

# The FREE NATION



THE MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS OF THE FREEDOM ASSOCIATION




## BREXIT UNLEASHED

— Seizing the Opportunities —

# 10

YEARS  
OF  
BREXIT

FREE PEOPLE.  
SOVEREIGN NATION.  
BRIGHTER FUTURE.

Firstly, our thanks again to all members for their continuing support. We are in the happy position of having been able to much reduce our office and other overheads.

We'll be holding a major pro-Brexit Conference '**Brexit Unleashed: Seizing the Opportunities**' in Westminster on Tuesday May 19th. The booking link for Priority early bird tickets has been emailed to members, before going on general sale. Conference tickets are available at [www.tfa.net](http://www.tfa.net). We'll hope to see you there.

*Tim Scott, Executive Director*

### OUR FREEDOMS ARE AT RISK: JOHN REDWOOD

In 2026 many feel our long cherished freedoms and rights are under pressure. We are today at risk again of losing our vital powers of self government.

### THE DECEIT OF AUTONOMY: LORD MOYLAN

Why the End of Life Bill coerces us. How should the Freedom Association think about this Bill?

### WHAT LIBERAL FREEDOM HAS FORGOTTEN

We need to return to the conflict that actually produced the political settlement we have inherited.



#### FROM OUR BLOG:

The Nanny state age-related smoking ban "...in the not-too-distant future, a 25-year-old would still be able to buy cigarettes while their 24-year-old friends will not, thanks to the Tobacco & Vapes Bill."

# OUR FREEDOMS ARE AT RISK

By JOHN REDWOOD

The British people have long been proud upholders of freedom. England, later the UK, has long been championing freedom under the law. We have been believers in equality of all before the law, vesting the people's sovereignty in a powerful Parliament, extending the franchise to all adults, permitting a free media and encouraging a rich and varied public debate.

I was brought up in an age that was proud of our nation's story, emboldened by the good we have done in the world to extend prosperity through trade and commerce, promote free speech, and spread the benefits of Parliamentary government. In the post war world of the last century most adults thought the country had done the right thing at great cost to public wealth and private safety by rescuing Europe from the Nazi genocide and tyranny.

This same spirit united and galvanised our nation to save the Falkland islanders from the violent occupation of their land by Argentina, and supported our part in the liberation of Kuwait. This was so different to today, when a government with a large majority wavers over how to respond to our American allies when they seek to destroy Iran's support for terrorism which has stalked our streets as well as being part of daily life in many countries of the Middle East.

## **MAKE A BAD REMARK OR USE METAPHORS OF VIOLENCE AND YOU CAN END UP IN PRISON FOR A FIRST OFFENCE WHERE THERE WAS NO INTENT TO DO ACTUAL BODILY HARM TO ANYONE.**

In 2026 many feel our long cherished freedoms and rights are under pressure. Our speech is increasingly controlled by law and by social pressures to conform with a left wing establishment view of what is permissible. Venture a wrong opinion on racial or sexual matters and the person may be hounded out of their job. Dare to deny the tenets of the climate change religion and be cut off from a wide range of jobs, conversations and meetings. Make a bad remark or use metaphors of violence and you can end up in prison for a first offence where there was no intent to do actual bodily harm to anyone.

We are today at risk again of losing our vital powers of self government. The people voted to restore our rights in the Brexit referendum. Many in the civil service, Ministers in this government, some judges and lawyers operating in our courts have a quiet passion to return us

to EU lawmaking, levies and taxes. They are seeking to erode our independence through the Chagos give away to Mauritius, the EU/UK Treaty over Gibraltar, the extension of so many laws and rules over Northern Ireland, the various planned give aways of our powers and money called the EU re set and their determination to make the UK one of the few countries which takes the CO2 targets of the Paris Treaty seriously to the detriment of our industry.

The pathetic inability of successive governments to negotiate firmly with the EU has made a mess of Brexit, seeking to water it down or stifle it at birth. They should learn from Margaret Thatcher's success in getting a substantial reduction in our financial contribution to the EU. She was faced with a binding Treaty and the opposition of all the other member states to her getting a discount on the high fees we were charged. Many in the UK civil service and Opposition parties were horrified that we were even asking. Margaret Thatcher ignored the defeatist establishment advice, and threatened to withhold our contributions if there was no give. There was no legal power to do that but political will won through and the EU gave in.

Mrs May failed to get a sensible leaving Agreement because she was unwilling simply to leave. That would have delivered a better outcome, because the EU was terrified of us doing that. The UK establishment just did not get it that we could trade perfectly well with the EU as we did the US without a special Trade Deal through most favoured national World Trade terms. I was the only MP that proposed leaving without a Trade Agreement. Ministers would not even accept they should threaten to do that in order to get a better offer from the EU, which would have been forthcoming. Most people in the debate did not see that our trade was in massive deficit with the EU, so we were the customer that could set out terms, not the supplier needing to give in to monstrous EU demands.

The same problem arises with the present more hopeless government. They look so desperate to have a re set. The EU saw them coming. They first demanded years of free fish from our fishing grounds just to get into talks. The answer should have been No to that outrageous request. They demanded we pay a big increase in fees to re join Erasmus. This means UK taxpayers have to go back to having to pay for many more EU students coming to the UK than UK students go to the EU. The UK fell for that. They wish to reinstate part of the free movement of people so many more young EU citizens can come to the UK in search of work and opportunity at a time when our jobs market cannot supply nearly enough jobs for our own young. Everything government asks about is treated as another opportunity to tie us into their laws and send us a large bill.

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## OUR FREEDOMS ARE AT RISK

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MAKE A BAD REMARK OR USE METAPHORS OF VIOLENCE AND YOU CAN END UP IN PRISON FOR A FIRST OFFENCE WHERE THERE WAS NO INTENT TO DO ACTUAL BODILY HARM TO ANYONE.



Preserving and protecting our sovereignty is essential to keeping our freedoms. The Remain EU cause always pretended there was no loss of important sovereignty by being in the EU because they know there are good majorities in the UK for keeping our powers of self government. People know better. Whilst of course we all see that Parliamentary democracy can serve up bad governments and policies we hate, we put up with it because we know we can dismiss the bad performers and get change whenever there is an election. In the EU laws and taxes were piled ever higher. We in the UK could not use our votes to get rid of those who badly governed us.

### OVER THIS CENTURY TO DATE THE U.S. HAS GROWN TWICE AS FAST AS THE EU BY HAVING LOWER TAXES AND BETTER LAW

The Treaties acted as the tyrants of a continent with ambitions well ahead of its abilities.

So what do we need to do today to restore our precious freedoms? We need to win the battle for free speech. We need to roll back European Human Rights laws that control what we say and prevent us controlling our own borders.

We need to sweep aside extreme net zero laws that have driven UK energy prices to be the dearest in the advanced world, and have led to so many industrial closures and lost jobs. The policies are absurd because they result in

us importing more energy intensive products, increasing world, CO<sub>2</sub> as a result. We are buying from coal burning countries with goods routed in diesel ships.

We need to save the Chagos islands from the clutches of Mauritius, a friend of China. In so doing we will save a lot of money the government wishes to throw needlessly away.

We need to unpick the Northern Ireland Windsor framework, as it is a one sided damaging deal for the UK. It was agreed to by the Prime Minister under EU/US Irish pressure with the consequences not clear.

We need to review the many laws and taxes we inherited from our time in the EU to simplify and improve. Over this century to date the US has grown twice as fast as the EU by having lower taxes and better law. The UK has grown almost as slowly as the EU. We could do so much better if only we cut the losses from the chains of EU law codes.

Free enterprise innovates, pays good wages and offers growth. Freedom allows new ideas. The clash of views allows better government. A strong Parliament elected by a sceptical people can check government from being overnight. All the rich countries of the world are free societies with lower taxes. All the poor countries are tyrannies with over extended and over mighty governments.

It should be an easy choice for us to make. Our ancestors chose Freedom. The Freedom Association keeps the flame of freedom burning. We need to insist on freedom more often.

# THE PULL OF THE PERMANENT: Identity, Sovereignty, and the Future of the Union

By ROGER PEACH

Fear the fleeting; cling to the permanent. People know their impermanence so well that they spend their lives pinning their hopes to the victorious survivors of constant change: embedded places, cherished buildings, churches, families, and nations. We know it sometimes seems that we are trying to glue a wisp of smoke to a mirage, but still, we persevere.

All this inevitably raises that most abused but fashionable word—identity—which today is forever on the lips of politicians in the "Blob," who must now attempt to reinvent it after their premeditated destruction of it. Before we go further, let us be humble.

## WE MUST HAVE FAITH IN SOMETHING THAT HAS WORKED SINCE WE WERE RECOGNISABLY HUMAN

The thoughts that follow are not mathematically provable; they are like the discoveries of science awaiting the next theory. But we must have faith in something that has worked since we were recognisably human, something that explains our presence today: our ability to see and accept the concept of difference, to embrace it, and to find pride, security, and contentment in our distinctness.

The phrase of the day, "Broken Britain", reflects our fear of the fleeting. In a mere few decades, the UK electorate has seen a nation with a historically stable population come to resemble the shattered aftermath of a lost war. Are the fragments capable of reassembly, or must something new arise?

The United Kingdom is a challenge to those who persist in seeking a single, perfectly coherent identity because it is the product of a complex, centuries-old political union. And as history shows, when highly centralised structures begin to loosen, ancient nations revive. The Nation State—as fragile a construct as piled Jenga pieces awaiting a trembling hand's final tug—is the sine qua non of democracy. The demos must be so tightly knit that it can accept

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the closest of electoral votes. The losing side must accept the decision without demur; the winning side without any certitude of future success. Only the consolidating power of time operating on a stable population—a reality oddly overlooked by today's Globalists and neo-Marxists—can achieve this coherence. Time is the great healer, but above all, it is the glue of life, slowly hardening into permanence.

The Union evolved over centuries, drawing Wales, Scotland, and Ireland into a centralised Westminster government, culminating formally in the Act of Union 1801. England, with roughly 85% of the population, naturally anchored this structure. Together, these nations built a global presence of astonishing reach. Yet, we must not pretend that as the 20th century progressed, the natural desire for local sovereignty magically bypassed the British Isles. The desire to reclaim power from a distant centre was perfectly exemplified by the Brexit slogan "Take Back Control," which defeated a powerful establishment backed by the legacy media. It is only natural that the smaller nations of the UK, which had shared the wealth and prestige of the British project, would eventually feel a similar pull toward local determination.

The chronological order of political separation stares us in the face. As the crow flies, the distance from London to Cardiff is 150 miles; to Edinburgh, 330 miles. Surely we are now too sophisticated to peer at the United Kingdom through the worn-out prism of Second World War propaganda, which trumpeted a monolithic British unity that has long been evolving.

Wales, despite its close proximity to Westminster and intense historical pressures, never lost its distinctiveness. A Home Rule movement emerged in the mid-19th century. By 1886, the Cymru Fydd (Young Wales)

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movement arose, backed by substantial politicians like Lloyd George. Wales championed its home-grown Nonconformism and founded key national institutions like the Eisteddfod. Today, a growing portion of the population speaks Welsh, and in 1999, Wales acquired its own National Assembly.

Scotland had a similar history of rising national consciousness, arguably accelerated by Ireland's earlier success in acquiring a powerful bloc of MPs in Westminster. Rising nationalism launched the SNP in 1934, and by 1999, the Labour Party set up a Scottish Parliament in an attempt to head off full independence.

This brings us to Ireland, the first major fracture of the central union. The continuing pressure for greater control fed a bloc of 100 Irish MPs into Westminster, eventually convincing serious politicians that they could no longer be held within the old UK structure.

## AS THE UNION NATURALLY EVOLVES AND DEVOLVES, ENGLAND CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO BE A MERE PASSIVE OBSERVER.

Do Wales and Scotland, whose blocs of MPs mirror those of Ireland of old, possess that exact same power to influence Westminster today? Unionists will cry that the Scottish referendum of 2014 settled the matter. But polling offers them no true comfort; the underlying desire for distinct national identity continues to pulse beneath the surface.

England, still 85% of the UK population, finds itself in a unique position. For over three centuries, its borders, culture, and governance have been inextricably tangled with the broader British project. As the Union naturally evolves and devolves, England can no longer afford to be a mere passive observer. It is left with a stark choice: rediscover its own ancient, standalone identity, or be submerged by one manufactured for it by politicians who despise the very concept of the Nation State.

This brings us to the final complication, one that time has not been allowed to bless with its binding glue: mass immigration. This unprecedented demographic shift actively weakens the existing nations of the UK. Rapid dilution inevitably thins out the vast web of links, shared reactions, and mutuality that make up the warp and weft of a national consciousness. It strips away the "permanent" and replaces it with a manufactured "fleeting."

Herein lies the true crisis of "Broken Britain." The establishment—the Blob—believes it can simply invent a new, transient, globalist identity to paper over these deepening cracks. They are entirely wrong. A democracy cannot function when its demos is artificially diluted and fundamentally divided. We are rapidly approaching a

moment where the electorate will be forced to make a profound decision. We must stop trying to glue a wisp of smoke to a mirage. Do we passively accept the fractured, transient reality engineered by our political class, or do we finally reject it and fiercely cling to the permanent: the deep, historic, and distinct national identities that made these islands great in the first place?

### PARLIAMENTARY MEETING WITH CHRISTOPHER CHOPE MP ON NET ZERO



We were very pleased to hold a meeting in Parliament for members, with supper afterwards. It was addressed by Christopher Chope, one of only five MPs to vote against the 2008 Climate Change Act (at least there was a vote- unlike for Net Zero in 2019!). David Cameron swore the five would never achieve office under him, now Kemi Badenoch is disowning Net Zero by 2050.

The science may not be settled, but the current law is. Net Zero by 2050 (which may not even be achievable, let alone desirable) is driving up energy costs and helping to de-industrialise the UK. It needs to be subject to a cost/benefit analysis and re-thought.

### RUPERT MATTHEWS WEBINAR



We were pleased to welcome TFA member, Police & Crime Commissioner and Better Off Out stalwart Rupert Matthews to speak with members and take questions. You can see highlights via here: [https://www.tfa.net/events\\_new](https://www.tfa.net/events_new)

# THE DECEIT OF AUTONOMY: Why the End of Life Bill Coerces Us All

By LORD MOYLAN

The House of Lords has been testing the boundaries of freedom recently. Advocates of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, a Private Member's Bill that has passed the Commons and has been given by the Whips an inordinate amount of time for debate in the Upper House, argue that the fundamental principle on which the Bill rests is "autonomy" – an undefined term that I construe as meaning the freedom to do what one likes with one's own body.

Some supporters argue that the Bill is driven primarily by compassion for those facing unavoidable suffering. But the principal advocates, such as Lord Falconer of Thoroton, give that short shrift. They rightly point out that the Bill makes no reference to pain or suffering and they resist any suggestion that it should. For them, the principle of "autonomy", the freedom to choose, is both sufficient and compelling.

The Bill creates a right for adults with mental capacity who are resident in England and Wales and who have an inevitably progressive illness or disease that can be reasonably expected to lead to death within six months to be provided with "assistance" to end their life earlier. The assistance takes the form of a self-administered poison (to be specified in due course by the Secretary of State) to be taken under some form of medical supervision. That is the heart of the matter. The bulk of the Bill is then taken up with a series of bureaucratic hoops the candidate for "assistance" has to go through, which are presented as safeguards. A separate Bill relevant to Scotland is under consideration there.

Of necessity then the Bill amends the Suicide Act 1961 to decriminalise assisting or encouraging suicide when acting in pursuit of the Bill.

The Bill mandates the Secretary of State to make provision for such a "service". The Bill does not state that this should be within or external to the NHS, though the involvement of two doctors to give separate approval appears to make NHS involvement of some sort inevitable. Nor does the Bill say that the service must be "free" (that is, provided at taxpayers' expense), but it seems to be the universal assumption that it will be.

How should the Freedom Association think about this Bill, which appears at first glance to chime well with its foundational principles, in particular with the first two of its "Ten Principles of a Free Society", namely Individual Freedom and Personal and Family Responsibility?

A first response might be to say that the ill-defined concept of "autonomy" needs more nuance and articulation if it is to be taken as a principle that can be put into practical effect in a free society. So, for example, the Freedom Association's carefully thought-through notion of "freedom" (as set out in the Ten Principles) includes in its definition Limited Government, Freedom of Religion and Belief and a Free Market Economy. Marching to the barricades under the unmodulated banner of "autonomy" could be a recipe for anarchy and the repression it always brings in its wake, not for freedom. Account has to be taken of the effects of one's autonomous actions on broader society.

But a more powerful response is to recognise that the Bill rests on a deceit. It is not about enhancing autonomy at all. The autonomy to end one's life early – for whatever reason and without having to clear any bureaucratic hurdles – came into operation in the UK with the decriminalisation of suicide by the 1961 Act. What this Bill in effect does goes way beyond the exercise of individual autonomy and implicate the whole of society in a personal choice to end one's life early. It is essentially coercive on others.

And this is not merely because each of us is expected to bear the costs of the process. It is also because it requires us to accept a complete revolution in our understanding of the purpose and role of medicine and of physicians, with deep potential consequences for societal trust. At a formal level this would be expressed through an alteration to the founding mission of the NHS to encompass deliberate termination of life, uncomfortably yoked to the current obligation to save life and heal.

But in an age which recalls the Liverpool Pathway and in which trust in medicine, instanced by increased uncertainty about vaccines, is falling below levels seen a generation or two ago, this new confusion in the purpose of medical treatment can only serve to deter engagement with medical services. If one is aware that one's medical team would as willingly terminate one's life as save it, one is naturally cautious, to say the least.

Members of the Freedom Association might easily be persuaded of the merits of an argument based on "autonomy". But it would be a mistake. If the Bill can be argued to liberate the individual, it does so only at the cost of imposing on the rest of us far-reaching changes of a most detrimental character. That is not our understanding of freedom.

# THE TREE AND ITS ROOTS: What Liberal Freedom Has Forgotten

By OSCAR GROVE

What is freedom? The question sounds simple until you try to answer it, and then it opens into a series of further questions that our political culture has largely stopped asking. We speak of freedom and liberty as though they were synonyms, using them interchangeably in editorials and manifestos, in the speeches of prime ministers and the slogans of protesters. But they are not the same word and they do not carry the same meaning.

Liberty comes to us from the Latin *libertas* — the condition of the freed slave, defined essentially by what it has escaped. It is a negative term, a word that points away from bondage rather than toward anything in particular. Freedom is older and comes from elsewhere: from the Germanic freedom, whose root we will return to at the close of this essay. For now it is enough to note that when we collapsed these two words into one, we lost a distinction that mattered. We inherited Latin liberty and called it Germanic freedom, and then we wondered why the word felt both indispensable and hollow.

To understand what is actually at stake in that hollowness, consider a theological dispute from five centuries ago that most politically educated people have never heard of. In 1524, Erasmus of Rotterdam argued that the question of free will — whether human beings genuinely choose their actions or whether all is determined — need not be resolved in order to do ethical reasoning. It was a careful deferral, motivated by a genuine distaste for metaphysical controversy. Martin Luther's response, *The Bondage of the Will*, was furious and exact. You cannot reason about morality, he argued, without first knowing the nature of the will you are claiming to reason about. To defer that question is not neutrality. It is to build an entire ethical system on a foundation you have refused to examine. The building may stand for a while. But it does not know what it is standing on.

The parallel with modern liberalism is not incidental. Liberal political philosophy, from Locke through to Rawls, proceeds precisely in the manner of Erasmus: it brackets the deep question of what human freedom actually is — what the will is, what it is for, what conditions it — in order to get on with the political argument. It treats freedom as self-evident, as an axiom needing no foundation, and constructs its account of rights, contracts, and legitimate authority on top of that unexamined premise. Luther's challenge to Erasmus is

the same challenge that the English Civil War, and the covenant theology that animated it, makes to liberalism: you cannot do legitimate political reasoning if you refuse to take a position on the nature of the very thing you claim to be protecting.

To see how liberalism arrived at this position, we need to return to the conflict that actually produced the political settlement we have inherited — not the Magna Carta, which every party invokes with equal confidence and equal imprecision, but the English Civil War: a war simultaneously theological and material, which our Enlightenment categories still cannot describe honestly. The theological argument turned on a structural problem that natural law and divine right had never been able to solve. Under those frameworks, the king occupied a position within a rational hierarchical order ordained by God. This had a decisive political consequence: it made principled, public resistance to the Crown almost structurally impossible. You could argue that a king was cruel or incompetent. The logic of natural order would always absorb that argument — the order itself matters more than any particular abuse of it; endure, wait, pray. The framework was not designed to produce accountability. It was designed to defer it indefinitely.

## THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR: A WAR SIMULTANEOUSLY THEOLOGICAL AND MATERIAL

Covenant theology broke this deadlock at the level of principle, not merely pragmatics. The Calvinist and Presbyterian traditions that animated the Parliamentary cause argued that kingship was a conditional office, that the monarch was bound simultaneously to God and to the people by covenant, and that breach of that covenant was legally identifiable and actionable through Parliament as a lesser magistrate. This was not rebellion. It was enforcement. The king could be called to account not because Parliament was stronger, but because God's covenant had specific terms, and Charles had broken them.

Theology alone, however, does not win wars. The Parliamentary cause was also carried by something entirely material: a century of transformation in English economic and social life. The print trade had put scripture into the hands of merchants and artisans who could read it without clerical mediation. London's commercial economy had produced a class of men with

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property, literacy, and interests distinct from the landed aristocracy. The New Model Army promoted by merit rather than birth, and its lay preaching tradition treated every soldier as capable of theological reasoning. Remove either factor — the covenant theology or the material infrastructure — and you do not get the English Revolution. You get either a peasant revolt with no theory of legitimate resistance, or a commercial grievance with no moral will to act.

## **A POLITICAL SYSTEM THAT CANNOT APPEAL TO ANY SHARED ACCOUNT OF THE GOOD, OF HUMAN NATURE, OR OF WHAT FREEDOM IS ULTIMATELY FOR, IS A SYSTEM THAT CANNOT JUSTIFY ITSELF.**

Thomas Hobbes saw the danger of covenant theology with absolute clarity. It had placed a source of authority above the state that the state could not control and that any sufficiently motivated preacher could invoke against any ruler. His solution was to sever the vertical dimension entirely. In Hobbes's contractualism, political authority derives from the rational consent of individuals seeking security — there is no divine covenant, no higher court of appeal, no breach that could be argued from scripture. The state is sovereign because those who compose it have rationally agreed it should be. Liberal contractualism keeps the grammar of covenant — agreement, obligation, the conditional nature of authority — while discarding the one thing that gave covenant theology its political teeth: the accountability of rulers to something beyond their own power.

But Hobbes's settlement immediately raised the philosophical problem that Spinoza identified and Locke inherited. If all appeals to revelation are excluded from political argument, and if reasonable people disagree about what natural reason recommends, then on what basis does the liberal state adjudicate between competing visions of the good?. Spinoza's answer, developed in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, was that theological and metaphysical claims are in principle unverifiable and therefore belong to individual conscience rather than public deliberation. Locke translated this into the political vocabulary of toleration: the state must remain neutral between competing comprehensive doctrines precisely because no one can know with certainty which is true. This is the birth of liberal pluralism, and it is entirely coherent within its own terms. The problem is where it ends. A political system that cannot appeal to any shared account of the good, of human nature, or of what freedom is ultimately for, is a system that cannot justify itself. It can defend individual rights but cannot explain why individuals possess the dignity they are said to possess. It can maximise preference satisfaction but cannot say why preferences are worth satisfying. Every

generation of liberal philosophers since Locke has tried to plug this hole with increasing sophistication. None has succeeded, because the hole is structural: it was opened by the Erasmian decision to defer precisely the metaphysical questions the system needs in order to be coherent.

There is a further problem, deeper still, that liberal contractualism cannot escape. The social contract imagines free agents coming together to constitute political order by rational agreement. This requires that the agents who enter it are prior to the society it creates — that they exist, with their interests and their rationality, before the arrangement. But no human being has ever existed in this condition. Every person is born into a language, a family, a class, a tradition, obligations they did not choose and cannot simply refuse. We are embedded in social relations before we are capable of reasoning about them. In covenant theology this presents no philosophical problem: you are already in covenant with the one who created you, born into a relationship that precedes your capacity to consent, and the political order is an extension of that prior and constitutive reality. Liberal contractualism has no equivalent answer. Its founding fiction — the free agent who chooses society — describes no one who has ever lived. The contract was never signed because the signatories never existed in the form the theory requires.

## **THE LEVELLERS, WHO HAD ASKED WHAT COVENANT MEANT FOR COMMON MEN WITHOUT PROPERTY, WERE SUPPRESSED.**

The settlement that followed the war — the Restoration of 1660, and the more durable accommodation of 1688 — was a peace made by the winners. And the winners were not the Puritan visionaries who had executed a king in the name of God's covenant. They were the landed gentry and merchant class who had used the theological argument to break the power of the Crown and then grew uncomfortable with its more radical implications. The Levellers, who had asked what covenant meant for common men without property, were suppressed. What survived was a social hierarchy reshuffled rather than overturned, requiring a new vocabulary that would not invite further disruption.

That vocabulary was provided, with devastating cultural effect, by John Milton. Milton had been an active apologist for regicide, had argued that the people of England had the right to call a tyrant to account. He lived through the Restoration, went blind, and wrote *Paradise Lost*. What Milton achieved, probably without intending it, was the aestheticisation of the Puritan political tradition into a framework of individual conscience, heroic interiority, and dignified defeat. Satan's declaration — better to reign in Hell than serve in

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Heaven — became the emotional template for liberal individualism: the solitary self asserting its dignity against unjust authority. The covenant framework, with its relational obligations and its theory of conditional political office, dissolved into the poetry of personal sovereignty. Milton gave liberal modernity its feeling for freedom while withdrawing the structural argument that had made the original claim coherent. He made the revolution beautiful, and beauty is the most effective form of forgetting.

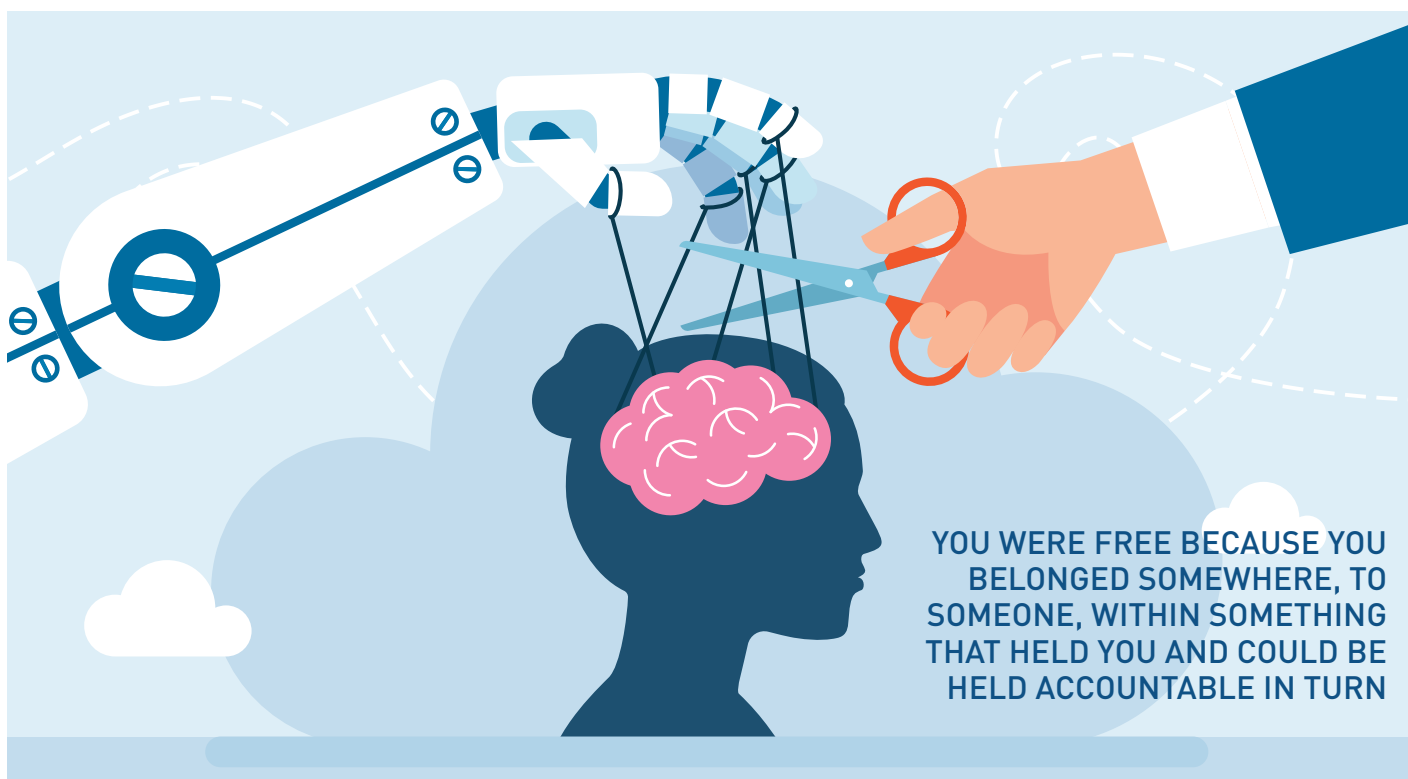
## THE RESULT IS THE DEBATE WE HAVE: LOUD, PERMANENT, AND STRUCTURALLY INCAPABLE OF RESOLUTION

What we have inherited is therefore a political tradition carrying the emotional force of a revolution it cannot describe, conducting its arguments in Enlightenment categories designed to make the theological and social foundations of that revolution invisible. Right-liberalism defends freedom in terms that, with remarkable consistency, protect the interests of those already powerful — what 1688 encoded as natural liberty was the liberty of those who had won. Left-liberalism promises equality in terms it has struggled for two centuries to deliver, because its leadership has repeatedly comprised a professional class with interests distinct from those it claims to represent. Both sides argue in good faith. Neither has the conceptual resources to name what is actually happening, because those resources were discarded along with the theology that provided them.

The result is the debate we have: loud, permanent, and structurally incapable of resolution, conducted in a language specifically constructed to prevent the deepest questions from being asked.

Which brings us back to the word. Not liberty, with its Latin root in the freed slave's escape from bondage — an essentially negative condition, defined by what it leaves behind. But freedom: the Old English word whose root is *freo*, meaning beloved, cherished, one who belongs. To be free, in that original sense, was not to be unencumbered. It was to be counted among those who were known and recognised, who had standing in a web of mutual obligations, who were seen. Freedom was a relational fact, not a private one. You were free because you belonged somewhere, to someone, within something that held you and could be held accountable in turn. Liberal modernity has produced, as its crowning achievement, an individual who belongs nowhere in particular, is obligated to no one by anything deeper than contract, and is recognised only by the state that guarantees his rights. He is, in the precise sense of the Latin, liberated — free from the ties that once defined him. Whether he is free in the older, Germanic sense is a question the political tradition he inhabits has no vocabulary to answer, because it made its founding decision, in the manner of Erasmus, not to ask.

The word remembers what the politics has forgotten. Whether that memory can be recovered — and what it would mean to try — is the question this essay leaves open. But you cannot begin to answer it without first admitting that something was lost, and that the loss was not accidental, but was the price of a settlement that suited those who made it.





THE FREEDOM  
ASSOCIATION

# BREXIT UNLEASHED

Maximising the Opportunities

## 10 YEARS OF BREXIT



### Brexit Unleashed - Seizing the Opportunities

Tue 19 May 2026 9:00 AM - 6:00 PM Emmanuel Centre, SW1P 3DW

A Freedom Association Conference, Emmanuel Centre, Westminster, SW1P 3DW, London.

Conference tickets are available at: [www.tfa.net](http://www.tfa.net)

Speakers to include: Daniel Hannan, Bill Cash, John Redwood, Camilla Tominey, David Frost and other leading speakers to be confirmed.

[www.tfa.net](http://www.tfa.net) X: @TFA4Freedom



## JOIN THE FREEDOM ASSOCIATION TODAY

If we don't fight for freedom now, we are in danger of losing it.  
We are not going to sit back and allow this to happen.

The Freedom Association, 83 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0HW

Email: [mail@tfa.net](mailto:mail@tfa.net). [www.tfa.net](http://www.tfa.net)

