

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 Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism by Brian Stanley, Professor of World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh is the latest volume (2013) in the IVP series, "History of Evangelicalism". The subtitle is "The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott".

In fewer than six pages (of 283), he looks at "Evangelicals and Homosexuality". He notes the public launching of Evangelicals Concerned during a National Association of Evangelicals convention, though he says EC's meeting "was provocatively held over the street from the [NAE] conference". But, as an NAE member, Blair thought it prudent to meet across the street, assuming the NAE had more clout at its Shoreham Hotel than it had at our Sheraton. Stanley rightly differentiates EC from MCC, understanding that MCC "maintained only sporadic connections with the evangelical community". But he's confused in saying that EC "bylaws" state that homosexuality is "part of God's created order". No such anachronism was ever the view of Evangelicals Concerned, Inc.

Stanley's take on Paul Jewett's view of homosexuality is misleading. Granting only that Jewett allowed that, "within the fallen estate of humanity the legitimacy of committed same-sex relationships may on occasion have to be conceded as the lesser of two evils" hardly reflects Jewett's strong support of EC. Even in the 1970s, he called Blair's work on homosexuality "the most informative and balanced thing on the subject anywhere". In the early '80s he wrote to Blair: "You have done some really pioneering work. I trust you get some positive response and particularly that you will be able to help many escape the terrible bind that they have been forced into." On Blair's critique of "ex-gay" claims, Jewett wrote: "I read it and had my admiration renewed for your control of such detailed material. ... It is surely very informative – and persuasive!" On Blair's *Sunshine and Rainfall for All*, Jewett wrote: "I

think it makes a very helpful point which may ease some tender consciences over the bridge to tolerance and openness." When Jewett died, his widow wrote to Blair: "Paul has always admired you and your work as well as your publication, *Review*. So I feel that you are my friend, too."

EC's 2014 Fall Weekend at Ocean Grove will be October 3-5. We'll be remembering Matthew Henry, George Whitefield, William Romaine and James Hervey on their 300th anniversaries and viewing their hand-written commentary and letters and other items related to them. On this 200th "Star Spangled Banner" anniversary, we'll also see a handwritten letter of Francis Scott Key about his Sunday School. Ralph Blair will do a lecture on their lives and significance and give three sermons on a neglected aspect of Christ's identity. There'll be time to enjoy the seaside, our gourmet meals, homemade ice cream and connecting with friends old and new. Sign up at www.ecinc.org.

Amy Plantinga Pauw and Jim Rayburn III were our guest keynoters at EC's 72nd summer connection. Pauw, a Jonathan Edwards scholar, teaches doctrinal theology at Louisville Seminary. Calvin College's Cornelius Plantinga and Alvin Plantinga are her uncles. Rayburn is the son of Young Life founder Jim Rayburn and the nephew of Bob Rayburn, founding president of Covenant College and Seminary (PCA). Bob Rayburn was the first evangelical leader to heartily affirm Blair's founding of EC in 1975 and he suggested that EC be publicly launched during the next NAE convention.

Cornelius Plantinga says: "A number of Christians who used to believe that homosexual acts were disordered or wrong have come to believe that they were being unfair to people who could

therefore not act on their disposition, and then blaming them for it, and came to think that they were now being uncharitable toward those people and changed their minds." This former president of Calvin Seminary was speaking at the annual Faith Angle Forum. Will Saletan of *Slate* reports that "over dinner, Plantinga gave the strong impression that he's one of these folks. He talked about gay couples he knows. With same-sex marriage, he said, "You get a lot – love, commitment, stability, and other virtues of Christian life." Plantinga has come a long way from what he wrote in the *Calvin Seminary Forum* in 1994. Then, he supported ordination for women but *not* for gays. In that essay, he called homosexuality a "sexual disorder", mocked a hypothetical gay candidate for ministry as a "militant flamingo from Act Up" and averred that, "femininity belongs to creation, gaily [*sic*] to the fall."

A Talbot Seminary graduate and Southern Baptist pastor says he's been wrong about homosexuality.

Danny Cortez, with 21 years in ministry, has come to see from his pastoral work with closeted folks at church and his study of scripture that he can no longer be aligned with church cruelty against gays and lesbians. After he came to these conclusions, his 15-year-old son shared about his own gay struggle and acceptance.

Cortez' congregation, New Heart Community Church in La Mirada, California, has voted to become a "Third Way" congregation, allowing for a range of understandings on homosexuality. But Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Al Mohler denounced the vote and threatens to enforce the Southern Baptist Convention's mandated antigay stand.

Vineyard Church pastor calls for a Romans 14 approach to gay issues.

Ken Wilson, founding pastor of Vineyard Church in Ann Arbor has written

A Letter to My Congregation, inviting Christians to reconsider same-sex couples. Prompted by pastoral concerns and a deeper understanding of scripture, Wilson asks Christians to see this divisive issue as falling within Paul's call for graciousness around honestly held differences of interpretation – as has been done with issues of divorce and re-marriage.

Mark Achtemeier, evangelical Presbyterian who, until the late 1990s, defended “traditional” views on homosexuality, writes *The Bible’s YES to Same-Sex Marriage*. A former Duquesne Seminary professor, Achtemeier didn't want to simply disregard what he'd taken to be the Bible verses on the subject, but his getting to know a gay seminarian prompted his taking a deeper look into what these “fragment texts” were originally about.

Dan Cathy, president of his family's Chick-fil-A chain says it was a mistake to involve the company in the debate over same-sex marriage two years ago. He's become very good friends with some gay folks while not changing his mind on marriage.

Chick-fil-A's 2013 sales were over \$5 billion, beating KFC's \$4.22 billion, though Chick-fil-A has only 1,775 stores to KFC's 4,491 and Chick-fil-A is closed on Sundays!

Chick-fil-A is now making a big entrance into New York City and transplanted Southern gays could not be happier. A gay 26-year-old digital strategist admits that, while he has “a healthy fear of the gay mafia”, the crispy chicken is “orgasmic”. Says a new resident from Texas: “It's comfort food” and “the Cadillac of chicken!” Harlem-based drag queen Peppermint says: “I want to live in a place where people can think differently” and she says she resents gays trying to “stop me from getting food from the Chick-fil-A.” Gay journalist Gregory E. Miller says: “For many members of the LGBT community, the first time they came out, it was to tell the world they were gay. The second time, it was to tell the world they love Chick-fil-A.”

Cal Thomas says: “Bake the cake for the gay couple”. He says it's “the biblical thing to do.” A conservative columnist and VP of the Moral Majority in the 1980s, Thomas gives his readers

some perspective: “Let us recall our history. Religion was once wrongly used by some to condemn interracial marriage. In some churches, the Bible was misused to justify countless forms of discrimination against African-Americans. Women, too, were thought by some Christians to be inferior to men and, therefore, it was believed to be just to deny them the same rights and privileges enjoyed by men. The Bible was sometimes employed to keep women from voting, establishing credit or owning property. Women were to be ‘submissive’ to their husbands, thereby inhibiting their demands for the vote and their calls for gender equality.”

Why don't Christians sell wedding cakes to gay couples? Andy Stanley reminds them: “Jesus died for a world with which he didn't see eye to eye. Serving people we don't see eye to eye with is the essence of Christianity.” An evangelical, Stanley is pastor of America's second largest congregation. He says: “If a bakery doesn't want to sell its products to a gay couple, it's their business. Literally. But leave Jesus out of it.”

Fox News political pundit Kirsten Powers and Religion News Service senior columnist Jonathan Merritt – both evangelical Christians – point out that, “If you refuse to photograph one unbiblical wedding, you should refuse to photograph them all. If not, you'll be seen as a hypocrite and, as a known Christian, heap shame on the Gospel. As all Christians know, Jesus saved his harshest words for the hypocritical behavior of religious people.” But Southern Baptist Seminary president Al Mohler and SBS dean Russell Moore rationalize that “unbiblical” weddings are not all equal. Says Moore: Christian vendors “need not investigate ... whether [a *heterosexual* wedding] is Christ-honoring.”

“Humility, not hubris, opens church doors and keeps them open.” This is how Paul Louis Metzger closes a recent *Patheos* essay. A professor of theology at Multnomah Bible College and Seminary, Metzger recalls the murderous rage prompted by Jesus' telling his hometown synagogue's members that he'd do wonders among the Gentiles. “We Gentile church-goers who confess Jesus often have the same kind of hubris”, Metzger notes. He laments: “As

a result, our churches are not very inviting. It is very difficult for us to think that Jesus might work outside our church walls in unorthodox or non-kosher contexts, and in part because of our own hardness of heart toward him.” He calls for repentance on the part of Christians “who have built fortresses around their souls to keep [Jesus] in or out, as the case may be.”

A *First Things* review of an openly gay and devout Catholic's new book sparked a “spitting angry” backlash from readers, as the editor of this conservative Roman Catholic journal put it. Paul J. Griffiths, who teaches Catholic theology at Duke Divinity School, had highly praised Richard Rodriguez's *Darling: A Spiritual Autobiography*. Griffiths responded to a few of the angry letters: “I wrote about what it means to call someone your darling, which is a central theme of Rodriguez's book. His central example in the book has nothing to do with (e.g.) sodomy or fellatio; it has, rather, to do with selfless, sacrificial, supportive giving of oneself to another over the course of a life. Can same-sex couples do this? Yes. Should Catholics celebrate their doing of it? Yes. Is there anything in those two affirmations that runs counter to Catholic doctrine? No.”

Talk radio's Michael L. Brown continues his misinformation mission against homosexuality. He says: “The only way a professing Christian can support ‘life-long, monogamous gay relationships’ is by ceasing to be a conservative Christian, ceasing to be an orthodox believer, and completely undermining their commitment to biblical authority.” Contrary to his judgment, some of the leading evangelicals over the past forty years have been supporters of Evangelicals Concerned. They've been on the faculties of e.g., Covenant College and Seminary, Calvin College and Seminary, Fuller Seminary, Beeson Divinity School, Messiah College, Trinity (Deerfield), Nyack College, Houghton College, Hope College, etc. They've been at the top of Campus Crusade, Young Life, IVCF, The Navigators, etc. IVP, Zondervan, Baker, NavPress, Eerdmans, Word and Revell publish their books. These folks certainly do not match Brown's caricature.

U. S. District Judge rejects the report of the Religious Right's Mark Regnerus on alleged bad outcomes for children reared by same-sex couples.

Bernard A. Friedman: "The Court finds Regnerus's testimony entirely unbelievable and not worthy of serious consideration. The evidence adduced at trial demonstrated that his 2012 'study' was hastily concocted at the behest of a third-party funder, which found it 'essential that the necessary data be gathered to settle the question in the forum of public debate about what kinds of family arrangement are best for society' and which 'was confident that the traditional understanding of marriage will be vindicated by this study.' In the funder's view, 'the future of the institution of marriage at this moment is very uncertain' and 'proper research' was needed to counter the many studies showing no differences in child outcomes."

"They're going to push Christians to a point where they're not going to be pushed anymore!", Tony Perkins threatened. He says they're *persecuting* Christians with same-sex marriage. Ignoring Jesus' instruction: "I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you", this Right-wing Family Research Council head bullies and bears false witness. He claims that marriage equality will take away "the ability to be who we are as a people. [It's] sowing the seeds of the disillusion of our republic." His complaint is reminiscent of complaints in the aftermath of slavery and segregation.

Warren Cole Smith claims that "homosexual activists ... share the blame [for the] marriage breakdown" that costs \$229 billion a year. Vice-president of *World* magazine, Smith says marriage rates fell "nearly 20 percent since 1991[and, he nonsensically adds, that's] the year the Hawaii Supreme Court [ruled] the state's refusal to grant same-sex marriage licenses discriminatory." Mocking 39 same-sex weddings performed at a hotel, as over its greater number of heterosexual weddings, he admits that in but one month, California issued more than 30,000 same-sex marriage licenses. He faults a university study because the author "openly supports gay marriage" but doesn't fault his own opinion while *openly opposing* gay marriage. He

cites his own approved expert's caution that "all assertions about the economic impact of gay marriage are at best a guess" but fails to apply this observation to *his own guesses*.

World Vision announced it would extend employment to folks in same-sex marriages. Immediate fury erupted with nasty calls for boycotting this major evangelical relief ministry. Among the outraged: Franklin Graham, Jim Denison, Peter Jones, Russell D. Moore and others on the Religious Right. The next day, World Vision's board changed the policy back to exclusion. It said it had "made a mistake. ... We failed to be consistent with ... the traditional understanding of Biblical marriage and our own Statement of Faith, which says, 'We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.' ... As a result, we made a change to our conduct policy that was not consistent with our Statement of Faith and our commitment to the sanctity of marriage. ... We have listened to you and want to say thank you and to humbly ask for your forgiveness."

A Westmont College graduate writes: "A mere two months before my graduation Westmont College threatened to expel me because I had homosexual off-campus. No Westmont straight couples, living and sleeping together off-campus, were threatened with this penalty, even though they were also breaking the school's honor code. Well, I lied my ass off: phony repentance, crocodile tears, counseling filled with lies and promises I never intended to keep, prayers that were jokes. Two months later I walked away with the diploma I had earned. And to secure that diploma I would tell the same lies all over again. I would have to. Lying has kept us LGBT people alive for generations."

Media Matters, founded by former Rightwing activist David Brock, accuses Fox News of using the H-word. In a 2011 *Politico* interview, Brock, who's gay, vowed to wage "guerrilla warfare and sabotage" Fox News. MM states: "Calling gay people 'homosexual' [is to] marginalize, pathologize, and and [*sic*] marginalize" them. Yet MM had to go back to 2010 to find any use of the term, "homosexuals", by Fox

News.

Bill Maher: "I think there is a gay mafia. I think if you cross them, you do get whacked. I really do." He was thinking of the forced resignation of a major CEO who, in 2008, had made a donation to the Prop 8 campaign in California. Conservatives agree with Maher on this. In a public statement, "Freedom to Marry, Freedom to Dissent: Why We Must Have Both", conservative scholars, writers and other public figures – all of whom *support* of same-sex marriage – registered their voices. Included: David Blankenhorn, John Corvino, Beth Elliott, Margaret Hoover, Heidi Kitrosser, Jim Kolbe, Ken Mehlman, Charles Murray, Norman Ornstein, Randy Potts, Jonathan Rauch, Will Saletan, Sally Satel, Christine Hoff Sommers, Andrew Sullivan, Rich Tafel, Cathy Young and others.

Eastern Mennonite Seminary dean writes: "In my dream, a voice says no one in the LGBT wars is unclean." In *Mennonite World Review*, Michael King notes: "As our LGBT theological divisions deepen, commitments to faithfulness are only strengthening." He compares this to the early church's wrestling over what was "clean" and "unclean" though scripture and tradition already seemingly defined the distinction. He sees that the *different* dreams of Cornelius and Peter helped clarify each other's dreams. This, King says, may guide us in dealing with our own different dreams about LGBT issues. He cites the revelation to Peter who concluded: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." Says King: "Together, Cornelius and Peter must learn that in Christ both can experience God's welcome. But," he exclaims, "what travel adventures, whether physical or in faith understandings, each must undergo to achieve such a dramatic double breakthrough." He concludes: "God is inviting each of us not only to weep together at the foot of a cross but also to linger there for days, for months, for years."

The Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians co-sponsored a Pro-life conference at Villanova University in March. PLAGAL's president, Cecelia

Brown, was also a speaker, along with sponsors and speakers from Secular ProLife, Democrats for Life, ProLife Humanists and Feminists for Nonviolent Choices.

Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson and his husband are divorcing. The first openly gay bishop of the Episcopal Church says: “Like any marriage, gay and lesbian couples are subject to the same complications and hardships that afflict marriages between heterosexuals.”

Steve Young, legendary San Francisco 49er, says: “We need to see each other as Jesus sees us.” Heterosexual and Mormon, he keynoted a gay Mormon conference in Salt Lake City and said his goal is to “build bridges with my gay brothers and sisters.” Introducing his wife, who has a gay brother, he told the audience: “There’s not a day that goes by that you are not on her mind. She has spent countless hours advocating for you.”

President Obama threatened to revoke aid to Uganda because of its antigay laws. The Ugandan government responded with disdain: “The West can keep their ‘aid’ to Uganda over homos!” Contrary to Western media’s alleging that Africa’s harsh antigay laws are due to meddling by America’s Religious Right, Africa has never accepted homosexuality. African leaders accuse the *gay-activist West* of trying to force homosexuality on Africans. Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe says homosexuality is a *Western* invention intended to “disturb the African moral fiber.” President Yahya Jammeh of Gambia denounces homosexuals as “satanic”. And Harvard-educated Nobel laureate Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, president of Liberia, defends her country’s antigay statutes as protecting *Africa’s* “traditional values”. Since signing Nigeria’s stricter antigay law, President Goodluck Jonathan’s popularity has risen. His stand against “Western cultural imperialism” regarding homosexuality is cheered across ethnic, religious and regional divisions. Nigerians are saying: “I’ve never been prouder to be a Nigerian!”

Nigerian Archbishop Ignatius Ayau Kaigama says the UN and Western culture are forcing homosexuality

“down the throats” of Africans. This Roman Catholic leader warned his seminarians that it’s being done through financial inducements. But “we must not be swallowed up by moral tyranny based on secular values.”

Nigerian law imposes a 14-year prison term for anyone in a same-sex union and a 10-year sentence for anyone who aids in a same-sex union ceremony.

In May, over a hundred of Michigan’s black preachers rallied against same-sex marriage. Meeting at the First Baptist World Changers International Church in Detroit, they condemned the efforts by supporters of marriage equality, including clergy. To Rev. Stacey Swimp of Flint: “The Gay Agenda is, by nature, anti-black!” He claims: Gay marriage will “destroy the backbone of our society!” Pastor Roland Caldwell called any preacher who supports gay marriage “the enemy of God”, and added, “You are my enemy! The fight is on!”

Homosexual behavior is said to be sin by 79 percent of black Protestants, 78 percent of white evangelicals and 38 percent of white mainline Protestants. Among Catholics, 33 percent say it’s sin. These are Pew Research findings. The Public Religion Report finds that among white evangelical Protestants, 27 percent support same-sex marriage. Support among Catholics is 57 percent and among mainline Protestants, it’s 62 percent.

“Murder Music” against gays is being protested in New York City. Jamaican reggae dancehall artists such as Queen Ifrica and Capelton, who spread violent anti-gay propaganda through their songs called “murder music”, are the focus of the protests. Targeted lyrics include: “Yo Batty a Dead Man Dem” (colloquial for “gay men must die”), “Bun Out Di Chi Chi” (“burn all gay men”), “Boom Blast Riddim” (“shoot all gay men”), and “Hang Dem Up” (“hang all gay men”).

“THE GOOD RAV: A Chassidic Talmud Chacham and Rabbi speaks” is an account of an Orthodox rabbi’s response to a young Jew who sought counseling in dealing with his homosexuality. Here’s the rabbi’s summary statement: “If I say nothing else but this, *dayeinu* [this is enough].

When G-d judges people, he does not judge them according to the objective category of the crime. He judges them according to their *subjective* circumstances. Now, any heterosexual, myself included, who thinks about their own challenges, knows that he often slips and falls, even when he could have done better. Think about the plight of homosexuals, such as the young man I was speaking to on that night, who was constrained in a homosexual orientation such that he was not able to have any other outlet. How many of us would *actually* be ready to commit ourselves to a life of celibacy and avoid all transgressions at all times? I think if we look at ourselves honestly in the mirror and if we put our hands on our hearts, we will acknowledge that this would be a very difficult achievement.

“Therefore, understanding the circumstances and the context in which a homosexual finds himself is most important. If G-d judges people according to their circumstances, we too, should do so.”

Zach Hoag blogs against Reformed evangelical damage control around sex abuse of underage boys. A Sovereign Grace Ministries youth pastor, found guilty, now faces up to 85 years in prison. Hoag is sees misplaced concerns of prominent Reformed leaders over what “a watching world” might think. He says concern should instead be focused on the impact of Christians’ “heartless obsession with legally discriminating against gay people, the greedy mishandling of church finances to enrich leaders, and the institutionalizing of abusive and manipulative practices as discipleship or church discipline, just to name a few other credibility-obliterating things the church in America is quite fond of doing on the regular. ... What the world needs is a church that is willing to fight so that the walls which keep the marginalized out of the kingdom – and fail to protect the weak, the innocent, the widow, the orphan, the child among us – are sufficiently torn down. No matter what celebrity leaders, or what powerful institutions, are keeping the gate. *Because if the world is watching for anything, it’s watching for whether or not we have the guts to reform, for Jesus’s sake.*”

The antigay lobby, American Family

Association, urges Americans to refuse all Harvey Milk postage stamped mail. The U.S. commemorative celebrates a gay San Francisco Board of Supervisors member murdered in 1978. Popularized in the movie, *Milk*, he was, however, *not* America's first openly gay elected official. That honor belongs to Elaine Noble, elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives as openly gay in 1974 – three years before Milk's election.

Right-wing lawyer Scott Lively has launched an international Coalition for Family Values. “We want to praise the Russian Federation for providing much-needed leadership in

restoring family values in public policy. ... I would rather the Ugandans had followed the Russian anti-propaganda model which reflects my philosophy of preventing the mainstreaming of homosexuality with the minimum limitation on personal liberties for those who choose to live discretely outside the mainstream.”

Meanwhile, Russia's foreign agents law, anti-propaganda law and government pressure on banks, landlords and employers are turned against LGBT activists. Government bureaucrats are accusing gay men and lesbians of being spies. The government pressures employers to force workers to stop their gay activism and gay community cen-

ters are losing their leases.

AND FINALLY:

Words such as “tranny” can be repurposed for positive use – just as “queer” has been. This was the point being made by Dan Savage, gay activist founder of “It Gets Better” when he recently spoke at the University of Chicago.

But one student said she was “offended” and “felt unsafe” by his voicing the word. She *so upset* herself that she left the seminar in what a petition in support of her deemed “a state of distress”. Well over a thousand students signed that petition.