

Stephen Strang: There's No Canceling Your Destiny

In my book *God and Cancel Culture*, I tell about how my grandparents faced “cancellation” 100 years ago as pioneers in the Pentecostal movement. Pentecostals were a small, much-despised subset of evangelicals known for speaking in tongues and believing in the Holy Spirit gifts of prophecy, healing, and more. Mainstream Christians shunned these “holy rollers,” excluding them from participation in church associations, magazines, and evangelistic events. The movement was treated as an oddity and embarrassment by “respectable” Christians.

Then something surprising happened: Pentecostalism—which includes “charismatics,” Spirit-filled Christians and others of similar practice and theology—grew astonishingly fast. Today, Pentecostals of all stripes number almost 700 million worldwide, while the once-dominant evangelicals number around 386 million. From a handful of people in 1906, Pentecostals now account for more than 25% of all Christians on the planet—second only to the Catholic Church.

Pentecostalism wasn't canceled. Rather, it is arguably the most successful movement of any kind in the last century.

Clearly, you can't stop the tides of history—and neither can you “cancel” people's personal destinies. I learned this for myself as a young journalist working for the *Orlando Sentinel*.

Canceled in Journalism

I came to my first “real” job with a lot of ambition and a fresh journalism degree from the University of Florida in 1973. I excelled early on and had every reason to anticipate a successful newspaper career—but then, the newsroom learned I was a Christian. Worse yet, I was a Pentecostal Christian. In their eyes, that meant I was just plain weird, or had some

“religious” agenda that compromised my journalistic integrity.

Over the months, I observed that I was quietly kept outside the power centers at that publication. My bosses and colleagues were professional to me, and curious in a limited way, but it was clear I probably would never ascend to a position of leadership within that publication, or perhaps within the field of journalism. My skills as a reporter seemed overshadowed by my personal beliefs, in their eyes. They went out drinking after work; I wasn't invited because I didn't drink.

Detecting my own “glass ceiling,” I left that job and pursued a different path. I founded a magazine which for nearly 50 years has reported journalistically on the charismatic/Pentecostal world—with an audience of millions. Today, my company also owns one of the largest publishing houses aimed at this branch of Christianity. I daresay my influence on the world has been much larger than if I had stayed in “mainstream” journalism. The Orlando newspaper's quiet “cancellation” of me was actually a blessing in disguise. Instead of a few hundred thousand who might see an article I wrote about local news, by God's grace I've been able to impact millions writing about His kingdom over the past four decades.

The lesson seems clear: Attempts to cancel a person or a movement often cause greater growth. Little did my grandparents know while fighting for souls—and fighting for acceptance from fellow Christians—that their movement would one day dwarf that of the “cancelers.”

That, to me, is the genius of America—at least until recently: This is a place where nobody gets canceled. We all get to say our piece. Our Founding Fathers created room for that. The First Amendment is first for a reason. This has allowed cultural movements, spiritual awakenings, historical shifts and new views of all kinds to gain a full hearing. It has

produced the most vibrant and prosperous nation in history—because we listen to each other.

What “cancelers” seem to forget is that cancellation never works, because nobody can control everybody’s minds or direct the forces of history. Even more dangerous is that “cancelers” usually get swept away and overcome by the very movements and people they try to control.

I’ve seen it happen in my own lifetime—the collapse of the Soviet Union comes to mind—and it will surely happen again, maybe sooner than anyone thinks, if the tides of history continue to flow swiftly.

Destinies, of people and nations, are just too powerful for anyone to suppress for long. {eo}

 **Stephen E. Strang** is the bestselling author of *God and Donald Trump*. The founder and CEO of Charisma Media, Strang was voted by Time magazine as one of the 25 most influential evangelicals in America. He has interviewed four U.S. presidents and has been featured on Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, CBN, Dr. James Dobson’s Family Talk and , and in many Christian outlets. Strang’s latest book, *God and Cancel Culture* was released on Sept. 7, 2021.

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.