

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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The 72nd summer connECTION of Evangelicals Concerned will be held May 30 – June 1, 2014 at Kirkridge in the mountains of eastern Pennsylvania. Our keynoters will be Amy Plantinga Pauw, Professor of Doctrinal Theology at Louisville Theological Seminary, Jim Rayburn III, author, speaker, jewelry designer and son of Young Life's founder, Jim Rayburn, and EC founder Ralph Blair.

In November, Christians commemorated the 50th anniversary of the death of C. S. Lewis. No 20th-century Christian writer has had a greater influence on evangelicals.

Many Lewis fans don't really know what he wrote on homosexuality, but he was wiser and kinder than many of his later devotees. Asked by Sheldon Vanauken for help in dealing with homosexual friends, Lewis summed up: "All I have really said is that, like all other tribulations, it must be offered to God and His guidance how to use it."

In 1955, Lewis said he saw "much hypocrisy" on the topic. He sensed, in heterosexuals, "a certain nausea" around it, and rightly noted: "I think that of very little relevance to moral judgment." (Antigay crusader Robert Gagnon uses "repulsive" and "disgusting" in dealing with the "abomination" (*to'evah*), at Leviticus 18:22. He's on point in that the term, *to'evah*, points to what's *culturally disgusting*, e.g., ingesting non-kosher food (Deut 14:13) or, for pagans, to eat with Jews (Gen 43:32). The category is *cultural*, not *moral*; a term of *taboo*, not *sin*. But today "abomination" is taken to signal *the worst sin*.)

Lewis asked rhetorically: "Is it then on Christian grounds? But how many of those who fulminate on the matter are in fact Christians?" He asked this long before the Religious Right's antigay harangues. But it's

still an appropriately *rhetorical* question. "And," Lewis mused, "what Christian, in a society as worldly and cruel [as ours] would pick out the carnal sins for special reprobation? Cruelty is surely more evil than lust and the World at least as dangerous as the Flesh." He concluded: "The real reason for all the pother is, in my opinion, neither Christian nor ethical. We attack this vice not because it is the worst but because it is, by adult standards, the most disreputable and unmentionable, and happens also to be a crime in English law."

Ron Belgau, a celibate gay Christian, says: "When I read Lewis's words on homosexuality when I was 17, it is no exaggeration to say that his humility and realism preserved the credibility of traditional Christianity for me." A gay Christian brother replies to Belgau: "My reaction to Lewis was much like yours when I read him at 19. It was a relief to finally find a Christian who did not despise me and find me disgusting just because I was attracted to other guys."

Arthur Greeves and Lewis were closest friends from childhood. Throughout life, Lewis exchanged more letters with him than with any other correspondent. Greeves told Lewis about his homosexuality in 1918 and the 19-year-old Lewis replied: "Congratulations old man, I am delighted that you have had the moral courage to form your own opinions independently, in defiance of the old taboos. I am not sure that I agree with you: but, as you hint in your letter, this penchant is a sort of mystery only to be fully understood by those who are made that way—and my views on it can be at best but emotion." Back then, Lewis called himself an atheist, but he did not "christianize" his response on this in any of their correspondence down to his death in 1963. And, in 1933, Lewis dedicated *The Pilgrim's Regress*, his first Christian

book, to Greeves.

In 1960, Lewis wrote to Delmar Banner (the painter and homosexual) to say that he supported decriminalization of homosexuality and added (in his habit of abbreviation) that he stood with "the persecuted homo against snoopers and busybodies." Banner was married to sculptor Josefina de Vasconcellos, a devout Christian. She learned early on that it was to be a *sexless* marriage. It lasted 53 years. She died at 100, 22 years after his death.

No doubt Lewis would not have been disturbed over the recent demise of the "ex-gay" movement. In *God in the Dock*, a posthumous collection of his essays, he wrote: "Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience. They may be more likely to go to Heaven yet at the same time likelier to make a Hell of earth. Their very kindness stings with intolerable insult. To be 'cured' against one's will and cured of states which we may not regard as disease is to be put on a level of those who have not yet reached the age of reason or those who never will; to be classed with infants, imbeciles, and domestic animals."

Nelson Mandela died two weeks after the Poets' Corner memorial service for C. S. Lewis in Westminster Abbey. Lewis died the year Mandela began his 27 years of imprisonment. At the Mandela funeral, Calvinists and other conservative Christians who'd misused the Bible to rationalize their persecution of him and other South African blacks came together with

world leaders to celebrate his life's contribution to justice. Meanwhile, many Calvinists and other conservative Christians still use Bible rationalizations against gay folks.

A presbytery in the South is asking its Presbyterian Church in America leadership to petition the government "to deny those who 'practice, advocate, or condone' homosexuality the right to become schoolteachers, and to petition local, state, and federal government leaders to 'cease and desist' from any legislation that legalizes gay marriage". The PCA online magazine, *byFaith*, announced this news.

In 1959, Ralph Blair helped start what is now a PCA congregation and served as its founding lay preacher. So, he emailed *byFaith*, urging caution: "For perspective, most delegates at the 1973 founding of the PCA were from a Deep South generation that had opposed racial integration and interracial marriage as being biblically 'rebellious'. Now, 'rebellious' is the word the PCA applies to all homosexuality. In 1867, R. L. Dabney, the leading Southern Presbyterian theologian, ended his 356-page defense of slavery with these words: 'Let the arrogant and successful wrongdoers [the "infidel" abolitionists] flout our defence [*sic*] with disdain: we will meet with it again, when it will be heard; in the day of their calamity, in the pages of impartial history, and in the Day of Judgment.'" Blair's email was blocked.

The PCA's Covenant College has censored an alumna's update. Now at the Law School of the University of Florida, Kathryn Brightbill reported to Covenant's alumni office that she'd been asked to assist on research for an *amicus* brief in the Prop 8 and DOMA cases for the U.S. Supreme Court. She saw the assignments as fine learning opportunities. But sharing this news was unacceptable to Covenant officials. Her update was chopped down to this brief note: "Kathryn Brightbill '03 is currently studying law at the University of Florida Law School." She was told that the school doesn't print what's counter to its position. She writes: "The disclaimer in the masthead that the contents of *View* may not necessari-

ly reflect the views of the college isn't enough. Neither was my suggestion that they print a disclaimer before the updates specifically stating that updates were for informational purposes only and did not imply endorsement by the school." So, she posted her story on her own website, under a Micah 6:8 banner. She received grateful and supportive replies from another alum and from a current Covenant student struggling with same-sex issues.

For further perspective, Robert G. Rayburn, the founding president of Covenant College and Covenant Theological Seminary, was the first evangelical leader with whom Blair shared his vision of EC. That was in November 1975, when the two met to talk about it in New York City. (In March of that year, Rayburn and another Covenant professor had driven to Kansas City to hear Blair lecture on homosexuality.) Rayburn was very encouraging and he suggested that the EC ministry be launched during the very next National Association of Evangelicals convention which was in February 1976. And it was.

Since then, many more evangelical leaders have supported EC and many of them have keynoted EC conferences. Included among these encouragers have been Eugenia Price, Rosalind Rinker, Marten Woudstra, Lewis B. Smedes, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Harry Boer, Val Clear, Walt Hearn, Paul King Jewett, Charlie Shedd, Kay Lindskoog, Wally Howard, John F. Alexander, Mark Olson, David Augsburger, Andrew Kuyvenhoven, Steve Hayner, Fisher Humphreys, Hendrik Hart, Gerald T. Sheppard, Robert Wennberg, Roy Clements, Phyllis Hart, Donald Dayton, Randall Balmer, Michael J. Christensen, Robert Bratcher, Reta Haltman Finger, Nancy Hardesty, Letha Scanzoni, Chuck Smith, Jr., Clark Pinnock, Stanley Rock, David G. Myers, Harold Ellens, Chip Miller, Douglas Miller, Howard Rice, Jack Rogers, Caroline J. Simon, Larry Holben, Ray McAfee, Ken Medema, David O. Moberg, Craig Detweiler, Cynthia Clawson, Doris Akers, Tom Key and many others. Supporters have included faculty members at Anderson, Asbury, Beeson Divinity, Calvin College & Seminary, Eastern Baptist Seminary, Fuller Seminary, Hope

College & Western Seminary, Houghton, Messiah, Trinity (Deerfield), Westmont and other evangelical schools as well as national leaders in InterVarsity, Campus Crusade, Youth for Christ, Young Life and The Navigators. Baker, Eerdmans, IVP, NavPress, Revell and Zondervan have published their award-winning books.

Obviously, our evangelical supporters speak for themselves and not for their employers or publishers, but to have such support from so many evangelical leaders through four decades of ministry, counters the accusation that EC is not an *evangelical* ministry.

Around a hundred Wheaton College gay students and friends sat on the steps in front of Edman Chapel on January 31 to demonstrate that there's "More than a Single Story" of homosexuality – more than the one that that day's invited chapel speaker, a "former radical lesbian", was about to tell. When the service was about to begin, these gay students went inside, with no protesting purpose, to join their fellow students.

On September 22, 1967, V. Raymond Edman, longtime President of Wheaton and the man for whom Edman Chapel is named, was preaching on "The Presence of the King" when he suffered a fatal heart attack. He'd just finished saying: "Chapel is to be a time of worship, not a lecture ... but a time of meeting the King."

In contrast to the story of a "former radical lesbian", there's the testimony of Liz Edman, one of President Edman's granddaughters. She's an ordained Episcopal priest and writes that she's "a child of God, and yes, very, very gay." In coming out, she says she was "blessed, deeply ... I received virtually unqualified affirmation from my family. My beloved sister volunteered for an AIDS caregiver program to be able to ask questions about my life that she was afraid to ask me for fear that I would interpret her questions as some sort of qualification of her support. My aunt responded, 'What matters is that you be who you are.'"

EC's Spring 1997 *RECORD* quoted Liz Edman's telling Wheaton's gay and lesbian alumni/ae group: "I think 'evangelical'

is kind of a dirty word in the gay community and a dirty word to most people who lean left of center. And I just think it's a good thing for people who know something of evangelical faith to kind of reclaim the concept. It doesn't need to be something that is only owned by right wing people."

Virginia's ban on same-sex marriage has been struck down by a federal judge. As in 1967, when Virginia's ban on interracial marriage was struck down by the Supreme Court in *Loving v. Virginia*, Judge Arenda L. Wright – an African-American – ruled that there is no "rational basis" for the antigay law. Dean Mat Staver of Liberty University's Law School called the decision, "outrageous". Recently, other federal judges also have ruled in support of same-gender marriage, e.g., in Oklahoma, Kentucky, Ohio and Utah.

Jim Denison says he was surprised when Queen Latifah presided over 33 marriages of both same-sex and heterosexual couples at the Grammys. He'd always thought of her "as a woman of strong faith". Yet, this Southern Baptist leader recounts that, "as I watched her joy in pronouncing these 'marriages' ... the question came unbidden: 'Am I sure we're right?' In that moment, claiming that homosexual activity is wrong and that same-sex marriages should be illegal felt so callous and intolerant." But he ignored the "unbidden" question that gave him pause and he proceeded to repeat the misinformation on homosexuality that's familiar in antigay rhetoric.

Ralph Blair wrote to him: "You admit that, 'the question came unbidden: "Am I sure we're right?"' Please do pay attention to that 'unbidden' question. You may discover it's prompted by the Spirit Himself. Many have already discovered that. The Pharisees should have paid attention to such a questioning of their traditions and prejudice, and so should those Jewish Christians who balked at fellowship with the Gentile-Christian 'dogs', and so should those Christians who supported slavery and segregation and opposed interracial marriage – all with Bible verses. And do a bit more solid research on what you

fear regarding the stats you cite and the extrapolations you fear. There's much that's said and done by gay folks that is nonsense, but there's much that is not nonsense. Same goes for what Christians say and do. Live with that 'unbidden' question and wait upon the Lord. God bless you!"

Focus on the Family president Jim Daly and other Religious Right leaders want to change their image by preaching that all are made in God's image. The slogan, "Love the sinner; hate the sin," Daly notes, "appears like we are hating the sinner as well as the sin." He's joined up with National Hispanic Christian Leadership Coalition president Samuel Rodriguez, Jr., televangelist James Robison, Liberty University VP Mat Staver and others to preach that we're all – including homosexuals – created in God's image, even though the Focus website still singles out homosexuality as a "particularly evil lie of Satan." Of course, as has been explained, a sincere belief that homosexual acts are wrong can't, as such, amount to "hate". Still, since evangelicals have *always* believed that *all* persons are created in the image of God, the recent rhetorical shift may seem to be more a *re-branding* of the Religious Right's image than a reminding of God's image in us all.

"There's been so much hate, and so much bigotry and so much insensitivity. I'm done with that." Carl Lentz of Hillsong NYC was responding to media questions about homosexuality. He doesn't *preach* on that: "How in the world can I hear your story" from the pulpit? "No matter where you're from, no matter what you carry, no matter what orientation you feel is your lane of life to run in, I want to have a conversation." He adds: "My job is to accept you as I have been accepted." His Pentecostal megachurch in Manhattan, a 2010 plant of Australia's Hillsong megachurch, now has more than 5,000 worshippers at five Sunday services.

Gay Christian Network's 2014 national meeting drew 700 conferees to Chicago in January. Among featured guests were Rachel

Held Evans, bestselling author, singer/songwriter Derek Webb and GCN founder Justin Lee. A few former "ex-gay" leaders attended as open and affirming gay Christians. Workshops dealt with biblical questions, support for parents, dating for single Christians, celibacy, couples, prayer, homophobia and other topics. The 2015 GCN conference will be in Portland, Oregon.

Ray Boltz won a Dove Award in 1990 for his very moving song, "Thank You". In 2008, his wife of three decades and their four grown children insisted he open up with them about his long-term depression. It was then that he admitted his lifelong struggle against his homosexuality. He and his wife are now divorced and the family is closer than ever. Carol Boltz and the children welcome his gay partner into their extended family.

As native Hoosiers, they're publicly opposing Indiana's legislative effort to ban same-gender marriage. Says Carol: "Ray and I have our history, and we have our kids, and I still say he's the best friend I ever had. We're still a family, in a very different way."

"Is my husband ... ?" A Google search reveals that "gay" is the most common word that follows those three words. It's ten times more common than "cheating" and it's most commonly asked by women in South Carolina and other states that are unfriendly to gays. In all states, 5 percent of online porn searches are for gay male themes. So, writing in *The New York Times*, Seth Stephens-Davidowitz suggests that, "there are just about as many gay men in less tolerant states as there are anywhere else."

A Christian who's gay writes in an Indiana GLBT paper: "In 2002 I photographed 16 same-sex couples who had been together for 10 years or more. One of the couples I photographed just celebrated 62 years together in September. Sort of. One of them has been in a nursing home for the last 2 years with Alzheimer's, while his partner of 62 years visits him twice a day to make sure they are taking good care of him."

Many of today's same-sex couples met in the late '60s and '70s. Even without benefit of legal marriage back then, and up against the hostility of family and church, they've accomplished decades of committed, loving relationship and are now in their declining years, taking care of each other just as faithful heterosexuals do.

A United Methodist jury has found a pastor guilty of officiating at his own son's same-sex wedding. The minister is guilty of "disobedience to order and discipline of the Methodist Church." He was suspended for 30 days. He was the first of five ministers to be charged with celebrating same-sex weddings in the 8.3 million-member UMC.

"You all know, we all know, that Ben is gay. Who here is comfortable being around him? Do you understand that Ben is going to hell?" Ben Wood's North Carolina Methodist youth leader demanded a response from each youth in the group. Humiliated by this public shaming, Ben could not join his friends on a Mission Trip and the incident was critical to his estrangement from church and from God. At 21, Ben killed himself.

Stephen V. Sprinkle, who teaches practical theology at Brite Divinity School, says: "The churches and their leadership have much to answer for in the deaths of young people like Ben Wood. While we may not be able to point to a smoking gun linking the suicide of young persons condemned by church teachings to the culpability of the churches, there is no doubt that Christian heterosexism and homophobia contribute to the climate that denigrates LGBTQ people and creates undue suffering in their lives. ...The heterosexism and homophobia Ben Wood experienced in his life is a Christian heresy – one the churches and clergy of every stripe must find the courage to repent of and repudiate."

A Biola University alum recalls: "That was really the beginning of the erosion of my Christian Faith". Kate Logan's reference is to her trip to the Dominican Republic where, as a Biola film student, she did a documentary on a funda-

mentalist-sponsored boot camp called Escuela Caribe. She saw American youths, including gays, so abused in the name of God that she says she's no longer a Christian. The staff's rationalization was that these kids had to be broken. Her documentary, *Kidnapped for Christ*, was test-screened at the Sacramento International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival.

Three teenage boys were dead following an Afrikaans camp leader's promise to "make men" out of them. They suffered severe brain injuries, broken bones, choking, cigarette burns over their bodies and extreme emaciation and dehydration. Teens in the program were chained, shocked with stun guns, forced to eat their own feces after losing toilet privileges and repeatedly beaten "to make them into real men." A South African critic explains that the so-called "moffie cure" fits the right-wing South African culture. She says that parents send their kids to the camp because a boy is seen to be effeminate and they fear he'll become gay. Rigid Dutch Reform Calvinist culture wants intervention to make pre-gay boys into "real men". The boys ranged in age from 15 to 19 and their parents spent thousands on the program set up by a self-styled "general".

Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan signs a bill that makes same-sex relationship punishable with up to 14 years in prison. It bans gay marriage, same-sex "amorous relationships" and membership in gay rights groups. Immediately after the antigay law was enacted there were many dozens of arrests. This antigay fervor is rooted in the native African primitivism that underlies the adopted antigay positions of Christianity and Islam. Mustapha Baba Ilesa who chairs the Bauchi Shariah Commission overseeing enforcement of Islamic law in the region, vows: "We are on the hunt!"

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference warns against what it calls the "draconian legislation" of African nations that are criminalizing gay people: "Such laws are not only unjust, but they also have the potential to tear at the

fabric of society if they are misused to facilitate false denunciations for gain, advancement or vengeance, much as what Christians are exposed to in Pakistan under that country's intolerable blasphemy law." The SACBC represents the Catholic bishops of South Africa, Botswana and Swaziland.

India's Supreme Court has reinstated India's old law against homosexuality, overturning the Delhi High Court's *decriminalization* ruling of 2009. "Carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal" is once again punishable by life imprisonment. The All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Utkal Christian Council and the Apostolic Churches Alliance called for reinstatement of the anti-homosexual law.

Nonetheless, record crowds of over 5,000 attended Mumbai's 7th annual gay pride event.

Meanwhile, a Roman Catholic archbishop, Protestant bishops and evangelical leaders were arrested as they marched for repeal of the Presidential Decree of 1950 that denies equal rights to Christian and Muslim "untouchables". The decree has extended to Sikhs since 1956 and to Buddhists since 1982.

"Killing a Kafir [non-Muslim] for any reason is OK - even if there is no reason for it", according to Muslim cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri. "Allah likes those who believe in him who kill those who do not believe in him. Allah likes that." And Allah sent AIDS to homosexuals "to run after them wherever they go". After years in prison in the UK, he's been extradited to the US to face multiple charges of terrorism. An extradition condition by the European Convention on Human Rights rules out the death penalty, though death is the penalty for consensual adult same-sex acts under Islamic regimes in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen and Mauritania.

Australia's High Court overturns the country's first same-sex marriage law five days after it came into effect in the Australian Capital Territory (Canberra). The Court said: "Whether same sex marriage

should be provided for by law is a matter for the federal parliament.”

“As a gay professor at a Christian college where it’s not safe to be out, I’ve been on an emotional roller coaster these past few months, reading about actions Christian colleges have taken on sexuality and gender issues.” So says an anonymous Christian at *rd* online. Reading both encouraging and discouraging news dispatches on the subject, the professor writes: “My eyes filled with tears. And I realized how I usually suppress feelings about having to be closeted.”

Jonathan Rauch of the Brookings Institution urges his fellow gay rights supporters to be more magnanimous and savvy: “I think there’s a real risk that we will overreach and set up the other side to portray itself as the victim if we decide we have to stamp out every instance of religious-based anti-gay discrimination.” As an openly gay

man, he reasons: “What the gay rights movement is fighting for is not just equality for gays but freedom of conscience to live openly according to their identity. I don’t think we should be in the business of being as intolerant of others as they were to us.”

New York’s Mayor Bill deBlasio boycotts St. Patrick’s Day Parade to protest the parade’s exclusion of marchers carrying pro-gay banners. But the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled in 1995 that such private parade sponsors have a right to present their parade’s message the way they wish. This same rule allows Gay Pride parades to exclude marchers carrying antigay banners.

AND FINALLY:

Feminist studies enthusiasts claim that too many “well-educated white males” have made Wikipedia “sexist” – it’s even “aestheti-

cally very masculine in its design”.

So, a protest is called for a massive “edit Wikipedia day”. At Columbia University, feminist art students filmed an all-female porn flick to protest patriarchy and objectification of the female body. It features naked girls making out and belting each other with raw eggs. Meanwhile, the University of Alaska has been forced to admit that a student newspaper reporter was within her First Amendment rights when she wrote a piece on publicly available data that a UA professor declared was “sexual harassment” and so she filed a complaint. This professor describes her work as having to do with “how organizations, states, and institutions organize social inequality based on race, class, sex, sexuality, gender, age, spatiality, looks, dis/ability, and other markers of difference [including] gender, sexualities, race and ethnic relations, rurality”