

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 2023

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

If you missed EC's 3 Internet presentations of our 2023 CONNECTION, posted on June 25, check them out in video, audio or in PDF text, at www.ECINC.org.

2023 Pride marchers chanted, "We're here, we're queer, we're coming for your children!" Decades before these marchers were *born*, this was the *lie* Anita Bryant warned was the very *aim* of the earliest Gay Pride agenda. So now, *this is progress?*

The Supreme Court rules 6-3 in favor of a website designer's First Amendment right to decline Colorado's forcing her to design website messages that *contradict* her Christian beliefs. "The First Amendment envisions the United States as a rich and complex place, where all persons are free to think and speak as they wish, not as the government demands", wrote Justice Neil Gorsuch for the Supreme Court's majority.

Pew Research finds that 27 percent of Americans have an unfavorable view of what is, for many of us, but a caricature of evangelicals, while 28 percent have a *favorable* view, although this 28 percent includes evangelicals that are a *quarter* of the population. In contrast, only 10 percent of Americans have negative views of "mainline" Protestants where they're never told that they're *sinners* in need of a *Savior*. The Bible explains these statistics: Sinners *don't want* to be told they're *sinners!*

So, among Americans who are *not evangelical*, the balance of opinion on evangelical Christians is much more *negative* (32% unfavorable, 18% favorable). *Most hostility is against evangelicals!* Jesus *foretold* this. Do pollsters need *assistance* to understand how *defense mechanisms* operate when one's *conscience is disturbed* in unwanted ways -- due, of course, to one's having to *face facts of one's own life?* *Retreating into denial* is always the

kneejerk reaction to unwanted truth that nonetheless hits home.

The Other Evangelicals: A Story of Liberal, Black, Progressive, Feminist and Gay Christians -- and the Movement That Pushed Them Out is a new book by Isaac B. Sharp (Eerdmans, 2023), based on his doctoral dissertation at New York's Union Seminary. Evangelicals Concerned is among the "*Other Evangelicals*" that Sharp includes as judged to be *odd, outsiders* and *outcasts* by *most* "evangelicals".

Yet, along with the angry criticism we've gotten in EC's half-century's history, we've also had *many endorsements from truly major evangelical leaders*. Respected and influential evangelical scholars and leaders endorse us, refer folks to us and keynote at our EC retreats across the country. To demonstrate the scope of that evangelical endorsement, we've never repeated the *same* keynoter at the *same* regional retreat, except for EC's founder who keynotes at *each* EC retreat. A guest female keynoter and a guest male keynoter present at each EC summer retreat. EC recommends Sharp's very well-written and informative book.

Why are church members giving up on "Christianity"? *Baptist News Global* says surveys find that, what "ultimately started" church members to "doubt Christianity" was being told that, as Christians, "they couldn't support their queer friends and family". They just "couldn't continue to ignore the treatment of LGBTQ and other marginalized people." Most respondents were *heterosexuals* who were told to *violate* what's one of Jesus' best-known sayings: "In everything, treat others as you would have them treat you." (Matt 7:12) His words, if taken *seriously*, can *resolve* all interpersonal problems!

Only 4% of Americans have "a biblical worldview", according to The Bar-

na Poll. It's "much more extensive than we actually expected. Typically, you don't find that religious beliefs change very much. ... We found a number of things that changed in terms of their views of truth, their views about God, their own assessment of their spiritual commitment, some of their moral perspectives — even their ideas and their behaviors related to religious activity, personal religious activity, going to church, reading the Bible, acknowledging their sins, and asking for forgiveness. Those kinds of things all shifted pretty dramatically."

Sadly, evangelicals who believe that Jesus was sinless during His life on earth has declined significantly. The 2023 American Worldview Inventory finds that just 44% of born-again Christians believe Jesus *did not commit sin* during His life on earth, down from 58% in 2020. The survey was conducted by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University. This continuing shift in belief is, of course, *contrary* to the Bible and repudiates historic orthodoxy. *What Bible do they read?* Are they falling asleep during Bible studies and sermons? Or, how biblically faithful are their teachers and preachers?

The percentage with "a God-given *calling* or *purpose* for their lives declined by almost half from 88% to 46%." Barna Research concludes: "We've really got to sit back and think, intelligently and strategically, about what are we doing in reference to worldview."

But Barna folk find that, sadly, in these matters, "parents are doing next to *nothing, intentionally*; churches are doing next to *nothing, intentionally*. So, what's happening is that every child is out there as a free moral agent trying to figure out the world, and I say *child* because a person's worldview is almost fully formed by the age of 13." Behind it all is *more dread of offending politi-*

cal correctness than dread of denying the Gospel!

Over 6,000 United Methodist churches (a fifth of the UMC) have left over issues of homosexuality. They're moving to affiliations with more conservative Christians.

A Christian Awakening over many weeks of spontaneous public worship began back in February at Asbury University and spread to other Christian colleges and then to secular campuses. Spontaneous student-led revivals then began at other Christian colleges, e.g., Lee, Belmont, Samford, Baylor, Cedarville, Regent, *et al.* It all was a reminder of *historic revivals* of yesteryears. As a Pentecostal professor at Lee said: "People are not sure what to call it", but, "people are rededicating their lives to Christ, there's deliverance from habits and some healings." There've been outbreaks, too, at Texas A&M and at Northern Kentucky University where, at one point, 15 people were baptized. Regent's professor, Jeff Grossman, observing a generational, sincere hunger, all "without showmanship", noted: "This current outpouring is like a Bar/Bat-Mitzvah for Gen Z. It is their coming-of-age party, where Jesus says to them, 'I see you. Welcome to the table.' It is like the party that the prodigal son's father threw for him upon his return."

None of 3 contestants on Jeopardy knew the missing word from the first line in the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, which art in heaven, _____ be thy name." (Matt 6:9) It's another example of basic *Christian illiteracy* in contemporary young America.

Now, Chick-fil-A is being attacked by the Right-wingers for following Jesus' Golden Rule to treat others as we want others to treat us. As this most popular restaurant chain for great chicken, and as a company founded by seriously devout Christians, the firm is committed, in the words of its DEI officer to, "doing better at *together*." But some in the Right-wing media don't like this turn of events. Actually, they should be spending more time with some serious Bible study than with their Far-Right media resources.

A third of California's 12 Roman Catholic dioceses have filed or are planning to file for bankruptcy as they face lawsuits filed by *survivors of sex abuse in childhood*. Over 3,000 lawsuits have been filed against the Roman Catholic Churches in California under a 2019 state law allowing alleged victims to sue up to the age of 40.

"History shows that once a denomination allows female pastors, it's usually just a matter of time until they affirm practicing homosexuals as pastors." So warns a Southern Baptist preacher in Virginia, about possible ordination of women as pastors in the SBC. He refers to 170 women serving SBC congregations under the title, "pastor", and he claims, with alarm: "This issue has been a canary in the coal mine for many denominations and maybe for ours if we do not stand with conviction and clarity."

How many people in the US identify on the LGBTQ spectrum? According to Gallup, in 2012, 3.5% identified somewhere on that LGBTQ range. By 2020, 5.6% so identified. In both 2021 and in 2022, those who so identify are at 7.1% of the American public. Meanwhile, Gallup reports that, while US support for *same-sex* relationships in 2022 was at 71%, in 2023, support for the *more complex LGBTQ spectrum* fell to 64%.

Campus Reform, a project of the conservative Leadership Institute, takes note of "Queerolonia", a history of anonymous gay sex at the University of North Carolina. Hosted by UNC, the exhibition featured an interactive map visitors can use to learn of the locations on and around campus where gays used to cruise and hook-up for sex in the homophobic 1940s and 1950s forward, into our much more tolerant times.

The USA Powerlifting organization must allow transwomen to compete against women who've been genetically female since before birth. The powerlifting group *mandates* inclusion of *transwomen, males at birth*, who want to compete against those who were born as *biological females*. In this *dictatorial ruling's own words of politically correct self-contradiction*:

"Cease and desist from all unfair discriminatory practices."

Meanwhile, a transgender athlete wins nine medals in events designated for *women*. Valentina Petrillo, a 49-year-old biological male from Italy, won the bronze medal in the women's Para Athletics World Championship 400m race in Paris. PC wins again.

The NY Times publicized a delusional conflation that twists anatomical anomalies in ancient Israel into today's woke endorsement for many "genders". The Gray Lady's headline: "Ancient Judaism Recognized a Range of Genders. It's Time We Did Too." This *Times* guest essayist, Elliot Kukla, offers, a "radical care", and *identifies* as "the first openly transgender rabbi to be ordained by a mainstream denomination", the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles. Kukla claims: "In my own tradition, Judaism, our most sacred texts reflect a multiplicity of gender." Alleging the "ancient Jewish world" saw a baby as a *boy, a girl, a tumtum, androgynos, aylonit and saris*. "There is not an exact equivalence between these ancient categories and modern gender identities. Some of these designations are based on biology, some on a person's role in society. But they show us that people who are more than binary have always been recognized by my religion. We are not a *fad*."

Hold on, says Jason Bedrick, a Heritage Foundation Research Fellow. *wjp* reminds us, in *The Jewish Syndicate*: "Judaism recognizes *two sexes, period*." Citing "Male and female, He created them", in Gen 1:27, Bedrick grants that Jewish law does recognize *anatomical and developmental aberrations* that are "physical traits that are not chosen." But, he says, Kukla *ignores* this *ancient Hebrew text* and, contrary to actual history, he refers to "the modern *binary world*".

Kukla and *The Times* both drew sharp criticism from Orthodox Jews. "*The New York Times* has taken a break from bashing Jews, to distort Judaism, to push a radical ideology. But anyone who has a basic knowledge of Jewish law knows that this is absolutely false." Bedrick *explains*: "The *tumtum, androgynos, aylonit, and saris* are not genders. 'Gender' was not even a concept in the Talmud separate from bio-

logical sex,” he added. “Once extra flesh is removed from the *tumtum*, the child’s sex is revealed, and the *androgynous* is a hermaphrodite or what today we would call ‘intersex.’ This is a very rare condition that is an aberration, but not a separate sex or gender itself,” as Bedrick explains. “An *aylonit* remains female, although her secondary sex characteristics do not develop, usually rendering her infertile.” He adds, “a *saris*, is a male who has been castrated (a eunuch) or who otherwise had his male sex organ physically damaged or not develop. Note that castration is against Jewish law.”

Not only do the four refer to *physical conditions*, rather than genders as understood today, but, he states, it is “ridiculous that *The New York Times* wants to use the Talmud’s recognition of sexual deformities to push transgenderism when the Torah itself very clearly forbids cross-dressing and castration (what’s today euphemistically called ‘gender-affirming surgery’).”

With his typical insight and wit, Ben Shapiro, conservative commentator, responds on Twitter, dismissively: “Hey, look, it’s the *New York Times* publishing a bunch of nonsensical garbage and pretending it’s actually reflective of Jewish law and philosophy! Nowhere does *halacha* humor the notion that a biological man can be a woman or that he should be treated as one.” Joel M. Petlin, Kiryas Joel School District superintendent, tweets: “It’s not enough for *The New York Times* to push a radical agenda. They also need to promote the false impression that Judaism supports it.”

Transgender “care”, so-called, is offered to toddlers at Duke Health, UNC Health, and ECU Health. They provide programs of “social transitioning treatment” for children as young as 2 years old. Yale’s Pediatric Gender Program, too, treats *toddlers*. Critics say that “pathologizing and medicalizing the normal behavior of toddlers is predatory and violates the tenets of ‘do no harm’.” These *well-informed* critics say that allegedly “gender-affirming care” is “a highway that you cannot get off of.” The tragically *irrational* “justifiable” *notion* is: “As soon as the child *thinks or pretends* that they might be a different sex, then that must be affirmed.” A critic wise-cracks: “Toddlers deserve at least an *honorary doc-*

torate for such an amazing self-diagnosis.”

More than 40% of the increase in push-back against LGBTQ legislation deals with allegedly “gender-affirming care” for youths who say they want to change gender. Given the *tragic history of regret* in such irreversible medical procedures, it is reasonable to postpone such far-reaching and consequential intervention until youthful patients have reached a more mature age. After all, each *wish* for change is always rooted in *mere fantasies* of what that change will be *like*.

There’s a proposed California state amendment that parents who don’t endorse their child’s choosing a gender transition could face removal of the child from the family’s home. A Democrat Assembly member with a transgender child helped write this *self-justifying* amendment. The bill makes no distinctions regarding the age of a child, how long a child has identified as transgender, or affirmation of social transition versus medical sex-change treatments. Moreover, the amendment fails to clarify what *not affirming* a child’s transitioning means exactly.

Annie Selak is addressing the Church of England’s consideration of language and pronouns that should be used to refer to God. She’s at Georgetown University in the Women’s Center, focused on gender equity as a Catholic Feminist theologian.

She refers to the current gender identity labels, claiming that, “historically, Christian tradition has recognized many pronouns for God, including ‘he/him’, ‘she/her’ and ‘they/them’.” She says, “This is partly because God does not have a gender.” She acknowledges that, even with the diverse images of God in the Bible and in Christian history, “male language and images predominate in contemporary Christian worship.”

Selak reasonably notes: “When we speak about God, we do so, knowing that what we say is incomplete. All images for God reveal something about God. No image of God is literal or reveals everything about God.” How could it be otherwise! Citing 13th-century Catholic theologian, Thomas Aquinas, she reminds us that what we may say about God may be true, but

it’s “always inadequate, always beyond what we can express.” That’s true, and well worth remembering. Being *in awe* of God surely allows for no *arrogantly comprehensive definitions of God*, on *our* part. The Bible is clear enough for all, on that.

Over 80,000 men claim they were abused as children by their Boy Scout leaders. Insurers argue that the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals must weigh in before the Boy Scouts move ahead with a settlement that “may become a template” for dealing with insurance on other cases of large numbers of plaintiffs. The Boy Scouts agree to contribute insurance rights up to \$4 billion to a settlement fund that will pay such claims. Those payments add to the \$2.46 billion put into the fund by the Boy Scouts, its two largest insurers, and organizations, e.g., churches that chartered Scouting.

There’s yet more evidence that Roman Catholicism’s requirement for unmarried priests is irrational and unbiblical. Luther was shocked and disgusted over what he witnessed of gross sexual activity in an early visit to The Vatican, five centuries ago.

Two decades after *The Boston Globe’s* revelations of priests’ sex abuse cases, state authorities in America continue to expose abuse *cover-ups* in Roman Catholic dioceses. Illinois’ Attorney General reports that more than 450 Catholic priests abused some 2,000 children in that state since 1950. Similar statistics are found in Pennsylvania and in Maryland, suggestive of what’s probably just as terribly typical all across America.

In homophobic eras, so many closeted young men were drawn to Roman Catholic vocations as a way to hide their same-sex attraction and to find others of same-sex attraction. The tragic outcomes of those eras of inadequate preparation and poor adjustment should now be lessons for learning more realistic ways of accepting one’s same-sex attraction without the temptations that have led so many others astray.

A Roman Catholic group in Colorado spent at least \$4 million to track priests by using gay “hookup apps” for gay bars and gay baths. Priests were reported to their bishops. The Catholic Laity and Clergy for Renewal

group *admits this* in a *Washington Post* *exposé* on how it paid for the data from Grindr, Scruff, Jack'd, OkCupid, etc. The CL&CR president confirms this in *First Things*, saying that he felt "blessed" by exposing these priests: "The purpose was simple: to love the Church and to help the Church to be holy, with every tool she could be given. When we learned legal ways to understand risks to the health of the Church beset by technology — including the use of hookup apps by clerics — we studied that. We learned some things. And we shared what we learned directly with bishops."

What has not yet been learned, so sadly and very apparently, is the foolishly *unbiblical* and *unreasonable* demand for *lifelong celibacy* for Roman Catholic priests.

Pope Francis is discussing the revision of the celibacy rule for Roman Catholic priests. Shockingly, he states: "There is no contradiction for a priest to marry. Celibacy in the Western Church is a *temporary* [?] prescription. I do not know if it is settled in one way or another, but it is *temporary* [?] in *this* sense." He stretches: "It is not *eternal* like priestly ordination, which is forever, whether you like it or not. Whether you leave or not is another matter, but it is forever. On the other hand, celibacy is a discipline." When journalist Daniel Hadad asks him if celibacy "could be reviewed," the Pope replied: "Yes, yes. In fact, everyone in the Eastern Church is married. Or those who want to. There they make a choice. Before ordination there is the choice to marry or to be celibate." The Pope explained there are married priests in the Catholic Church in the Eastern rites. He noted that, earlier that very day, he'd met with an Eastern Catholic priest who works in the Roman Curia and has a wife and a son. So much *doubletalk!*

"The asserted goals of DEI [Diversity / Equity / Inclusion] are positive: to promote the representation, participation, and fair treatment of historically marginalized groups", says the conservative *FrontPage* magazine's Adam Milstein. But, he notes, "in practice, DEI requires adherents to follow its tenets blindly, without any doubt or reservation, and has been deployed to advance radical agendas that

clearly undermine fundamental American values by promoting *equality of outcome* over *equality of opportunity*, *collective* identity (race, gender, etc.) over *individual* character, *censorship* of opposing viewpoints over *freedom of speech*, and a victim culture that crudely bifurcates society into *oppressors and oppressed*." Milstein refers his readers to *The Atlantic's* essay, "How Social Justice Became a New Religion" by Helen Lewis.

***Kids on the Street: Queer Kinship and Religion in San Francisco's Tenderloin*, was written by Joseph Plaster (Duke University Press). "Tenderloin" is a term referring to neighborhoods known for vice and immorality, dealing with "abandoned and run-away queer youth" trying to survive in such districts across the US. He examines a tragic history of "queer life that's been overshadowed by narratives of gay progress and pride."**

The Human Rights Campaign tallies and laments a record 520 "anti-LGBTQ bills" introduced in legislatures in 2023. However, these stats can be *misleading*, and so, *misinterpreted*, since more than 40% of *opposition* is concern over *transgenderism for minors* and not about the HRC's *original focus on helping gay men and lesbians*.

Over 125 bills have been brought against what these critics see as sadly *premature advocacy* for *irreversible surgical and hormonal interventions* misleadingly phrased as, "*gender-affirming care*" for *minors*. The tragic history of transgenderism, formerly known as Transsexualism, has left a trail of so many regrets and suicides for so many.

"Trans" tragedy was predicted many decades ago, given its start in *untested fantasy*, thus, *unscientific notions*, of sexologist John Money. His self-centered "solution" for a tragically botched circumcision of one twin brother's damaged penis was to *rear* him as a *girl*. Money's repeated pedophilic sexual abuse of both of these young twins was so very terribly *damaging* and both boys eventually committed suicide. This was how the *trans* movement *began* in Money's own, *ego-driven* and *sexually perverted* mind and in his own sexual abuse of these

twins. It all later morphed into today's "transgenderism".

Bud Light stock continues plummeting in the boycotts over Dylan Mulvaney's transgender publicity for this beer, as the summer began, the most popular time for drinking beer. Even some *gay bars* have quit serving Bud Light. So, rival brands' sales, e.g., Miller Lite, Coors Light, and Yuengling Lager, are now *all up*.

Target has also suffered the drop of *billions* in its market value as its *angry customers* criticize its "woke" Trans-Pride bathing suits for transgender kids' "tuck-friendly construction" or "extra crotch coverage". According to critics, the chain "certainly didn't handle this well, going in or trying to deal with it on the way out."

Taxpayer-funded National Public Radio blindly and foolishly claims that there's only "limited scientific evidence" that men have any athletic advantage over women in sports. In clumsy attempts at "correction", NPR added that there's, "limited research involving elite trans athletes in competition". But common-sense in the public awareness is recoiling at all of the irrational PC spin in the matter.

Words don't kill but words can get you canned. Steven Shaviro, a now suspended Wayne State University professor of English, culture and film, said: "I think it is far more admirable to *kill* a racist, homophobic or transphobic speaker than it is to *shout* them down." That's what he so stupidly said and it resulted in his *suspension* from WSU.

Here's a *less extreme*, even a *boringly lame*, sample of *PC posturing* on campus. A University of Cincinnati sophomore's project *proposal* was returned to her with her professor's comment and a grade of "0" out of a possible "20": "Olivia, this is a solid proposal. However, the terms 'biological women' are exclusionary and not allowed in this course as they further reinforce heteronormativity." But the University so wisely reprimanded this overly "politically correct" professor for attacking the student's *free speech rights*. The student heard from many other students from across the country

about their own having been censored in the same way.

Oprah Winfrey's spiritual healer, "John of God", is now sentenced to 99 years in prison for raping and abusing more than 600 women and young girls and running a baby trafficking scheme where newborns were sold to childless couples. Young girls, held captive on remote Brazilian "farms", were forced into pregnancies before being murdered after 10 years of birthing. One activist whose investigations led to the arrest of "John of God" said she spoke to women from Europe, the US and Australia who bought these Brazilian babies for as much as \$50,000 each. Among "John of God's" other celebrity fans were Bill Clinton, Shirley MacLaine and Naomi Campbell.

And Finally

***Touchstone*, a conservative Christian periodical, is subtitled, "A Journal of Mere Christianity".** "Mere Christianity" rings a bell with C. S. Lewis' readers and identifies *Touchstone's* editors as also fans of Lewis' work, attracting attention from others who appreciate what all Lewis gave to us.

Recently, in a promotional communication, *Touchstone's* executive editor, J. Douglas Johnson, noted "the erosion of institutional trust", giving *e.g.*, the Left's *New York Times* and the Right's *National Review*, rightly citing the *NYT's* counter-historical propaganda, "The 1619 Project", and less well citing *NR's* "support for the redefinition of marriage."

Johnson may be unaware of the disconnect between *his public admiration of Lewis and Lewis' lifelong support for folks of same-sex-orientation.* Lewis' Belfast neighbor and his *closest*

friend, from 1926 until 1963, when they both died, was his "first friend", as Lewis called him. He was Arthur Greeves, a devout Christian long *before* Lewis became a devout Christian. Arthur, a *lifelong invalid*, was *homosexual*. He and Lewis regularly visited in person and otherwise communicated with each other from their first meeting to the last few days of Lewis' life when Lewis wrote his final letter to his, "dear Arthur", expressing his *crushing grief* in realizing that, as they *both* were now shut-ins, they'd never again *be seeing one another, in-person, in this world.*

Lewis had befriended many homosexuals and, in 1957, he'd publicly advocated for *decriminalizing all private same-sex relationships.* And at the end of his life on earth, he entrusted all of his life's papers to another homosexual friend for historic preservation.