

POPULARITY AND PERSPECTIVE

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Not a few people have been bemused at the public reaction to the trial of Mr. Jackson of pop music fame. I am amazed that people get caught up in these things, though I know that it is because a popular (in some circles) celebrity is involved. There is, however, an underlying problem with spiritual implications.

Here is the problem expressed as a question: *What is important?* If we allow the popular culture to define what is or is not important we will be led down various garden paths continually. It is, for another instance, popular to criticize Christianity while criticism of Islam is “off-limits.” The popular media fails to mention that it is illegal for Christians (of any kind) to do mission work in many Islamic countries. That is correct: Many countries with Islamic governments do not allow for religious freedom. Yet this is not part of the emphasis in the popular press.

The point here is rather plain. Just because something is popular does not make it right. The passage that comes to mind is Matthew 7:13-14: *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”* Jesus said that basing one’s life on what is popular will not work. Just because millions are fixated on Mr. Jackson’s problems does not mean that his life is more important than those of one’s next-door neighbor. Just because millions believe in the religion of Islam does not make it correct, nor does it place that religion above examination.

An important dimension of the problem is this: We must not allow the popular media to determine what is important in our minds. Specifically, we must not allow the popular culture to tell us what to think about religion. On the one hand, the truth is that Mr. Jackson’s is gnat, historically. And on the other hand, the prohibition of religious freedom in a large part of the world is more significant than the supposed mistreatment of a copy of the Koran.

Human beings need to use their intelligence to filter out all the trash that comes down the pike purporting to be truth. This we can do if we allow our minds to be trained by the principles revealed in the Bible. It is always better to be correctly informed than to be popular.