

“Deconstruction” -defined-

by Sean Davidson—excerpted from
Brad Jersak’s *A More Christlike Way*

One thing “deconstruction” does not mean is a cynical, angry interlude on the way to militant progressivism.

At least it wouldn’t have meant that for *Jacques Derrida*, the French philosopher who coined the term. Deconstruction, for Derrida, isn’t about manning the barricades. It’s about learning to slow down, to attend closely to the way we use language. It is to be mindful about how we discuss and practice truth and meaning.

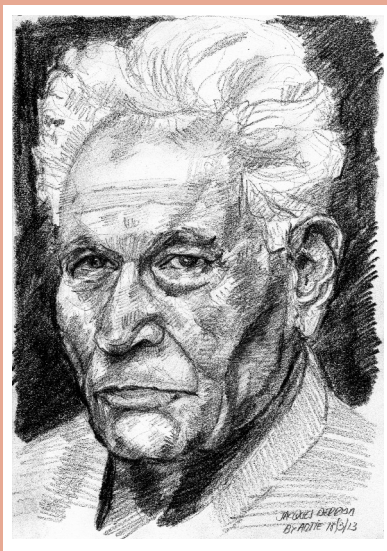
This has important implications for theology. If you pay close attention to Derrida, he doesn’t try to disprove truth claims—nor does he try to prove them. He remains open to truth and meaning.

The point of deconstruction is to unmask claims to truth that pretend to stand on their own, independent of conditions and contexts.

The pop version of “deconstruction” fails to appreciate these dynamics in its own discourse. For many post-Evangelicals, deconstruction tends to be practiced as an intermediary stage of doubt and cynicism in the service of militant progressivism. That form of deconstruction is a construction that Derrida himself would have deconstructed.

I know there have been very real abuses in the church. I’ve lived through enough of them to have my own struggles and misgivings. What troubles me is the strident reactionary and rationalistic spirit as recourse. I can understand that to an extent, given the experience of spiritual abuse. But not as a concerted strategy for moving forward in faith, hope and love. There’s too much about this spirit that seems fueled by the very thing it’s supposing to resist.

Derrida’s original practice provides a much-needed corrective—it not only helps to critique institutionalized problems, but also reactionary solutions. It forces us to consider genuine alternatives that are less about ideological tactics and posturing and more about participation in the gospel. □



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again” to “go to heaven when he died.” Rather, Jesus confronted Saul with the reality that he completely associated and identified with the “less than other”—the ones Saul considered enemies, worthy of death.



By God’s grace, we may look at those who offend us and say: “When I saw you, it is as if I had seen the face of God.”

Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount, “Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you.” This simple but costly discipleship is how Jesus describes the Jesus Way, the Way of the Cross where we “take up our cross” and follow him. □

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