



Dr. Fred Schwarz

The Schwarz Report



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Volume 44, Number 12

December 2004

Our 51st Year!

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And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead expose them. Ephesians 5:11

The Virgin Birth of Christ

by Dr. Norman L. Geisler

The Holy Spirit will come upon you [Mary], and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Luke 1:35

The virgin birth of Christ is the perennial target of naturalistic Bible critics, who tend to regard it as the result of pagan influence on Christian writers of the second century. These Christians developed the myth in an emulation of stories from Greek mythology. One reason for the vehemence of these pronouncements is that, if true, the virgin birth establishes beyond question the life of Jesus as a supernatural intervention of God. If antisupernaturalists concede at this point, they have no case left.

At the root of the rejection of the virgin birth of Christ is the rejection of miracles. A virgin birth is a miracle. If a theistic God exists, and there is evidence that he does, then miracles are automatically possible. For if there is a God who can act, then there can be acts of God. Indeed, there is every reason to believe that miracles have occurred from the instant of the founding of the universe. Hence, the record of Jesus' virgin birth cannot be ruled as mythological in advance of looking at the evidence.

Long before the New Testament recorded the virgin birth, the Old Testament anticipated it. In fact, the earliest messianic prediction in the Bible implies the virgin birth. Speaking to the Tempter (Serpent), "God said 'And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'" (Gen. 3:15)

That the coming Redeemer was to be the "offspring" or "seed" of the woman is important in a patriarchal culture. Why of a woman? Normally, descendants were traced through their father (cf. Gen 5, 11). Even the official genealogy of the Messiah in Matthew 1 is traced through Jesus' legal father, Joseph. In the unique term, *seed of the woman*, there is implied that the messiah would come by a woman but not a natural father.

Another possible intimation of the virgin birth in the Old Testament is found in the curse placed on Jeconiah which said: "Record this man as if childless, a man who will not prosper, none will sit on the throne of David or rule any more in Judah" (Jer. 22:30). The problem with this prediction is that Jesus was the descendant of the throne of David through Jeconiah (cf. Matt. 1:12).

However, since Joseph was only Jesus' legal father (by virtue of being engaged to Mary when she became pregnant), Jesus did not inherit the curse on Jeconiah's *actual* descendants. And since Jesus was the actual son of David through Mary according to

"Dwell on the past and you'll lose an eye; forget the past and you'll lose both eyes." Old Russian Proverb

Luke's matriarchal genealogy (Luke 3), he fulfilled the conditions of coming "from the loins of David" (2 Samuel 7:12-16) without losing legal rights to the throne of David by falling under the curse of Jeconiah. Thus, the virgin birth is implied in the consistent understanding of these Old Testament passages.

Both the New Testament (Matt. 1:23) and many Christian apologetics use Isaiah 7:14 as a predictive prophecy to prove the Bible makes specific supernatural predictions centuries in advance. However, critics following the interpretation of many Bible scholars say verse 16 refers to the birth of Isaiah's own child shortly before the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. If so, this is not a prophecy about the virgin birth of Jesus and it has no apologetic value.

Of the three interpretations of Isaiah 7:14, only one is incompatible with a supernatural predictive understanding in reference to Christ's birth. That is that this prophecy referred only to Isaiah's day and was fulfilled in the natural birth of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (Isa. 8:3). Of the other two possibilities, the prophecy could have had a double fulfillment—a preliminary one in Isaiah's child and the final one in Christ's birth. Or this prophecy refers only to the supernatural birth of Christ (Matt. 1:23).

Liberal scholars and some conservatives view Isaiah 7:14 as having reference only to the natural conception and birth of the son of the prophetess. They argue that the Hebrew *'almâ*, sometimes translated "virgin" (KJV, ASV, NIV), refers to a young woman, whether married or unmarried, and should be translated "young maiden" (RSV). If the prophet had intended someone who was a virgin, he would have used *bethulah* (cf. Gen. 24:16; Levit. 21:3; Judg. 21:12). Further, the context reveals that the prophecy had a near-view fulfillment. Verse 16 declares that "before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste" (Is. 7:16). This was literally fulfilled in the invasion of the Assyrian Tiglath Pileser.

Even in the broader context, only the birth of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz fit the prophecy. Isaiah 8:3 reads: "Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said to me, 'Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz'" (Isa. 8:3). The "sign" was promised to Ahaz (7:10) and would have made no sense if its fulfillment was after his time (7:14).

Therefore, the argument concludes that no prediction of Christ's virgin birth should be found here. The use by Matthew was either faulty or purely typological, with no predictive or apologetic value. Matthew uses the phrase "that it might be fulfilled" typologically in other cases (for example, 2:15, 23). Matthew *applied* to Christ texts that were not messianic in their contexts.

There is a difficulty with the claim that *'almâ* refers to someone who is married. Not once does the Old Testament use *'almâ* to refer to a married person. *Bethulah*, on the other hand, is used for a married women (see Joel 1:8). Among texts using *'almâ* to refer to a virgin are Genesis 24:43, Exodus 2:8, Psalm 68:25, Proverbs 30:19, and Song of Solomon 1:3, 6:8.

Some critics use I Chronicles 15:20 and Psalm 46 as examples of *'almâ* (or *alamoth*) referring to a married person. In Psalm 46 it is simply part of the title of the Psalm, "A Song for *Alamoth*." Nothing in the title or psalm text helps us understand what *Alamoth* means, let alone whether it refers to a married person. It may be a musical notation, as one for the young women's choir to sing, or it could refer to some kind of musical accompaniment. The reference in I Chronicles 15:20 is similar. Music is being sung "with strings according to *Alamoth*." Whatever this may mean, it does not prove that *'almâ* means a married woman.

It can be argued that some features of the passage could not possibly refer only to the immediate circumstances: the supernatural nature of the "sign"; the reference to the one born as *Immanuel*, "God with us," and the reference to the whole "house of David" (vs. 13). The birth of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz in the next chapter cannot fulfill 7:14, since the one born was to be named "Immanuel."

While the "sign" was for Ahaz, it also was for the whole "house of David" (vs. 13). A distant sign can be for someone who lives long before the event, provided the benefits of the sign extend to the one for whom it is given. Since the "sign" was the birth of Messiah, the hope of salvation for Ahaz and everyone else, the sign was certainly for him.

But what of 7:16? The only meaningful way to understand this verse is that it refers to a child born in Isaiah's day. It should be kept in mind that 7:16's reference to the Assyrian invasion is itself a supernatural predictive prophecy. The issue is not, then, whether 7:14 is predictive and was fulfilled. The question is whether it was fulfilled in three years or 700. There is a possibility that Isaiah 7:16 can be understood in terms of the virgin birth-only view. Commentator William Hendriksen suggests this possible interpretation: "Behold, the virgin conceives and gives birth to a son. . . . Before this child, *who before my prophetic eye has already arrived*, shall know to refuse the evil and chose the good—i.e., *within a very short time*—the land whose two kings you abhor shall be deserted" (Hendriksen, 139). Or, if one wants to be more literal, the Assyrians did invade *before* the child Jesus grew up—long before.

It is generally acknowledged that not all usages of the phrase "that it might be fulfilled" entail a truly predictive prophecy, Isaiah 7:14 need not be one of them. Matthew cites

Micah 5:2, a clear prediction that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:5; see also Matt 3:3, 21:5, 22:43).

Even if the immediate context reveals that the prophecy had a near-view fulfillment in mind, this does not mean that there is not also a fuller fulfillment in a far-view reference to Christ. According to this view, many Old Testament prophecies have both a partial fulfillment in their day and a complete fulfillment in the distant future. Because of their desperate situation, God promised to give to Ahaz a sign that would assure the people that God would ultimately deliver them from bondage. This was a sign of the physical deliverance of Israel from the bondage of their enemies. It ultimately was a sign of the spiritual deliverance of spiritual Israel from bondage to Satan. The first aspect of the sign was fulfilled in the birth of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, the second aspect in the birth of Jesus to the true virgin, Mary. Such double fulfillments are clear in other prophecies. Zechariah 12:10 can be applied both to Christ's first (John 19:37) and second comings (Rev. 1:7). Part of Isaiah 61 was fulfilled in Jesus (Isa. 61:1-2a; cf. Luke 4:18-19). Part remains for the second coming (Isa. 61:2b-11).

According to the double-reference view, *ʿalmâ* refers to a young maiden who has never had sexual intercourse. The wife of Isaiah who bore the son in fulfillment of the first aspect of the prophecy was a virgin until she conceived by Isaiah. However, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a complete fulfillment—a virgin when she conceived Jesus (Matthew 1:24-25).

Other arguments for this position also fit the supernatural birth-only view. Both of these views reject the idea that the significance of Isaiah 7:14 is exhausted in the natural birth of the prophetess's son.

Some scholars defend the position that Isa. 7:14 refers only to the supernatural virgin birth of Christ. Contrary to the first option, *ʿalmâ* is only translated “virgin” in the Old Testament and has no other options. The prophetess, therefore, does not qualify. The Greek Old Testament (*Septuagint*) translated *ʿalmâ* by the unambiguous word *parthenos* which can only mean “virgin.” These translators, working before the advent, evidently believed that this was a prediction of the virgin birth of the Messiah. The inspired New Testament sanctioned this work by quoting from the *Septuagint* in Matt 1:23. Further, to translate *ʿalmâ* as a young girl who is not yet married, but would soon marry, Isaiah means that it would be no longer a *virgin* who is conceiving, but a married woman. Isaiah 7:14 regards both the conception and birth as by a virgin.

Proponents of the supernatural-birth-only view point out that the prediction obviously goes beyond Ahaz to the whole “house of David” (Isa. 7:13). That hardly would apply to a

natural birth by the prophetess in Isaiah's day. Also, the emphasis is on some wonderful, unheard of “sign” (Isa. 7:11-14). Why should an ordinary birth be understood as an extraordinary sign?

The whole context of Isaiah 7-11 (cf. Micah 5:2f.) forms an unbreakable chain of messianic prophecy:

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:

The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” [7:14]

“Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, O Immanuel!” [8:8b]

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. [9:6]

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash round his waist. [11:1-5]

Matthew 1:22 both interprets Isaiah 7:14 as prophetic with the phrase “that it might be fulfilled” and adds an intensifying phrase, “*now all this was done* that it might be fulfilled...” (emphasis added). The manner of the quotation emphasizes the supernatural quality of the birth and the deity of Christ. Most scholars on both sides of the issues acknowledge that the phrase “that it might be fulfilled” does not necessarily refer to a predicative prophecy. However, indications are that Matthew 1:23 is an example of one that it predictive.

Finally, the same verse cannot refer to the birth of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, for the same verse cannot mean two different (opposing) things. If both the *Septuagint* and the inspired New Testament affirm that this refers to an actual virgin, it must refer to Christ alone.

A final issue that arises in this debate regards whether the name *Immanuel* mandates that Isaiah was referring to God incarnate. It does not. *Immanuel* can mean “God is with us.” While the translation “God with us” seems to mean the name-bearer has deity, it is linguistically possible to translate

“Immanuel” as “God is with us,” which does not denote deity for the name-bearer. The name of a child can refer to a situation meaningful to the giver of the name. Thus Sarah named her son *Isaac*, meaning “laughter.”

However, overall evidence indicates that the traditional translation is correct. When a point is made of a biblical name, it most often refers to the one who bears it: *Eve*, mother of the “living” (Gen. 3:20); *Noah*, related to the Hebrew for “comfort” (Gen. 5:29); *Abram*, “father” and *Abraham*, “father of many” (Gen. 17:5); *Sarai*, “princess,” and *Sarah*, “princess of God” (Gen. 17:15); *Esau*, “hairy” (Gen. 25:25); *Jacob*, “He grasps the heel” or “deceiver,” and *Israel*, “He struggles with God” (Gen. 27:36; 32:28); *Naomi*, “pleasant,” and *Mara*, “bitter” (Ruth 1:20); *Nabal*, “fool” (1 Samuel 25:3, 25); *Jesus*, “Yahweh saves” (Matt. 1:21); *Peter*, “rock” (Matt. 16:18); and *Barnabas*, “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36).

Both the immediate and broad contexts show that *Immanuel* refers to the character of the one bearing the name. The event is a supernatural sign. The whole “house of David,” is in view, especially within the “messianic chain” of Isaiah 7-11. The New Testament interprets it as referring to Christ. All these factors support the view that it is a reference to Christ.

The evidence that Jesus was conceived of a virgin is based in the reliability of the New Testament documents and the New Testament witnesses. Both of these have been established with strong evidence. In fact, as is shown elsewhere, the evidence for the authenticity of the New Testament is greater than for that of any book from the ancient world. It remains only to show that these records do testify to the virgin birth of Christ.

There can be no doubt that the New Testament clearly affirms that Christ was born of a virgin. Matthew wrote:

“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but *before they came together*, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, *he had in mind to divorce her quietly*. But after he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because *what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit*. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord has said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and*

will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”—which means, “God with us.” [1:18-23]

The emphasized sections point to four factors which demonstrate that Christ was virgin born: First, Mary conceived “*before they came together*,” thus revealing that it was not a natural conception. Second, Joseph’s initial reaction reveals that he had not had sexual intercourse with Mary, since when he found that she was pregnant “*he had in mind to divorce her quietly*.” Third, the phrase “*what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit*” reveals the supernatural nature of the event. Finally, the citation from the *Septuagint* translation of Isaiah 7:14 about a *parthenos*, “virgin,” giving “birth” to a child indicates that Mary had not had sexual relations with anyone. She was not simply a virgin before the baby was conceived, but after it was conceived and even when it was born.

Mark begins immediately with Jesus’ ministry, in accord with his stress on Christ as “servant” (cf. 10:45). But we would expect a physician, Dr. Luke, to give attention to the circumstances of the birth. He begins with the announcement of Christ’s birth of a virgin:

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a *virgin pledged to be married* to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The *virgin’s* name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are *highly favored!* The Lord is with you.” Mary was *greatly troubled* at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.” . . . “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you*. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.” [1:26-35]

The emphasized text again demonstrates that the conception of Christ was supernatural: Mary was a “virgin” (*parthenos*), pledged to be married.” Mary’s reaction of being “greatly troubled” and being “afraid,” as well as her astonished question, “how will this be?” reveals that she was a virgin. The angel gave some description of how the conception would happen through the Holy Spirit and “the power of the Most High.”

When Luke records the birth he again stresses that Mary was only “pledged to be married,” which in that culture meant she had not yet had sexual intercourse with Joseph. The su-

pernatural appearance of the angel and the heavenly choir demonstrate that something extraordinary had happened. Mary's reaction was to contemplate in awe the mystery of it all. Obviously she knew something supernatural and holy had occurred (vs. 19).

John stresses the overall divinity of Christ, and doesn't dwell on particulars. Nevertheless, there are a couple of strong intimations in John's Gospel that Jesus was virgin born. When Jesus performed his first miracle at Cana of Galilee his mother was obviously aware of his supernatural origin and confident that he could do the supernatural. John wrote: "On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.' 'Dear woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied, 'My time has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'" Indeed, the emphasized text reveals that Mary seems not only to believe that Jesus could do a miracle but to be requesting one, even though she had never seen him do one since this was Jesus' "first miracle" (vs. 11). Her understanding of his supernatural ability came from her past relationship with Jesus, including his birth.

Even the insult of Jesus' enemies shows that the circumstances of his birth had stirred general gossip, as might be expected if the story spread. Jesus said to them, "You are doing the things your own father [Satan] does.' 'We are not illegitimate children,' they protested. 'The only Father we have is God himself.'" The Jews may have simply been responding defensively to Jesus' attack on their misplaced confidence in the fatherhood of Abraham. If so, it is an odd rejoinder. But it makes perfect sense if they were turning the argument back on Jesus' own legitimacy. Even Joseph had needed an angelic visitation to be convinced of Mary's purity (Matt. 1:20). He and Mary likely faced a continuing shadow on their reputations. But Jesus faced the matter boldly in responding to his sniggering accusers, "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?" (John 8:46).

The Epistles are filled with references to Jesus' sinlessness. In the context of teaching about the innate sinfulness that adheres to each descendant of Adam (for example, Romans 5), these teachings themselves indicate that God had done something different in Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; I John 3:3). Paul's reference to Jesus as "born of a woman" is relatively explicit. He wrote, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law" (Gal. 4:4). This refers to Genesis 3:15. In a Jewish patriarchal culture one is begotten of a male (the father). To bring attention to

being "born of a woman" is to show that something unusual is occurring—in Jesus' case a virgin birth.

It is difficult to deny that the New Testament teaches the virgin birth of Christ. The easier attack is to say that it is a myth patterned after Greek and Roman gods and was not really a historical event. In brief:

- Evidence is unassailable that the New Testament was written by contemporaries and eyewitnesses (cf. Luke 1:1-4). Second-century dating theories have now been thoroughly discredited by archaeological and manuscript evidence, allowing no time for legend development.
- Virgin birth records do not show any of the standard literary marks of the myth genre.
- Persons, places, and events of Christ's birth precise and historically substantiated. Luke in particular goes to great pains to note historical details (Luke 3:1-2).
- No Greek myth even remotely corresponds to the literal incarnation of a monotheistic God in human form (cf. John 1:1-3, 14) by way of a literal virgin birth (Matt. 1:18-25). The Greeks were polytheists, not monotheists.
- Stories of Greek gods become human via miraculous events like a virgin birth postdated the time of Christ. Hence, if there is any influence it is from Christianity on mythology, not the reverse.

Historical evidence that Jesus was supernaturally conceived of a virgin is more than substantial. Indeed, there are more eyewitness contemporary records of the virgin birth than for most events from the ancient world. The records show no signs of myth development. Indeed, they are surrounded by historical references to real people, places, and times. Thus, there is no reason to believe Jesus was not literally, biologically born of a virgin just as the Bible claims he was. Only an unjustified antisupernatural bias is ground for any conclusion to the contrary.

A particular battleground text is Isaiah 7:14, which is cited by Matthew. Critics argue that it has no predictive value. At worst the text refers to events in Isaiah's time only, which were applied typologically to Christ but have no predictive value. There is reason to believe the text refers, in part or whole, to a prediction of the virgin birth. In any case, there are other clear predictive texts in the Old Testament.

—Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologists* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, 1999), pages 759-764. *The Schwarz Report* editors highly recommends this 840-page volume.

Johnny's Marxist Sociology Professor

by Mike Adams

Dear Johnny:

Thanks for getting in touch with me last week to express your concerns about your sociology class. You are not the first student to ask me why sociology professors spend most of their class time talking about the need for redistribution of wealth, higher taxes, and bigger government. Nor are you the first to ask me why your sociology professor didn't major in economics. I know that your question, "Just what the hell is sociology, anyway?" was probably rhetorical, but I will try to answer it as I address your other concerns in this brief letter.

First of all, your sociology professor probably isn't that bright. She may have wanted to major in economics, but opted for sociology because the discipline is so much less demanding. If this sounds too harsh or sarcastic, just take a look at the grade distribution posted outside of a classroom in the sociology building. Last semester, while giving an examination, I noticed that the test scores for a junior-level sociology class were as follows: 34 "As," 2 "Bs," 1 "C," 0 "Ds," and 0 "Fs." Such a distribution produces a class GPA of 3.89. Remember that students only need a 2.0 GPA to graduate.

Something else you might not realize is that many graduate programs in sociology only require a 3.0 GPA for admission. Some of those programs require students to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), but only as a formality after the student has already been admitted. Sociologists don't like standardized tests, because they think they are racist and sexist, despite the paucity of questions about NASCAR and deer hunting.

Lowering standards to boost GPAs is the best way to make sure that a discipline is filled with the least bright and least motivated students. Setting a GPA requirement for graduate admissions well below the undergraduate average is also a bad idea. It merely guarantees that incompetent students will wind up teaching sociology in college. It isn't that way in economics. That's why your sociology professor isn't an economics professor. That also helps explain why she is a Marxist.

But, aside from low IQ, there are other reasons why your professor is in love with Marxism. You may have been barking up the wrong tree, however, when you asked me

how someone with a PhD could adopt such a failed political philosophy.

Yes, you were right to point out that the communists killed 100 million people worldwide in just 72 years. Yes, you were right to point out that sociologists cannot explain the fall of the Berlin Wall within the Marxist dialectic. Yes, you were right to point out that they cannot even explain why the Berlin Wall was necessary in the first place. You were also right to be outraged by your professor's espousal of Marxism, given that your relatives fought to defeat communists and totalitarians over seas, while your Marxist professor's biggest problem is spilling her four-dollar skinny latte on her \$25 leather-bound edition of *The Communist Manifesto*.

But you were wrong to characterize Marxism as a political philosophy. Marxism is an emotional disorder, not a political philosophy.

Wealthy people sometimes accept Marxism, not because it has ever worked, but because they feel guilty about having more than other people. But more often it is accepted by those with less who are angry, usually because they lack the talent and drive to succeed in a capitalist society. This realization often occurs at a ten-year high school reunion after they see people with less schooling and fewer degrees but with more money than they have. They don't want to compete with these people. They just want the IRS to take their wealth and "redistribute" it against their will under the threat of incarceration. They also like to call conservatives "fascists."

Johnny, this semester is going to go so much faster if you avoid answering the silly questions that your Marxist feminist sociology professor poses in class. Instead, your only chance of learning depends on your willingness to ask your professor questions about her emotional disorder. Here are some suggestions:

1. Which leader killed more Jews in the 20th century: a) Joseph Stalin or, b) Adolph Hitler?
2. Which of the following is more perplexing: a) A Jewish professor who calls herself a Marxist or, b) A black professor who calls himself a Klansman?
3. Whose idea was it to turn over Eastern Europe to Stalin after winning it from Hitler: a) Franklin Delano Roosevelt or, b) His advisor (and Soviet spy) Alger Hiss?
4. Which worldview is true: a) The Biblical perspective that human nature is flawed (to the point where utopia is impossible) or, b) The sociological perspective that we are inherently good until corrupted by society?

The Schwarz Report Bookshelf

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5. Which problem is harder for sociologists to explain: a) The logical assertion that inherently good people combine to form a “bad” society that, in turn, corrupts previously good people or, b) The empirical fact that sociologists consistently explain around ten percent of the variance in delinquency while refusing to use the term “free will” to explain the other 90% of the variance.

6. And (regarding question #5, part “b”) how can the team scoring one run be called the “winner” against a team scoring nine runs?

And, of course, you will want to ask your professor to explain the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall within the Marxist dialectic some time before Christmas vacation.

But, please, don’t take any more sociology classes after this one. Go to the psychology department to learn about human behavior and the business department to learn about economics. Let the sociologists talk about their feelings on their own. Eventually, the discipline will collapse due to internal weaknesses.

—*Townhall.com*, October 27, 2004

The Deconstruction of Jacques Derrida

by Steven Plaut

Jacques Derrida, the father of the pseudo-philosophy of “Deconstructionism,” has been deconstructed into the next world. He had been conducting a terminal “narrative” with cancer. Well, at least that is the subjective unproven conclusion we have, since, after all, how do we REALLY know that death and cancer exist? Well in fact we do, and the passing of an individual, even a philosopher who has contributed to human confusion rather than to enlightenment and clarification is regrettable. However, the tragedy of ordinary human mortality should not dissuade us from examining the legacy left behind.

Deconstructionism is the nonsensical, infantile “philosophy” that argues that words have no meaning, there are no facts nor truth, and the only thing we can REALLY be absolutely certain about are that the US and capitalism and Israel are evil and must be eliminated. Deconstructionism has become something of a pseudo-intellectual orthodoxy among certain of our academic colleagues, especially those in the academic professions that never quite found out where’s the beef. Here in Israel, the Hebrew University last year granted Derrida, the godfather of the Deconstructionism, an honorary PhD for his enormous contributions to, well, saying nothing of value about nothingness. (While technically born Jewish, Derrida had a long record of endorsing the Left’s set of liberation solutions to the “problem” of Israel’s existence.)

Deconstructionism is a shallow form of Non-Thinking that has gained popularity among some of the more simple-minded disciplines of the academic world. Essentially the same as post-modernism (how is that for a true nonsense word, something no woodchuck could chuck?), Deconstructionism argues that there do not exist any such things as facts, truth, logic, rationality, nor science. Nothing in the world exists beyond subjective narratives, each as legitimate as the next. Language is the ultimate form of tyranny and source of control over us oppressed folks by those evil elites. There are no false narratives, just different subjectivities.

Deconstructionism was defined nicely by Robert Locke: “It is also known as poststructuralism, but don’t ask what structuralism was, as it was no better. It is based on the proposition that the apparently real world is in fact a vast social construct and that the way to knowledge lies in taking apart in one’s mind this thing society has built. Taken to its logical conclusion, it supposes that there is at the end of the day no actual reality, just a series of appearances stitched together by social constructs into what we all agree to call reality. But not agree voluntarily, for society has (this is the leftist bit) an oppressive structure, so we are pressured to agree to that version of reality which pleases the people in charge.”

Left-wing academics love substituting polysyllable-invention for thinking and analysis.

Among the founders of the School of Deconstructionism was Yale professor Paul de Man, a close friend of Jacques Derrida’s, who had published pro-Nazi collaborationist and anti-Semitic articles in two Belgian newspapers in the early Forties. The other Deconstructionists have always tried to deconstruct the Nazism of de Man so that it would not look too bad.

Deconstructionism has long been linked with Marxism, a rather strange combination—given the insistence by deconstructionists that they should never claim to know anything. Marxists claim to know everything, based on ridiculous theories by Marx disproved 160 years ago, making the Marxist-Deconstructionist axis rather queer. It also sometimes calls itself post-colonialism, apparently because some of its Frenchie inventors came from Algeria, although I have never understood how it can be certain that anything or anyone was ever colonized or colonizer.

For deconstructionists, proof and disproof are unimportant. They accept as axiomatic the claim that social power structures control everything in the world, I guess including all narratives, and that literature and art are nothing more than reflections of or protests against such power and oppression. Never mind that the Decon conmen have no way of measuring nor assessing power, control, class, nor privilege; they are SURE that these things are out there and control the world, just like in the sort of giant conspiracy promoted on some of the wackier conspiracist web sites on the web.

Robert Locke has said that Deconstructionism is the

opiate of an obsolete intellectual class. It is little more than sophistry and absolute moral relativism. Deconstructionists insist that even words themselves have no meaning. Hence we all live in a meaningless universe in which we are all no better than noisy mutts, making silly barking sounds, which of course should already be obvious to any of you out there who have listened to comparative literature courses from lefty profs. As one critic pointed out, all of Deconstructionism is founded on the paradox of using language to claim that language cannot make unambiguous claims (John Searle, "The World Turned Upside Down," *The New York Review*, October 27, 1983).

Deconstructionists oppose being judgmental about anything, except the absolute evil of capitalism and America, which is why it is popular these days mainly among American tenured leftists (the French berets have by and large moved on to other amusements). They believe in an absolute justice, although they cannot tell you what and where it is, nor how to achieve it. They think it is something we all simply need to sit back and await, like a Messiah on a deconstructed donkey, although we can hurry it along by joining the Far Left. Deconstructionism attracts a certain sort of adolescent mind (regardless of the age of the accompanying body) because of its cynicism and dismissal of rational thought and science. In Locke's wonderful words, "It raises to the level of a philosophical system the intuition that everything grownups do is a fraud. It is the metaphysics of Holden Caulfield. It enables the practitioner to tell himself that he is among the privileged group of insiders who know that the Wizard of Oz is behind the curtain."

Among the forms of knowledge dismissed by them, especially in the case of the Deconstructionist philosopher Michel Foucault, is medicine, because medical science is merely an elite knowledge system that confers power on rich doctors. I have long believed that one of the funniest things in life must be a Deconstructionist professor of comparative literature in need of an emergency root canal, being treated by a deconstructionist dentist. ("Your pain is not real, it is subjective, let me narrate about it to you, there is no pain in reality, Novocain will just interfere with your narrative.")

Jacques Derrida was one of the fathers of this school of Deconstructionism. He was best known for his attack on "logocentrism," that is, on the cruel oppression by rational thinking. (What a great guru for the humanities departments at YOUR university!) He even dismissed Stalin as a logocentrist, which explains I guess why those Gulags and Red Terror ruined what otherwise would be the great blessings of Marxism. In short, we should all seek salvation through resistance to logic. What a great excuse not to do your homework!

As Deconstructionism has become regarded more and more as a laughingstock, even among French leftwing intel-

lectuals, it has gained popularity in some of the darker corners of American (and Israeli) campuses. Israeli leftists and media columnists (pretty much the same people) like to toss around the Newspeak of Deconstructionism, and long ago decided that the whole Middle East war stems from the fact that those insensitive Jews refuse to accept the Palestinian Other. Palestinians blowing up dozens of young Jewish Others on buses do not seem to bother them much.

The weaker the level of intellectual analysis and formal standards of scientific evidence and proof, the more popular Deconstructionism is. This is why professors of comparative literature have trouble controlling their sexual excitement stimulated by it, professors of education adore it, sociologists and political "scientists" applaud it, and members of all real scientific fields tend to place Deconstructionism in the same category as the Ra-El cult.

To Derrida's credit, he never bought in to the Stalinism so popular among most other French intellectuals. And Derrida is only one of the better-known clowns in the three-ring Deconstructionist Big Top. Michel Foucault is perhaps even better known than Derrida. He was a great celebrator of psychedelic drug use, sado-masochistic anonymous gay sex, cruelty and violence as expressions of liberation and deepness. There have been allegations that after discovering that he had picked up AIDS, he intentionally continued cruising the San Francisco gay scene to infect as many gay men as possible with the virus. In the autumn of 1983, after Foucault's health had collapsed and less than a year before his death, he continued to frequent gay bathhouses and bars. He is best remembered for his motto: Sex is worth dying for. According to Mark Lilla (*The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics*), Foucault laughed at the idea of 'safe sex' and apparently said, "To die for the love of boys: what could be more beautiful?"

Derrida was only one of the herd of fatuous trendy leftist know-nothing Eurotwit pseudo-thinkers turned into cult heroes by campus "thinkers." A few years back another Israeli university gave a similar honorary doctorate to German philosopher Jurgen Habermas. Habermas's theory is a watered down nursery school chant, where there are no actual conflicts of interests on earth, where all conflicts in the world are the result of poor communications, and where all conflict may be resolved through communicative actions (psychobabble for talking it out). I would like to see Herr Habermas get himself out of a mugging situation in gang turf in some of my old Philadelphian stomping grounds using communicative action. But Habermas had at least been a vocal critic of German skinheads and neo-Nazis. Derrida had no such track record. He never even renounced de Man.

—*FrontPageMagazine.com*, October 11, 2004

Founded in 1953, the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, under the leadership of Dr. Fred C. Schwarz, has been publishing a monthly newsletter since 1960. *The Schwarz Report* is edited by Dr. David A. Noebel and Dr. Michael Bauman with the assistance of Dr. Ronald H. Nash. The Crusade's address is PO Box 129, Manitou Springs, CO 80829. Our telephone number is (719) 685-9043. All correspondence and tax-deductible gifts (the Crusade is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization) may be sent to this address. Permission to reproduce materials from this *Report* is granted provided our name and address are given. **Check out our updated website at www.schwarzreport.org.**