

Golden Calf Religion

“The gay-affirming ‘gospel’ is a toxic heresy that must be addressed in 2007.”

At the risk of sounding old-fashioned, prudish, out-of-touch, narrow-minded and judgmental—not to mention totally uncool—I want to go on the record as saying that I strongly disagree with Jay Bakker.

Some of you are asking yourselves, Who’s he?

You might remember him as Jamie Charles Bakker, the cute kid who made a few awkward appearances on his parents’ Christian talk show, The PTL Club, back in the 1980s. The son of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, Jay was one of the most tragic casualties of the PTL scandal that sent his father to prison. In Jay’s 2002 autobiography, *Son of a Preacher Man*, he tells how he struggled with alcohol and drugs after his parents lost their ministry.

Jay returned to the national spotlight in 1994 when he launched Revolution, a creative outreach to disenfranchised youth. With his goatee, multiple tattoos and prodigal testimony, he fit right in with the punk-rock crowd. He began to plant small churches in urban areas all over the country.

So far so good. I can get excited about winning punk rockers to Jesus—even if you use tattoos or loud music to reach them.

But somewhere along the way Jay’s message got muddled. In 2005 he was invited to speak at a conference hosted by Exodus International, a ministry that helps people leave the gay lifestyle. Just before the conference began, Jay was yanked

from the schedule because he would not sign a form that said he agreed with Exodus' theology and conservative values.

A while later Jay let the world know what he really believes. He told Radar magazine: "This sounds so churchy, but I felt like God spoke to my heart and said [homosexuality] is not a sin."

Before you expend all your breath gasping over Jay's questionable "revelation," consider that (1) he is quite popular among many twentysomething Christian leaders; and (2) he has gained considerable media attention in recent weeks because of a six-part documentary on his life, *One Punk Under God*, which began airing in December on the Sundance Channel.

In the TV documentary and in other interviews, Jay has made it clear that he embraces what he calls a "gay-affirming" gospel. He told Mother Jones magazine that he came to the conclusion that homosexuality is an acceptable lifestyle by "looking deeper in the Bible" and by visiting a gay-affirming church. He also admitted that one of his biggest ministry donors stopped supporting his work when he embraced this radical new theology.

I don't mean to pick on Jay. As a child he was the innocent victim of appalling religious hypocrisy. But he's a big boy now, 31 to be exact, and if he's going to be in the game with the adults he needs to play by the rules.

So I'm blowing the whistle. This is an official apostasy alert.

In case you haven't noticed, Jay is not the only voice in the

blogosphere claiming that God has changed His mind about homosexuality. The Episcopal Church voted to ordain a gay bishop in 2003. Many gay-affirming churches are sprouting up in Middle America—including some that claim to be Pentecostal. In fact, the founder of the largest gay denomination in the country, Troy Perry, was raised in the Church of God of Prophecy.

What Troy Perry, Jay Bakker and the Episcopalians are offering America is a new religion that guarantees no hell and requires no holiness. It is a limp, spineless Christianity that cannot confront sin for fear of being “judgmental.” It is an impotent gospel that tells people who wrestle with homosexuality that they might as well indulge.

It welcomes everyone with a polite “come as you are” mantra—but in the end is incapable of breaking the power of addiction or sexual dysfunction. It uses feel-good words such as “tolerance,” “acceptance” and “grace,” terms that sound hip and sexy in today’s permissive culture. It is a golden calf, shiny and seductive, forged by those whose goal is to invent a new morality.

This gay-affirming “gospel” is a toxic heresy that must be addressed boldly from our pulpits in 2007. I pray there is enough moral backbone left in the church to face this challenge.

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