

A Christian case for Brexit

As a politician my view about the EU referendum is a simple one of keeping a promise – to my constituents before the General Election. I pledged that unless our borders could be controlled I would vote to leave the EU. However the Prime Minister's deal is dressed up, it does not regain control of EU migration. I believe we should welcome the skills we lack and provide refuge to those that need sanctuary; however, losing control over EU migration has impacted our security and our public services like housing, schools and the NHS. I want our country and Parliament to take back control and have a new relationship with Europe based on trade and co-operation. So I am campaigning with those from all parties and none to Vote Leave.



I have been a Euro-sceptic throughout my political life – although I prefer to call myself an EU-sceptic. In many ways I share the European ideal which is influenced by notions of Christian morality and expressions of Christian democracy – the prevention of war amongst our nations, advancing peaceful solutions in our broken and troubled world, and even finding the all elusive solution to the migrant and refugee crisis. But today's EU is not fit to promote these noble ideals. You only have to visit Calais as I did last month to see an example of the failed EU political project – vulnerable refugees living in deplorable conditions being deterred from finding refuge in most EU countries. Or take a longer trip to Greece and see how a generation has been impoverished by the failed EU economic project. The EU has been described as an analogue union in a digital age. The harsh reality is that it is ill equipped to deal with the divergent challenges of economic growth, recession, terrorism and migration.

As a Christian my view about the EU is less simple. Like with most political issues there is not a blueprint in the Bible which determines policies. But the Bible has much to tell us about national identities and diversity as ordained by God and something to be celebrated. From Old Testament Israel to the Pentecost and the future New Jerusalem, distinct nationhood and self-determination is seen as a blessing from God. There are relevant biblical principles of power being limited, dispersed and accountable. The words of William Temple have resonance now as they did 14 years before the European Economic Community (EEC) was established in 1956:

'Each individual is born into a family and a nation. In his maturity he is very largely what these have made him. The family is so deeply grounded in nature and the nation in history that anyone who believes in God as Creator and as Providence is bound to regard both as part of the divine plan for human life.'

The EU has become less accountable, more interfering, more damaging to our national well-being, and more eroding of our national sovereignty. An aggressive supra-national secularism which is increasingly at odds with our British and Christian based rule of law and Parliamentary sovereignty. Since Britain signed up to the free trade agreement in 1973, our membership has snowballed and now dictates policy areas as diverse as health, welfare, energy, fisheries, and justice. The costs have also spiralled amounting to £50 million per day which could be used better by decisions accountable to Parliament not unelected EU bureaucrats. Dr Adrian Hilton who has formed the Brexit campaign group '*Christians for Britain*' sums it up by saying:

'We're all for loving our neighbour: we just have a problem when that neighbour presumes to tell us how much fish we can eat; how many hours we can spend gardening; how much tax we must pay on electricity, and what colour we ought to paint the front door.'

Whilst the Prime Minister has negotiated away the words "ever closer union", many in Brussels would take the EU project to its logical next step of developing a European foreign policy and army. The idea of an army without democratic control shows how far the EU has gone beyond its original ideal and Christian principles. Political and economic decisions should have wide participation to ensure accountability in the exercise of power and restrain our fallenness which, unchecked, could lead to an authoritarian state.

Far from providing security in an uncertain world, the EU's policies have become a source of instability and insecurity. The former head of Interpol described the EU's internal borders policy as "*like hanging a sign welcoming terrorists to Europe*". Britain is not subject to the Schengen border free zone, but EU rules limit us from both keeping serious criminals out of our country and removing EU citizens who have committed serious offences in the UK.

My EU-scepticism is defined not just by what I am against but what I am for. I am for a freer, fairer and better country outside the EU. Great Britain is a global nation – our economy is more dynamic than the Eurozone, we have the most attractive capital city on the globe, the greatest "soft power" and global influence of any state and a leadership role in NATO and the UN. Our nation needs to be a more open free trading nation not just to Europe but the world. Great Britain could play a greater role in the world today unfettered from the burden of our membership of the EU. We can shape an optimistic, forward-looking and genuinely internationalist alternative to the path the EU is going down. I believe independence would instil a new confidence. We would be in charge of our own destiny again, leading instead of following, thriving rather than surviving.

As Christians we wish to see a society underpinned by democratic rights, set against a backdrop of Christian values and shared values of peace and reconciliation with those of all faiths and none. It is time for our country and Parliament to regain its independence working with EU countries and non EU countries more effectively for the common good. Ahead of his EU negotiations the Prime Minister spoke about the character of our nation – "*independent, forthright, passionate in defence of our sovereignty.*" I look forward with other Christians to show that character in the campaign for Brexit.

David Burrowes MP