For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 8*

RECORD

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"We're actually looking to revel in the partisan divide", laments Joe Clark, after the killings at the Orlando gay club, Pulse. Writing at the Presbyterian Church in America's byFaith website, he observes: "In the wake of mass violence, a common pattern is emerging among tech-literate, socially connected Christians. Rather than hearing the news and turning to God, we turn first to social media. If we wanted to learn the facts about the incident we would look to news agencies. Too often, though, we're actually looking to revel in the partisan divide. Even without looking we know the various angles that will be played out (e.g., gun control, the violence of Islam) and want to jump into the fray to join our 'team'." Clark urges that Christians, instead, move through prayer, pause, grieving, love and Christian hope.

"Now is not a time for returning rhetorical fire." And, "It is certainly not a time for people on either, or any, side of a moral or political dispute to attempt to score points or advance an agenda." These comments from Robert George, a conservative Christian activist and a Princeton University professor of law, followed news of the Pulse tragedy. "Outrageous and defamatory [responses] can be forgiven" immediately after such a "truly traumatizing event when people are angry and grieving." Some blame all Muslims or all Christians, the Left or the Right but, said George, it's "time for grieving and solidarity".

Bruce Bawer wonders why, "on CNN and Fox News, one politician after another professed to be 'shocked' by the jihadist terror attack in Orlando." This veteran gay writer reminds his readers: "Islamic law, after all, is crystal clear on homosexuality. ... In Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Yemen, Mauritania, Pakistan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, as well as in parts of Nigeria, Somalia, Syria and Iraq, homosexuality is indeed punishable by death." He acknowledges, "Yes, there are self-identified Muslims who harbor no antigay prejudice; I suspect that more than a few of them are actually apostates who – aware that Islam considers apostasy too, a capital crime – choose to keep quiet about their infidel status." Against media mantras that Islam's 1.5 billion adherents are "tolerant, peace-loving, etc.", Bawer observes, "The fact is that the great majority of those 1.5 billion Muslims also belong to varieties of Islam that preach contempt for, and sever punishment of, homosexuals".

Bawer states: "Incredibly, many gays still don't get this - or refuse to get it. They cling - mindlessly, one wants to say - to leftist ideology, which tells them that Muslims, like gays, are an official victim group, and thus their natural allies. They see Christians as their enemies - though even the most aggressively antigay Christians in America, namely the 'God hates fags' crowd at the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, don't go around killing anybody. Perversely, some gays support the BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) movement, which demonizes the only gay-friendly country in the Middle East."

"An echo of past themes that never stop playing—and lessons that never get learned." This is historian Victor Davis Hanson's reaction to the Orlando jihadi attack. He says: "The post-911 debate over "why do they hate us" should have been settled long ago with a resounding 'because of who we are,' rather than the refrain from the blame-America crowd—voiced from the Ron Paul libertarian Right to the Michael Moore Left—that the answer is 'because of what we do'."

Days after America's worst mass shooting, *The New York Times* insisted that, "the precise motivation for the rampage remains unclear". Yet, eyewitnesses say that, during the siege, the shooter, Omar Mateen, shouted, "*Allahu Akbar*!" ("God is greater!). Electronic evidence shows that he sent out messages such as: "I pledge my alliance to (ISIS leader) abu bakr al Baghdadi. May Allah accept me" and "Real Muslims will never accept the filthy ways of the West".

Yet, Peter Bergen says: "Its unlikely that anything will ever really explain why [Omar Mateen] did what he did. ... Even the perpetrators themselves can never really articulate 'Why?' in any meaningful way." But, in a 2002 letter to America, Osama bin Laden did assert clearly: "The first thing we are calling you to is Islam."

"This man's pledges of allegiance" to ISIS – will be deleted from public transcripts of his phone calls with police, promised Attorney General Loretta Lynch during her appearances on five Sunday morning talk shows. She alleged that we don't want to "further his propaganda" or cause more pain to the victims. Backlash to the Justice Department doctoring of evidence quickly led to the release of at least the full transcript of the shooter's 911 calls in which he clearly and repeatedly boasted of his full allegiance to the Islamic State. But his calls with police, in which he spoke in what a Special Agent called, a "chilling, calm and deliberate manner", were still censored by the DOJ.

"Death is the sentence. There's nothing to be embarrassed about this. Death is the sentence. Out of compassion, let's get rid of them now." These are the videotaped words, spoken with an eerie calm by prominent Muslim scholar Farrokh Sekaleshfar at the University of Michigan in Dearborn in 2013. For over an hour, he explained Muslim Law with particular attention to homosexuality. He also spoke at Florida mosques, including the British-born and Orlando mosque. medically educated at Imperial College, London, Sheikh Sekaleshfar resides in Iran.

"The ISIS thing is a distraction", claims a queer studies and visual

culture teacher. Gay activist Jonathan Katz of SUNY Buffalo says that ISIS devotee Omar Mateen's slaughtering of gays was actually "stoked and promoted by the Christian right". In this accusation, he echoes the accusations of the ACLU and others on the Left. Katz insists that the cause of the Orlando murders is not to be found in "the Middle East", no matter what explanation the killer himself repeatedly and forcefully expressed.

Ironically, in 2010, after a Catholic sociologist objected to a Smithsonian Institute "art" exhibit featuring a video of a crucifix crawling with ants, Katz assailed a Christian's objection to the "art". Katz called him an "American Taliban" – evidently reminded of Islam's violent intolerance of art deemed "Islamophobic".

"As a devout gay Muslim I am not going to make a claim that 'Islam is a religion of peace'." Film director and producer Parvez Sharma wrote this in the *Daily Beast* in the immediate aftermath of "the carnage in Orlando [that] has shaken my very core." He says he "just knew" the shooter was a Muslim, even when all he'd been told was that there had been a mass shooting at a gay club.

Sharma: "Mateen's attitude is not fringe. It can be found everywhere from Mecca to my own mosque in New York City." He explains: "For the majority of 1.6 billion Muslims, many of them plagued by poverty and illiteracy, the debates going on amongst the Western Muslim pundits, will make no sense. What they listen to is Khutba (Friday sermon) after Khutba that talks about homosexuality as a sin."

Sharma's film, A Sinner in Mecca, deals with what he describes as his "effort to reconcile my faith and my sexuality in Islam's holiest places, surrounded by people who would sooner see me publicly beaten, thrown off a cliff or beheaded."

He concludes that "a closeted gay Muslim who harbored an immense selfloathing, … murderously redirected this loathing toward dozens of young brown gay men who were enjoying their first tastes of a profound freedom and acceptance that he probably felt he could never truly enjoy with the same carefree abandon."

When one of the psychotherapy groups led by Ralph Blair asked for his take on the killer's motivation, he suggested: "Maybe the killer projected his Islamic guilt about his own homosexuality onto all those gay men and thus tried to earn Allah's approval by killing them, being killed and escaping Allah's wrath so as to go to heaven as a martyr."

"Double Jeopardy: Queer and Muslim in the USA" was The Village *Voice's* full-page cover story after the Orlando killings. Subtitled, "In the wake of Orlando, Islamophobia and Homophobia Collide", a fairly short essay by Raillan Brooks, a queer Muslim, tried to soften Our'an- and Hadithbased hatred of homosexual acts and Sharia-dictated death sentences for all who commit homosexual acts. Harking back to an allegedly "golden" past for gay Muslims, he blamed Western "imperialism" for Islam's homophobia. He bashed Israel (the only Middle East state where LGBT folk have protection) and injected the obligator "pink-washing" accusation into his narrative against Israel.

He did, however, admit that Pew Research reports that gay sex is legal in only two Muslim-majority countries (Egypt and Jordan) and that "94 percent and 96 percent of respondents, respectively, viewed homosexuality as morally wrong". Strangely, he tried to counter this finding by saying that "anyone who's ever seen a Super Bowl commercial knows homophobia is rampant in this country, too." But he did grant that, "It is true I could be whipped and even beheaded for being gay in my mother's native country".

"We progressives here in America still labor under the delusion that the religion we need to combat is Christianity. ... Meanwhile Muslim extremists, with guns, murder us, and on the left our only response is to bleat about 'Islamophobia' and jump through hoops trying to explain away the selfevident religious motivation." This is a Progressive activist's PJ Media response to the Orlando shootings. He wrote anonymously since, "I would be harassed and doxxed and shunned by everyone I know and by the Twitter lynch mobs which up until yesterday I myself led." If over a thousand comments on the very first day of his post are any indication, he well knew what the pushback would be. He said he's "sick of the hypocrisy. Sick of the Sick of the deception." pandering. And, "Although I voted for Hillary in the primary. I now cringe inwardly with shame and embarrassment at having done so, and in November I will

vote for Trump." He says, "Yes, I know that Trump is an a**hole. Trump is a clown. Trump is a motormouth buffoon. ... But he's also the only person saying anything about putting the brakes on Islamic extremism ... and Trump has never said anything homophobic. ... I am ashamed. I am angry. And I am sad. I don't want to vote for Trump, but I must."

"From Iran to Gaza, being gay is a death sentence. The lucky ones are simply executed by hanging or thrown off a tall building. Others experience torture before meeting their ultimate fate. But these atrocities rarely make the Twitter and Facebook feeds of leftist organizations more worried about selective political correctness than human rights". These are the words of Paul Miller, president of the Haym Salomon Center. He was writing in the New York Observer following the Orlando slaughter. A conservative, Miller notes that, Israel is "the only safe place for gavs in the Middle East. But the opposition to Israel's existence is so virulent that Israel's detractors have deemed gay rights in Israel as part of a political conspiracy to divert attention from the Palestinian issue. 'Pink-washing' accusations are used to demonize and delegitimize Israel's leadership in gay rights". He adds that in all of his consulting work in the GOP: "Never has a devout Christian or Orthodox Jew ever expressed to me a desire to see gays physically harmed, or worse. There is a world of difference between opposition to redefining marriage and the belief that gays should be exterminated."

"Militants with the so-called Islamic State have allegedly executed another Syrian teenage boy who they accused of engaging in homosexuality." With insertion of "so-called", the LGBT paper, The Washington Blade, conforms to politically correct phrasing to avoid linking Islam and "homophobia" or the murder of gays. But comments in response to the Blade's report of Islamist atrocities against gays objected to the paper's camouflage. The first comment observed that, " 'the so-called Islamic State' is Islamic. They follow Islamic teachings and the examples of their religion's founder."

The Human Rights Campaign claims that, in Islam, "it is not possible to state clear policies regarding issues of interest to LGBT people". Still, HRC admits, though rather understatedly: "It is rare that an openly LGBT Muslim feels fully welcome at a mainstream mosque in the United States."

Orlando's 4,000-member Iglesia El Calvario gave blood and passed out water in the aftermath of the terrorist attack at Pulse. In an outreach to the LGBT community, this Pentecostal church offered grief counseling and conducted funerals for victims.

On that Sunday evening, in the church sanctuary, there was a citywide vigil to remember the lives that were lost. Governor Rick Scott and Lieutenant Governor Carlos Lopez-Cantera participated in the service.

Gabriel Salguero, an Iglesia El Calvaio pastor and the founder of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, offered prayers in Spanish and English at an 8,000-person event hosted by the LGBT advocacy group, Equality Florida. When reporters asked about tension between Evangelicals and the gay community, Salguero replied: "We're called to be Christ to everybody. We're called to love our neighbor, every neighbor."

In the immediate aftermath of the Pulse shootings, Chick-Fil-A outlets in Orlando opened in order to donate food and beverages to first responders, police, the gathered grieving and the long lines of people waiting to donate blood for the survivors. Chick-Fil-A restaurants, owned by an Evangelical Christian family, are not open on Sundays so employees "have an opportunity to rest, spend time with family and friends, and worship if they choose to do so". But in the wake of this mass murder in the wee hours of Sunday morning, the Orlando outlets were opened. This has been the practice at the scenes of other tragedies. When HuffPost reported this generous gesture, many comments were grateful but others were hostile, venting, e.g., "guilt food", "shameless self-promotion", "[Ben] Carson shares same antigay views as shooter", "the homophobia that came from Chik[sic]-Fil-A's owners helped to incite hatred against those that were slaughtered", etc.

Orlando churches offered their facilities for funeral and memorial services free of charge for the victims in Orlando. These churches included the Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church, Forest City Spanish Adventist Church, Florida Hospital SDA Church, Discovery Church, Metro Church and the huge Northland Church.

Many other Christians responded with similar generosity and care to those who were especially impacted by the killings in Orlando. The Billy Graham Rapid Response Team quickly sent their trained chaplains to Orlando to offer emotional and spiritual care to Pulse victims and their families. The African Methodist Episcopal Church issued a statement saying: "We feel the loss, hurt and sorrow of those whose loved ones have been injured and killed in Orlando, Florida. We extend our sympathy and our prayers and ask God to comfort them in their sorrow, fill the void in their lives, and give them the peace of God. We also lift our prayers for those who have been injured, believing that God will heal and restore them, physically, emotionally and spiritually."

The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference president issued this statement: "Today's deplorable act of terrorism goes against everything we stand for as Americans and as Christians. We call upon all Americans to come together for the purpose of building a firewall of love, grace, truth and respect against intolerance, hatred, bigotry and violence."

Baptist ethicist Russell Moore was right when he tweeted: "Christian, your gay or lesbian neighbor is probably really scared right now. Whatever our genuine disagreements, let's love and pray." Ted Cruz noted: "Nobody has a right to murder someone who doesn't share their faith or sexual orientation." Fr. James Martin faults Catholic bishops' condolences after the Orlando shootings. He criticizes their evading of reference to the killer's targets: gays. Elliot Milco, deputy editor of First Things, pushes back against Martin. Both Milco and Martin, editorat-large of America, are Jesuits. "Here's the rub", according to Milco: "The Catholic Church and the LGBT Community have divergent understandings of human nature, personal identity, the proper use of bodies, and the requirements for happiness." Martin, though, is surely not unaware of the point Milco tries to make, but it's beside Martin's point. Thus, Milco overlooks the *relevant* common ground for condolences - "our common humanity" - only parenthetically noted by Milco' criticism.

Southern Baptists met in their Annual Meeting just hours after the terrorist attack in Orlando. The first order of business at this St. Louis assembly was to respond to the Orlando shooting. Resolution 1 refers to the "tragic deaths of at least fifty" and calls for prayer, love and "regard [for] those affected by this tragedy as fellow image-bearers of God and our neighbors." But, as in the Catholic bishops' statement, there was no specific mention of the fact that the victims were gay people.

Soon after this, the SBC "messengers" passed Resolution 3, "On Biblical Sexuality and the Freedom of Conscience", reiterating Southern Baptist positions on overturning marriage for same-sex couples and other LGBT matters.

The Indian Wells' Southwest Church lead pastor since 2013, formerly on the Saddleback Church staff, was told to resign after he refused to condemn homosexuality. Both the expastor, Gerald Sharon, as well as his wife, Gesa, were forbidden even to worship at the church after that. Sharon wrote in his responding resignation letter, "My heart sank realizing that no homosexual person who would read these [Southwest] documents would truly feel welcome at Southwest." The congregation's governing board announced Sharon's departure just hours before the terrorist's attack in Orlando. Several families, in sadness and disgust, walked out of the service after the announcement of the forced resignation.

Gay Catholic pundit and Breitbart editor Milo Yiannopoulos, at the scene of the Orlando terrorist attack. told a grieving but appreciative crowd: "What the left is going to tell you is that conflating Islam with Islamism is hateful, it is right-wing rhetoric, it is not something that civilized people do, and it betrays what we all know about our Muslim friends and all the rest of it." But, he said, "Ruminate on the reality of being a gay person in a Muslim world - 100 million people live in countries where you can be put to death for being gay, 100 million!" He noted: "We don't have that in the West. Why? Because we have democratic capitalism, and also because we have Christianity."

To escape "torture and certain death" as a gay Christian in the West

Bank, the grandson of a founder of Hamas, the Islamist terror group, has fled to America. The 25-year-old "John Calvin", as he calls himself for protection, is living in New York City. Although Canada rejected his application for asylum and a U.S. immigration judge also dismissed his application, another judge has granted him deferred removal under the U.N. convention.

Anti-Israeli pro-Palestinian protests cancel a black transgender-rights activist's speech at Brown University. Janet Mock's scheduled talk at the campus Hillel was called off after Leftists engaged in accusations of "pinkwashing" - what Israel's enemies call Israel's pro-LGBT policies that make it the only supportive country for LGBT folks in the Middle East. Mock's appearance was to have been a part of Hillel's yearlong series on LGBT issues. This attack is yet another example of the many occasions when, as one observer notes, "accusations that all events organized by Jewish groups, even those with no Israel-related stances or affiliations, are part of some nefarious Israeli propaganda machine [that] echo familiar tropes of anti-Semitism."

"Elton John is setting a great example for parents." He's "turning out to be a model father." Conservative columnist Naomi Schaefer Riley expresses her admiration for the gay megastar's parenting philosophy. John and his partner David Furnish say that their 5year-old and 3-year-old sons would not be well served by leaving them "crazy, silly, go-wild money so that they could be buying Picassos or private jets Anything beyond the basic, they have to go out and earn it themselves." John recalls growing up in "a very workingclass family. I earned everything I did from hard work, and that's the way [my kids have] got to do it." John says their kids "have to do chores in the house" unlike today's trend in two-thirds of American homes.

Riley approvingly cites Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck: "We used to think we could hand children self-esteem on a platter. That has backfired."

World magazine picks Abigail Santamaria's Joy as one of its 2016 Books of the Year. One of four history/biography finalists, her book's full title is Joy: Poet, Seeker, and the Woman Who Captivated C. S. Lewis. *World's* Editor-in-Chief, Marvin Olasky, says that her biography of Joy Davidman "respects Davidman and her love for Lewis but does not cover up her manipulation as she moved from a troubled marriage to a long visit with Lewis and his brother, then to a marriage for legal purposes so she could stay in England, and finally to a marriage growing out of real love in 1957."

Olasky notes that most of these Books of the Year "challenge the conventional wisdom". So, too, does the fact that a *World* magazine-honored author – Santamaria – guest keynoted EC's 2016 summer connection along with Tony Campolo.

Mark Galli, editor of Christianity Today, slips into a fallacy of false dilemma in writing of "religious conservatives" who believe "that sexual mores are rooted in God-given teaching and the natural order" over against "LGBT activists" who believe "that every individual has the right to determine how to live sexually". He overlooks the many exceptions to his rigid dichotomy. Some leading 20th-century "religious conservatives" supported the integration of evangelical Christian faith and same-sex marriage, e.g., Eugenia Price, Rosalind Rinker, Robert G. Rayburn, Paul Jewett, Lewis Smedes, Nick Wolterstorff, Nancy Hardesty, Chuck Smith, Jr., Kay Lindskoog, Fisher Humphreys, Charlie Shedd, Cynthia Clawson, Ken Medema, David G. Myers, Donald Dayton, Roy Clements, Robert Wennberg, Reta Halteman Finger, et al. Galli neglects to recognize the integration of Evangelical Christian faith and homosexuality in Evangelicals Concerned, The Gay Christian Network and The Evangelical Network. Christian history is full of examples of integration that were, in their times of transition, revolutionary, but are now commonly held Christian belief.

In the same editorial, Galli shows a far more realistic and reconciling approach when he writes: "We at CT hope leaders will press on to find solutions that protect both religious freedom and the civil rights of LGBT people. With political goodwill, we believe this can happen." He reminds readers that, "Jesus suggested we should look beyond the symbolic condoning of injustice (helping a soldier) ["during the oppression of Roman occupation"] to a deeper ethic." Says Galli: "Jesus told his disciples – to put it into today's terms – that when asked to bake a cake for a gay wedding, we might offer to bake two (Matt. 5:41)."

Donald Trump has announced an Evangelical Advisory Board that's far to the right of his own position on gay rights. Trump states: "I look forward to continuing to talk about the issues important to Evangelicals, and all Americans, and the common sense solutions I will implement when I am President."

These "advisors" are some celebrity preachers with large followings in religious media and a few veteran leaders in Religious Right politics, e.g., Ken and Gloria Copeland, Robert Jeffress, James Robison, Paula White, Ralph Reed, James Dobson and Jerry Falwell, Jr. Conspicuously absent are more significant Evangelical leaders such as Franklin Graham, Tim Keller, Ravi Zacharias, Luis Palau, Mark Galli, Philip Yancey, Philip Ryken, Luci Shaw, Rachel Held Evans, Joni Eareckson Tada, R. C. Sproul, Michael Cromartie, Joel Hunter, Leith Anderson, Russell Moore, Jim Denison, etc.

Casey Fulgenzi is the manager of social media for Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City's megachurch PCA congregation. He is also the assistant manager for Tim Keller's resource site, Gospel in Life, where he handles the orders for Keller's sermons. He's included on the staff page of the Redeemer website. He has worked for Keller since 2014. Fulgenzi says that homosexuality is not sinful.

Spectrum Ministries at Westmont College was organized by students to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues. They want to "create respectful and loving dialogue around these matters. Westmont administrators have allowed the group to meet as an "unofficial" group while it partners with other LGBTQ groups in Santa Barbara such as Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

In response to Spectrum's presence on the web, one person was puzzled: "I don't understand why a person who is gay, lesbian, etc etc would even go to a school like this and then expect THEM to conform to your views?? Its a private religious school correct??" Another replied matter-of-factly: "Well, I would imagine that their faith is important to them, they value a high quality liberal arts education, they value beautiful locations, and they happen to be LGBTQ." Longtime Wheaton College president V. Raymond Edman's lesbian granddaughter writes in Salon that 'pride [that's] aggressive, hubristic self-aggrandizement absolutely can and does come at God's expense, resulting in a stubborn refusal to participate in God's vision for humanity or even to recognize God's transcendent power. But", she notes, "defined like this, 'pride' becomes the exact opposite of queer Pride. ... Hubristic pride is the antithesis of healthy relationship. That's why in Christian theology pride is in no small way the essence of sin: hubristic pride makes relationship with Self, Other, and God nearly impossible. By contrast, queer Pride is all about a healthy relationship with Self, Other, and for many of us, transcendent reality." Elizabeth Edman is an Episcopal priest.

Two Evangelical bishops of the Church of England urge a rethinking of the Bible on homosexuality. They are Bishop of Liverpool, Paul Bayes, and Bishop of Dorchester, Colin Fletcher. Bayes says he's been "pro-

foundly changed" by getting to know lesbians and gay men who are Christians - including within his own family. He writes: "My views on the few explicit biblical texts on 'homosexual practice' (which is an anomalous term for biblical times) are open not closed particularly as we continue to engage with the dialogue between texts and contexts." In a Foreword to the book, Journeys in Grace and Truth, Fletcher writes: "I confess that I get worried when I am told – as I was very recently - that this is a 'Gospel Issue'." These bishops point out that there's always an important distinction between the basic Christian doctrines and those matters about which serious Christians honestly differ. As Bayes puts it: "I do want to challenge the assertion that places [views on homosexuality] on an equal footing with the great creedal truths of the Trinity or the humanity and divinity of Christ."

AND FINALLY

Focus on the Family founder James Dobson, was speaking to his radio audience about "clergy who are compassionate to those who have attractions to same-sex individuals [and] put their arm around them". He says, he'd "like them to think, just for a moment, about 'LGBT'." Dobson then explains: "The 'B' stands for bisexual. That's orgies!" Orgies? Dobson's "B" is a blooper.

Meanwhile, The New York Times continues to show its religious ignorance in bloopers of its own, such as its report that a "crow's ear" (instead of a crosier or papal staff) was placed with the body of Pope John Paul II lying in state. Two Times writers now link the Orlando murders to a report that "a Republican congressman read his colleagues a Bible verse from Romans that calls for the execution of gays." But the Romans text contains no such call. Online, the Times article includes an additional reference to "Revelations [sic] 22:18-19". Yet Revelation 22 contains nothing on sexuality, let alone homosexuality. However, Revelation 22:18 explicitly warns against reading into the text what isn't there!