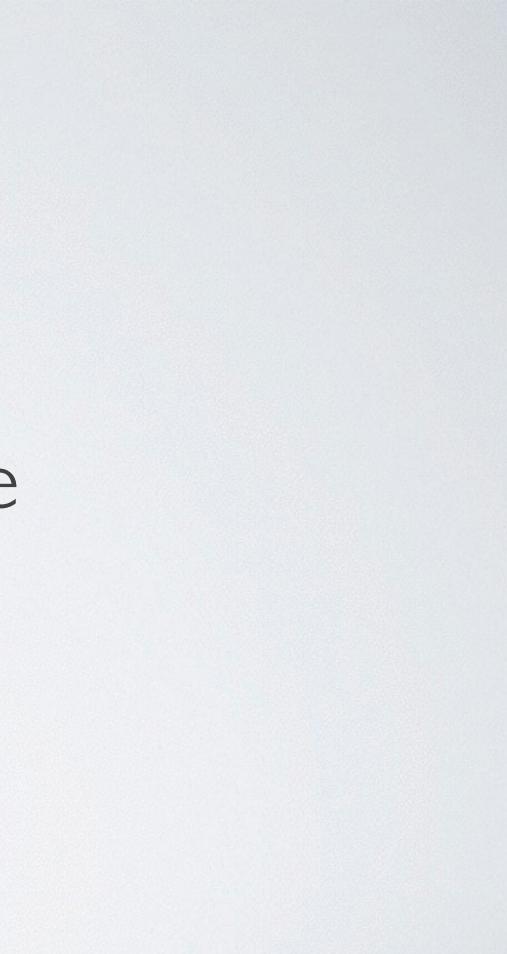
Writing Classic Prose



The Principles of Style

Why? The Motive

Where? The Scene

Who? The Roles

How? The Method



Classic Style

Why? The Motive is Truth

Where? The Scene is a Conversation

Who? The Roles are an equal Reader and Writer

How? The Method is Direct Presentation Clear and Simple



Classic Style

Madame de Chevreuse had sparkling intelligence, ambition, and beauty in plenty; she was flirtatious, lively, bold, enterprising; she used all her charms to push her projects to success, and she almost always brought disaster to those she encountered on her way.

- François de La Rochefoucauld, Mémoires

Practical Style

Why? The Motive is the Job or Problem

Where? The Scene is a Workplace

Who? The Roles are Boss and Worker

How? The Method is Report or MemoPredictable and Easy to Skim



Practical Style

We found that the Department of Energy collects no data on how other Federal offices allocate energy resources to the states. Because the Department needs these data to decide how to redirect resources when conditions change, we recommend that the Secretary of Energy establish a system for gathering such information on a regular basis.

School Style

Why? The Motive is Fear

Where? The Scene is a Classroom

Who? The Roles are Teacher and Student

How? The Method is ProtectionPad and Hedge



School Style

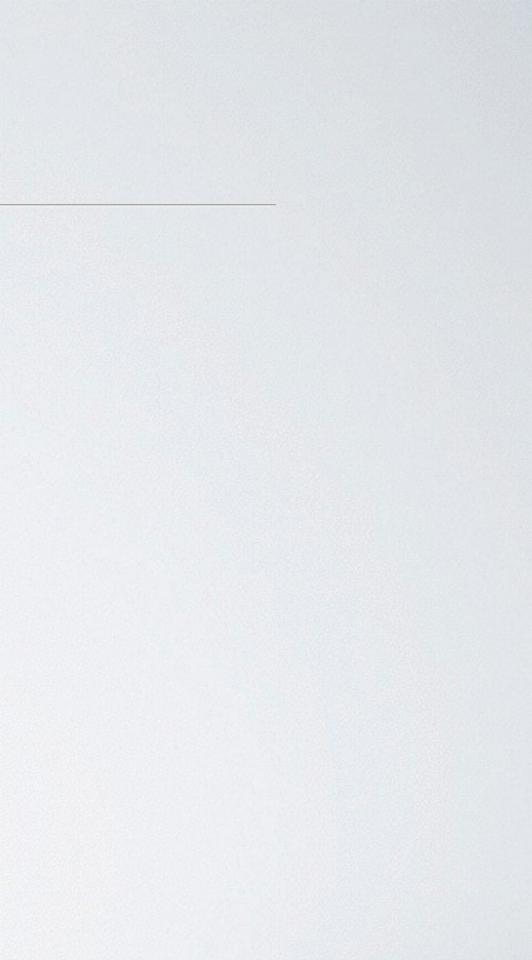
Let us first examine part of what is, in my opinion, the correct interpretation of the Parable of the Vineyard. In the exegesis of any passage of the Bible, it is fundamental that one must understand the context of the passage as well as the content. The context in which the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard is found most likely indicates that the subject being dealt with is the different degrees of eternal reward in heaven.

Classical Origins

Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War (410 BC)

Plato, Apology (399 BC)

Euclid, Elements of Geometry (300 BC)



French Enlightenment

René Descartes, Discourse on the Method (1637)

Blaise Pascal, Provincial Letters (1656)

François de La Rochefoucauld, Mémoires (1662)



American Classic Prose

Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence (1776)

Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi (1883)

A. J. Liebling, The New Yorker (1935–1963)



The Importance of Being Earnest

The truth is rarely plain, and never simple. — Oscar Wilde

Life on the Mississippi

When I was a boy, there was but one permanent ambition among my comrades in our village on the west bank of the Mississippi River. That was, to be a steamboatman. We had transient ambitions of other sorts, but they were only transient. When a circus came and went, it left us all burning to become clowns; the first negro minstrel show that came to our section left us all suffering to try that kind of life; now and then we had a hope that if we lived and were good, God would permit us to be pirates. These ambitions faded out, each in its turn; but the ambition to be a steamboatman always remained. — Mark Twain

Audubon Field Guide

Tufted Titmouse

Titmice are social birds and, especially in winter, join with small mixed flocks of chickadees, nuthatches, kinglets, creepers, and the smaller woodpeckers. Although a frequent visitor at feeders, it is not as tame or confiding as the chickadees. It often clings to the bark of trees and turns upside down to pick spiders and insects from the underside of a twig or leaf. The "Black-crested Titmouse" of Texas was until recently considered a separate species.

Audubon Field Guide

Northern Shrike

Unusual among songbirds, shrikes prey on small birds and rodents, catching them with the bill and sometimes impaling them on thorns or barbed wire for storage. Like other northern birds that depend on rodent populations, the Northern Shrike movements are cyclical, becoming more abundant in the South when northern rodent populations are low. At times they hunt from an open perch, where they sit motionless until prey appears; at other times they hover in the air ready to pounce on anything that moves.

The End

