

Why ‘Cancel Culture’ Can’t Cancel the Bible

It seems no one these days is immune from being canceled. The names George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are being removed from school buildings. J.K. Rowling, creator of the Harry Potter series, has been canceled because she criticized the transgender movement. Even talk show host Ellen DeGeneres has been attacked online because of reports that she mistreats her employees.

I’m not sure what was worse about 2020—the COVID-19 pandemic or the intolerance of “cancel culture” that erupted in the past 12 months.

Naturally, Christians are worried that rights to freedom of speech and religion will soon be taken away in this hostile environment. What if Twitter, Facebook and YouTube ban Christian content on their platforms? What if Google eliminates access to Christian websites? Could America become like China, where government agents arrest pastors for openly preaching the gospel?

I’m not a doom and gloom guy. I believe the majority of politicians in this country still believe in liberty. Besides, there aren’t enough prison cells in this country to hold all the sincere Christians who are willing to go to jail for their faith. But even if there was a movement to stamp out Christianity in the United States, it wouldn’t work.

Why do I say that with confidence? I have read history. In spite of all the violent efforts to squelch religious faith over the centuries, the gospel has continued to spread. Consider the authors of the New Testament, who first introduced the truth about Jesus:

– Matthew was killed with a spear while preaching in Ethiopia,

around 60 A.D.

- Mark was killed by a mob in Alexandria, Egypt. Tradition says they tied a rope around his neck and dragged him through the streets until his body was unrecognizable.
- Luke, the beloved Gentile who traveled with the apostle Paul, was supposedly hanged from an olive tree in central Greece.
- John was banished to the Isle of Patmos, off the coast of Turkey. He was “canceled,” yet he was able to write while imprisoned.
- Paul was probably beheaded in 67 A.D. by Nero.
- Peter was supposedly killed in Rome under the rule of Nero. Tradition says he was crucified upside down.
- James, the brother of Jesus and author of the epistle of James, suffered martyrdom at the hands of his Jewish enemies. The historian Josephus says James was stoned, while another early Christian historian, Hegesippus, says he was thrown from a tower.
- Jude, another brother of Jesus who wrote the short epistle of Jude, suffered a martyr’s death. Some say he was crucified; others say he was clubbed to death and then sawn in half.

All the authors of the New Testament were “canceled.” Yet that imperishable seed that fell to the ground and died sprang to life again. Consider also the Old Testament prophets. Jewish tradition says Isaiah was sawn in half, while Jeremiah was stoned to death in Egypt. Ezekiel, Micah and Amos were also martyred.

Besides these authors of the Bible, consider those brave saints who translated and distributed the Bible in the early days.

John Wycliffe was branded a heretic by the Catholic Church because he wanted to make the Bible accessible to everyone. He was a thorn in the side to the corrupt bishops and priests he criticized. Several years after his death in 1384, his writings were banned and his corpse was exhumed and burned. But he became the forerunner of the Protestant Reformation, and his ideas spread throughout Europe.

William Tyndale was arrested for heresy in 1536 because he translated the Bible into English. He was tied to a stake and strangled to death, and then his body was burned. But the contraband Bible he published became the source of the King James Version of the Bible that later was distributed all over England.

Even in the 1980s, Bibles had to be smuggled into Soviet countries because communists had “canceled” Christianity. Today, owning your own Bible in Saudi Arabia can land you in prison. The same is true in North Korea, Yemen, Afghanistan and Iran. At least 50 countries in the world severely limit access to the Bible today.

In China, where many churches are still persecuted and Bibles sometimes confiscated, copies of the Scriptures are mass-produced by the Amity Printing Company there. In 2018, 80 million Bibles had been printed for Chinese churches, plus 100 million for overseas Christians. China actually produces one copy of the Bible every second!

In spite of all the confiscations, raids, book burnings, crackdowns and cancellations of Christianity, the Bible is the bestselling book of all time—with more than 5 billion copies published in more than 2,000 languages. No matter how evil men attempt to cancel the gospel, the apostle Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 2:9b (NLT) are still true: “But the word of God cannot be chained.” {eoa}

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