

Book Review

Alisa Childers & Tim Barnett, *The Deconstruction of Christianity: What It Is, Why It's Destructive, and How to Respond*, Forward by Carl R. Trueman (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2023), xv + 277 pp. \$17.99.

Reviewed by Nils I. Borquist

IN THE SEARCH FOR MEANING UNDERTAKEN by every person concerned with the course of his life, certain questions arise, such as ‘Who am I?’ ‘What should I do?’ ‘Where should I go?’ and ‘What should I believe?’ For those raised in a religious environment, apprehension about faith, worship, rituals, and foundational tenets inevitably arises. In past decades and centuries, the structures of Western towns and cities were built on Christian texts and ethical directives. Members of such societies, even those with doubts, ingrained themselves in social norms for the betterment of themselves and their fellow citizens by creating strong communities connected through relationships with God, family, and neighbors. However, the twentieth century saw a surge of ideas opposing traditional morality, knowledge, and societal institutions, especially the church. The Christian church in particular rose to a prominent position as the primary target of disillusioned and hostile individuals insistent on reassessing notions of fairness, justice, education, and social interactions—all in the pursuit of self-righteous truth-seeking, or so it seemed and still seems for those pursuing a fractured view of equity that, in appearance and language, is disguised as equality.

Specifically as concerns Christianity, such apostasy has infiltrated America’s youth, fueling a movement called “deconstruction.” Alisa Childers and Tim Barnett focus on this damaging practice in their text *The Deconstruction of Christianity: What It Is, Why It’s Destructive, and How to Respond*. Essentially, deconstruction involves the reevaluation of one’s faith, often leading to a departure from the church and its traditions, and sometimes a shift toward self-autonomy, in which personal truth trumps objective truth. However, even with an understanding of the individual components of deconstruction, the authors clearly point out three major issues that must be addressed before identifying specific problems. The core issues consist of a lack of a desire to “achieve correct theology” (24), an absence of a clear “end goal...to the process” (25), and the lack of an “external authority” that provides a plan for what the ultimate goal entails (26). When combining the three elements, it becomes clear that deconstruction appears to be missing the pursuit of objective truth,

a defined process, and a specific goal, all of which conflict with proper reasoning and the Christian faith. Sadly, though, this appears to align with the deconstructionist mission statement, one relying on deceptive language, unfounded, harmful allegations, and deliberate targeting of impressionable, easily persuaded young minds.

One can realistically assume that young people who attend church become easy targets for deconstructionists due to expectations to uphold high personal moral standards, strict adherence to divine principles and rules, and a persistent sense of God's presence. In the digital age, with its inherent dangers of pornography and political agitation, maintaining personal accountability and self-control seems perhaps more challenging than ever before. With social media influencers promoting material indulgence and pleasure over other values, teens and young adults who spend several hours daily consuming such content may be more easily swayed away from the faith. Childers and Barnett also point out that deconstructionists aiming to justify apostasy often present extremist views of Christianity, claiming that the Christian faith actually promotes "white supremacy, Christian nationalism, and" the glorification of "Western civilization in general" (32), all of which are seen as harmful both to individuals and their roles as productive citizens. Furthermore, when connected to the idea of a literal reading of the Bible that seeks to prioritize a patriarchal system (which is supposedly demeaning to women through the concept of their submission to men), to denigrate one's sexual preference if it deviates from heterosexuality, to highlight America's values as the most desirable over those of any other culture, and to push a politically conservative agenda—often regarded as regressive and ultimately hateful—deconstructionists have compiled a long list of unfounded criticisms meant to discourage thoughtful consideration of Christianity's true positive qualities.

Childers and Barnett point out that the originator of deconstruction appears in Genesis: the serpent, a character whom the authors state represents Satan. Satan works toward deconstruction in three ways: questioning God, denying the word of God, and ultimately fully deconstructing who God is by discrediting His love, His truth, and His sufficiency. Through such methods, Satan, unfortunately, finds some success, especially when fusing his process with cultural and community norms and desires. As a culture expands, especially its population, various perspectives that are not aligned with God's laws begin to emerge. When this happens, conflict is often inevitable. Attempts to soothe citizens' fears and complaints—including claims of being denied happiness due to supposed oppressions that, unsurprisingly, run counter to God's demands and expectations—lead community leaders to adjust the perception of who God is to suit cultural wishes. The authors give specific examples, such as the widespread acceptance of same-sex marriages, the so-called preachers of the "prosperity gospel" who link financial success with one's faith, and the acceptance of other faiths as reasonable variations of Christianity. Ultimately,

emphasis on “personal preferences” becomes a comparison with God’s Word; if the latter conflicts with the former, then preferences—those views that ease daily life—are chosen, and the Logos becomes an afterthought. Essentially, by making such choices, individuals create their own idols, their own religion: a faith rooted in subjectivity and personal truth above all else.

Three common elements make up most deconstruction stories: “a process of deconstruction,” “a belief being deconstructed,” and “a person deconstructing” (77). Furthermore, Childers and Barnett explain that personal crisis often plays a role in deconstruction. These crises typically involve some form of suffering, doubt, political distress, sexual curiosity or deviance, biblical questioning, moral or theological doubts, abuse, or questioning the validity/truth of the religion and its practices. However, these questions and failings—the normal stumbling and falling as part of growing up—are not the problem. Instead, Childers and Barnett clearly state that everyone faces decisions, and choosing to keep faith or turn away from God depends entirely on the individual, though eternal influences may be present. Personal preference or one’s subjective truth certainly impacts the decision, but recognizing the absolute truth of God’s Word also plays a powerful role. Truth, then, emerges as a concept to be clearly defined, with the latter being God’s Word, which ultimately holds great authority due to historical consistency, the overwhelming wisdom of Jesus’s teachings, and centuries of testimonial evidence. However, pursuing a subjective course leads to the outcome described by the authors when they state that “if we don’t let the words of Christ inform what we believe about the mind of Christ, we will effectively be... putting [Christ] in the realm of ‘my truth.’ The end result will probably be a Christ that reflects *our* minds rather than *His*” (117).

Childers and Barnett clearly outline a step-by-step process of the path to deconstruction that appears quite repeatable. The first step is identifying a supposed societal problem that is seen as under-addressed, such as the history of slavery. The second step implicates the Church or the faith, suggesting it endorses or passively neglects the societal issue, even in its past history. The final step recommends revising the belief system to correct past wrongs, which could mean complete dismantling. However, the authors emphasize that “the gospel isn’t socially constructed; it’s divinely revealed” (156). Therefore, acknowledging human error in societal development can be accepted as fact without implying that the Word of God is complicit in damaging practices. Through genuine faith and God’s redemptive grace, followers of Christ can make mistakes and yet still be forgiven.

Formation or reformation, for those seeking to return to Christ or to begin anew, is seen as an important way to reject deconstruction according to Childers and Barnett. Utilizing apologetics to answer questions and deepen understanding becomes a valuable practice. For the authors, proclaiming that Jesus taught followers the Bible is the Word of God remains the primary apologetical standard. They

provide three premises and additional scriptural support to strengthen this claim: first, Jesus is God; second, God proves Jesus's claim by raising Him from the dead; and third, Jesus affirms the truth of the Old Testament through the inspired writings of the New Testament.

In the most critical fashion, deconstruction results from a fracture of one's faith and a distorted view of sin. Childers and Barnett state that deconstruction arises as a reaction to sin, motivated by sin, in the form of sin where people seek a subjective truth rather than the objective and divine truth of God, from a cynical perspective of the faith, or as an act of pure rebellion against the church. Ultimately, however, the authors straightforwardly assert that all of us will eventually bow to God "as creatures," as moral beings who sin, and to the knowledge of God's truth.

Given the threats to faith many believers face, they may ask what they can do to strengthen it. Childers and Barnett offer several answers. First, they should ask questions and seek biblical answers. They should consistently pray and reflect upon the Word. They should stay calm and trust in God and His Word as proper guidance. They should finally continue to love God and participate in life in the ways He deems proper and fruitful. Christ noted that following Him is the most difficult decision and course of action one will undertake. As Christians face pressure to abandon their beliefs—to deconstruct, in contemporary terms—as has been the case for centuries, maintaining faith, love, and trust in God will ultimately prove the most fulfilling way of life.

Nils Borquist *is an ILT PhD student and English teacher at Neville High School in Monroe, Louisiana. He attained a BA from Tabor College, an MA from the University of Louisiana at Monroe, an MAT from the University of Mississippi, and a PhD from Liberty University.*



**A Serious Christian Journal of Life
and its Significance**

Annual Print Subscriptions!

***Verba Vitae* will make physical hard copy issues
available beginning with the Spring 2026 issue.**

**Annual subscriptions include the entire volume year,
to be sent to the subscriber regardless of when
the subscription is placed during that volume year.**

- \$50 for 1-year subscription
- \$95 for 2-year subscription
- \$45/year continuous subscription
(3-year minimum: \$135)
- \$100/year institutional/library

Annual subscriptions do not auto-renew

Subscribe at
library.ilt.edu/verba-vitae/

Volumes 1 & 2 free online at
<https://verba-vitae.org>

Any questions or communication should be directed to
verba-vitae@ilt.edu



A Call for Papers

***Verba Vitae* is seeking essay submissions
for the following upcoming issues:**

Volume 3, No. 2 (Summer 2026):

“Christian Medical Ethics in a Secular Medical Environment”

Volume 3, No. 3 (Autumn 2026):

“Christianity and Transhumanism: Ethical Considerations”

Volume 3, No. 4 (Winter 2026):

“Artificial Intelligence: A Rigorous Examination”

Volume 4, No. 1 (Spring 2027):

“The Issue of Gender: Old and New Perspectives in Conflict”

Volume 4, No. 2 (Summer 2027):

“The Dawn of Life: Pre and Neonatal Life in Modern Society”

Volume 4, No. 3 (Autumn 2027):

“The Power of Language: Navigating Ethical Communication
in the Era of Newspeak”

Volume 4, No. 4 (Winter 2027):

“Facing the Final Frontier: Divine Perspectives and Social Narratives
on Mortality”

All essay submissions (on any life-related topic) should be made at:

<https://verba-vitae.org>

Submitting authors need to register with a *Verba Vitae* account

Please see the Submissions Guidelines for important information!

Any questions should be directed to:

Douglas V. Morton, Associate Editor

dmorton@ilt.edu
