

## **CANCEL CULTURE**

It has long been recognized that people think and behave differently when they become part of a mob.

They tend to put aside their power of reason, the control of their emotions—even their moral principles—and subscribe to “mob purposes”—a willingness go wherever the mob is going.

A perfect example of the mob instinct taking over an entire country was Germany during reign of the Nazis.

Germany is a beautiful country with beautiful cities and friendly people—hard-working people who are known for their willingness to persevere under harsh circumstances.

People who have produced some of the greatest art, philosophy and literature in history.

So it seems incomprehensible that this kind of a country with this kind of people could have succumbed to the evil leadership of a man like Adolf Hitler.

Some people think of Hitler as a madman but he was far from insane.

He was actually a genius—an evil genius to be sure but nonetheless a genius—who managed to transform the people of Germany into an angry mob which was willing to follow him wherever he led them.

Hitler had three stated goals.

- 1) To expand Germany through the violent invasion and subjugation of other nations.
- 2) To utterly destroy anything and anyone who stood in his way.
- 3) To murder all the Jews in every country he controlled.

To this day when people are shown videos of the death camps where this mass murder was carried out they typically say, “How could any human being do these things to another human being?”

The answer is that they can do these things because they are not thinking or acting as individuals, but as a mob.

And a mob has a mind of its own.

And once a mob has people under its control it will not tolerate dissent within its ranks but will act quickly and viciously to suppress it.

Once the Nazis were in power they made it clear that opposition to them would not be tolerated.

Anyone who spoke publicly against them would go to prison or worse.

Driven by a mob mentality and streamlined by the elimination of opposition Germany became a juggernaut and quickly achieved Hitler’s goals.

1. Within a few years it dominated continental Europe.
2. It effectively silenced all protest—not only in Germany but in the nations it conquered.
3. It murdered six million Jews.

These mob characteristics—the abandonment of personal morality, the rejection of rational dialogue and the persecution of opposition—is the subject of a book by Eric Metaxas about a phenomenon which he calls “cancel cultures.”

Cancel cultures are cultures which try to cancel out anything or anyone who refuses to subscribe to their cause.

Germany under the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich was a textbook example of a cancel culture, but there have been others in history as well.

The patriots who gave birth to the French Revolution in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century quickly coalesced into a cancel culture.

Their slogan was “liberty, equality and fraternity.”

In the years of 1792-1793 their pursuit of liberty, equality and fraternity took the form of a Parisian mob which beheaded between 15,000 and 17,000 people on the guillotine.

Victims included the king and his nobles, land barons, priests, nuns and even some of the early leaders of the Revolution who were considered not fervent enough in their revolutionary zeal.

The vast majority, however, were commoners who barely knew what the Revolution was even about.

Then there were the leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1918 Russia, whose forced collectivising of farms in the Ukraine by Joseph Stalin resulted in 3.9 million deaths.

A modern example is the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the 1960's when China's dictator-leader Mao Tse Tung's stated goal was to eliminate the family unit as the basic structural unit of society and replace it with the power and authority of the state.

Family members—including children—were encouraged to “turn their parents in” if they heard them criticizing “the state.”

The spirit which animates these cancel cultures is demonic and almost always regards religion as its enemy.

For Hitler it was the Jews.

For the Bolsheviks it was the church.

Between 1918 and 1942 Stalin shuttered, closed down and demolished churches, synagogues and mosques all over Russia in an effort to stamp out religion which he regarded as an enemy of the state.

As his rationale he cited the words of the architect of communism—Karl Marx—who described religion as “the opiate of the people” and said “Where atheism prevails, communism begins.”

Mao Tse Tung said “Religion is poison and a hindrance to the state.”

Diderot, one of the champions and idols of the French Revolution, said that “Men will not be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest.”

This is how cancel culture works.

It refuses to engage in a reasonable dialogue with people who hold contrary opinions and attacks the people themselves

Mob-like, it drowns out those who oppose it.

There is an ancient name for this kind of argumentation.

It was coined by the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who first defined the science of logic.

He called it “ad hominem” argumentation which instead of debating issues logically with opponents it attacked them personally.

Aristotle considered it one of the worst offenses against logic.

And now the practice of cancel culture has come to our country.

And how quickly it has come!

I went back and looked at the texts of the televised Kennedy/Nixon debates in 1960.

The entire focus of the debates was on political issues: there was not a hint of personal attacks or character assassination.

Conversely, in the current world of politics there is virtually nothing BUT character assassination.

But it is in the sphere of religion that the cancel culture shows its fangs most vividly.

A good example is the mob protests against Israel and the persecution of Jewish students on Ivy League campuses.

Just this last week three deans at Columbia University had to resign for antisemitism.

A member of the U.S. House of Representatives publicly referred to the Israelis as terrorists and their Prime Minister as a “war criminal.”

As we know, the persecution of Jews is nothing new, but what you may or may not realize is that their main target is Bible based Christianity.

A good example of is the case of the popular actor and evangelical Christian, Kirk Cameron.

In 2012 Cameron appeared on the Piers Morgan’s CNN program where he spoke of the Biblical teaching that marriage should be between a man and a woman and that active homosexuality was detrimental to those who practiced it.

The cancel culturists decided that what he said was “hateful” and “bigoted” and a group of his Hollywood celebrities turned on him, one of them calling him “an accomplice to murder.”

To cite the Bible as a basis of one’s religious or political beliefs nowadays is to invite ridicule and defamation from the cancel culture.

If you doubt that try referring to the Bible publicly as the basis for your religious scruples.

Try saying that God hates divorce and that for a man and woman to live together outside of marriage is the sin of fornication.

Try saying that transgenderism violates the words God speaks in the Scriptures: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”

Or that God considers a child in his mother’s womb to be a living human being to whom he says, “Before you were formed I called you by name” and “I knit you together in your mother’s womb.”

Or that the Bible in both Testaments calls the practice of homosexual relations a sin and an abomination.

You will soon find out what the cancel culture thinks of Biblical Christianity.

It is so tempting to just leave these issues alone and not speak up about them—which is exactly what the control culture wants you to do.

We can so easily fall into the category of those people described by the Irish poet William Butler Yeats whom he called “...the best [who] lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity.”

We must keep in mind the words of our Savior who said, “He who is ashamed of me I will be ashamed of when he appears before my Father.”

A man by the name of Martin Niemoller was arrested by the Nazis and spent eight years in concentration camps.

Toward the end of the war he managed to escape and so lived to tell the tale of what he had experienced.

In 1947 he wrote this famous poem:

*“First they came for the Communists and I did not speak out—because I was not a Communist.*

*Then they came for the Socialists and I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist.*

*Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.*

*Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.*

*Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.”*

Mobs don't always take the form of a violent group of people marching down the street breaking windows and shouting slogans.

They can also take the form of people who subscribe to a particular cultural or intellectual trend which they hold to be superior to all other ways of thinking.

The Germans have a word for such “trends”: they call them “zeitgeists”—a word which means “the spirit of the times,”

In modern jargon, we might refer to a zeitgeist as “whatever is cool at a particular time.”

Someone once said that what people are inclined to believe and regard as truth has less to do with logic or evidence and more to do with what the majority of other people think.

The way Jesus put it was that we care more about what other people think of us than about what God thinks of us.

When the zeitgeist of a cancel culture is hostility toward Biblical Christianity it has great power to silence Christian witness to the truth of God’s Word.

I hope and pray that we Christians will not let that happen in America.

