

# Book Review

Joe Dallas, *Christians in a Cancel Culture: Speaking with Truth and Grace in a Hostile World* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2021), 208 pp. \$15.99 Perfectbound

Reviewed by Nils I. Borquist

THE UNITED STATES OF 2026 APPEARS TO BE a country overwhelmingly focused on absolute conformity in political perspectives. From the perspective of those leading major state institutions, including universities and governmental offices, perspectives on abortion, affirmative action, or border policies must align with the dominant liberal stance. In this environment, the Christian perspective has been substantially silenced with the apparent ultimate goal of outright cancellation. Joe Dallas, in *Christians in a Cancel Culture*, attempts to outline a Christian response to such restrictions, as well as the potential repercussions should Christians allow themselves to be excluded from political and social dynamics.

The push to silence the Christian voice from involvement in prominent social and political issues has grown markedly over the past two decades. As such, Christians who may be inclined to comply with this demand may be unaware of the potential losses in their American way of life, most notably, as Dallas points out, the forgoing of free speech as well as the inclusion of protestation against violations thereof. Additionally, if large enough groups of Christians stay silent, and thus refuse to project their voices and protect their rights, they inadvertently participate in accelerating anti-Christian rhetoric and even direct discrimination. Dallas proposes that Christians, in contesting the Cancel Culture driven by the cynical woke crowd, individually and collectively decide to increase the public display of their faith, thereby promoting the views of millions who desire to follow Christ's lead in cultivating a community of trust, truth, and biblical authority via the Word of the Lord because "it is alive," "it is relevant," and "it is potent" in the pursuit of one nation under God (17).

Two of the most prominent industries presently clamping down on the voices of Christians are media groups, including social media sites, and higher education institutions. Media bias away from Christianity has existed for several decades but has gained momentum recently with the decidedly prevalent rise in "wokism" and a "far-left" mentality within media commentators and broadcasters. Not only does the majority of the media silence and/or denounce Christian views, but it often belittles

the Christian perspective and proclaims the backwardness or harmful effects of believing in God and biblical teachings. Dallas notes that a common media narrative portrays the Christian view as not only wrong and idiotic but also “dangerous and repugnant,” and therefore worthy of punishment, silencing, and cancellation (21). The hesitation Christians feel about speaking out, though, appears warranted due to concerns over “the wrath of man” or “the fear of man” (23). In either case, the Christian is intimidated into staying quiet, to avoid any public confrontation or offending others with his views. Similarly, the Christian college student or faculty member accepts the reality that his beliefs are better kept locked away, since admitting faith in God or defending the Word may mean being targeted for ridicule or even shunning. While this trepidation stems from legitimate concerns about one’s well-being and status, Dallas recommends that the Christian exercise the rights of free speech and self-defense. Specifically, he directs the Christian to be nice but also to stand his ground so he does not get run over. One may present perspectives respectfully and even kindly while retaining strength, truth, and goodness; in fact, Dallas writes that such presentations are “biblical” and display a “human” aspect that shows consideration for the other (27). Above all else, the Christian should pursue the truth that is God’s Word and be willing to share it.

When considering the progression of the Cancel Culture protestations, especially as they relate to Christianity, Dallas discusses the movement’s early stages, showing that the original iteration began as a search for greater tolerance for people and their beliefs or attributes that varied from the societal norm. However, the present version has shifted “pleas of tolerance” to “demands for uniformity,” resulting in “celebrations of diversity” that “have become declarations of war against anything deemed bigoted or hateful,” including Christianity and the biblical history and teachings (35). In a sense, a revolutionary way of thinking has erupted, as Dallas states, yet he further declares that rather than the movement mimicking the usual aspects of a politically necessary resistance, which “usually have centralized leadership and definable goals,” Cancel Culture activities more mirror the effects of a virus with their spreading and infectious nature (37). The year 2020, in particular, witnessed tremendous growth amid the George Floyd events and the COVID-19 pandemic. As national fear and suspicion rose, the push for absolute conformity, including adopting the ideas that racial cohesiveness is deteriorating, that trans ideology be accepted, and that anti-Semitic perspectives are reasonable, grew in turn, bringing with it anarchistic riots, an upheaval in social media biases, and the censoring of anyone turning to God for relief and answers. Dallas quite accurately describing the frightening overarching perspective, writes, “a running theme you’ll hear from universities, activist groups such as Antifa and Black Lives Matter, and folks who are ‘woke,’ is that there’s no room for ‘agreeing to disagree’ over the views they’ve decided are unacceptable. The new views are the only legitimate ones” (44-45).

Fortunately, there is a way for Christians to continue standing up to the accusations of thought crimes and free speech infringements: do not cave to the threats, and, instead, lean on the Word of God for the strength to stand up for what is right.

An atrocious side effect of Cancel Culture's attack on Christians appears as what Dallas refers to as "starring," or "a derivative of the 'misrepresent, then mistreat' tactic" used to harm the reputation of Jesus two millennia ago and reproduced to damage contemporary Christians' lives as well (51). Today's accusations against Christians often center on claims of hatred toward transsexual individuals and of defending racist undertakings, such as slavery. What has emerged echoes centuries of persecution that began with the Hebrews and continues to the present. Amid misrepresentations or outright lies, hurled by people participating as woke vigilantes at Christians, a surge in labeling Christians as evil and selfish reprobates becomes acceptable and normal. What often follows verbal attacks, is a rise in physical attacks and threats. As Dallas declares, "Convince the public someone is evil, and the public will offer little resistance when you malign, then limit, then assault that someone" (54). To counter such methods, Christians must remember to bear the delusional reproaches coming from others in this world because of the rewards that shall come in the next. Dallas reminds Christians to trust in God, study and learn the words of the Bible, and prepare themselves for spiritual and verbal warfare against heretics.

The following five chapters provide explicit examples of the hostility directed toward Christians, with Dallas presenting three specific elements that fully contribute to the power of Cancel Culture: "convenience, conscience, and conviction" (62). Convenience refers to avoiding the truth and instead relying on the repeated perpetuation of damaging lies intended to defame. Conscience pertains to actually disengaging from the guilt that comes with participating in harmful hate speech aimed at Christians who profess only to caring for neighbors and desiring the pursuit of truth and goodness. Conviction applies to the woke who double down on the premise that Christians solely aim to assume power and spread their own false versions of reality to the more educated masses. From these three aspects, contemporary society must contend with perspectives that wholly defend abortion, homosexual relationships, accusations of innate racism in white people only, and the rights of transsexuals. Such a turn in moral and even ethical norms has prompted an urgency in the need for salvation and a call to mindfully avoid the so-called progressive Christianity that assists woke movements in infiltrating the minds and hearts of young adults and children.

Using the words of Elie Wiesel, who said, "we must always take sides" because "neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim," Dallas ultimately proclaims that choosing a side and taking a stand is the only way to defend the Christian way of life. By standing on the sidelines and refusing to play in this most serious of games,

Christians essentially condone the harmful tactics of Cancel Culture. Rather than avoiding the confrontation that has become, quite simply, unavoidable, Christians must rely on the truth and live it at all times in order to reform the church and bring it back to the position that guides society's moral standards. By taking a stand for God and His Word, Christians give themselves the best opportunity to enlighten those in darkness, to revive the church's faltering perceptions, and to reconnect citizens around a common goal of loving the neighbor and pursuing the truth that is God's promise of glory.

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