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And the angel answered and said to her, the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

Luke 1:35

From The President's Desk

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Month In Review

Q “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women.’

“But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’

“Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’

“And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’

“Then Mary said, ‘Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word,’ And the angel departed from her.”

—Luke 1:26-38

Q “No woman ever conceived a child, no mare a foal, without Him. But once, and for a special purpose, He dispensed with that long line which is His instrument: once His life-giving finger touched a woman without passing through the ages of interlocked events. Once the great glove of Nature was taken off His hand. His naked hand touched her. There was of course a unique reason for it. That time He was creating not simply a man but the Man who was to be Himself: was creating Man anew: was beginning, at this divine and human point, the New Creation of all things. The whole soiled and weary universe quivered at this direct injection of essential life—direct, uncontaminated, not drained through all the crowded history of Nature.”

—C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*

Q “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.”

—Norman L. Geisler, Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, p. 759

Q “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.”

— Norman L. Geisler, Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, p. 760

Q “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 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.”

— Norman L. Geisler, Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, p. 760

Q “The Son of God became the Son of Man so that sons of men may become sons of God.”

—C.S. Lewis

Q “The twentieth century gave rise to one of the greatest and most distressing paradoxes of human history: that the greatest intolerance and violence of that century were practiced by those [communists and Nazis] who believed that religion caused intolerance and violence.”

—Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, p. 230

Q “At times, Freud’s influence has been such that the elimination of a person’s religious beliefs has been seen as a precondition for mental health.

“Yet Freud is now a fallen idol, the fall having been all the heavier for its postponement. The toppling of Freud from his seemingly unassailable position in American culture was a slow process. Frank Sulloway’s *Freud—Biologist of the Mind* (1979) raised some difficult questions concerning Freud’s scientific credentials. Adolf Grünbaum’s *Foundations of Psychoanalysis* (1984) drew attention to the many failings and vulnerabilities of his theories. It was left to Frederick Crews, however, in his *Unauthorized Freud* (1998), to popularize a growing body of professional literature that challenged Freud at every level, calling into question the reliability of his original case studies and the integrity of his therapeutic methods, and highlighting the credulity of his followers. Freud, it was argued, had a worrying tendency to convert the accidents of social history into the necessary truths of human nature. The long-overdue outcome was to bring about a collapse of confidence in Freud’s judgments concerning religion at the level of popular culture, this conclusion having been reached at least a decade earlier in professional circles.

“There is now growing awareness of the importance of spirituality in health care, both as a positive factor in relation to well-being and as an issue to which patients have a right. The major conference ‘Spirituality and Healing in Medicine,’ sponsored by Harvard Medical School in 1998, drew public and professional attention as never before to the issue of incorporating spirituality into professional medicine. It was there reported that 86 percent of Americans as a whole, 99 percent of family physicians, and 94 percent of HMO professionals now believe that prayer, meditation, and other spiritual and religious practices exercise a major positive role within the healing process.”

—Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, p. 263

Q “The Great Scandinavian Frolic of the Nobel Prize usually enlivens the fall season. This year’s Frolic is particularly rich in human comedy. Wangari Maathai, a lady from Kenya, wins the Peace Prize for starting a movement that is both green and feminist, getting women to plant 30 million trees in her country. Maathai and other women once stripped naked in downtown Nairobi as a protest. She also thinks that AIDS is a biological weapon developed

in the West to kill black people. Oh, and she was best friends with Bella Abzug. ‘We have added a new dimension to the concept of peace,’ says the fellow handing out the swollen check. Yessir, but Maathai is a boringly sober citizen compared with Elfriede Jelinek, winner of the Literature Prize. She’s Austrian, also a feminist, and was a Communist from 1974 to 1991. What a wonderful time span for membership! Her subject, according to one enthused report, is sex, ‘raw, depraved, sadomasochistic.’ What the Frolic committee particularly likes is the way she has abandoned ‘traditional dialogue for a kind of polyphonic monologues.’ She suffers, she tells us, from ‘social phobia.’ There isn’t a satirist alive who could invent any of this.”

—National Review, November 8, 2004, p. 14

Q “The Economics Prize, fortunately, is more serious. The latest one went to Edward Prescott, an advisor to the Federal Reserve Bank of Minnesota, and Finn Kydland of Carnegie Mellon University. Their work contributed to the dethroning of the orthodox Keynesianism regnant after World War II. And they are still contributing to our economic understanding. Prescott, in a recent study, found that the reason Americans work so much harder than Europeans—which was not true in the early 1970s—is that marginal tax rates on work are now lower here. Prescott argues that letting people invest their Social Security funds would further increase the returns to work and saving. Not surprisingly, he is a strong supporter of President Bush.”

—National Review, November 8, 2004, p. 14

Q “It is not reason that is taking away my faith: on the contrary, my faith is based on reason. It is my imagination and emotions. The battle is between faith and reason on one side and emotion and imagination on the other.”

—C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Q “Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.”

—Richard Dawkins (atheist), *The Blind Watchmaker*

Q “The belief that there is no God is just as much a matter of faith as the belief that there is a God.”

—Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, p. 180

Q “Tyranny is not dead, not in politics and certainly not in our souls. The age of the master ideologies may be over, but so long as men and women think about politics—so long as there

are thinking men and women at all—the temptation will be there to succumb to the allure of an idea, to allow passion to blind us to its tyrannical potential, and to abdicate our first responsibility, which is to master the tyrant within.

“The events of the last century merely provided the occasion for extraordinary displays of intellectual philotyranny whose sources will not disappear in less extreme political circumstances, for they are part of the makeup of our souls.”

—Mark Lilla, *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics*, p. 216

Q “Dionysius [Greek tyrant of Syracuse, 430-367 B.C.] is our contemporary. Over the last century he has assumed many names: Lenin and Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini, Mao and Ho, Castro and Trujillo, Amin and Bokassa, Saddam and Khomeini, Ceausescu and Milosevic—one’s pen runs dry. In the nineteenth century optimistic souls could believe that tyranny was a thing of the past. After all, Europe had entered the modern age and everyone knew that complex modern societies, attached to secular, democratic values, simply could not be ruled by old-style despotic means. Modern societies might still be authoritarian, their bureaucracies cold and their workplaces cruel, but they could not be tyrannies in the sense that Syracuse was. Modernization would render the classical concept of tyranny obsolete, and as nations outside Europe modernized they, too, would enter the post-tyrannical future. We now know how wrong this was. The harems and foodtasters of ancient times are indeed gone but their places have been taken by propaganda ministers and revolutionary guards, drug barons and Swiss bankers. The tyrant has survived.

“The problem of Dionysius is as old as creation. That of his intellectual partisans is new. As continental Europe gave birth to two great tyrannical systems in the twentieth century, communism and fascism, it also gave birth to a new social type, for which we need a new name: the philotyrannical intellectual. A few major thinkers of that period whose work is still meaningful for us today dared to serve the modern Dionysius openly in word and deed, and their cases are infamous: Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt in Nazi Germany, Georg Lukács in Hungary, perhaps a few others. A great many joined Fascist and Communist parties on both sides of the Iron Curtain, whether out of elective affinities or professional ambition, without taking great risks; a few played soldier for a time in the jungles and deserts of the third world. A surprising number were pilgrims to the new Syracuse being built in Moscow, Berlin, Hanoi, and Havana. These were the political voyeurs who made carefully choreographed tours of the tyrant’s domains with return tickets in hand, admiring the collective farms, the tractor factories, the sugarcane groves, the schools, but somehow never visiting the prisons.

“Mainly, though, European intellectuals stayed at their desks, visiting Syracuse only in their imaginations, developing interesting, sometimes brilliant ideas to explain away the sufferings of peoples whose eyes they would never meet. Distinguished professors, gifted poets, and

influential journalists summoned their talents to convince all who would listen that modern tyrants were liberators and that their unconscionable crimes were noble, when seen in the proper perspective. Whoever takes it upon himself to write an honest intellectual history of twentieth-century Europe will need a strong stomach.”

—Mark Lilla, *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics*, p. 196 f.

Q “It was relatively easy to overlook the dark side of atheism in the heyday of Western liberalism. Reports of terror, torture, famine, mass deportations, and massacres in the Soviet Union were once easily dismissed as the propaganda of reactionaries and political conservatives.

“Truth, however, has a habit of emerging. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 did more than allow inhabitants of the Soviet bloc access to the West; it also paved the way for Western scholars to inspect the archives of the Soviet Union and its allies. What was found was shocking. The opening of the Soviet archives led to revelations that ended any notion that atheism was a gracious, gentle, and generous worldview. *The Black Book of Communism*, based on those archives, created a sensation when first published in France in 1997, not least because it implied that French communism—still a potent force in national life—was tainted with the crimes and excesses of Lenin and Stalin. Where, many of its irate readers asked, were the Nuremberg trials of communism? Communism was a ‘tragedy of planetary dimensions’ with a grand total of victims variously estimated by contributors to the volume at between 85 million and 100 million—far in excess of those murdered under Nazism.

“With the publication of this volume, any meaningful talk in the West about atheism as a liberator came to an abrupt end. The authors adopted Ignazio Silone’s maxim that ‘revolution, like trees, should be judged by their fruit.’ Communism promised liberation from the illusion of religion; it ended up with a body count exceeding anything previously known in history. In a powerful and compelling analysis, *The Black Book* demonstrated how exclusion leads inexorably to extermination. When religion is declared to be an enemy, the outcome is as inevitable as it is criminal.”

—Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, p. 232, 3

Q “The appeal of atheism to generations lay in its offer of liberation. It promised to liberate the enslaved and exploited masses from their cruel oppression by the state and church. Yet wherever atheism became the establishment, it demonstrated a ruthlessness and lack of toleration that destroyed its credentials as a liberator. The Promethean liberator had turned nasty....

“Atheism presented itself as a liberator, destroying the myth of the gods and thus enabling humanity to step outside the arbitrary limits placed upon it by religious bigots. Religion

stopped people from doing things that were fun, useful, and productive. Abolishing the idea of God eradicated these arbitrary limits. Yet, as Dostoyevsky foresaw, the elimination of God led to new heights of moral brutality and political violence in Stalinism and Nazism. The opening of Pandora's box turned out to bring just as much woe as joy.”

—Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, p. 234, 5

Q “As the history of the twentieth century makes clear, atheists can be just as nasty, prejudiced, stupid, and backward as their religious counterparts. In retrospect, this was only to be expected. After all, atheists are human beings, like everyone else, and their refusal to believe in God or any other spiritual force makes them no better and no worse than anyone else. Yet many expected that atheism would morally elevate its followers. It was much easier to believe this in the nineteenth century, when atheism held the moral high ground, never having been exposed to the corrupting influences of power and government. When atheists kept a discreetly low profile, nobody could be bothered to look into their beliefs and lifestyles. But when they launched high-profile social and political campaigns advocating an atheist agenda, people started asking awkward questions. And they began getting disturbing answers.”

—Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, p. 236, 7

Q “The principle that the universe was created fully functioning has an extremely long history. As discussed briefly in chapter six, contemporary creationists accept the idea and conclude from it that at least some appearance of age is absolutely unavoidable in a fully functioning universe, even were it in fact created only moments ago. Any humans would have the appearance of some age or other, and if such humans were expected to care for the creation, harvest food for themselves and so forth, the apparent age would have to be at least beyond infancy. Similarly, if the world were created as ecologically fully formed, plants would unavoidably have to have the appearance of varying ages. And if God wished to present the new humans with a dazzling stellar night sky involving a wide variety of objects at genuinely stellar distances, he would have to either sit and wait millions of years for the light to arrive at the earth or else create light in transit—again, giving the appearance of age.

“As a simple example, take the case of Eve on a creationist reading of Genesis. Eve presumably had the appearance neither of a fertilized egg nor of a newborn (though her true age was essentially zero), but of some more advanced age. But that would hardly seem to imply that God was engaged in some sort of deceit toward Adam here. Given that Adam called her “woman” because “she had been taken out of man” (despite his having slept through the operation), he evidently was informed in some way of what had happened. In that sort of case, the mere existence of apparent age did not imply deceit.”

—Del Ratzsch, *The Battle of Beginnings*, p. 96, 98

Q “Nearly every anticreationist objects (many almost bitterly) to the apparent-age implications of the creationist doctrine of full functionality, claiming that it threatens to make God into a deliberate deceiver.

“But we need to be a bit careful here. Exactly why would apparent age be deceit? Rocks and fossils do not come with an age stamped on them. The age we assign to them is a result of application of theory, interpretation of various features and so forth. Suppose that we are wrong and that fossils and so forth really are young. Why should we hold God morally responsible for our having made some mistaken theoretical interpretations? Or do we presume that our theories are so good that we are correctly interpreting what the rocks and fossils actually say—so that if they do not mean what we think they say about their age, then their Creator is responsible for their prevarication? Either way looks a bit intellectually shaky.

“Suppose, furthermore, that creationists are right—as I think they are—that instantaneous creation of a large-scale, fully functioning universe could not help but exhibit apparent age in at least some respects. In that case, how might a Creator prevent scientific creatures of that universe from being misled? One obvious way would be simply to tell them (even indirectly) how old things really were. And that, claim creationists, is exactly what God has done in Scripture.”

—Del Ratzsch, *The Battle of Beginnings*, p. 97

Q “The Titans of intellectual adventure clashed:

Newtonian gravity against Maxwell’s electrodynamics, idealizations about the infinitely large and small.

The triumphant electrodynamicists were generous,

Praising Newtonian gravity as a ‘special case’ of their geometrical and relativized gravity.

After all, the equations were almost the same.

But...(in quiet corners there was anguish),

...the explanations of the equations were opposite:

Gravity utilizes force, relatively postulates geometrical space-time creases.

Oh! Cavendish balance, do you measure creases or forces?

Further atheoristic irony abounded:

Electrodynamicists used Newton's fluxions and irascible

mathematical points to destroy Newtonian infinity,

But because relativity was 'precisely confirmed' in that famous solar eclipse expedition of 20 percent accuracy,

It is true, and all is thus relative

...unless indeterminate, complementary concepts are preferred.

...or unless strings fascinate your mind's eye.

Whichever way, 'science' triumphs,

proving that reason is objective and shall judge subjective faith.

And as Sir Hoyle explained in his astronomy textbook:

Whether the earth goes around the sun or vice versa, has no physical significance!

So...taking him at his word,

And atheoristically viewing the 1887 Michelson-Morley observations where major idealizations prominently clashed!

A stationary earth is confirmed by the null result.

But we are told that it has no physical significance.

We conclude that relativists face a big challenge,

...to be always or situationally relativistic!

—Russel Moe, Polyscience and Christianity, p. 120

Q "The first commandment given to the first humans was 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth' (Genesis 1:28). As portrayed in the Bible, this command precedes the subdivision of humanity into races and tribes: it precedes the birth of the Hebrew tradition and the

development of all of man's different religions and cultures. The creation of man and woman in the image of God (Genesis 1) is complemented by the detailed creation of Eve as a helpmeet for Adam in the next chapter, which is followed by what we may call the oldest love poem, in which Adam says, 'This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man' (2:23). Mutuality and multiplication thus were part of the divine plan for man and woman. Thus what we call the natural family may be said to have a supernatural warrant in the opening chapters of the Hebrew Scriptures, i.e. of the Bible.

"The account in this form was not known to most of the world's earliest societies. Nevertheless, they all recognized the central importance of the family, and generally created laws and structures to reinforce and protect it. Explicit divine revelation was not necessary, because the family can be established and to a large extent regulated by natural law. By natural law in this context, we understand principles and patterns of human conduct that are derived from our perceptions of the order of nature, perceived through what is called common sense. Common sense in this context does not mean simply 'good sense' or 'prudence,' but rather the common understanding of most human beings. Is there a shared understanding of things, so that most people will have a similar understanding of good and evil? Indeed, there is. It is evident that nature itself, the way things are in the world, does give us certain guides for structuring our human society. If they turn out to be very much the same as what biblical revelation teaches, it is no doubt because God is the author of nature.

"All living beings naturally seek to preserve their own life and to propagate their species. Sometimes the desire to propagate is so strong that a mother or father will sacrifice her or his own life for the sake of the offspring. It is self-evident that the conjoined activity of one member of each sex is necessary for propagation; indeed, as Salvador de Madriaga wrote, without this conjoined activity life is neither possible nor agreeable. Does nature prescribe monogamy, that a husband should have one wife? This is not self-evident from the need to propagate the species, for a man could have more than one spouse, and in many cultures this has been common, especially for rulers and other highly placed men.

"Nevertheless, in the human race as a whole, men and women, boys and girls, are present in nearly equal numbers. Polygamy, if widely practiced, would leave many males stranded without mates, a situation that can generally be counted on to produce disorder in society.

"Homosexuality, if widely practiced instead of normal heterosexual unions, will not propagate the species. Thus when theologians call homosexual conduct *contra naturam*, they are not expounding a theological doctrine, but simply stating a fact.

"It is self-evidently part of the natural order for human parents to remain together for years, even decades, because the human baby takes so long—so dreadfully long, some might say—to become self-sufficient and even longer to become truly mature. Some larger mammals,

especially the herbivores, can walk almost as soon as they are born. A human baby will take several months or a year to learn to toddle. There will always be exceptions to this and every other rule of natural law in practice, but it seems abundantly evident that nature intends for human families to be stable for a long period of time. For at least a few of her childbearing years, a mother certainly can use a male protector for herself and her children. The woman knows whether a child is hers, but the man can be confident that his spouse's child is his own only if he can trust her faithfulness.

“Hence, we can say that the principles of marital faithfulness and the prohibition of adulterous relationships, common in human societies, are quite consistent with the laws of Nature and of Nature's God. As Cicero wrote in *De Republica*, it is a sin to attempt to change these laws and impossible to abolish them. The efforts being made in our own and other contemporary societies to do so can only bring disorder, confusion, and individual and collective misery. As the late geneticist Dr. Jerome Lejeune used to say, ‘Only God truly forgives, man sometimes forgives, nature never forgives.’”

—The Religion and Society Report, September 2004, p. 7, 8

Q “Yesterday [Nov. 2, 2004] voters in 11 states voted to protect the most basic institution in our society from activist judges by approving state constitutional amendments which define marriage as the union between one man and one woman. FRC president Tony Perkins released the following statement:

“ ‘Yesterday's vote reveals once again the broad support for protecting marriage among the American people. We've seen reports with passage in Ohio with 62%, Mississippi with 86%, Kentucky 75%, Michigan 59%. The people aren't waiting for the politicians to act to reign in activist judges who have no regard for the rule of law. The courts gave us abortion on demand in 1973, the American people stated today that they are not going to allow the courts to do the same by imposing same-sex “marriage” on the people of this country.

“ ‘Almost a dozen and a half states have now refused to hold their peace and have spoken loudly against the effort of judges to force same-sex “marriage” on them. However, the next Congress must pass a Marriage Protection Amendment to ensure that yesterday's overwhelming vote is not overturned by unelected federal judges.’”

—Family Research Council, November 3, 2004