



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

Steve Jobs likes to rattle cages. His iPad, from Apple – introduced last month, but not for sale until next month - is generating buzz everywhere, as prognosticators try to imagine what the digital tablet will do to the world of publication. *Where will newspapers/magazines/books be in 10 years?*

Parade will be affected, somehow. Currently #1 in the magazine world - with 33 million copies and 73 million readers every week - it lands in driveways, stuffed into nearly 500 Sunday newspapers. Yesterday, Elton John stared from the cover of **Parade**, announcing his feature inside.

Sir Elton John (*originally Reginald Kenneth Dwight*) has been a pop music icon over four decades; his 250 million record/cd sales make him one of the most successful artists, ever. The focus of the interview was his philanthropy...

As is often done in the digital age, the article drove readers to the **Parade** website with the promise of



deeper details. In this case, Sir Elton's opinions about additional subjects - "religion" was headlined - awaited a web visit. Sitting at the airport, I was curious. What would John say about faith?

"I think Jesus was a compassionate, super-intelligent gay man who understood human problems. On the cross, he forgave people who crucified him. Jesus wanted us to be loving and forgiving. I don't know what makes people so cruel. Try being a gay woman in the Middle East - you're as good as dead."

In modern culture, being popular - in any branch of entertainment arts - raises the apparent value of your opinion, whether you're speaking into your field of expertise or not. Elton John's growing body of quoted wisdom is gathering under topical

headlines. In his “religion” section, his 2006 comment in Music Monthly continues to create angst: *“From my point of view I would ban religion completely, even though there are some wonderful things about it. I love the idea of the teachings of Jesus Christ and the beautiful stories about it, which I loved in Sunday school and I collected all the little stickers and put them in my book. But the reality is that organized religion doesn’t seem to work. It turns people into hateful lemmings and it’s not really compassionate...”*

I don’t know where little Reginald went to Sunday school, but his sticker book probably lacked citation from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. In that epic address, Jesus declared the religion (*Judaism*) that had emerged from God’s relationship with His people, the Jews, to be defunct. What had begun as a vibrant and vital relationship between the Creator and those He called “Chosen” had devolved into a system *controlled* by evil men and *inflicted* on the “Chosen.”

If Jesus had titled that message, I think He may have used this: **Religion Doesn’t Work**. That was His theme: if you trust a religion to save you, you’ve got no hope. Thank God He didn’t just dismiss religion, He offered the life-giving alternative: the

God who *made us* came to *save us*. In the world of “organized religions that turn people into hateful lemmings,” Jesus offered an organic relationship that turns people into compassionate and loving children of the Heavenly Father, through the redemption made possible through the Lord Jesus Christ (*the one described in the Scriptures, not the “super-intelligent gay man” imagined by Elton John*).

This morning, I prayed that Reginald Kenneth Dwight/Sir Elton John would come to realize that religions are all futile attempts created by lost mankind to reach God, but that God has taken the initiative through Jesus Christ to reach lost mankind. *Even Elton needs Jesus...*

Bob Shank

Bob Shank is Founder and Chief Mentoring Officer of The Master’s Program (TMP).

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