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## **Free states and enlightenment**

Richard Whatmore's *The End of Enlightenment* argues that if we define the enlightenment as any strategy that prevents wars of religion from failing then all strategies had collapsed by the end of the 18th century.

Understanding enlightenment has to be tied together with an understanding of the history of free states, which were in crisis during this era. The greatest shock of the early 19th century was that Britain – the state most expected to collapse during the 18th century because of its corrupt economy which Adam Smith called a mercantile system – had become a model free state. We've been living with the consequences ever since.