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Elton John, John Lennon, and Jesus

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The late John Lennon, basking in the glow of fame, once remarked of the Beatles —“We’re more popular than Jesus now.” In more recent days, pop star Elton John gave an interview to a gay-themed magazine related to *The Observer* [London]. Perhaps Sir Elton is picking up where John Lennon left off.

In the course of the interview, the singer called for religion to be abolished. Note this section of the interview [transcript](#) [Warning: The interview includes obscene language and content.]:

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 organised religion doesn't seem to work. It turns people into hateful lemmings and it's not really compassionate.

That’s a pretty straightforward statement. Sir Elton would simply ban all religion. It was a response to an interview question, of course. He offered no suggested public policy or means of enforcing the ban. The statement is merely revealing. Nevertheless, it was widely reported in the international press.

I found another section of the interview similarly revealing. Popular culture exerts a massive influence on society, no doubt. But do pop artists have an inflated concept of their own importance? Consider this paragraph from the Elton John interview:

We are all God's people; we have to get along and the [religious leaders] have to lead the way. If they don't do it, who else is going to do it? They're not going to do it and it's left to musicians or to someone else to deal with it. It's like the peace movement in the Sixties - musicians got through [to people] by getting out there and doing peace concerts but we don't seem to do them any more. We seem to be doing fundraisers for Africa and everything like that but I think peace is really important. If John Lennon were alive today he'd be leading it with a vengeance.

This paragraph points to the fact that many celebrities really believe that their art is the driving engine of social change. Need a movement for world peace? “If John Lennon were alive today he’d be leading it with a vengeance.” Well, maybe. After all, he did think the Beatles were more popular than Jesus.

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