

This Chicago style sample paper offers a brief example of appropriate Chicago style and academic writing conventions, including a thesis statement and appropriate use of sources. Included in this sample are an introduction, a conclusion, and excerpted sections from an original student essay. Any use of this written material except as a stylistic writing sample is expressly prohibited.

Course Number & Name

Instructor Name

Final Paper

31 December 2007

### The Hope of Deconstruction

“*What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?*”—Tertullian

The question posed by Tertullian, while ancient in its origins, has deep contemporary relevance. Throughout history, the church has held an uneasy relationship with the field of philosophy, wavering between adopting some thinking in support of faith (such as Thomas Aquinas’s use of Aristotelian rationalism), while rejecting others as antithetical to belief altogether (such as the thought of Pelagius). In many ways, the church has always struggled to remain relevant to the culture while also particular in its call and mission. From the Reformation and Enlightenment to the scientific revolutions of Copernicus, each movement challenged the traditional thinking of the church in its own way and dared Christianity to broaden its view of the world and God. In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, with the centuries-old tenets and beliefs of modernism quickly eroding in favor of something called *postmodernism*, the church once more needs to determine its stance with/in the shift, again asking the question Tertullian formulated so long ago: “What does philosophy have to do with faith?” This conversation about postmodernism and faith allows us to turn to the hope found within the deconstructive task and reclaim the infinite nature of the infinite. In response to evolving philosophies, the church must see postmodernism as a renewed companion to faith and, thus, embrace the contemporary “Athens” as a robust conversation partner.

**Comment [MA1]:** MHGS formatting guidelines:

- Use 8 ½ x 11 inch white paper.
- Type or word process the paper.
- Use black 12-point type and a serif font.
- Margins should be 1- to 1.25-inches.
- Text should be double-spaced.
- Do not include a title page.
- The header should include the course number and the date.
- Pages should be numbered.
- Titles should be centered in regular font.
- Student name should appear on the back of the paper.

**Comment [MA2]:** Thesis clearly makes a claim that the rest of the paper will set out to prove with logic and evidence.

One of the forerunners of postmodernism, Jacques Derrida, saw the world as comprised simply of writing. Therefore, crucial to the deconstructive task is the very critique of writing. “Deconstruction,” Raschke writes, “zeroed in on the theory of writing as writing, as the composition of meaning.”<sup>1</sup> Deconstruction sees the world as one series of texts after another, always needing another text to be read and understood. There is indeed, as Derrida famously says, “nothing outside of the text.”<sup>2</sup> To move outside of the text we hope to interpret only yields more text and then more text beyond that. In fact, as James Smith plainly writes, “...we never really get ‘behind’ or ‘past’ texts; we never get beyond the realm of interpretation to some kind of kingdom of pure reading. We are never able to step out of our skins. Texts and language are not something that we get through to a world without language or a state of nature where interpretation is not necessary.”<sup>3</sup> As Raschke states, to read is to catch a text in deconstruction because we’re always taking something away from it.<sup>4</sup> We are, in other words, always acting as vandals as we deconstruct the pump of the text.

**Comment [MA3]:** Clear attribution of quotations throughout the text.

**Comment [m4]:** Correct first citation of a text (see footnote).

**Comment [MA5]:** Appropriate citation of lecture material (see footnote).

What postmodernism helps us see through the projects set forth by Gilles Deleuze, Derrida, and others is that as a philosophy, it serves to undercut our theologies for the ways they limit God while also asserting God’s infinite and mysterious character. Raschke brings the conversation together brilliantly, arguing (with the help of John D. Caputo) that the task of the deconstructionist is to “de-Hellenize” Christianity:

**Comment [MA6]:** Clear identification of this text’s reliance on a secondary source.

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Raschke, *The Next Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 83.

<sup>2</sup> James K.A. Smith. *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>4</sup> Carl Raschke, “Postmodernism” (lecture, Philosophy II, Mars Hill Graduate School, Seattle, WA, June 25, 2007.)

Deconstruction is not faith, per se, Caputo insists, but it leaves a wide berth for faith. It is the trek into the desert so that faith can come into its own, so that there are no accessories to faith, so that faith can experience the pure presence of the One who is not present as an object at all. One cannot be saved by philosophy or even theology. Every destiny is God's, and God's alone...Deconstruction assists faith because it is 'a pact with the *tout autre* (wholly other).' God can only be 'known' through faith – through stripped down, bare-bones, noncontentious, unassuming faith.<sup>5</sup>

**Comment [m7]:** Correct subsequent citation for a text used earlier in the essay (see footnote).

**Comment [MA8]:** For long quotations over 5 lines, block the quotation. Single space the quote, indent the entire quotation half an inch, and leave a blank line before and after the quotation. Do not add quotation marks at the beginning or end of the quote.

Deconstruction (and the postmodern milieu) unsettles us from the comfortable perch of theology and philosophy by consistently questioning that which we take for granted. In the process, it often exposes where our true loyalties lie (within intricate theologies/philosophies) and then points us toward the infinite, toward something inconceivable and, thus, toward God himself.

Raschke continues, "We respond to God in faith because we allow our systems of thought to be crucified and rejected, so that God may raise up. There can be no faith without the preparation that the deconstructive power of postmodernist discourse offers."<sup>6</sup> When the holes in our systems of faith are exposed—indeed the difference—we submit to worshipping a God which is beyond all that we can comprehend, a God who is truly the "Wholly Other." And we are confronted with the realization that perhaps all along we've worshipped the thought of God rather than the One True God.

**Comment [m9]:** Correct subsequent citation for a text used immediately before. Note the clear attribution of author's name in the text.

Kierkegaard uses a powerful narrative to demonstrate how the infinite breaking into our finite existence brings a violent rupture of our system of faith. The story of Abraham and Isaac is the story of a deeply devoted old man, the son he so patiently waited for as promised by God, and the story of this man's "test." Abraham was a man well over one hundred and still enjoying the young son for which he'd waited so long when he heard God say, "Take your son, your only

**Comment [MA10]:** Clear attribution alerts the reader that this interpretation to follow is Kierkegaard's.

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<sup>5</sup> Raschke, *The Next Reformation*, 112.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

son, Isaac, whom you love and...sacrifice him...as a burnt offering on one of the mountains...<sup>7</sup>

Abraham was committed to the Lord in faith, had trusted him, and then this? What could God be thinking? What was his intent? As Kierkegaard remarks, “All was lost! Seventy years of trusting expectancy, the brief joy over the fulfillment of faith. Who is this who seizes the staff from the old man, who is this who demands that he himself shall break it! Who is this who makes a man’s gray hairs disconsolate, who is this who demands that he himself shall do it?”<sup>8</sup> Kierkegaard understood that Genesis 22 adds a layer of deep complexity to one’s conception of God. It’s a disturbing request and, in many ways, paints the image of a God difficult to understand. This is not a safe God but rather one who has the potential of inviting one to surrender the very things he or she has been given to steward and cherish. Abraham’s story is the portrait of one of the greatest fathers of faith, a man so grief-stricken and angry with God that he never will speak to God again.

**Comment [MA11]:** Appropriate citation of a Biblical text. Consult with instructors about the particularities of biblical citation required for individual courses.

Just as Kierkegaard’s discussion of Abraham highlights the complexity of the narrative, postmodernism weaves an equally complex web of philosophy, theology, and cultural theory into a hopeful and meaningful dialogue with people of faith. What lies beyond postmodernism philosophically (post-postmodernism?) remains to be seen, but the hope is that while the church continues to confront otherness, it will do so passionately and charitably. Incorporating difference into the life of the church can only lead to a more robust, fear- and awe-inspiring faith.

**Comment [MA12]:** Author integrates the Biblical text with the philosophical source material discussed.

**Comment [m13]:** The conclusion clearly transitions from the final body paragraph. Additionally, the conclusion returns to the claim presented in the thesis and further discusses the implications of the claim the paper has made.

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<sup>7</sup> Genesis 22:2 (NIV).

<sup>8</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 19.

## Bibliography

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling*. Edited and translated by Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Raschke, Carl. *The Next Reformation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.

———. “Postmodernism.” Lecture, Philosophy II, Mars Hill Graduate School, Seattle, WA, June 25, 2007.

Smith, James K.A. *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006.

**Comment [MA14]:** Chicago style bibliography page entries should be alphabetized and formatted with a hanging indentation. Single-space the entries, and leave an extra space between them. Center the title in regular font: Bibliography.

**Comment [m15]:** For multiple texts by the same author, list them in alphabetical order and use a 3-em dash to replace the author’s name in all entries after the first.

**Comment [MA16]:** Chicago Style does not require the Bible to be listed on the Bibliography page, but some instructors may require it. Consult with instructors about the particularities of biblical citation required for individual courses.