

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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**Dietrich Bonhoeffer was gay!?** It's suggested in *Strange Glory*, Charles Marsh's new biography of the heroic theologian killed by the Nazis. A University of Virginia religious studies professor, Marsh zeroes in on the unusually close relationship Bonhoeffer had with his student, Eberhard Bethge.

One response is histrionics from an ex-Religious Right winger who jabs at his old cohorts who're Bonhoeffer fans: "Bonhoeffer Was Flamingly Gay – Deal With It!" Some seize onto an obfuscating conflation of "just friends" and "erotic love". In a *Christianity Today* review, Wheaton's Timothy Larsen states: "Marsh makes a convincing case that Bonhoeffer harbored feelings for Bethge that extended beyond friendship." Indeed, as Marsh puts it: "Bonhoeffer's relationship with Bethge had always strained toward the achievement of a romantic love, one ever chaste but complete in its complex aspirations."

The two shared a bank account and spent many hours in each other's close company. Marsh suggests that Bonhoeffer's prison engagement to a woman he'd known for years was an attempt to stay a "soul mate" of Bethge who'd become engaged to Bonhoeffer's niece. Bonhoeffer left only a memento to his fiancée while leaving all the rest of his property, including his money, to Bethge.

**Contemporary Christian composer and performer, Vicky Beeching, has come out as gay** and the response has ranged from "How could she do this to us?" to "God bless her!" She tells of many years of turmoil when she prayed without ceasing that God would take away her same-sex attractions and even sought "deliverance" from the "demons of homosexuality" at a big healing crusade. After over three decades of struggle and denial, she's still an evangelical believer who happens to be gay and she now understands that God is fine with that. She's received strong support from the evangelical Archbishop of Canterbury and his family with whom

she's been friendly for some time. She will be a keynote at the 2015 Gay Christian Network's conference in Portland in January.

**"Since I was five years old I've noticed girls."** This is American Family Association's Ed Vitigliano's "coming out" as *heterosexual* in an odd attempt to relate to Vicky Beeching's having noticed girls since her own childhood years. Writing in *Charisma*, a Pentecostal magazine, he grants that their early crushes were probably equally involuntary. But, he insists, "We obviously aren't designed to be attracted to the same sex". Aware of the many decades of failure in the "ex-gay" enterprise, he admits that, "for many – or even most – homosexuals, in order to be Christians they will have to accept that their 'orientation' is a manifestation of brokenness, not wholeness [and] they will have to reject that lameness [while] they will hobble through life."

**After 14 years in the "Ex-Gay" movement, Yvette Schneider comes out against it.**

She worked for Family Research Council, Concerned Women for America and other Religious Right groups pushing "ex-gay" claims. She wrote a Campus Crusade booklet, *Bridging the Gap: Reaching Lesbian-Identified Women with the Love of Christ*. Now she admits she's *never* seen anyone change sexual orientation. She says: "According to the dogma of conservative Christian churches, we have to believe that homosexuality is sinful and wrong. Period. The problem for me was that I had to turn away from what I witnessed and experienced in my day-to-day life; I couldn't allow myself to acknowledge what was glaringly obvious, which was that I saw an abundance of healthy homosexual relationships. My uncle has been with his partner for nearly 30 years. My ex-girlfriend from years ago recently married her partner in California after having been in a committed relationship

with her for close to 20 years. They're normal people, living normal lives."

**John Paulk publicly admits yet again: "For all my public rhetoric, I was never one bit less gay."** He'd been the famous *Newsweek* cover's "ex-gay" poster boy, Board Chair of Exodus' "ex-gay" network, headed Focus on the Family's "ex-gay" efforts and was a close associate of Joseph Nicolosi, the major proponent of "reparative therapy".

This summer, in *Politico*, Paulk confesses again: "I was in denial. It wasn't in fact true, any of it. Worse than being wrong, it was harmful to many people." He says: "I was in agony. I wasn't easy to live with either. I was short with my children and took my anger and anxiety out on my devoted wife. I just couldn't handle it anymore. ... The older I got, the lonelier I was becoming."

In coming clean about the fraudulent "ex-gay" claims and coming to terms with his same-sex orientation, he says that, "for the first time since I was a young man, I'm not living a double life – a life that is a lie, day in and day out." And it's obvious to those closest to him. "Recently, my oldest son, who is 17, said this to me: 'You've become a better dad to us, and a better person. You're much more at peace. You don't lose your temper. You're calm. I accept you for who you are, Dad, and I love you.'" But antigay preachers and Religious Right magazine editors who pushed his *false* witness for years refuse to pay attention to his telling the *truth* now. It doesn't suit their agenda.

Ralph Blair's review of Paulk's 1998 book, *Not Afraid to Change: The Remarkable Story of How One Man Overcame Homosexuality*, can be found in the archived EC Review (Fall 1998, Vol. 23, No. 4) All that Paulk now admits was evident back then.

**Anne Paulk's own denial forces her to say that John is "disobedient".** As late as 2012, when they were *already separated*, she publicly presented their

marriage as a “miracle marriage”. With the closing of Exodus in acknowledged utter failure, she’s co-founded another “ex-gay” effort with Frank Worthen and Rob Gagnon. Called Restored Hope, it’s for same-sex strugglers to “become more mature”. There’s no claim of *sexual orientation change*.

In the book, *Love Won Out*, co-authored with John in 1999, Anne wrote that, after high school, she met a man who “appealed to me sexually ... We were drawn together by sheer animal magnetism”. It’s been pointed out that this biographical data may mean that her labeling herself an “*ex-lesbian*” is inaccurate. Or, given the fluidity of sexual orientation in females’ experience as over against that of males’, she may be “bisexual”.

**“There are those who have simply made a choice to walk away from the homosexual lifestyle, without clinical help—much like how Robin Williams simply stopped using drugs and alcohol in the 1980’s. Others have sought professional help, perhaps at the urging of family members, in the form of ‘sexual reorientation therapy’—much like when Williams entered a formal alcohol rehab program in 2006.”** This is the Religious Right’s Family Research Council’s Peter Sprigg’s misleading misunderstanding of the difference between *substance abuse* and *sexual orientation*.

**Grady W. Smith is a Christian young man who’s gay and committed to celibacy.** He made a good-natured YouTube video about himself and his blog and it was picked up in June by *Instinct!*, a magazine billing itself: “*Where Faith, the Real World & Gay Life intersect*”. Smith makes it clear: “I’m not here to dictate how anyone else should live [and] I’m not here to condemn”. He gently mocks Christians who are antigay.

In August, that *Instinct* piece, with its comments thread, was the topic of an Op-ed in the *Advocate*, the longtime LGBT magazine. Under the heading, “In Defense of Celibate Gay Christians”, Eliel Cruz lamented: “Hundreds of comments from gay men were posted [at *Instinct*] mostly crucifying Smith for not being sexually active”. Cruz said: “We advocate for inclusiveness with a ‘come as you are’ slogan, but I feel there has always been fine print on the terms and conditions.” President of [the SDA] Intercollegiate Adventist Gay-Straight Alliance, Cruz says: “Our

sex lives or lack thereof shouldn’t be up for scrutiny by homophobic Christians or gay men” and concludes: “It seems one group of people will only affirm you if you’re not having sex and the other will only affirm you if you are.”

**The Supreme Court has declined to review a ban on gay “change” counseling.** The Court let stand a federal appeals court’s ruling that California’s ban on “ex-gay” therapy doesn’t violate free speech of “ex-gay” counselors or clients. Mat Staver of Liberty University’s Liberty Counsel says the minors LC represents “do not want to act on same-sex attractions”. But, as Exodus International admitted when that veteran “ex-gay” network finally closed down for good after decades of failures, “ex-gay” counseling did *not* change same-sex orientation to heterosexual and it did lots of damage while trying.

**Asks a *Christianity Today* review of three gay-related documentaries : “Is Change Possible?”** It’s an odd question given over four decades of “ex-gay” failures and the long and growing list of “ex-gay” leaders who admit that, no matter their testimonies in the past, neither their own nor anyone else’s same-sex orientation *ever* changed. That the question is still a tag in periodicals such as *CT* indicates that evangelical journalism refuses to admit the overwhelming evidence against the fraud.

*CT* writer and seminary student Brett McCracken asks, “Can a person’s sexual identity change?” But that’s a very different question. It deals with how one chooses to *identify* rather than how one *experiences involuntary sexual attraction*.

*Desire of the Everlasting Hills* is a film about three Roman Catholics who now choose celibacy, though they used to be in gay relationships – and one man, very promiscuously. *Desire* is produced by what used to be a Roman Catholic “ex-gay” group, but McCracken notes that none of the three films promises *sexual orientation change*. *Sing Over Me* is the testimony of Christian musician Dennis Jernigan, a former Exodus board member. It’s promoted as a film about his “deliverance from homosexuality” but, as McCracken says, “it doesn’t openly advocate ex-gay therapy”. *Kidnapped for Christ* documents ordeals endured by a gay teenager who was sent by his parents to a Fundamentalist boot camp

in the Dominican Republic in order to get over his homosexuality. Making the film as a Biola student project, Kate Logan, who used to think homosexuality was sinful, changed her mind after getting to know this gay teenager.

**Yet another “Ex-gay” counselor has been arrested for alleged sexual assault on yet another boy.** This “ex-gay” preacher’s book, *Freedom From Homosexuality*, promises “deliverance”. Already a registered sex offender after his 2006 sentencing for molesting a 15-year-old boy, the same year he published his book, Duane Youngblood is the Bishop of Higher Call World Outreach Church in Pittsburgh.

**Fundamentalist preacher John MacArthur gave parents of an adult gay son some “biblical” advice at his “Grace to You” site.** They’re to order him to “repent” and escalate efforts from there. If even a public shaming at church doesn’t get the demanded “repentance”, they’re to *totally shun* him. This approach has led to loss of faith and even to suicide. And as for a gay person’s seeking a more understanding reception from a gay affirming church, MacArthur tells *The Blaze*: Any such church is “Satan’s church!”

**Larry Tomczak tells fathers what to do with sons who “come out” as gay.** The Fundamentalist preacher known as an advocate of corporal punishment says fathers should assure their sons of their of love and then assert firmly: “This ‘coming out’ needs to be a coming out of deception and, like the prodigal son, returning to the God and Father who created you, loves you and has a wonderful destiny for your life. Have we made ourselves perfectly clear?”

**The Pennsylvania Methodist minister, defrocked at the end of 2013, is reinstated.** United Methodist minister Frank Schaefer was defrocked for conducting his son’s same-sex wedding in 2013. Now, however, the Northeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Appeals has restored his credentials and ordered Eastern Pennsylvania’s Conference to compensate him for all his lost salary and benefits. Schaefer: “I never did understand the severity of my punishment for an act of love for my son Tim.”

**Seattle's Mars Hill antigay preacher Mark Driscoll posed as a "William Wallace II"** and went on for months, posted foul rants on his church's Internet discussion board. His vulgar attacks were aimed against same-sex marriage, egalitarian marriage and "pussified" America. When his identity as "Wallace" was revealed, Driscoll apologized but didn't retract his bullying views. After a string of other recent controversies, Mars Hill attendance has slipped from around 13,000 to 9,000 a week and financial support has suffered severely. Some 30 to 40 percent of paid staff is to be laid off. Driscoll has announced he's taking a short break away from the pulpit.

**New Hope Missionary Baptist Church preacher T. W. Jenkins called off a gay man's funeral the night before the service.** After Julion Evans' home church pastor learned he'd been married to a *male* partner of 17 years, he told Evan's mother he'd canceled her son's funeral. He claimed that *not* canceling would be "blasphemous". Suffering from a rare hereditary disorder, Evans was in and out of hospitals over the past four years while his husband nursed him at home. He died at 42.

Southern Baptist blogger Jim Denison comments on the gay man's canceled funeral. He begins by rightly noting that, "there is no biblical precedent for this issue. There are no same-sex marriages in the Bible." But neither are there any *same-sex orientated people* in the Bible. Denison says the funeral should not have been canceled but that the following public statements should have been made at the funeral: "Our church is honored to host today's memorial service. We do not want you to see our decision as an endorsement of homosexuality, because it is not."

**Jim Denison is against Christians baking cakes for gay weddings.** He admits that conservative scholar and gay atheist, Jonathan Rauch, is "thought-provoking" in warning that antigay Christians are making themselves irrelevant to the younger generation. Rauch urges they supply such services to gays, even "with a moral caveat and a prayer". Denison disagrees. He argues that serving the gay couple would *endorse* their marriage and illustrates: Jesus *ate* with a tax collector but didn't help him *collect* taxes. He overlooks Jesus' *endorsing* the paying of taxes. Here, Denison ignores

evangelicals such as Andy Stanley and Cal Thomas who says: "Bake the cake for the gay couple".

**Jim Denison wonders how to respond to the majority of young Americans who see Christians as antigay.** He says there're four options: "fight back ... retreat ... capitulate to the culture [or] earn the right to speak the truth." In putting the question to "those of us who believe God's word" as *Denison interprets it*, he fails to learn from the sad history of *misinterpretations* of God's word by his Southern Baptist forebears who *believed* what they *wanted* to believe was God's word on *slavery, segregation, anti-miscegenation*, etc. Nowadays, many evangelical biblical scholars and theologians are rejecting their church culture's take on the Bible and *homosexuality* just as Denison has revised his forebears' *racist* take on the Bible and *slavery and segregation*.

So, there's a fifth option for Denison and his readers and it's an option that's proved its worth time after time: Speak truth *after more rigorous searching* of the scripture.

**The Religious Right's agenda replaced the Gospel among evangelicals** according to the man who now preaches from the pulpit of the deceased D. James Kennedy, leader of the antigay Religious Right. According to Tullian Tchividjian, now senior pastor at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, "For the last 40 years we've talked more about what's going on in our culture than we have preached Christ and him crucified." Tchividjian, Billy Graham's grandson, says evangelicals "became so closely aligned with political ideologies and culture warring issues, what's been lost is the core good news message of the Christian faith." National polls prove he's right to regret the damage the Religious Right has done to the understanding of the Gospel and the image that's then been picked up by secular media as the *essence* of "biblical Christianity".

**"Just because someone doesn't support gay rights doesn't automatically make that person a hateful bigot."** That's an obviously true affirmation voiced by Rod Snyder, gay and evangelical Christian who, from 2010 to 2013, was president of Young Democrats of America. "I have immediate family members who oppose marriage

equality and believe my sexual orientation is sinful, but I've honestly not once questioned their love for me." Still, he sees that, "The modern evangelical movement is currently reaping what it has sown for decades [of] vilify[ing] LGBT people for political purposes." And, he cautions, "Long after this political debate becomes passé and marriage certificates are being issued to gay couples in even the reddest of states, there will be young LGBT people sitting in the pews of evangelical churches just like I did still wrestling with intense shame or worse." Snyder himself was not able to come to terms with being gay until he was 31.

A graduate of Eastern University in Philadelphia, Snyder now says: "I am a Christian, an American, a West Virginian, a Young Democrat, a rural advocate, a singer-songwriter, a brother, a son, a grandson, a nephew, an uncle, and a gay man."

**A Christian who fought against same-sex marriage apologizes** and sets an example for others. Artist and blogger Randy Thomas writes: "The night that Prop 8 in California and Amendment 2 in Florida (both banning gay marriage) passed I was jubilant. I truly believed what we had done was right and good. In the following days, and for a while afterwards, I repeated the talking points I had willingly adopted. I truly believed what I was saying. What I didn't make widely known was how heartbroken I was when I saw the gay community in California take to the streets. Their protests that night and in the days afterwards tugged at me. When I saw their grief-stricken faces my heart twisted in my chest. It was the first time in a long time I remember thinking, 'did we do something wrong?' I quickly shoved that thought out of my mind as I joined my fellow religious activists celebrating the marriage 'wins.'

"Yet, the gay community with their protesting and sorrow filled faces would come back to haunt me over the years. Eventually the doubt over what we had done would get louder in my mind and change from a question to a conviction; a conviction that indeed we had done something terribly wrong.

"For my part in this, I deeply apologize.

"Today, I can honestly say that I am glad that the courts are striking down all the marriage bans across the country. It is my hope that we (Christians) can learn from the past, make the ap-

appropriate amends, and rebuild dialog and relationships with the LGBT community.”

**Same-sex marriage supporters outnumber those who are opposed.** A Rasmussen national telephone survey in July finds that nearly 48 percent of Likely U.S. Voters favor gay marriage, up from a previous high of 45 percent in regular tracking since last fall. In opposition to gay marriage are 41 percent, while 11 percent are undecided.

**Most Americans say marriage is important to society.** Rasmussen Reports finds that, 78 percent of American adults think so, including 54 percent who see it as very important. Only 18 percent disagree.

**The Millennial generation is becoming the one with the lowest rate of marriage of any previous generation.** Over 30 percent of Millennial women are not expected to marry until 40 or older – or never. The percentage of black single women having babies is at 71 percent according to National Vital Statistics Reports. For white women, that number is at 29 percent.

**“Marriage does the whole body good.”** This research-based finding is reported in *byFaith*, online magazine of the conservative Presbyterian Church in America. But, the PCA rejects marriage for all same-sex oriented couples. Citing several large-scale studies and WebMD’s summary that “married people are twice as likely to be happy with life”, *byFaith*’s reporter concludes that all of this evidence is “yet another reason to overturn public policies that weaken marriage”, by which *byFaith* means, e.g., *same-sex* marriage.

This summer, 23 congregations in PCA’s eastern Tennessee and southwest Virginia presbytery brought antigay overtures to General Assembly but the PCA moderator ruled them “out of order”. Most PCA churches are in the South and separated from the more liberal Presbyterians in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century.

**The liberal Presbyterian Church (USA) affirmed same-sex marriage** at its General Assembly in June. The PCUSA also voted to divest from Israel, calling Zionism “racism”. But, in contrast to Hamas and the rest of the Islamic world, Israel not only doesn’t persecute gays but it’s the only gay-affirming state in the Middle East.

100,000 participated in this summer’s 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Gay Pride Parade in Tel Aviv. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded to the Presbyterians by inviting them to visit Israel and follow that with a bus trip through Libya, Syria and Iraq. But, for the latter trip, he advised: “Make sure it’s an armored bus and don’t say you’re Christian.”

**March for Marriage drew far fewer participants than sponsors predicted for its June rally in Washington.** Mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century America saw *anti-interracial marriage* rallies (e.g., “Race Mixing is Communism” and “Stop the Race Mixing of the Anti-Christ”). Now there are *anti-gay-marriage* rallies (“Gay Sex Leads to Adult Diapers” and “Every Child Deserves a Mom and Dad”). Some say that second banner would be put to better use in calling attention to the over forty percent of America’s children who are reared without a father, usually because the man who impregnated the woman has deserted her and the child.

The rally was sponsored by National Organization for Marriage, Family Research Council, Coalition of African-American Pastors, Frederick Douglass Foundation, ACT Right, Concerned Women for America, Manhattan Declaration and Heritage Foundation. Rick Santorum, Mike Huckabee and Ruben Diaz spoke.

**“What’s particularly worrisome about the pathway to the legalization of same-sex marriage is that the only way to travel down this path is to abolish the belief in natural law.”** So argues apologist Alex McFarland of North Greenville University, a Southern Baptist school in South Carolina. He says: “As any student of our nation’s history understands, our entire system of government is based on the understanding that natural law exists and that it governs our liberties.” As any student of our nation’s history understands, the founding Southern Baptists held that *natural law* permitted slavery and forbade “amalgamation” of the races and interracial marriage – while supporting racial segregation at Southern Baptist schools into the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century.

**Ralph Reed likens marriage equality opponents to abolitionists!** He says they shouldn’t be discouraged by the recent surge for gay marriage. As *abolitionists*, after the Supreme Court’s pro-slavery *Dred Scot* decision of

1857, had to be patient before they finally won the battle for human rights, so, Reed says, “traditional” marriage supporters must be patient.

But, when Reed led Christian Coalition in 1996, he apologized to blacks for the fact that, “the white evangelical church was not only on the sidelines but on the wrong side of the most central struggle for social justice in this century.” He said: “Liberals have been correct throughout history on issues of social justice while we have been neglectful and derelict. ... We quote Martin Luther King Jr. to great effect but how many of us marched with him, and how many of us bear the scars of Bull Connor’s billy clubs and police dogs?”

**Gallup finds that LGBT adult Americans are more likely than their non-LGBT counterparts to identify as non-religious.** A survey in August found that 47 percent of LGBT adults say they’re non-religious, in contrast to 30 percent of non-LGBT adults. This is not surprising, given that the *main* source of antigay rhetoric and abuse is *religious fundamentalism*, whether Christian or Islamic.

**The 2015 St. Patrick’s Day Parade in New York City will be led by New York’s Timothy Cardinal Dolan and, for the first time, have an Irish gay group marching under its own banner.** Dolan quickly issued a statement in agreement with the Parade organizers’ decision to include the gay group. “I think we’re seeing the Catholicism of Pope Francis come to the Archdiocese of New York,” said J. Patrick Hornbeck, the chair of theology at Fordham University.

**AND FINALLY: Baptist megachurch preacher John Piper tweets: “Good-bye, Burger King”.** Known for his other one-line dismissals, e.g., “Farewell, Bell”, and his bizarrely blaming the Evangelical Lutherans’ affirmation of gays for a tornado’s touching the tip of a Lutheran steeple (and overlooking several tornados that totally demolished *antigay* church buildings), this hyper-Calvinist is at it again over Burger King’s support for same-sex couples. During Pride festivities in San Francisco, “The Proud Whopper” – actually but an ordinary Burger King Whopper – *came out* in a rainbow-colored wrapper that reads: “We’re All the Same on the Inside”.