

A NEW (FALSE) GOSPEL

# DECONSTRUCTION

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Figure 5.1. Group Identities Across Relations of Power

Minoritized/Target Group	Oppression	Dominant/Agent Group
Peoples of Color	Racism	White
Poor		
Working Class	Classism	Owning Class
Middle Class		
Women; Transgender; Genderqueer	Sexism	(cis)Men
Gays; Lesbians; Bisexuals; Two Spirit	Heterosexism	Heterosexuals
Muslims; Buddhists; Jews; Hindus; and other non-Christian groups	Religious Oppression Anti-Semitism	Christians
People with Disabilities	Ableism	Able-bodied
Immigrants (perceived)	Nationalism	Citizens (perceived)
Indigenous Peoples	Colonialism	White Settlers

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TALKING ABOUT RACE | NMAAHC

## ASPECTS & ASSUMPTIONS OF WHITENESS & WHITE CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

White dominant culture, or **whiteness**, refers to the ways white people and their traditions, attitudes and ways of life have been normalized over time and are now considered standard practices in the United States. And since white people still hold most of the relational power in America, we will all benefit from some aspects of whiteness — including gender of color.

- Rugged Individualism**
  - The individual is the primary unit.
  - Self-reliance
  - Independence & autonomy highly valued & rewarded
  - Individuals assumed to be in control of their environment, "You get what you deserve"
- Family Structure**
  - The nuclear family: father, mother, 2-3 children is the ideal social unit
  - Husband is breadwinner and head of household
  - Wife is homemaker and subordinate to the husband
  - Children should have own rooms, be independent
- Emphasis on Scientific Method**
  - Objective, rational linear thinking
  - Cause and effect relationships
  - Quantitative emphasis
- History**
  - Based on Northern European immigrants' experience in the United States
  - Heavy focus on the British Empire
  - The primacy of Western (Greek, Roman) and Judeo-Christian tradition
- Protestant Work Ethic**
  - Hard work is the key to success
  - Work before play
  - "If you didn't meet your goals, you didn't work hard enough!"
- Religion**
  - Christianity is the core
  - Anglican or other mainline — Christian tradition is flexible
  - No tolerance for deviation from single god concept
- Status, Power & Authority**
  - Wealth = worth
  - How rich is who you are
  - Respect authority
  - Respect status or membership of groups, (spare, privilege)
- Future**
  - Plan for future
  - Delayed gratification
  - Progress is a good thing
  - "Tomorrow will be better"
- Time**
  - Follow rigid time schedules
  - Time viewed as a commodity
- Aesthetics**
  - Based on European culture
  - Break and tradition, "hard to beat"
  - Woman's beauty based on standards, thin — "barbie"
  - Men's attractiveness based on economic status, power, wealth
- Holidays**
  - Based on Christian religions
  - Based on white history & male leaders
- Justice**
  - Based on English common law
  - Historic property & settlements
  - Merit courts
- Competition**
  - Be #1
  - Win at all costs
  - Winner/loser dichotomy
  - Active competition
  - Master and control nature
  - Must always "be something" about a situation
  - Aggressiveness and extension
  - Decision-Making
  - Majority rules (when whites have power)
- Communication**
  - "The King's English" rules
  - Written tradition
  - Need conflict, ceremony
  - Don't show emotion
  - Don't discuss personal life
  - Be polite

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TEXT

► I - a white straight 18-years-and-counting married woman- am not the *guide* for you. I can be *alongside* of you only... After you read this, I encourage you to **turn towards the margins** and to let them lead you further out into God's shalom.

Sarah Bessey, "Penny in the Air: My Story of Becoming Affirming"

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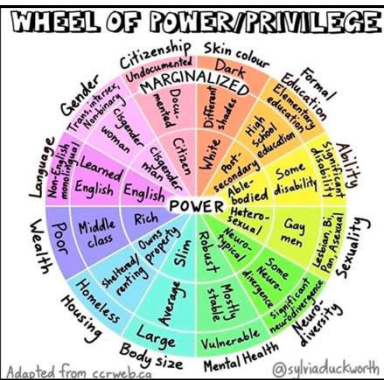
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TEXT

### STANDPOINT EPISTEMOLOGY

► The view that an individual's minority status gives him or her the unique ability to see truth in society, a perspective which is not able to be seen by a person in the majority group

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TEXT

RELATIVISM

- ▶ The doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute.

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- ▶ The church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2,000 years ago as their best defense.

Rob Bell

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TEXT

- ▶ Human beings can't do better than their very best at any given moment to communicate about God as they understand God, and... **Scripture faithfully reveals the evolution of our ancestors' best attempts to communicate their successive best understandings of God.** As human capacity grows to conceive of a higher and wiser view of God, each new vision is faithfully preserved in Scripture like fossils in layers of sediment.

Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christianity*  
 (San Francisco: Harper One, 2010), 103

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A relatively new idea that arose out of the world of textual criticism, the word “deconstruction” takes on different meanings depending on the field in which it’s being used. For our purposes—that is, regarding religious faith—we’ll define it as *the taking apart of an idea, practice, tradition, belief, or system into smaller components in order to examine their foundation, truthfulness, usefulness, and impact.*

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Think of it like an older house—not one that’s completely dilapidated, but that definitely needs some fixing up...Faith is actually much like that house. As we grow older, the components of our faith grow older, too—but some don’t age as well as others or have a shorter lifespan. *A certain wall, which at one point may have been load-bearing and crucial to the structure of our faith, might have become pointless and therefore needs to be removed.*

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... Ultimately, a person engages in deconstruction in order to see what of their faith is worth keeping and what needs rebuilding. If they determine that nothing was worth salvaging—that they can no longer believe—they will ultimately choose to walk away, or “deconvert.” However, if they determine that something is worth salvaging, they will then begin reconstructing from that foundation, *rebuilding a faith that feels more authentic to how they perceive God. Because the faith journey is so personal, the choice of what to do after deconstruction is up to the person and no one else.*

Melanie Mudge, *What Is Faith Deconstruction?* at [sophiasociety.org](http://sophiasociety.org)

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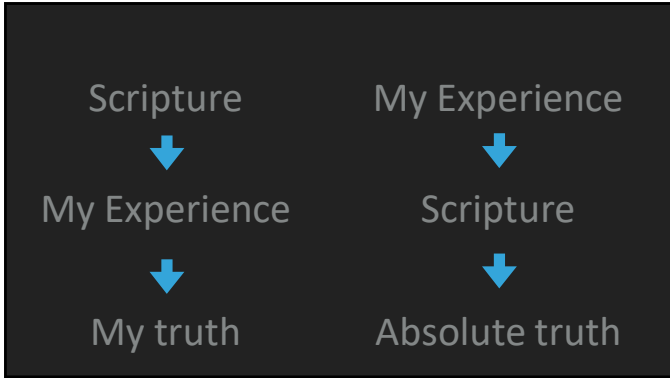
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**3 COMMON CRITICISMS OF SCRIPTURE**

- ▶ Variants in the copies
- ▶ Variants in the eyewitness accounts of the Gospels
- ▶ God of the Old Testament viewed as vengeful and bloodthirsty

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TEXT

- ▶ The vast majority of these hundreds of thousands of differences are completely and utterly unimportant and insignificant and don't matter at all. By far the most common differences simply show us that scribes in the ancient world could spell no better than most people today (and the scribes didn't have spell-check!). If we really want to know what the apostle Paul had to say about the importance of Jesus' death and resurrection, does it matter to us how he spelled the word "resurrection"? Probably not. Moreover, lots of other kinds of differences in our manuscripts - as we will see - are easy to explain and don't affect the meaning of the writings in the least.

*Bart Ehrman, "New Testament Manuscripts: Good News and Bad News"*

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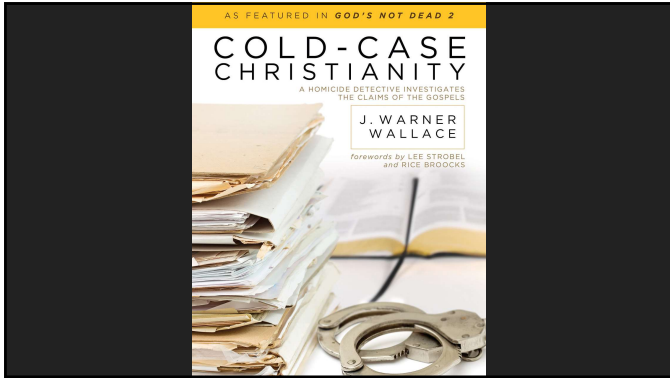
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If God was supposed to be the hero of the story, then why did God behave like the villain?  
Rachel Held Evans

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JESUS' VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

- ▶ It is authoritative
- ▶ It is inspired
- ▶ It is the Word of God

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▶ He [Jesus] has the resources of heaven available, yet he fights by using the **authority of the Scriptures**... His position is unequivocal: "You're trying to tempt me, but the Scriptures have spoken. That's the end of the conversation."

*Andrew Wilson, Unbreakable: What the Son of God Said About the Word of God*

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'Jesus responded, "Then why does David, speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit, call the Messiah 'my Lord'?"

Matthew 22:43

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'He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded..."

Matthew 15:3-4

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'And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: '

Matthew 22:31

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' "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. '

John 16:12-13

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'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.'

2 Timothy 3:16-17

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