

So Tinky Winky Is Gay? by Thom Saffold

Parents Alert: Is Jerry Falwell Gay?

IN THE “PARENTS ALERT” section of a recent Jerry Falwell publication, Tinky-Winky, one of the Teletubbies, has been outed as gay.

The shocking evidence: Tinky-Winky has a big inverted triangle on his head. The U.S. gay community often uses a triangle as a group symbol.

Tinky-Winky carries a magic bag. Gays are often stereotyped as carrying purses.

- Tinky-Winky is purple.

Which is sort of like pink. Not much, but sort of.

A professor in my Baptist seminary, Tom McDaniel, changed all that. He had a way of getting people to see what the Christian Bible REALLY is now said, rather than the distorted things most churches teach the Bible says. Through intensive study of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, I became an ardent feminist, and lost my homophobia, coming to believe fervently that homosexuality is no less a gift of God than heterosexuality.

McDaniel taught that “the Bible” is not a monolithic entity, but a collection of writings, and each part falls within one of four levels of truth. The first is God’s truth about humanity—for example that all people are equal and equally loved, and that we’re not supposed to harm each other. Second is God’s truth about Him/Herself, that God is love and lives in every person. The next level is the truth that many of the men who penned the Bible got it all wrong about God, and the final level contains their distortions about humanity.

People like Falwell base their religion on passages from levels three and four, sugercoated with words from levels one and two. This is how so-called Christians have justified all kinds of evil things, from slavery to genocide to killing people of other religions to burning women as witches to torturing and killing homosexuals. But such things are never, ever sanctioned by God.

The god of folks like Falwell is exclusivistic, damning and absolutely anal retentive about what HIS believers believe in. “If y’all don’t believe the right doctrines, hate queers, read the King James Version, and say the Lord’s Prayer with ‘trespasses’ instead of ‘debts,’” this Heavenly Father Frankenstein says, “Go straight to Hell. Do not pass Go. Do not collect \$200!”

Worshipping that kind of God has got to make Jerry feel pretty insecure about himself. With that kind of God, he’s got to constantly prove that he is good and worthy of salvation, and the only way to do that is to have people he can point to and say, “See, God, I’m not like those evil-doers over there!”

In my first parish in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, I helped form a Gay and Lesbian Union on the local U of W campus in 1978. Before that, folks were pretty closeted. A woman came to me in 1975 for help with what she described as “a really bad problem. I think she expected me to condemn her for being a lesbian, and it took her a long time to share her “dark secret,” but when she did, I remember blurting out, “Oh, is that all? You’re a lesbian. That’s not a problem!”

Coincidence? Jerry Falwell thinks not.

Then again, the gay community also uses the rainbow flag and the Greek letter Lambda as symbols, neither of which appear on the show. I live in West Hollywood and have never once seen a gay man with a purse, outside of the occasional drag queen in full Streisand mode. And as to purple, on Earth it’s more clearly associated with the British royal family, Welch’s grape juice, and the Minnesota Vikings, none of which is particularly gay, although if you put all three in a hot tub you’re halfway there

Thanks to an immediate national outpouring of derision and common sense, Falwell is now

But first, let’s back up. There are indeed good reasons to fear the Teletubbies. Homosexuality is not one of them.

In the Pre-fab Four’s weird little biome, no clear line exists between the natural and synthetic worlds. Both real and man-made plants abound. Even technology and living flesh are merged,

But, of course, she did have problems—with self-loathing, with knowing how to express her sexuality, with fears of being rejected by family members and God. After a couple of weeks, she brought a friend she suspected might have the same problems, and I met a couple of other like-minded women by chance. Working with all four individually, I realized that each felt that she was the only woman in the world who was a lesbian. To each I said, “Well, I know three other women you should meet,” and soon we formed a very therapeutic support group. In the months we met, I learned not only what it was like to be a lesbian in our culture, but a lot about being a woman in America, too.

That group was the genesis of the Gay and Lesbian Union. I also performed the first of twelve same-sex weddings for one of the women in the group.

That’s what we called it, anyway. We knew that a wedding of two people of the same gender was illegal, and that their union could not be legal, but it was a holy moment. The Lutheran campus pastor lent us his sanctuary, and the carefully planned ceremony was attended by about twenty people. Jerry Falwell wasn’t well known then, but his shadow hung over us. We felt like early Christians, whose worship also was illegal and forbidden, and, like them, our ceremony was filled with joy and a knowledge of God’s presence and approval.

Sometimes they are called “ceremonies of sacred union.” I still think of them as weddings, for in each case there was a commitment to unify two souls in a covenant, just as in the weddings I perform for men and women. One of the greatest examples of “Christian” hypocrisy is to condemn gays and lesbians as promiscuous, and then sanctimoniously deny them the opportunity to marry. Of course, given the divorce rate among heterosexual marriage partners, many self-respecting gays and lesbians reject calling their relationship “marriage”.



trying to distance himself from the article. Still, earlier this week, his spokesperson insisted that Falwell, who admittedly has never even seen the Teletubbies, was in full agreement with what his organization published.

Of course, you can take three or four isolated facts out of almost anything and use them to convince yourself of any point you’d like to make. As we’ll soon see.

with technology clearly the dominant force. When the pinwheel spins and a TV signal is broadcast, the Teletubbies are helpless to resist. All they can do is stop everything, lamely protest with a futile “uh-oh,” and watch passively as their own bodies respond to remote control.

Think about it. If George Orwell’s *1984* had included children’s TV, this is what it would have looked like.

Looking ahead, it’s hard to imagine the Teletubbies generation holding any intuitive qualms about things like human cloning and other genetic tinkering. And intentionally or not, an entire generation of children is being taught by example—before they’ve learned to speak, before they can even hold a single critical thought of their own—that domination from a monolithic media, controlled elsewhere by an insuperable power, is the natural order of things.

That’s hardly a democratic lesson. Not that Jerry Falwell thinks critically about such things.

No, Jerry Falwell says he’s a man of God. Which means, of course, that he thinks mostly about sex.

Not all the time, granted. When not obsessing about Monica Lewinsky and Paula Jones and Tinky Winky, Jerry Falwell occasionally finds time to point out that the anti-Christ is a Jew, rock music is full of backward

Most committed relationships between same-gendered couples strive for egalitarianism, and not the patriarchy that is still a part of “traditional marriage.”

I remember the wedding of Kris and Jeanne, in Syracuse, N.Y. Jeanne’s mother was the only parent who attended, the only one who hadn’t disowned them. Most mothers cry during weddings, but Jeanne’s mom wept buckets, and they were not joyful tears. After the ceremony, she took me aside and asked, “**At least tell me this. My daughter—she’s the male in the couple, isn’t she?**”

That query spoke volumes about where homophobia originates. It comes from patriarchy, male dominance, the “one up, one down” mentality of masculinist cultures. When people free themselves of it, homophobia vanishes, along with other forms of exploitation and violence.

One marriage I celebrated ended tragically. One of the women, Karla, had been raised in a Falwell-type church. She also worked as an organizer for a local “liberal” church. Someone there “outed” her to her parents and the congregation, and she quickly was eye-deep in shaming. She denied that she had a lover, let alone that she had wedded one, which hurt her partner deeply. In fact, Karla never went back to their apartment. Instead, she cut off all ties and went back to live with her folks. We heard she started dating a man at her parents’ insistence, and then that she was going to

Satanic messages, and, according to the “Clinton Chronicles” videotape this holy man has enthusiastically hawked, President Clinton may very well command a sinister death squad.

But mostly Jerry Falwell thinks about sex.

Tinky-Winky has a triangle on his head. That’s the secret symbol, see.

Right. The producers of the Teletubbies put a secret symbol *on top of the character’s head*. That’s how they’re keeping it secret.

Don’t anybody look at the character’s head, shhh, it’s a secret. That’s our secret hiding place: the top of the character’s head.

See, that’s how gays communicate secretly. Giant triangles.

Delta Airlines? Gay. The Kansas City Chiefs? Gay. The Play button on your CD? Gay. Fast Forward? Double gay.

But it’s a secret. Don’t anybody tell.

That way, only the really hip infants are gonna notice an eight-inch triangle on top of one character’s head.

Excuse me, but if Jerry Falwell and his evil minions are looking for sex in the Teletubbies, let me help out here: Dipsy’s the one with a *12-inch shaft* sprouting out the top of his skull. What in the hell are Falwell’s people looking at? See for yourself.

Dipsy is the John Holmes of children’s television.

It’s enough to give a guy a serious case of Antenna Envy.

get married. One day we learned that she took a gun, shoved it in her vagina, and pulled the trigger. The coroner estimated that it took many excruciating minutes for her to die from internal injuries.

Years later, I shared Karla’s story with a group of clergy. One overweight and pompous reverend with a pompadour (no, it wasn’t Jerry) shook his head vigorously and said that “her perversion” caused her to commit suicide. Fortunately, a friend of mine kept me from punching the guy into a bloody pulp. “If there’s a Judgment Day,” I said instead, through clenched teeth, “I’m pretty sure people like you are going to have to answer to a very pissed-off God for shaming her to death.”

Today it would be a lot easier for Karla. There is a lot more acceptance of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people than twenty years ago. Places like Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti are enacting laws recognizing gay and lesbian relationships for legal and insurance purposes, and parts of our society are seriously considering same-sex

And that’s not all. Check out little Po. Po’s head is adorned with... yes, a perfect circle.

Hmm. What could this mean? Twelve-inch shaft... perfect circle... OK, you tell me what’s happening on the other side of Teletubbie Hill.

Uh-oh, uh-oh, uh-oh, uh-oh, uh-oh, uh-oh, uh-ohhhhhhhhh...

In case you think I exaggerate: next time you’re in a video store, pick up a Teletubbies tape and look at the cover. On the very first one I picked up, Po has her legs spread open as wide as possible, like a Hustler centerfold, but smarter-looking.

Coincidence? Still, the character I really feel sorry for is the other one, Laa-Laa, who’s stuck with that weird yellow spiral coming out of his head. What the hell kind of painful apparatus is that to go carrying around? No wonder Po never goes near him.



Laa-Laa has either suffered a frightening impact to his spongy tissue, or that’s a giant spirochete on the top of his head. Either way, no Po-jobs for Laa-Laa.

So, taking Rev. Falwell at his word, the Teletubbies secret code seems to be: *Tinky-Winky....gay*

Dipsy.....guy

Po.....girl

Laa-Laa.....diseased,

possibly injured, asexual mutant

At least now when you catch your two-year-old reading a copy of *Blueboy*, you won’t have to wonder how it happened.

marriage. Early in February, for example, in New York State, a regional chapter of a major denomination voted overwhelmingly to affirm “the freedom of...its ministers to perform ceremonies of holy union between persons of the same gender.” However, it is still tough for most “differently gendered” folks, particularly young people. The forces of ignorance, patriarchy and greed still cause suffering and death. People of good conscience need to band together as never before and hold the light of truth and love against the darkness of the Falwellites.

Finally, just to demonstrate you can pull things out of context to make any case you want to:

It’s a fact that people who are unsure of their own sexuality often obsess about the sexuality of others, projecting outward their own innermost feelings. J. Edgar Hoover, for example, was certain everybody else in Washington had sexual habits worthy of blackmail precisely because of his own.

Clinical studies confirm that homophobes are often reacting to unresolved homoerotic feelings of their own (see sidebar).

So. Is Jerry Falwell’s interest in Tinky-Winky’s sexuality really just his way of trying to tell us something? Is Jerry Falwell secretly gay?

Consider the following...

Jerry Falwell’s books include:

- Church Aflame*
- Stepping Out On Faith*
- When It Hurts Too Much To Cry*

Jerry Falwell personally:

- has been voted three times as one of the 10 Most Admired Men in America—by *Good Housekeeping*
- tried to put Larry Flynt, one of the world’s leading heterosexual pornographers, out of business
- has never had sex with Jessica Hahn
- And anagramming the names of Falwell’s organizations, we find: LIBERTY CHRISTIAN ACADEMY** *Libertine days at rich YMCA*
- LYNCHBURG BAPTIST COLLEGE *Pat... clench... bugger... Still, boy!*
- TRINITY UNIVERSITY MAIN CAMPUS

I’m a sly pervert in a muni city bus

And according to his own website: Falwell is “regularly seen driving around the Liberty University campus in his Suburban truck... he is affectionately called “Jerry” by most of the students, many of whom he knows by name.” *Ewwwwww.*

Clearly (and taken just as misguidedly out of context), Jerry Falwell is at least as great a danger to children as Tinky-Winky.

Parents Alert! indeed.

As the tag-line of a recent e-mail I received puts it: “Remember Matt Shepherd and change this place.”

Does It Take One To Know One? It Helps ...

Why do we have difficulty dealing with friends, family, and even *fictional characters* whose preferences are never going to intersect with our own bedrooms anyway?

A recent study published in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology might have the answer.

In the study, participants filled out personality questionnaires before viewing a variety of erotic videos while wearing “genital strain gauges” to measure their arousal. (This is actually true, I swear. I think I went to the wrong college.)

Guess what? Turns out there’s a striking, direct correlation between homophobia and latent homoerotic impulses. **The very folks who revealed genuine fear or hostility toward gays on the written test were consistently more stimulated by gay images than heterosexual ones.** Apparently, the myth is true: homophobes really *do* have closets to explore, or at least a desk drawer or two.

The rest of us are letting their ignorance influence us, for whatever reason.

So perhaps we should cease talking about gays and lesbians “gaining” mainstream acceptance, as if co-existence is entirely their responsibility. Instead, let’s just begin thinking honestly and compassionately about our *own* motivations and phobias. I couldn’t have been the only guy in high school who pretended to laugh at gay-bashing jokes just so the vicious ones wouldn’t turn their venom on me.

From “Ellen Is Out: What Took Us So Long,” ©1997 Bob Harris

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