

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

Summer 2012

Newsletter of EVANGELICALS CONCERNED, INC., 311 East 72nd Street, New York, New York, 10021

“So great to learn that God is saving people in gay Christian circles. I guess I have felt, along with many evangelicals, that once someone drops the traditional view of homosexuality, eventually all the other dominos will fall and the result will be some kind of vacuous liberalism or secular humanism. From our latest correspondence, that would seem not to be the case. I don’t understand God’s way of working, but what else is new?” This is an emailed response from a prominent conservative evangelical theologian after he heard a firsthand report on the 2012 summer retreat of Evangelicals Concerned.

Unlike many LGBT religious groups, EC’s focus is on Christ, the Gospel and Christian discipleship. Since 1980, our 99 (and counting) guest keynoters have included Rosalind Rinker, Charlie Shedd, Kay Lindskoog, Fisher Humphreys, Lewis B. Smedes, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Walt Hearn, John F. Alexander, Ken and Nancy Sehested, Wally Howard, Ken Medema, Reta Halteman Finger, David G. Myers, Val Clear, Donald W. Dayton, Jack Rogers, Caroline J. Simon, Cynthia Clawson, Tom Key, Nancy Hardesty, Randall Balmer, Chuck Smith, Jr. and many other evangelical supporters.

An expanded version of Ralph Blair’s 2012 connectiON keynote address is available online at ECinc.org as well as in booklet form from EC’s New York office. The title is, *None So Blind: The Suppression of God’s Truth*.

Ralph Blair spoke at the American Psychiatric Association’s annual convention in May. He addressed the topic: “Patient Oriented Therapy: Understanding and Implementing the APA Task Force Paper on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation”. His APA presentation can be read at ECinc.org.

“Less than ideal: Study challenges rosy assumptions about homosexual parenting.” But this is a misleading headline. It appears in the Religious

Right’s *World* magazine, heralding an account by Mark Regnerus (*World* repeatedly misspells it, “Regenerus”). Qualified researchers point to major flaws in the Regnerus report and fault its misuse by antigay religious and political lobbies. Regnerus, himself, grants that, “sexual orientation is not at fault” and *World* quotes his saying so. He reports that children reared in *broken* homes don’t do as well as children reared in *intact* homes. No surprise. But he admits that, “a failed heterosexual union” is the most typical characteristic for the group that he *classified* as “same-sex-headed households.” In effect, his report is a warning against *mixed-orientation* marriage – a contributing factor to the breakups of such ill-advised sexual arrangements and an increased risk to any kids reared by such conflicted parents.

Exodus president Alan Chambers says, yet again, that the “ex-gay” promise is not heterosexual orientation. In his 2009 book, *Leaving Homosexuality*, he’d written: “Heterosexuality shouldn’t have been my goal – nor should it be yours.” At the 2012 Exodus convention in June, he urged member groups to stop making “reparative” claims: “For someone to put out a shingle and say, ‘I can cure homosexuality’ — that to me is bizarre.” Chambers graciously adds: “For those that don’t hold to the same Biblical ethic that I do, I think there’s room for further discussion without a culture war that has really served no one. I think it’s time for us in the church to move on from that fight.”

But antigay preachers and “reparative therapists” are pushing back against him on this. Robert Gagnon of Pittsburgh Seminary renders yet another of his many antigay attacks – this time it’s a 35-page warning that Chambers’ largess spells *damnation* for those who continue “living a homosexual life”. Gagnon asserts that, “living a homosexual life [is] egregious [sin that] can get one excluded from eternal life.” He’s calling for Chambers’ resignation

from Exodus. For Ralph Blair’s 2002 critique of Gagnon’s 2001 book, see *Review*, Fall, 2002.

Institute for American Values founder David Blankenhorn: “The time has come for me to accept gay marriage and emphasize the good that it can do.” He terms his changed position a matter of “basic fairness”. Formerly the mentor of same-sex marriage foe Maggie Gallagher, he adds: “The time for denigrating or stigmatizing same-sex relationships is over.” In 2007, Blankenhorn wrote a book against same-sex marriage. He testified against California’s Prop 8. Now, writing in *The New York Times*, he states that, to his “deep regret, much of the opposition to gay marriage seems to stem, at least in part, from an underlying antigay animus. To me, a Southerner by birth whose formative moral experience was the civil rights movement, this fact is profoundly disturbing.”

Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and the District of Columbia now have legal same-sex marriage. California, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Oregon and Washington permit comprehensive domestic partnerships or civil unions for same-sex couples.

Rachel Held Evans asks her fellow Christians: “Is a political ‘victory’ worth perpetuating the idea that evangelical Christians are at war with gays and lesbians?” Author of *Evolving in Monkey Town* (Zondervan), she grew up in Dayton, Tennessee (site of the Scopes Trial) and graduated from Bryan College. She asks: “Is a political ‘victory’ really worth losing millions more young people to cynicism regarding the Church?” She reports that, in her travels, speaking at Christian schools, e.g., Calvin College, Abilene Christian University, Baylor University, Point Loma Nazarene University and Fuller Seminary, she chats with students who are tired of evangel-

icals' all too typical hostility toward gay men and lesbians and committed same-sex relationships. She notes what she takes to be the, no doubt, unintended, but clearly observable effects of the evangelicals' identity with the antigay side in the culture wars.

“Blame Jerry Falwell for Millennials’ Rejection of Religion.” That’s Nick Vadala’s take on the anti-religion bent of those born after 1980. At PhillyMag.com, he mentions Falwell’s 1999 charge that Tinky Winky seduced kids into homosexuality. Falwell noted the red purse and said: “he is purple – the gay-pride color. And his antenna is shaped like a triangle – the gay-pride symbol.” Vadala observes: “For most people, what Falwell had to say about a character on a children’s show was irrelevant and asinine (which it was). But for American millennials—many of whom were just getting a solid grip on basic critical thinking at the time—Falwell’s piously hateful, anti-gay screed represents an early memorable experience with religion on a large public scale.”

“If I were to guess, I’m betting that [Jesus] would be against the ‘righteous’ and with the outcasts on this one.” So says Christian conservative and “rock-solid, loyal Republican” John Delaney, a former mayor of Jacksonville, Florida. Speaking about a proposed Jacksonville city ordinance to ban discrimination against gay and lesbian citizens, Delaney cited Bible passages to support efforts at protecting the vulnerable.

“I lived every day in fear that my secret would be discovered and that the worst would happen.” This was the experience of a Geneva College biblical studies and philosophy student who graduated in 2010. He tells his college newspaper: “I caught wind of rumors about my sexuality and of gossip about classmates casually mentioning their suspicions in front of professors and other authority figures.” Even so, he recalls his time at this Reformed Presbyterian school as positive overall. Another gay student says: “I’m not going to go changing myself just because someone says its wrong, because of the study I’ve done and what I believe.” Oddly, the Dean of Student Development compares the experiences of closeted gays with those of non-Presbyterians on campus. Says the Director of Counseling: “I don’t see

this sin as anything worse than any other struggle.” For some reasonable perspective, at the end of the article, another gay student is quoted as saying: “People hate people for being Christian and I fear more for that.”

Biola Queer Underground has been launched by GLBT students, alumni and their friends and supporters within the Biola University community. The university president spoke in chapel about the need for “grace and truth” in the matter, though he made it clear that the official position on homosexuality was not up for review. The campus paper carries news of the controversy, with comments and letters, pro and con.

Founded in 1908 as the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, Biola now has six schools – undergraduate studies through graduate schools that include Rosemead School of Psychology and Talbot School of Theology.

Ralph Blair wrote to the group: “I’m glad to see you’re in touch with each other. I see in a news report that the VP for student development at Biola says: ‘We don’t know who these people are.’ Those words are truer than the VP knows. So many Christians don’t have any idea *who* gay people are and yet they don’t hesitate to go on and on about them. They’re like the religious leaders in Jesus’ day, who in their insults thrown at the man Jesus healed of blindness, disparaged Jesus by saying: ‘We don’t even know where this guy comes from!’ Yet their acknowledged ignorance didn’t stop them from having a very harsh opinion of him.” A spokesperson for the group replied to Blair, in part: “Thank you so much for your email, you hit the nail on the head. It was really ironic that Biola leadership called us Pharisees in their chapel sermon about us.” For more information go to biolaunderground.webs.com or contact biola.underground@gmail.com.

“Bob Jones University recognizes the right of alumni to organize and support the LGBT agenda and LGBT events.” This was the official statement of BJU’s Chief Communications Officer for Public Relations, Carol Keirstead, responding to BJU LGBT alums’ participation in 2012 Gay Pride festivities in New York City. The statement went on to say that, though “we do not single out homosexuality in our policies”, the BJU understanding of Scripture is that “monogamous hetero-

sexual marriage relationship [is] God’s intention from the beginning.” For more information on this, go to BJUnity.org.

“There are few more effective arguments against gay marriage than a gay-pride parade,” says *National Review*, commenting on a Russian court’s recent ban on gay pride parades in Moscow for the next 100 years. *NR* adds: “At last, we know what it takes to get the Left to condemn Russia. Better half a century late than never.”

White shirts and ties at Gay Pride?

It was a welcome relief from the more commonly unclad presentation at gay pride parades. At Salt Lake City’s 2012 gay pride parade, gay Mormons in their Sunday best were smiling and waving rainbow flags. Joining them were some 300 heterosexual men and women from Mormons Building Bridges, a group started just weeks before by a Mormon mom of five. Similarly attired Mormons marched and were cheered in gay pride parades in New York City and elsewhere.

The LDS website, “Meet Mormons”, includes the testimony of gays such as a young man who is currently in college studying to be a history teacher and, eventually, to go into business. He shares: “I am gay, Mormon and I believe in Christ!” A gay-straight alliance of students at the LDS-run Brigham Young University has produced a 9-minute YouTube video in which a dozen lesbians and gay men share their witness.

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints votes to allow same-sex marriage and ordination of gay members to priesthood.

Founded in 1872 in Missouri, the Reorganized church is now known as the Community of Christ. The vote, at the Canadian National Conference in June, requires approval by the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve and this process may take a year to complete.

The Mormon-run Marriott mega-hotel chain offers special deals for gay couples in its campaign, “Be You, With Us.”

Along with a free copy of the Book of Mormon in every room, Marriott has been promoting guides to gay pride festivals throughout the country, with sweepstakes and awards aimed at LGBT guests. Marriott is a major donor to Mitt Romney’s Presidential campaign. Romney is a former Marriott board member.

Fred Pattison died on June 9. In 1988, he began The Evangelical Network to connect evangelicals within the gay-affirming Metropolitan Community Church, of which he'd been a pastor. Pattison is survived by Joseph Sombrío, his loving companion of 39 years.

Huff Post columnist John Shore: "I write quite a bit about the relationship between gay people and Christianity. ... I write on that matter for one reason, and one reason only: I love Christianity. Love it. Christianity is the most awesome thing to happen to mankind since a few freak chimps went, "Whoa, check it out. Thumbs! ... Christ is everything real and important that God has to say to mankind; he is the final proof of the depth of God's love for us. Christianity is unutterably sublime, entrancingly mystical, and philosophically complete. ... I don't write about gay people because I love them so much. I don't love gay people any more than I do anyone else. They're just people. But they're an entire class of people who are every day being cruelly maligned, denigrated, bullied to death, and in every way dehumanized—by Christians. People representing the faith to which I ascribe are, in the name of that faith, purposefully, consciously, and even gleefully tending to the destruction of people whose only 'crime' is that they love in a way that's barely different from the way the majority of people love. How can I live with that? It's so wrong. It's so hideous. It's so inexcusable. It's the crudest, most damaging kind of transgression. It needs to stop."

Carrie Underwood: "As a married person myself, I don't know what it's like to be told I can't marry somebody I love, and want to marry." The Christian and Country Music artist, in supporting same-sex marriage, says, "I definitely think we should all have the right to love, and love publicly, the people that we want to love."

Gay Republican GOProud leader, Jimmy LaSalvia, responds: "Good for her. The more Americans think about how issues affect their gay friends and family the more they come to realize that supporting same-sex civil marriage is the right thing to do. More and more people are coming to that conclusion – and that includes conservative Christians."

Mary Cheney and Heather Poe were married in Washington, DC on June

22, exactly 20 years after their first date. The Virginia couple has two children. Cheney's parents, former Republican Vice-President Dick Cheney and Lynne Cheney, issued this statement through the conservative *Daily Caller*: "Mary and Heather have been in a committed relationship for many years, and we are delighted that they were able to take advantage of the opportunity to have that relationship recognized. Mary and Heather and their children are very important and much-loved members of our family, and we wish them every happiness."

Gay activist Dan Savage was ranting on and on about what he called "the bullshit in the Bible" as he addressed the 2012 National High School Journalism Conference in Seattle. While he kept going in the vein, many of the students walked out in disgust. Those who remained cheered Savage as he bullied the students who were leaving, calling them "pansy-asses" – a homophobic slur. GOProud's Jimmy LaSalvia comments: "It's ironic that someone whose claim to fame is fighting bullying would resort to bullying tactics in attacking high school students who were offended by his outrageous remarks."

The National Association of Evangelicals has joined in a coalition of religious groups and educators to address issues of bullying and free speech. The other organizations include the Christian Legal Society, The American Jewish Committee, the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, the Muslim Public Affairs Council, the Islamic Society of North America, the Hindu American Foundation and other groups. The coalition is distributing an 11-page pamphlet, *Harassment, Bullying and Free Expression: Guidelines for Free and Safe Public Schools*. The Anti-Defamation League is concerned that the coalition's guidelines favors First Amendment concerns on viewpoints over protecting the typical targets of bullying: kids with "less physical or social standing."

"They're equating their sin with my skin!" Black preacher Dwight McKissic was "sounding the alarm" at the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting. He was one of the sponsors of the SBC's resolution against same-sex marriage. The SBC boycott-

ed Walt Disney for eight years because of the company's gay-friendly policy. They ended that boycott in 2005.

This summer, the SBC elected the Rev. Fred Luter, Jr., 55, as its new president. He's the first black person ever to be elected SBC president since the denomination was formed in 1845 in a split from northern Baptists over the right of whites to own black slaves. Luter is the pastor of a formerly whites-only SBC church in New Orleans.

Trying to distance itself from its pro-slavery and segregationist past, the SBC is downplaying "Southern". "Great Commission Baptists" can now be the denominational name for SBC churches that choose to use it. As the gavel was passed to this first black president, he was asked about his plans. His reply: "I'm going to Disney World!"

"The Church is scratching its head and trying to work out where it is on all that." That's the Archbishop of Canterbury on homosexuality and same-sex marriage. "We're used to being alongside people who are gay; many of our friends may be – indeed, we may be – wrestling with that issue ourselves."

Brad Pitt's mom's op-ed in a local paper evoked a media firestorm. She'd warned of anti-Mormon bias and agreed with Romney on abortion and homosexuality. Her younger son, Doug, director of a clean water charity for Africa, said on "Today": "I think moms and dads and kids agree to disagree all over the world. ... There can be healthy discussion when people disagree with you. ... The bad thing is when it turns to venom and negativity, and we don't have that in our family. It's open discussion. We can learn from each other and, if anything, it solidifies your point. Or maybe you learn something."

"The most stunning magazine cover in American history." That's what Pat Boone calls the *Newsweek* depiction of President Obama under a rainbow halo of Gay Pride. With more overstatement, Boone says endorsement of same-sex marriage rejects marriage as it's been "since the human race came into being". But, in the Bible, Solomon had 700 wives, 300 concubines. Polygamy, sibling marriage, marriage for procreation with a late husband's closest kin and prohibitions against racial intermarriage were common. Marriages took place at puberty.

Fathers arranged the marriages for economic advantage, as daughters were a father's property and wives were a husband's property. None of this is what people think of today as "traditional marriage", dating and romance.

Two antigay Fundamentalist church videos went viral this spring. One, from North Carolina, was a sermon by a King-James-Only Independent Fundamentalist Baptist preacher railing against "all the lesbians and queers" and proposing incarceration inside two huge areas enclosed by an electrified fence so they'll all "die out". The other showed preschoolers on stage at an Indiana church. As preacher and congregation egg them on, the kids belt out a little ditty on: "Ain't no homo gonna make it to heaven".

Bryan Fischer of American Family Association says: "Homosexuality gave us Adolph Hitler and homosexuals in the military gave us the Brown Shirts, the Nazi war machine and 6 million dead Jews." This Religious Right-winger lumps all homosexuals together with "people who rip off convenience stores and eat the faces off homeless people." He also pushes the utterly baseless conspiracy claim that HIV does *not* cause AIDS.

The Origins of AIDS, from Cambridge University Press, is Jacques Pepin's much acclaimed and comprehensive review of the history and science of HIV. Pepin is an infectious disease specialist. In the early years of AIDS, many were quick to label it God's judgment on homosexuals. But, even then, they overlooked the fact that HIV was spreading through the general Haitian community and among hemophiliacs – though not among *lesbians*. Still the antigay preachers *equated* AIDS and homosexuality.

Pepin explains that we now know of HIV in Africa as far back as 1920. We know that good medical intentions plus dirty needles in the Congo started the spread of HIV, first among Kinshasa residents, then in Haitians working there, then through a disreputable blood lab called Hemo-Caribbean and eventually into the blood of hemophiliacs and gay males in the U.S. And now, across the globe, some 60 million people have been infected and 30 million have died. Today, 34 million are living with HIV and 3.4 million of these are children under 15 years of age. Nonetheless, by manipulating statistics, antigay lobbies are still linking *homosexuality, as such*, with disease and early demise, and they've *never* apologized for all their ranting about AIDS and God's *judgment on gays*.

Evangelicals' opposition to same-sex marriage dropped from 85 percent in 1988 to 59 percent in 2010 – according to the federally-funded General Social Survey. Current Evangelicals' views resemble the general public's views in the 1980s.

"How Do You Feel About Gay Christians and Mormons?" Replying to this Gay.com question, well over half the readers' responses were positive. Only 1 percent said they were "antagonistic" while 16 percent were "skeptical". The poll was, of course, not statistically rigorous.

The Presbyterian Church USA narrowly defeated blessing same-sex marriage while the Episcopal Church strongly approved it in their respective 2012 summer conventions.

The Muslim Council of Britain is waging jihad against same-sex marriage. MCB is comprised of some 500 Muslim groups. Imams around the world are calling for the death of ho-

mosexuals. Death is prescribed for homosexuality in Islamic countries, e.g., Saudi Arabia, Iran, Mauritania, the Sudan, Yemen and northern Nigeria.

Islamic nations have the highest restrictions on religious freedom and Christians are the most persecuted.

Aggressive Western secularism has resulted in putting the UK in the "high" category, with Iran and Saudi Arabia, and France has moved ahead of Cuba as hostile to religion. Meanwhile, the US State Department says it's dropping coverage of religious freedom from its annual Human Rights Report.

The Conservative branch of American Judaism approves of same-sex marriage ceremonies.

The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards states: "We acknowledge that these partnerships are distinct from those discussed in the Talmud as 'according to the law of Moses and Israel,' but we celebrate them with the same sense of holiness and joy as that expressed in heterosexual marriages." As with heterosexual couples, Conservative rabbis don't preside at a marriage of a Jew to a non-Jew. Reform and Reconstructionist branches also affirm same-sex relationships, though Orthodox Judaism does not.

AND FINALLY:

Kraft Foods has been celebrating the centennial of Oreos with a daily Facebook focus "reflecting current events". For June 25th, a photo-shopped picture of an Oreo filled with 6 different colored layers of crême represented the Gay Pride rainbow. Reaction was mixed. Some commended the Oreo for supporting fairness in marriage. Others citing Sodom and Gomorrah and said they were swearing off Oreos forever. The National Organization for Marriage is calling for a boycott of the cookie – America's favorite!