



September 2023

DECONSTRUCTIONISM

Reforming or Removing Faith

Update on Unite Camp 2023

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Apologetic. Ministry. Preparing. Educated. Disciples.

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."



I met a fantastic group of young adults at REACH CHURCH in Kokomo, IN. I am inspired by the fact that many of America's young adults are taking a serious interest in their Christian faith. Let's all pray that the young men and women across our country who are standing for Christ will continue to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. The temptation to cave to social pressure has never been greater. The Lord has promised to place a hedge of protection around our children, so let us believe for it!

Thank you Pastor Brian Hughes for this opportunity.

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DECONSTRUCTIONISM

REFORMING OR REMOVING FAITH

By Billy Anger

Any Christian wanting to grow in their faith asks questions. These curiosities are typically safe as they do not challenge preconceived core ideas or fundamental beliefs. While these investigations are always productive, they are limited in concretizing a person's belief system. People who fear objectively exploring their faith characteristically reject asking probing questions. This approach to pursuing truth typically leaves the believer with a limited perspective and a profoundly lacking ability to empathize with those who struggle spiritually.

While no person is immune from questioning their religious convictions, a fashionable approach to doubting has recently emerged called "deconstruction." This movement cites both biblical and historical actions to establish its justification for challenging traditional Christianity. They mention the rallying call of the Reformation, *semper reformando*, which means "always reforming." The deconstructionists, though, fatally misrepresent the works of Hus, Calvin, Luther, Tyndale, and a host of others who sacrificed greatly to spearhead the efforts of the Great Reformation. The Lord Jesus Christ is also summonsed as justification for modern deconstructionism. The recurrent challenges with which He confronted the Pharisees are inserted into the conversation as examples of dismantling established religious beliefs.

The term deconstruction can mean different things in various contexts. It is a postmodern philosophical label adopted by present and previous evangelicals to sometimes mean navigating a faith crisis. In other instances, it means identifying harmful cultural influences that distort the true gospel. Most frequently, however, it represents questioning and rejecting traditional evangelical doctrines and authority figures. This deconstructionism ultimately leads to departing the Christian faith altogether.

Deconstructionism originated in the 1960s when a French philosopher named Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) began to advocate for a postmodern philosophy of language and its relationship to the concepts of meaning that he called "deconstruction." It is a puzzling philosophy and infamously challenging to summarize. Even Derrida declined to recap deconstruction, maintaining that his entire life's work was a summary of his philosophy. The motive behind Derrida's strategy of dismantling [deconstruction] resulted from his

concern over illegitimate appeals to authority and illicit expressions of power. He argued that the idea one has reached the correct meaning, that being God or truth, affords an ideal justification for damning those with whom one disagrees. Derrida argued that neither priests, who allegedly speak for God, nor philosophers, who purportedly extol reason, should be trusted. He contended this claim to speak from an advantaged perspective is a scam that must be "deconstructed."

The term has wrestled into the standard dialect in the years following Derrida's philosophical introduction. It has become typically understood as "a critical dismantlement of tradition and traditional methods of thought." In the Christian culture, this means critically questioning traditional methods of fundamental belief and frequently declining to recognize those perceived as occupying privileged Christian institutional positions as authorities. Such would be pastors, teachers, and the like. An unfortunate association has been made with the truth of the Christian God and those who misrepresent His reality.

Cultivating one's faith is not the same as searching for ways to disassemble it. The Bible repeatedly encourages believers to grow their trust and knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is in this sense that Christians reform their faith. Deconstructionism embraces the fatal flaw of removing the Bible from critical thinking. This requirement instantly delegitimizes any pursuit of individual Christian Reformation because it removes the essential component of a truth standard. Tweaking personal theology cannot be done by removing the very source from which theological reality is derived. Reforming individual faith is correcting mistaken aspects of understanding by aligning properly with Scripture.

In the absence of a standard, there can be no coherent direction. A rudderless culture becomes susceptible to every whim and fancy. Ultimately, the ruling criteria are individual internal impulses and personal preferences. This principle holds for Christians, too. Believers abandoning the faith really should be of no surprise whatsoever. When the Bible is no longer the foundation on which faith is established, it only stands to reason that the pillars of belief come crashing down. This demolition of objective truth leaves a void that

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the escapee desperately tries to reconcile with various substitutes, including progressive Christianity or atheism.

Responding to a person in deconstruction is indispensable, and understanding what brought that person to such a place of doubt is necessary for effective intervention. As faithful Christians, every follower of Jesus should respond with a lifestyle and academic apologetic. Keeping in mind that a deconstructing Christian is often someone in significant pain allows for a sense of sympathy. This humility destroys attitudes of spiritual superiority. Those who have endured a faith crisis will readily attest to this process not being some abstract academic exercise but one of intense conflict at every level.

FRANCIS SCHAEFFER

Francis Schaeffer was an outstanding American evangelical theologian, philosopher, and Presbyterian pastor. He was a foremost apologist, considered one of the most influential Christians of the twentieth century. Schaeffer is remembered for his exceptional ability to engage secular culture while remaining fundamental in his biblical views. After time attending

seminary, he and his wife Edith moved to Switzerland to work as missionaries. The year was 1948. At that time they began opening their home to female students in the Alps on the holidays, which resulted in religious conversations at night.

In 1951, Schaeffer unexpectedly found himself plunged into a spiritual crisis. As he compared the New Testament's portrayal of Christian love with what he identified as the suspicious, angry, separatist culture of American Protestantism that he had been involved with for the previous two decades, he was "torn to pieces by the lack of reality." He questioned whether Christianity itself was authentic. For excruciating months, he disassembled his beliefs and reconnected them piece by piece. As a result, Schaeffer emerged with a greater sureness in the fundamental truth claims of Christianity. It resulted in a life-changing and ministry-shaping conviction that Christian truth and love are inseparable.

Francis Schaeffer's experience was not in any way unusual and serves as an excellent illustration of the sort of "deconstruction" that embodies the spiritual situation of many who still identify themselves as evangelical. This faith crisis is not wrong, but how one resolves the conflict is vitally important. And, it is the obligation of fellow believers to express support. 📖

Pastors, Can We Partner in 2024?



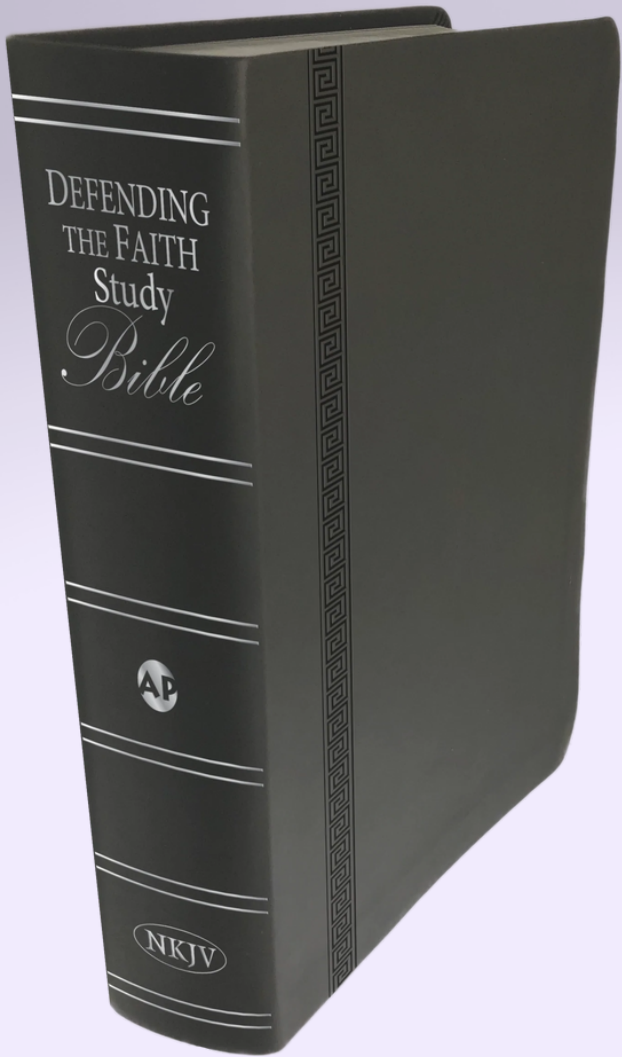
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Q&A



DID THE COUNCIL OF NICEA INVENT THE IDEA OF JESUS' DEITY?

A common misrepresentation concerning the deity of Jesus Christ is that Emperor Constantine invented the deity of Christ in A.D. 325. A look at quotes from the early church fathers shows this is an egregious misrepresentation of the facts. Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus of Rome, and Origen all taught Jesus was God and wrote well before the Council of Nicaea. The Nicæan Council did play an essential role regarding the deity of Christ, not by proposing the idea but by confirming the teaching. The final vote was 214 affirmations, only 2 denials. These bishops attested to their conviction that Jesus was God when they signed a creedal statement known as the Nicene Creed.

This argument that accepting Christ's deity was a later development also overlooks that the belief was fundamental to the earliest church documents. This is a matter of historical record from the earliest sources available. The writings of the Apostle Paul repeatedly attest to the deity of Christ (I Corinthians 8:5, 6; Philippians 2:9-11). The author of Hebrews (Hebrews 1:3), John in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 1:1-7), and again in his gospel (John 1:1-18) confirm the reality of Jesus' divinity. The testimony of Christ Himself at the Jewish examination (Mark 14:62-65) clearly reveals His deity. He claimed a position of equal status to God by receiving worship. These documents all date anywhere from the sixties to the nineties of the first century.

Supplemental to biblical evidence for the divinity of Christ are the works discovered outside the Scriptures. An example can be taken from the testimony of Pliny the Younger during his time serving as the Roman Governor of Bithynia, a location a far distance from Jerusalem. In his correspondence with the Roman Emperor Trajan, dated approximately A.D. 117, he spoke of Christians singing hymns to Jesus as though He were a god. Other extrabiblical accounts are available through historians such as Josephus and Celsus.

Positing that the belief in Christ's divinity is a late development is simply untrue. Emperor Constantine did call this council together, but it was because he wanted peace and unity in the church.

DOES THE BIBLE SPEAK ABOUT WITCHCRAFT?

Witchcraft is becoming more prevalent in America than ever before. This is a practice that includes the use of various spells, hypnotic chants, particular objects, distinct symbols, and mysterious ceremonies. The driving purpose of these multiple practices is deploying darkness into the spirit realm. Tapping into this unseen kingdom frequently provides gained knowledge, untapped power, and spiritual influence. The knowledge, power, and influence, however, are saturated in inappropriate desires and forbidden illumination. The Bible condemns witchcraft as an inordinate sin and warns of severe penalties for persons who practice it. Witchcraft manifests itself in various methods such as divination, sorcery, familiar spirits, necromancy, interpreting omens, fortune-telling, mediumship, idolatry, and magic.

Witchcraft is decidedly antagonistic to the biblical God. These various practices are only understood as a deliberate revolt against God, a denial of His word, and a rejection of His providential grace. Witchcraft incorporates trickery from the demonic forces that imitate dead relatives, which are familiar spirits. These demons offer otherwise unknowable information. They package much of their trickery in the promise of influence. The result of this spiritual masquerade is inextricable bondage. Those who practice any form of witchcraft, regardless of the manifestation it assumes, are captive to the influence of Satan and his demons. The Bible pronounces the harshest judgment against anyone who participates in this activity.

There is excellent news, though, for anyone who has subjected themselves to this mysterious enslavement. God's truth is more potent than any category of witchcraft. Any person who repents and embraces Christ will receive forgiveness for the occult practice they have adopted and receive emancipation from the ensnarement it brings. God is light, and His illumination transcends all demonic power or spiritual deception.

WAS JESUS BORN OF A VIRGIN?

The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is an extraordinary claim made in the Bible. The assertion is subject to countless criticisms and a myriad of denials. There is no question that scores of people have rejected the truth of Christianity because of this teaching. Academic doubters have rejected this Biblical claim because they deny any miraculous possibilities. But it was through the virgin birth of Jesus Christ that God revealed His Son to humanity. The Bible does not bend when it comes to this event happening. It is documented as a historical reality.

The authenticity of this fantastic event provides irrefutable evidence for the identity of the Savior. Seven hundred years before the advent of Christ, the announcement of His arrival was declared by the prophet Isaiah. Chapter 7 and verse 4 tell the reader that the virgin birth of the Messiah was a "sign." This teaching has been a fundamental doctrine of the Church since its inauguration. The early Christian writer and patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius, wrote dogmatically about the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. In his correspondence to the Ephesian congregation, he stated that the Lord was the "seed...of the Holy Ghost." The fact that the account of the virgin birth comes from eyewitnesses to Christ's life reinforces the conviction of the church fathers.

Antagonists have tried to dismiss the virgin birth of Christ by identifying it as the product of Greek or Babylonian mythology, having then been borrowed by the Gospel authors. Many foreign gods were reportedly born uncommonly, but history shows these beings never existed. Ultimately, the miraculous element of the virgin birth causes doubters to seek alternative explanations. The Scriptures, though, indicate that this supernatural physical delivery was necessary.

Many false teachings directed towards Jesus portray Him as a created being. He was not a newly formed individual of any type, but He unashamedly declared Himself to be the Son of God. This expression is a claim of divinity as Christ is confirmed to be pre-existent to His birth (John 8:58; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15, 16). The flawless sin offering that He presented at the crucifixion would not have occurred had the Lord been born through natural processes. Every member of the human race is contaminated by sin, and only the miraculous incarnation of Christ through the virgin birth could circumvent this curse. This unique natal experience allowed Christ to live sinlessly, a prerequisite to becoming an acceptable substitute for fallen humanity.

The virgin birth of Christ was not only a historical fact but also a necessary historical reality.



Be Sure to Send Your Questions

No Topic is Off Limits

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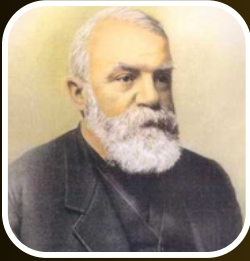
ICPF CAMP Update



What a powerful weekend! A great group of students from five universities descended on Cedar Hill, TX for three days of significant conversations and newly established friendships. The worship was rich, led by a group of talented musicians and singers. Each service a word was presented that provoked thinking towards the Christian worldview. I am grateful to the leaders of the ICPF for the invitation to interact with these young adults. Pray with us that the seeds of truth sown over these hours together will culminate in a new way of thinking.



Quotes of the Month



D. L. Moody

"Moses spent forty years thinking he was somebody; forty years learning he was nobody; and forty years discovering what God can do with a nobody."

"The most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight, but has no vision."



Helen Keller



Billy Graham

"Integrity means that if our private life was suddenly exposed, we'd have no reason to be ashamed or embarrassed. Integrity means our outward life is consistent with our inner convictions."

"Your life as a Christian should make non believers question their disbelief in God."



Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Coco Gauff

"I'm just happy to be here in this moment. I'd like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's been a lot of nights alone crying, trying to figure it out. And you know, I still have a lot to figure out. But you know, I thank Him for covering me."

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ICPF International
Mt. Lebanon Camp and
Conference Center
Cedar Hill, TX

September 17, 2023

International Baptist
Church
1013 West Park Row Drive
Arlington, TX

September 23, 2023

AMPED Training Center
5517 Denton Highway
Haltom City, TX

September 29-1, 2023

Clemson University
Pastor Joe Holloway
RIVER OAKS RETREAT
180 Youth Camp Road
Honea Path, SC 29654

October 9, 2023

University of Texas Dallas
Founders Room
800 West Campbell Road
Dallas, TX

October 24, 2023

University of Texas
Red River Room
701 South Nedderman Dr.
Arlington, TX

November 5, 2023

Teen Challenge
Benjamin McArdle
3332 Leesburg Road
Columbia, SC

November 12, 2023

Full Life Assembly
Pastor Roger Restin
800 South Rogers Street
Waxahachie, TX

November 19, 2023

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