



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

An article worth considering

I hardly need say that I am not a 'fan' of the general run of Mr Alex Kane's articles. Mr Kane is an atheist. Nevertheless there is an awful lot of common sense in what he says in the article which follows. It is from today's 'Belfast Newsletter'.

I am not a 'fan' of Balaam the false prophet but I wholehearted agree with him when he is reported by the Holy Ghost as saying:

"How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Numbers 23:8-10.

I am surely not wrong in finding common ground on this matter with Balaam.

Paul said something similar when he found in the words of a heathen prophet (Epimenides by name, I understand) that with which he agreed and went on to quote: "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true," Titus 1:12-13.

There are many 'true' things said by those who might otherwise disagree with the Word of God. It is to be acknowledged when the truth is thus spoken, irrespective of the source.

I commend therefore the generality of the article to you for your consideration.

Yes, restrictions are inconvenient but are a necessary price to pay

Those rattling on about lost freedoms across the UK should try upping sticks and relocating to North Korea.

By Alex Kane

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The primary task of any government (a task taken more seriously in democracies) is the protection and welfare of its citizens. In fulfilling that task governments are constantly making decisions which millions of those citizens reckon undermine or remove one freedom or another. Think of the smokers who campaigned against legislation to prevent them lighting up in pubs, restaurants, offices and other public spaces.

It didn't matter that the government was acting in their best interests, or the interests of non-smokers. Millions of them still believed a freedom was being removed from them. I'm old enough to remember the freedom-removing complaints from people about the compulsory wearing of seatbelts (some argued it made them more likely to end up with worse injuries); and the complaints about drink-driving legislation ("I don't need a government to tell me when I'm not fit to drive").

People complain about legislation governing alcohol consumption and eating habits leading to obesity: libertarians insisting governments have no right to tell people what to eat and drink. Others say abortion legislation removes the rights and freedoms of the unborn child. Hardly a day passes without some blog or lobby group complaining about legislation removing their freedom to say and think what they like: "It won't be long until you can't say anything at all in case you offend someone."

But, as I say, I'm old enough to remember when it was considered acceptable to discriminate (and openly, too) against people on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, nationality, disability or even social status. Looking back, how many of us could really object to the loss of the 'freedom' to discriminate against millions of our fellow citizens?



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It's the responsibility of a democratic government to act in the best interests of its citizens, even if not all the citizens see it that way. It's why we have elections (the freedom to vote, universal suffrage, was a long, hard-fought-for freedom, with many key political/societal voices raised against it), allowing citizens affected by the change to have their voices heard.

A crisis, usually in the form of a war or natural catastrophe, places enormous pressure on a government: often requiring it to act in a way in which it would rather not act. When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939 the British government – without an election, or referendum, and knowing the enormous sacrifices which would be required of their citizens – declared war. That decision was made on the basis that British citizens would be much worse affected, and for longer, if Hitler was allowed to continue with his ultimate strategy.

On September 1, the day Germany invaded Poland, the government took the decision to begin the evacuation of 1.5 million citizens (children, mothers with infants and the infirm) from British towns and cities, likely to be bombing targets, for as long as the war lasted. The government also introduced and imposed a raft of regulations (including curfews when necessary) which would have a significant impact on every citizen.

It's what governments do in a crisis: even when it means that some freedoms usually taken for granted have to be waived for a while. That's what happening right now across the UK as lockdowns and assorted restrictions are imposed to bring Covid-19 under control. Now, I do accept that it looks like an overreaction in terms of the numbers dying from the virus (at the time of writing it is 66,541 – not all of which had Covid as the primary cause of death); but the government reaction seems more necessary when we look at the figures for those who had or presently have the virus – 1,977,167 cases since March; many requiring hospital treatment.

A new variant of the virus has emerged over the past couple of weeks (it's what happens with viruses) and this variant seems to be 70% more transmissible. In other words, more people become infected more quickly. And if those numbers include millions of working people it raises the possibility of a huge swathe of the workforce (even those supposed to be working from home) not being fit to work. And let's not forget all of the people who wouldn't, in turn, be able to go to shops, gyms, cinemas, leisure centres et al, even if they were open.

That's the problem the government has always faced. And it's a problem which is magnified when the transmission rates with a new variant (and we must assume it won't be the only variant: one of which may be much more brutal and vaccine-resistant) begin to sky-rocket. So it does make sense to do everything we can to significantly slow the transmission rate, particularly at a moment when we seem to be on the cusp of rolling out a vaccine: which can only work properly when used on people who don't yet have the virus.

I don't like the restrictions I've had to deal with since March. They are an inconvenience and have prevented some of the work I'd usually do. But I don't view them as an assault on my freedom, or the undermining of my citizenship. It's not fun, but, on balance, seems to me more sensible than any of the alternatives.

And on that note, let me wish you all a happy, healthy and safe Christmas.