[91] Horton adds, "It is always the Spirit's role, we have to seen, to bring about the perlocutionary effect of [God's speaking the Son] within creatures." Horton, *Christian Faith*, 556.

Figure 44. Icon representing writing principle 7

Writing Principle 7: Carrying the Baton

The Sainte-Chapelle was built in six years, but the eternal temple is taking over 6000 years and counting. Each person, each living stone making up that eternal temple, is part of a community, a "relay team" running through the ages.[92] We write in and for community. The efficacy of that writing and its lasting influence, power, or help for coming generations rests on the power of the Holy Spirit and the craftsmanship of the writer. The Sainte-Chapelle is still standing because of its beauty, and the church's greatest written works give evidence of beauty too. In the prologue to *Pilgrim's Progress* that Bunyan calls the "Author's Apology for His Book," he says,

> Thus I set Pen to Paper with delight,
> And quickly had my thoughts in black and white.
> . . . . Well, when I had thus put my ends together,
> I show'd them others, that I might see whether
> They would condemn them, or them justify:
> And some said, let them live; some said let them die:
> Some said, John, Print it; others said, not so:
> Some said it might do good; other said, no.

The Pilgrim's Progress[93]

Despite Bunyan's quandary whether his book was worth printing or not, 100,000 copies were bought within fourteen years of its first printing, and it is still being

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[92] Gerald Sittser's term in *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 10.

[93] Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 4.

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reprinted over three hundred years later, one of the bestsellers in history, one of the ten most published books of all time.[94] Bunyan and many of his fellow Puritans captivatingly carried the baton through their leg of church history. The third leaf of the triquetra reflects the Holy Spirit's enabling Christian writers to be relay race members, faithfully carrying the baton to the spot the next generation will reach for it.

The Sainte-Chapelle windows have told the same biblical story for almost eight hundred years while outside history marches past—Aquinas came to teach at the University of Paris (1245); the Seine flooded repeatedly (1280, 1296); Notre Dame was finally completed (1163-1345); the Black Death filled cemeteries (1348); Joan of Arc attempted to recapture Paris (1429); Christians were martyred for reading and printing the Word (1535); revolutionaries invaded the chapel, decapitating the apostles' statues (1789); two world wars passed, Hitler ordered Paris to be destroyed (1944); and tourists hurry by to Notre Dame often failing to notice it.[95]

Revolutionaries, war, floods, and pollution have left ravages of pox marks on the Sainte-Chapelle's complexion, but it still stands, telling its metanarrative story. The Sainte-Chapelle has changed from the Middle Ages—French kings no longer bow in worship there; the crown of thorns moved to the more prestigious Notre Dame until fire destroyed the roof. The relics it was built for, the people it was built for, the purpose it was built for are all gone, yet still it stands.

Those who have entered the Sainte-Chapelle and stood beneath the stained-glass windows have included faithful followers looking up with reverence, angry revolutionaries seeing a symbol of rotten ruling, admiring artisans, analyzing scholars, and tepid tourists. The gospel message of the windows does not change, but the reaction in the eyes of the beholders does. Without the Holy Spirit's help, writing is like looking at those stained-glass windows at night. The light does not come through the work nor ignite the heart of the

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[94] Over 250,000 million copies sold to date.

[95] Revolutionaries attacked and damaged the Sainte-Chapelle during the French Revolution because they saw it as a symbol of the divine right of kings.

reader. But when the light of the Holy Spirit shines through human artistry, the world notices.

Are Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries producing Bunyans, raising up Edwardses, inspiring Lewises and Tolkiens? Can we afford to teach writing as a skill or can we equip a generation to steward words, writing for the church now and the church to come like those in the past have written to inspire us? Are our best theologians, storytellers, and hymnwriters crippled because we have not encouraged them to write masterfully? It seems we have trained our students to write *about* the triune God, but have we missed encouraging them to work and write in His power? Has the academic guild treasured technical proficiency over that which is not only truthful, but also beautiful and good writing?

Figure 45. Icon representing writing principle 8

Writing Principle 8: The Mystery of Holy Spirit Inspired Improvisation

While the Holy Spirit is the same in essence with the Father and the Son and is perfectly consistent in all the characteristics of the Godhead, to predict an operational pattern of how the Holy Spirit works in the writing process of an individual writer would

be to limit His infinitely unlimited ways of influence on the writer and eventually the reader. After all, He is "not a tame lion."[96]

Jeremy Begbie says that the Holy Spirit is like a great jazz improviser: He applies biblical truths to specific people in specific circumstances, at specific times, in specific ways. As the writer submits to the work of the Holy Spirit under the authority of Scripture, the writer, the topic, and the occasion open the door for holy improvisation.[97] While jazz improvisation can sound to the uninitiated like one musician taking off and running random musical circles around the rest of the ensemble, quite the opposite is true as the musician soloing does so within set boundaries of fixed meter and key, chord changes, and stylistic expression. The soloist improvises new and extemporaneous melodic lines over a series of particular, repeated chord changes played by the other musicians. For the experienced jazz artist and listener, no improvised solo is ever the same. While the Holy Spirit is perfectly consistent, His work in the lives of individuals is never the same.

For writers to experience the guiding presence of Christ in their written work, they need to stay within the chord changes lined out in the Word. The Holy Spirit improvises with perfect intentionality on the fly. Richard Blackaby relates the story of his dad, Henry Blackaby, being asked at the last minute to offer a devotional to a group of pastors: "Do you have a word for us, Henry?" And in that moment, Henry ministered out of his overflow as he riffed for forty-five minutes on the devotion he had that morning.[98] The more writers are attached to the Word and the voice of Christ through the Word, the

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[96] C. S. Lewis, "The Last Battle," in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 679.

[97] Horton writes, "On the basis of the union's legal aspect (justification and adoption), the Spirit begins to 'deliver the goods,' as it were. . . . Believers immediately receive the subjective benefits of their vital engrafting to their life-giving Vine. . . . Believers bear fruit that is not the result of their imitation of Christ's life but of their being incorporated into Christ and his eschatological resurrection-life in the Spirit." Horton, *Christian Faith*, 591.

[98] Richard Blackaby, "Following Jesus," Southern Baptist Convention North American Mission Board (NAMB) Revive Summit, Tuscan, Arizona, March 14-15, 2023.

easier time they have hearing the Holy Spirit improvising over their lives and written words.

In great jazz and great writing, beauty and power are generated when we are sensitive to the Holy Spirit. He guides us in ways we could never have imagined if we skuttle our pride and depend on him. A. W. Tozer captures one of the keys to the Christian writers' sensitivity and dependency on the Holy Spirit through what he calls "spiritual receptivity." The influential pastor asks the question, "Why do some persons 'find' God in a way that others do not? . . . I venture to suggest that the one vital quality which they had in common was spiritual receptivity . . . they had spiritual awareness and . . . went on to cultivate it until it became the biggest thing in their lives."[99] One example of this spiritual receptivity is found in the prologue of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan expresses to readers that he wrote a different book than he intended:

> When at the first I took my Pen in hand
> Thus for to write; I did not understand,
> That I at all should make a little Book
> In such a Mode: Nay, I had undertook
> To make another; which when almost done,
> Before I was aware, I this begun.
>
> *The Pilgrim's Progress*[100]

Bunyan's receptivity to the Holy Spirit was the catalyst for a work that is still being sold and read since it was published in 1678.

As a writing teacher, one of the roadblocks I see in students is that they are often hampered by the fear of the unfinished paper. What they fail to realize is that the process of writing guided by the Holy Spirit will eventually navigate them to a much more satisfying end. It is not just a matter of trusting the writing process, it is submitting to the Holy Spirit in that process for a writing journey that produces an end result that is *just right* and *totally unexpected*. Writing often ends in places we never expected to go.

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[99] A. W. Tozer, *Pursuit of God* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian, 1993), 60-61.

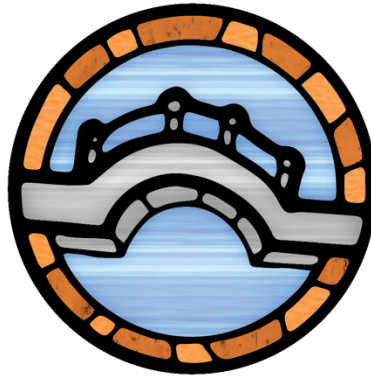[100] Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 3.

Figure 46. Icon representing writing principle 9

Writing Principle 9: The Bridge to Formation and Flourishing

"A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another," said Valentin Nikolaevich Voloshinov [101] As the writer considers the potential influence of their work, a vision for the purpose of writing begins to emerge as a bridge to spiritual formation and human flourishing.[102] In *Seeing Beauty and Saying Beautifully*, John Piper analyzes the power of the writing of George Herbert, George Whitefield, and C. S. Lewis.[103] He argues that even as these three wrote for their readers, they themselves as writers were meditating and going deeper with Christ:

> [They] made poetic effort to see and savor and show the glories of Christ. This effort was the God-dependent intention and exertion to find striking, penetrating, imaginative, and awakening ways of expressing the excellencies they saw. My thesis is that this effort to say beautifully is, perhaps surprisingly, a way of seeing and savoring beauty [for the writer].[104]

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[101] Valentin Nikolaevich Voloshinov, "V. N. Voloshinov: 'Language, Speech, and Utterance' and 'Verbal Interaction,'" in *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader*, by Simon Dentith (New York: Routledge, 1995), 127.

[102] Horton writes,

Although the Spirit works within us, it is with the intention of drawing us outside of ourselves to focus on this economy of grace. The Spirit is an extrovert, always going forth on missions with his Word, creating an extroverted community who can at last look up to God in faith and out to the world in love, witness, and service. And, as Jesus teaches in John 16, the same Spirit who led Christ to his destiny—through the cross to the resurrection—also leads us in Christ's train. (Horton, *Christian Faith*, 558)

[103] Herbert graduated from Cambridge and held positions there. Whitefield and Lewis both graduated from Oxford, and Lewis was an Oxford fellow and tutor and Cambridge chair; thus, all three men were trained academic writers.

[104] Piper, *Seeing Beauty and Saying Beautifully*, 17.

The act of writing can contribute to spiritual formation of the writer as well as the reader. Writing as a way of seeing new insights and helping others to see them is evident in George Herbert's poem "The Quidditie." He describes writing poetry as a way of communing with God: "But it [writing poetry] is that which while I use/ I am with thee."[105] Abraham Kuyper applied the idea of communing with God through scholarly work as well: "The purpose of scholarship is threefold: to bring to light the hidden things of God, to give us joy in digging up the gold hidden in the creation, and to contribute to the well-being of human life."[106]

Can Christian writers and writing instructors embark on a journey that charts an intentional path for themselves and their students toward spiritual growth like Herbert, Whitefield, and Lewis did? Through the discipline of writing in light of the nine principles articulated above, might wordsmiths dedicated to Christ contribute to the flourishing of others? Jonathan Pennington and Dru Johnson express a vision for Christ-centered scholarship and education that synthesizes formation and flourishing: "We are suggesting that the goal of Christian education and scholarship must not be only the production and transference of information rooted in a Christian understanding, but formation of whole persons in community, thus offering to the world more than an understanding, but a flourishing community into which all are welcome to enter."[107]

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[105] George Herbert, *The Complete Works of George Herbert* (n.p.: Pantianos Classics, 2019), 29.

[106] Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition*, 298. See also Don N. Howell Jr., *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 3. Johnson and Pennington suggest,

> The goal of Christian education and scholarship must not be only the production and transference of information rooted in a Christian understanding, but formation of whole persons in community, thus offering to the world more than an understanding, but a flourishing community into which all are welcome to enter. . . . The development of the whole person intellectually, habitually, affectionally, and in values, goals, and desires (*paideia*) enables scholarship that employs the foundational metaphysical view of Scripture to serve broader courses of inquiry in the humanities, sciences, engineering, and beyond. (Johnson and Pennington, "The Role of the Bible as Wisdom," 9)

[107] Johnson and Pennington, "The Role of the Bible as Wisdom," 9. Johnson and Pennington go on to expound, "The development of the whole person intellectually, habitually, affectionally, and in values, goals, and desires (*paideia*) enables scholarship that employs the foundational metaphysical view of Scripture to serve broader courses of inquiry in the humanities, sciences, engineering, and beyond" (9).

When writing pedagogy helps students engineer their academic writing dualistically and reinforces the reality of the student's place in the community of the Trinity, then writing assignments will become more than skill-based exercises; they will become catalysts for spiritual formation because writing has the potential of changing the writers themselves, not just their readers.[108] See figure 49.

Figure 47. Leaf no. 3 of the writing triquetra: Faithfully carrying the baton from the church in the past, Holy Spirit inspired improvisation, and writing for formation and flourishing, all contributing to doxological writing.[109]

Allison explains, "All image bearers are living in this world and working to develop society so that every person can flourish." Allison, unpublished lecture notes.

[108] Vanhoozer remarks, "For Augustine, the purpose of the city of language is to lead one to the city of God. . . . The highest end of human beings is enjoying God. Language, when rightly used, is one of the chief means that lead to this joy." Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in Text?*, 202.

[109] The Bible is the inspired Word of God, so "inspired" in this context of the triquetra means "influenced, receptive to" the Holy Spirit, not written by the Holy Spirit as the Bible is.

Figure 48. The writing triquetra in stained glass

**The Triquetra's Nexus:
Doxological Writing**

The nexus of the stained glass where the three leaves overlap depicts the synergistic culmination of the writing triquetra—doxological writing.

The Effect of Doxological Writing

Outside the triquetra, the effects of doxological writing are represented— spiritual formation of reader and writer and cultivating the garden. From the dawn of human history, God has engaged with His people in particular places, most notable of

which are gardens—from Eden to the tabernacle and temple (sacred spaces replete with distinct garden imagery) to Gethsemane, and finally one day in the New Jerusalem. To believers on earth belong the delightful duty of cultivating the gardens between Gethsemane and heaven in which to invite people to gaze upon Christ's loveliness. The Sainte-Chapelle craftsmen created such a garden: they lovingly hung the stories of Scripture illumined in the divinely dictated colors of the tabernacle—blue, purple, and scarlet—upon the translucent trellises of the chapel's walls. And though centuries have soldiered past these craftsmen's graves, their glass garden remains a sacred space beckoning viewers to meet with God.

At every opportunity, the craftsmen of the Sainte-Chapelle sought to use Scripture as a guide in the design, colors, and content of the chapel. When writers employ the nine scriptural writing principles budding from the three leaves of the Trinitarian triquetra based on God's character, God's Word, and God's authority, they too create an Eden-esque spacial mosaic in which readers are pulled into a closer relationship with God.

Conclusion

Many professors in Christian institutions who teach writing courses, coach writers, or supervise the dissertation process view their job as supplying students with a skill set. While writing coaching is commendable, the tragedy of this short-sighted aim is that professors are missing a unique opportunity both to (1) disciple their students through the writing process and, (2) practice devotion themselves by intentionally using scriptural principles to instruct students in writing. In other words, teaching writing can be done Christianly, which means that believing writing coaches/instructors can teach in Christian institutions differently than they can as believers teaching in secular institutions. As a result, even the teaching process becomes a direct act of devotion for Christian writing instructors.

When the light shines through the glass of the Sainte-Chapelle, the glory of the gospel is revealed. The glass is a means of seeing the glory. Likewise, Christian writing professors and coaches can train students to let God's light shine through their writing—the glory of the gospel revealed through the glass of their writing.

John ends his Gospel with this thought: "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which, if every one of them were written down, I suppose not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). Since the time he penned those words, believing writers, those mighty, limping, devoted Christians who chronicled their spiritual courses, have been attempting to fill the world with books about what Jesus has done and will do. Christian writing instructors have a singular opportunity to foster the devotion and fill the pens of the next generation of chroniclers of the goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ. When he returns, may the world be filled with ink telling the triumphs of His grace.

Moving from the Apologetic for a Christian Writing Pedagogy to Its Curriculum

One renowned believer whose heart was smitten with Christ and soaked in Scripture employed his pen to sow a story with the Trinitarian writing principles articulated above. The fruit of his work continues to nourish Christians nearly 350 years after its publication. Puritan John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to That which is to come: Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream Wherein is Discovered the manner of his setting out, His Dangerous Journey, and safe Arrival at the Desired Country* demonstrates each of the nine writing principles.

In honor of this dedicated Christian craftsman and peerless grower of allegories, a manual has been created to guide other aspiring writers in utilizing the Trinitarian writing principles. This manual, *The Pencil's Progress: From This Writing to That Which Is to Come, Delivered under the Similitude of a Draft Wherein Is Discovered the Manner of His Setting Out, His Dangerous Journey, and Safe Arrival at the Desired*

Country, takes the student writer through the writing process with an aspiring Christian author in pencil caricature named Bunyan. Bunyan the Pencil journeys on a pilgrimage wherein he encounters numerous perils and discovers treasures about writing on his way to the City of Polished Prose.

Beginning at Author's Outfitters, students travel with Bunyan the Pencil through eight lands where different aspects of the writing process are highlighted and practiced. Each of the eight major sections includes: (1) a piece of Bunyan the Pencil's story, where he meets characters such as Mr. Shiftless Draft, the dragon in the Turabian Tunnel, and Dr. Seasoned Scholar as well as encountering hazards and joys of the writing journey; (2) "The Point" in each section summarizes the moral of that part of Bunyan the Pencil's story; (3) "Writing Instruction" delves into the mechanics and details of the writing principle; (4) A page from Bunyan's journal focuses on spiritual formation for writers; (5) "Sharpen Your Point" is the spot where writers stop for writing practice, and "Black Diamond Trails" offer extra excursions for more advanced writers; (6) "Quillgrims" include quotations by writers about writing.

Because academic writers face a myriad of writing choices and challenges, Bunyan the Pencil's writing adventure is broken down into steps that can be expanded or condensed, depending on students' academic level and writing ability. For example, freshmen need to learn how to ask a research question; doctoral students need to understand how to contribute to their field. Both tasks logically fall under "Author Outfitters," near the beginning of the writing journey; thus, professors can add supplemental material of their own along the journey in logical places if they so choose. The journey's narrative format provides students with a way to make sense of the writing process. The spiritual emphasis of the journey fosters students' spiritual formation and their desire and ability to writing doxologically.

Figure 49. Map of Bunyan the Pencil's journey

CHAPTER 17

FURTHER RECOMMENDED RESEARCH

Question 1:
Does the Sainte-Chapelle Model Make
Christian Students Better Writers?

As this dissertation fosters a conversation in a field ruled by secular theories,

follow- up mixed methods studies are needed to determine if this proposed model does in

fact improve students' vision for writing, attitudes about writing, and ability to write. Are

theologically based writing pedagogies more effective at Christian institutions than

current paradigms that utilize primarily secular ideologies?

David Smit of Southern Illinois University points out that many composition

faculty members are seemingly more interested in supporting and utilizing composition

pedagogies based on the ideologies behind them rather than their efficacy. He says most

pedagogies

> epitomize the kind of conversation that has been going on in composition studies for
> the past few decades about how writing should be taught. In general, the participants
> in the conversation have not made their case by arguing how people learn to write
> and then citing relevant evidence. Rather, they have aligned themselves with a
> particular theory or philosophical position focused on a particular kind of discourse
> or a particular epistemology, and argued the merits of the theory. As a result, all of
> the discussion of 'theory' and 'philosophy' has tended to obscure the fundamental
> questions. . . . These essayists cite no evidence as to the efficacy of their particular
> pedagogy; they in effect use the device of exhortation to rally supporters of their
> particular point of view to their side.[1]

While Smit's argument that effectiveness of a pedagogy is more relevant than its

ideological foundations, ideology does drive pedagogy, and theology drives ideology.

The end results a pedagogy produces matter, but the ideological (and theological)

underpinnings matter most. A writing pedagogy worth using in Christian institutions

needs to produce stronger writers by being theologically sound. The purpose of this

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[1] David W. Smit, *The End of Composition Studies* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University,
2004), 138. Smit concludes, "The problem of promoting writing in higher education . . . is not going to be
solved by abolishing required writing courses, as certain major theorists in the profession are beginning to
advocate" (138).

current dissertation was to produce such a theory; research is needed to empirically prove or disprove its effectiveness.

First Corresponding Research Study

Does introducing this Trinitarian writing model generate meaningfully different results compared to a traditional approach to writing pedagogy? A study testing two Christian sections of freshman composition (within-subject effects) would shed light on this question. For example, if multiple sections of freshman composition on a Christian campus were taught the same semester, one using a theologically driven pedagogy while the other did not, would there be any meaningfully different results? A pre-survey and post-survey could measure interest, motivation, and passion. Pre- and post-writing samples could rate competency. If, as Ajzen demonstrates, self-efficacy is the core of translating intention into behavior, then increasing student competencies will generate more successful outcomes.[2]

Second Corresponding Research Study

If a composition researcher could adopt the presented model for a multi-year longitudinal study, what components of the model would be found to generate the most meaningful differences in student learning?

<div align="center">

Question 2:
What Are the Implications of the Model
for Writing Across the Disciplines?

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At Christian institutions, how best can theologically-based writing instruction be integrated across the disciplines? Many secular institutions designate a writing pedagogue on campus as the point person responsible for spearheading faculty training and efforts to foster excellent writing across the curriculum. This individual equips faculty with research, ideas, and materials to improve student writing in the disciplines and

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[2] Icek Ajzen, "The Theory of Planned Behavior," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50, no 2 (December 1991): 179-211.

generate faculty cross-disciplinary conversations on writing. Are Christian institutions utilizing a composition faculty member to foster transdisciplinary coordination of writing training? If so, how? What are the best practices?

First Corresponding Research Study

A current survey of Christian colleges and universities in North America could be done to investigate which institutions appoint a Writing Program Administrator and how effective those institutions find their campus coordination of writing.[3]

Would using this Trinitarian model of writing inform, unify, and motivate more cross-disciplinary coordination of writing instruction among faculty? Additionally, since writing is an integral element for all disciplines, how could the model of writing connect disciplines across the campus in a shared theological base? On the student side, could sharing this model throughout an institution's disciplines help students make important connections between subjects? Dorothy Sayers insists in *The Lost Tools of Learning* that education teaches students isolated subjects but not how to think. Students, she says, need to understand the interconnection between subjects,[4] and writing instruction is one of these natural connections.

Second Corresponding Research Study

In what ways does introducing the theological model impact writing in subsequent classes over a student's four-year college experience? A survey of professors who assign writing in sophomore, junior, and senior-level courses could be done to see if students who have taken a freshman composition course(s) using the writing model exhibit improved writing in upper level courses. Additionally, a variation of this study

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[3] In 2006, Breland compiled information on the writing programs of thirty-five institutions of the Association of Southern Baptist Schools. Mary Elizabeth Lawrence Breland, "The State of Writing Instruction in Southern Baptist Colleges and Universities" (PhD diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2006).

[4] Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Lost Tools of Learning: Symposium on Education* (Lexington, KY: CrossReach, 2016), 9.

may involve professors of upper level courses reinforcing what was learned in freshman composition by reintroducing the writing model and applying it to their discipline-specific courses. Students' writing may then be analyzed to determine whether or not their subsequent written works produce significantly better papers.

Question 3:
How Could the Proposed Writing Model Strengthen
Discipline-Specific Writing Instruction?

In what ways does improved theological writing impact student success in discipline-specific subjects such as preaching classes, communication courses, and ministry-related fields? Some academics are arguing that writing instruction should be taught only in the student's chosen field of study. Smit articulates the discussion this way:

> If overall writing ability is tied in some way to the ability to write in particular genres in particular contexts, then it may be that the kind or numbers of genres students learn to master is less important than their ability to master a few. Thus, at a certain point in their development . . . novices may need to be immersed in the discourses they need or want to learn as part of their own goals and ambitions. They may need to have extensive practice in reading and writing the genres of these communities over time in order to develop real fluency. They may need to be introduced to the critical frameworks necessary to understanding how their groups function, so that they can develop a metacognitive sense of how writing functions in the group. They cannot get this practice, they cannot develop this fluency, they cannot develop this metacognitive ability in generic writing courses.[5]

The obvious problem with this argument is that who teaches writing is not an either/or situation; writing instruction should be taught both by experts in writing pedagogy *and* by faculty in each discipline.

Research needs to be done to ascertain whether students excel in both academic writing and professional writing to a greater or lesser extent if they have theologically grounded "generic writing courses" in addition to discipline-specific writing.

If employers repeatedly hire students from the same institution over a course of several years, those employers could be surveyed about employees' writing before the writing model is implemented and then after its inception to determine if the quality of

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[5] Smit, *The End of Composition Studies*, 159.

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graduates' writing has changed.

Question 4:
How Can the Sainte-Chapelle Model Be Adapted
for Specific Learner Populations?

How can theological writing models translate best to online environments?[6] Because a theologically based writing model is rooted in the dynamic properties inherent in the Trinitarian fellowship, would online learners, geographically dispersed and potentially disconnected from peers and instructors, sense a stronger alliance with the virtual classroom community? To test this hypothesis, specific research studies could be conducted with online students to gather data. A pre- and post-survey could be done to measure if any change of perceived community occurs over time. A study could be done to analyze the way students describe their experience, examining whether students' use individualistic or communal language to do so.

How can this model be used to help global learners at Christian colleges? How does this model expand to address second or third language users or third culture issues?[7] One of the greatest hurdles international students consistently face is writing effectively in English. Would a more thorough grounding in the trans-cultural, trans-temporal realities of the Trinity help international students grasp writing concepts better? Understanding how a global ecology affects and shapes the composition classroom is an aspect of this research project that requires further investigation.

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[6] National Writing Project with Danielle Nicole DeVoss, Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, and Troy Hicks, *Because Digital Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in Online and Multimedia Environments* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

[7] See Steven Fraiberg, "Composition 2.0: Toward a Multilingual and Multimodal Framework," *College Composition and Communication* 62, no. 1 (September 2010): 100-126. Fraiberg claims four areas are important to focus on as the field of composition and rhetoric takes on a global perspective: ecologies (seeing language as part of a global and cultural ecology), "knotworking" (the structuring and restricting of genres), "remediation" (the idea that every medium is 'refashioned from an already existing medium, and "actant-network theory" (students and teachers are not just engaged with each other but in multilingual dialogue that includes textbooks, Web pages, class handouts, conversations in and out of the classroom, etc.). The solution is a "remixing of disciplines"—ESL, composition, and foreign language acquisition. Key to this remixing of the field is a situated framework that locates multimodal-multilingual activities in wider genre, cultural, national, and global ecologies.

Could a theologically grounded writing model affect racial reconciliation attempts on Christian campuses? With its emphasis on relationship (vertical relationship with God and horizontal relationship in community with other human beings), the Trinitarian writing model may have significant applications for repairing racial rifts in the college classroom.[8]

Question 5:
Can the Proposed Model of Writing Affect
Recruitment and Retention?

Has any research shown a relationship between dropout rates and students' perceived stress caused by academic writing? Is there a correlation between student retention and effective writing instruction that impacts not just freshman English courses but all academic endeavors? If so, a follow-up study may determine whether the Trinitarian writing model influences students' confidence and ability and whether that increased student self-efficacy and writing proficiency affects retention. Such a study would require a longitudinal study to show causation rather than correlation.

Question 6:
What Can the Proposed Model of Writing Do
for Digitally-Based Instruction?

How does a writing curriculum based on this proposed model impact writing courses geared toward digitally-based instructional models? With integration of writing pedagogy and digital media becoming more necessary in this screen-driven world, writing expertise wedded to media expertise is a growing necessity. Techniques such as "hypertext links, mouse-overs, text-wrapped around images . . . print linked to sound" are all becoming common practices.[9] As multimedia and digital means of written expression become increasingly complex, a theological response is necessary. How might this model

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[8] Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve King, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 104.

[9] Brooks Landon, *Building Great Sentences: How to Write the Kinds of Sentences You Love to Read* (New York: Plume, 2013), 252-53.

impact writers' cyberspace interactions?

Question 7:
How Can the Proposed Model Help Students Navigate
the Complexities of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Platforms
such as ChatGPT?

Currently, one of the most hotly debated discussions among administrators and faculty at every level of education is the use and implementation of ChatGPT (Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer). Launched at the end of 2022 by OpenAI, ChatGPT (one of several language processing tools) can engage in conversations with humans and produce written artifacts – from essays and papers to resumes and computer codes within seconds after receiving specific prompts. While the proposed model in this study is anchored in relationships between the writer and a community of human believers under the umbrella of the ultimate relationship with God the Father through Christ the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, no digital chatbot can take the place of the inseverable relationship between the Triune God and His adopted children. Therefore, can this model help faculty and students navigate both the positive and the negative realities of artificial intelligence in relationship to their students' own development as Christian writers?

Question 8:
How Can Campus Writing Centers Utilize and Disseminate
This Theological Writing Model to Create a Culture
of Writing on Christian Campuses?

How can the vision, purpose, and impact of campus writing centers increase as they utilize theological foundations in their writing coaching and material development?

Question 9:
Could This Sainte-Chapelle Writing Model Become
a Catalyst for a Four-Year Writing Initiative?

How could this writing model be used to create a culture of writing on Christian campuses? Writing training should be considered within the entire undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate context. Writing is a common denominator among disciplines, so sharing

a campus-wide vision and pedagogical/theological model of writing could be a unifying, cross-disciplinary tool:

> What we know is that writing may not be a simple, single ability but a complex web of related knowledge and skills that writers acquire over time by being immersed in literate environments. Those environments must, of course—at least at first—include a great deal of explicit instruction, usually through formal schooling, but there is ample evidence that after learning what we might call the technology of writing . . . such as spelling, punctuation, and usage; and a certain amount of syntactic fluency and rhetorical maturity, novice writers increase their knowledge and skill primarily by immersing themselves in the various tasks and contexts that require writing. They increase their knowledge and skill by using writing in a wide variety of contexts, to achieve a wide variety of goals, and by tacitly acquiring a sense of how writing as a 'tool' can be used in different ways for different reasons.[10]

Therefore, a couple of semesters of freshman composition need to be followed by writing training in content areas:

> Instructors in "upper-level courses" must not just expect all of their students to have mastered the conventions they do not want to teach. They must know the literature on error analysis and revision and be prepared to help students not only with the major concepts and genre conventions of their particular discourse communities but also with spelling, punctuation, syntax, and usage. They must be part of a broad university-wide program that introduces all novice writers "slowly but steadily and systematically" to new genres and social contexts, a program that encourages students to develop their "structural, rhetorical, stylistic facility" over time.[11]

Question 10:
What Can Composition Faculty Learn
from Secular Research and Methods?

Like the composition field, the counseling field has struggled balancing secular research with Christian ideas. David Powlison, executive director of the Christian Counseling & Education Foundation, describes the argument for the field of counseling this way: "The church's counseling has been locked in epistemological stalemate. Both sides say we can learn something from psychology; both sides say the Bible gets final

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[10] David W. Smit, *The End of Composition Studies* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2004), 181-82.

[11] Smit, *The End of Composition Studies*, 188. See also Mike Rose, "Remedial Writing Courses: A Critique and a Proposal," *College English* 45, no. 2 (February 1983): 112.

say. The debates usually sputter into fruitless generalities about common grace and biblical authority. How can we break through to fresh ground?"[12]

The Bible versus social science research is usually depicted as a spectrum but is more like a teeter-totter with Christian academics weighing in on each side. Some argue for biblical ideas to take precedence; others contend social science research must have practical jurisdiction in fields about which the Bible is not explicit.[13] John David Trentham offers an excellent analysis and hermeneutical framework for Christian scholars to employ when reading social science literature.[14]

Having begun the process of building a biblical model, the question remains, what can composition faculty learn from secular research and methods?[15] The fall affected people's minds and ability to perceive truth rightly; this is true of Christian and non-Christian academics: "Our epistemic blindness does not go away just because we

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[12] David Powlison, "Cure of Souls and Modern Psychotherapy," Christian Counseling and Education Foundation, April 10, 2010, http://www.ccef.org/cure-souls-and-modern-psychotherapies, 277.

[13] Evangelical Christian educators agree the Bible is pre-eminent for life and faith; the difference of opinion lies in how to balance the Bible and research. Roy Zuck writes, "Without the Bible as the foundation and core . . . there can be no true Christian education." Roy Zuck, *Spiritual Power in Your Teacher* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 5. James Estep, professor of Christian education at Lincoln Christian University, agrees that the core essential for Christian education is its theological foundation: "Theology is ultimately the core determinant of Christian education," yet Estep recognizes social science research's validity also. James R. Estep, Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison, *A Theology of Christian Education* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 299-300.

[14] John David Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (part 1 and part II): Approaching and Qualifying Models of Human Development," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (2019). "Cure of Souls," 277. Before Trentham published his inverses consistency theory, Powlison developed three priorities for biblical counselors to use in analyzing social science literature. His three priorities apply to other disciplines as well. His second priority is analyzing alternative models, both secular and religious, in light of the biblical model. The church has historically clung to unchanging truth while seeking to relate to the culture effectively, but how to relate to culture without being contaminated with unbiblical views is a tension point. This second priority of viewing writing pedagogy through biblical glasses protects composition instructors from being syncretistic in their writing pedagogies. Part of the bibliocentric glasses includes identifying other models' ideological roots.

[15] Robert Pazmiño writes, "The danger in our teaching efforts is becoming context-bound without the facility of faculty to see beyond our immediate setting. This leads to a contextualism that fails to learn from others and to see new possibilities of what God can bring to pass. Our God beyond us provides a transcendent perspective as an alternative to contextual boundedness." Robert W. Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 144.

become Christians. The world can come up with wisdom we have missed," says Timothy Paul Jones.[16] As neuroscience continues to explore how people learn, is additional social science research available that could strengthen the Sainte-Chapelle writing model? Is a third iteration needed?

Question 11:
How Can Christian Composition Faculty Contribute to Secular Discussions on Composition as Christian Scholars?

Discussion needs to take place concerning how Christian composition faculty can most winsomely integrate into the composition and rhetoric field, contributing to the secular conversation. Former chairman of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 2011, Gwendolyn Pough describes herself as a black, pro-choice, feminist, compositionalist-rhetorician and swings open the door for Christian composition faculty to enter the secular conversation on ideological grounds.

In her chair's address, she says, "Language is indeed crucial to our humanity."[17] Her argument is that CCCC (which encompasses the fields of composition, rhetoric, creative writing, language/linguistics, visual and digital rhetorics, professional writing and communication) is a cross-disciplinary, diverse group, which will benefit from her "sister outsider" viewpoint, a sister outsider viewpoint being defined as one where a person finds identity and has expertise in more than one field. She vehemently claims that CCCC is much more than freshman composition and is much more than academicians think. However, she says, composition and rhetoric academics need to be more interdisciplinary in their thinking, calling this approach "undisciplined." For example, composition teachers need to realize "academic rhetorical studies has the

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[16] Timothy Paul Jones, "92050 Human Development" (lecture, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, July 2016).

[17] Gwendolyn D. Pough, "2011 CCCC Chair's Address: It's Bigger Than Comp/Rhet: Contested and *Un*disciplined," *College Composition and Communication* 63, no. 2 (December 2011): 302.

special role of describing and evaluating the rhetoric used in and beyond the academy."[18] Christians can enter the discussion as sister outsiders. Pazmiño discusses the need for huddling with Christian counterparts, in this case, with Christian writing instructors, as well as mingling with secular counterparts.[19]

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[18] Pough, "It's Bigger Than Comp/Rhet," 309.

[19]ct Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher*, 149-51.

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ABSTRACT

FROM SLAYING A SERPENT TO THE SAINTE-CHAPELLE:
THE GENESIS AND ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF A
WRITING PEDAGOGY FOR CHRISTIAN
COLLEGES AND SEMINARIES

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The field of composition and rhetoric does not have a pedagogy that reconciles faith and scholarship. The purpose of this Doctor of Philosophy dissertation is twofold: (1) to ignite a conversation among Christian composition faculty by introducing a prototype freshman composition pedagogy built on a Christian theological, philosophical, and educational foundation, and (2) to advance the conversation about writing pedagogy to include college, graduate-level, and doctoral writing, using a second iteration of the original model, which offers nine principles and strategies for the art of writing.

Chapter 1 describes the research arc. Chapter 2 argues composition pedagogy is in crisis and compares freshman composition to the Greek mythological hydra with many heads and many problems. Chapter 3 traces composition instruction trends in America up to 2015. Chapter 4 overviews failing secular strategies in response to the freshman composition instruction crisis. Chapter 5 builds the theological and philosophical foundation for an instructional design theory with an accompanying model. Chapters 6-13 provide the initial instructional design theory from its theological inception to fostering a vision for doxological writing. Craig Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge provides the systematic *method* this project uses to rebuild composition theory; Kevin Vanhoozer's Trinitarian Theology of Communication model is the *theological base* providing key theoretical categories of the writing pedagogy.

Chapters 15 and 16 illustrate how the prototype model (designed for freshman

composition courses) progressed after nearly a decade of implementation into a multi-dimensional, fully orbed iteration of the original model for use with Christian writers at every level (college, graduate, doctoral). While the initial fourteen chapters contribute to the conversation on teaching freshman composition, chapters 15 and 16 are designed to illustrate that Christian theology and philosophy impact writing pedagogy at all levels through nine writing principles. The ultimate goals of the newer model (fashioned after an architectural masterpiece, the Sainte-Chappelle in Paris) are spiritual formation and human flourishing in the life of each student writer.

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