



When you are right and you know it...

Am I that illiberal?

You know, I can understand that my own opinions might appear reactionary and that people may wish to ferociously argue with me — perhaps even during the course of the argument slip in the odd “bigoted” and make very plain their utter disgust, if they were an Uber driver I would not be riding with them — however, and this is the real rub for me, at least we can engage in an argument and actually learn from one another. I had a [great experience](#) on Medium of just that.

Another example is that of a controversial writer who has written a [book](#), not a particularly well-executed one, but where their central assertion in the introduction was that it was *the argument* that most clearly identified Western civilisation. It was by laying out the arguments of your opponents clearly and then demonstrating their weaknesses and fallacies that you

established the soundness of your own contrary position. In the very early days of my part-time PhD studies (just a couple of years ago but seems like a lifetime) I was talking to my supervisor (who is actually 20 years my junior) about this and he was even more cynical and despairing about the modern “online” discourse — it simply allows one to shout their own position very loudly and he/she/they with the most hits wins, there is no argument at all — at least in the Socratic sense, we are right because we “feel” it to be so and who are you to say otherwise?

According to Plato, Socrates refused to write anything down because it was so easy to misrepresent and misunderstand your opponent and vice versa , he wanted to directly engage in spoken discourse — would it not be stunningly refreshing if we were to give our opponents the same appreciation today?

Of course, there are practical challenges to overcome with this position—do we debate a Holocaust denier, a white supremacist...some thoughtful discourses concluded “no” and it is okay to “no platform” such people; some might extend this to “flat-Earthers” as an example of supreme and utter stupidity and why would you want to lend it any credibility by engaging in debate (unfortunately I can now use all my fingers up on one hand with friends that now hold this position)—I understand and respect that decision but would personally debate such people if it were constructive to do so. It is easy to see the logic of the “no platform” position collapses for where to draw the line is totally arbitrary and allows the *real* bigots who do not want to defend their position off the hook—the “no platform” option is now the default option for many on the left and right, we should always be prepared to publicly debate and refute.

In my days as an undergraduate (1989!), the student union had a vigorous debate about abortion and it got to the point where the Student Union meetings which were frequently almost empty except for the few radical socialists and Marxists that

controlled it (not even a remote exaggeration) had to be moved to a major hall because so many students were animated by the debate and it became one of the few decisions of the Student's Union that actually represented the views of the students rather than the executive clique. Today, this debate would never happen — pro-Life would be denied the platform or comprehensively censored as “hate speech” — this is a massively backward step and has one simple destination, tyranny. To illustrate this, I read a really thoughtful [article](#) today by a Dutch law professor and I think this quote identifies our problem so well:

“From a system in which citizens are free to pursue the good life they have chosen for themselves, it runs the risk of changing into a system which imposes one particular conception of the good life on society as a whole. ”

There is nothing wrong with us taking a position and forcefully, with full conviction, standing our ground convinced we are on the side of truth — even if it later transpires we were mistaken to a greater or lesser degree — as long as we are prepared to allow others that same space, no matter how offensive it might initially seem. That is the *true* liberal position which seems to get lost as people take as a personal attack (equating it with “violence” and therefore they can respond in kind including physical assault) when you disagree with any aspect of their chosen lifestyle. Someone once said to me “you sometimes need to smell the sh** you're shoveling” — it was an explicit version of the need to engage with a different understanding of life.

Now my point of this prologue was to ask people to read what I have written below with some kind of open-mind. It does not

neatly fit into “liberal” or “conservative” despite the intolerant invective that it generated when I wrote it as a response to an article which I felt was good but lacked clear understanding in certain respects of the subject matter. I am more than happy for people to respond point by point and argue why I am wrong....much better than simply sign off with “bigot”.

This is an interesting article and, judging from one of your other [articles](#), you have some interest in the religious mindset whilst wishing to remain hovering above it, pointing and giggling (well, at least smirking). However, I do believe there is a substantial weakness in your treatment which is to not sufficiently discriminate between what is a cult and what is mainstream, what is authentic religion and what is not. Any honest analysis should recognise the granularity of its subject matter if it is really interested in helping us to understand it rather than just trying to score rhetorical points.

To describe snake handlers as “Pentecostal” has redefined “Pentecostal”- the Pentecostal tradition may appear to many to be one sultana short of a fruitcake’s religion but authentic Pentecostal biblical religion will have a far more robust theology and rounded approach to religious experience. Now, granted, the people within the cult might call themselves Pentecostal but that is because they want to claim whatever religious respectability there is attached to Pentecostalism which in its early days, was an extension of the Holiness movement, noted among other things for its women preachers and racial inclusivity (this was not universal, there was plenty of prejudice but notable leaders made a point of non-segregated services and of women-led meetings). In a more modern and contemporary example, the famous feminist Germaine Greer (the *Naked Ape* and all that) said trans-women are *not* women just because

they have taken hormones and are post-operative — it is just misappropriation of a designation, a basic category mistake for ideological purposes, stealing whatever intellectual respectability the terms Pentecostal, or “woman” might have.

As you correctly described, the snake handlers took one of the possible endings to Mark’s gospel and interpreted it in isolation — this is the mark of a cult, you see the same thing in the JW’s, Church of the Latter Day Saints, Christadelphians, Christian Scientists etc who normally have some special “insight” not publicly available but revealed by their founders by which all else is interpreted. It is almost as clumsy as using the term “fundamentalist”- Chicago university spent 10 (maybe 15) years on a major project during the 1990s into the early 2000s with many hundreds of articles and hundreds of PhDs granted studying it to finally conclude you cannot use the term with any precision, you have to stick a load of adjectives in front of it — in fact, do not use it at all and call it “strong religion” instead was the conclusion of the three main movers in that academic project — unless you deliberately want to insult people, which of course is the primary use of the term, we all know a fundamentalist when we see one, somebody white who voted for Trump.

What makes your style so interesting is that many a Western liberal does not realise that their right to dissent was established by the Reformation tradition standing in opposition to the Catholic socio-economic political hegemony. The Reformers understood we stand as individuals before God with a sovereign conscience and freedom to choose to be a heretic and then live with the consequences. By definition, they embraced pluralism, as did the early Christians by necessity — they were just one idea in the marketplace of ideas, it is just people started to notice freedom seemed to mark their communities and voted with their feet and their lives in joining and then dying for them.

The Reformers gave us capitalism which for the first time, created wealthy nations rather than just wealthy individuals,

people do not get wealthy by government handouts, they get wealthy when they learn to do business for themselves — that is why creating business opportunities is now at the heart of any “aid” programme that is actually interested in helping a nation stand on its own two feet rather than being a slave to the World Bank or neo-colonialist fellow travelers. Geneva in Switzerland was developed by Calvin as Europe’s refugee camp as people fled from Catholic persecution-it was the first modern state with public education considered as a right for all, people were given the opportunity to work for a living wage and develop industry; it is no accident Switzerland has been such a strong nation built on that foundation. As Jesus told his first followers, it was *life* and life in *all its fullness*, he came to bring to humanity, not the bondage of Catholicism or formalised religion that exists for itself (John 10:10 if anyone is curious).

As our society has lost its Christianity, it has moved back towards tyranny — any student of the 20th century knows it was the century of Marxism, that beautiful blossoming of the promise of the French revolution, where Humanity would kill God and free themselves from those shackles in all their wonderful maturity — yet, the Marxists shed more blood in the name of liberty and equality, surpassing even those medieval Catholics to take first prize in the Genocide stakes; what was even more remarkable was that Western “liberals” initially considered Stalin’s purges a cathartic necessity (well, according to Malcolm Muggeridge a famous British liberal newspaper editor of the 1960s and 1970s that lapsed into Christianity in his old age, senile old fool), many a pilgrimage to the USSR was undertaken by the academic elite of our finest institutions to show us how socialism should be done after the Second World War, even until the early 1970s.

It is with substantial grim amusement that we have a wonderful LGBT charity in the UK called *Stonewall* who now have a vodka on sale in supermarkets with the great slogan “*Acceptance without exception*” — except if you are a bigoted non-believer

like me, please feel free to arrest, demote, fire or jail me, in fact take my children away, if I dare to assert men are men and women are women, who thinks a fanatical minority has imposed an ideology that permits no dissent, haters who accuse others of hate-speech (of course, I am speaking as an ex-Marxist from my youth, I fully accept this aggressive “liberal” ideology is the “radical” wing of the movement, there are plenty moral, gentle and loving gay folk out there, I just never hear their voices any more).

One of your great national fathers made the proclamation “men must be *governed* by God or *ruled* by tyrants”, being a fellow silver-haired person, I have seen the loss of Christian faith in our nation and the arrival of that beautiful blend of radical Islam and secular humanism as having a negative, destructive effect on our freedom and liberty. It strikes me as “how dum can you get” that our European governments will run tax-funded programs to help returning ISIS fighters “reintegrate” into the nations they left to fight for the Caliphate (we in the UK had about 250 000 who left, well 10 000 according to official government statistics...) and yet jail those for “hate speech” who dare to protest against it.