The Reformation and Brexit.

History, historiography and the position of the United Kingdom in Europe

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On 23 June 2016, the British people voted in a referendum that Britain should to leave the EU. Or, put more precisely, 51.9% of those who cast their vote opted to leave the EU, with a turnout of 72.2%. The consequences of this result are still being worked out, and this paper does not seek to explore these. Rather, it engages with one aspect of the discussion of Britain's relationship to the European Union over the past few years: the use – or abuse – of history, and in particular the history of the Reformation. This paper first explores how references to the Reformation have been used in the media, before relating these observations to the historiography of the English and the Scottish Reformations and what they reveal about the construction of identity, before finally offering a brief reflection on the attitudes of the British churches and churchgoers to the question of Britain's relationship to Europe.

1.   The appeal to the Reformation in the debate about the UK in Europe

An early example of things to come can be seen in June 2012, when in a blog (which seems no longer to be available online), the political journalist Iain Martin, then a columnist for *The Telegraph,* responded to a speech by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the House of Lords by asking: "Why is the Church of England speaking up for the EU?" Martin argued that the Church of England is not a European Church and that the English Reformation represented a break with Europe. The point of Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy in 1534 and of the Act of Settlement under Elizabeth I in 1559 was "that England, and then Britain, did not genuflect to any foreign authority [...]."[1] Similarly, in May 2016, the Anglican priest, philosopher and

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[1]   Iain Martin, 'Why is the Church of England speaking up for the EU?', *The Telegraph* (19 June 2012); originally online at http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/iainmartin1/100166323/why-is-the-church-of-england-speaking-up-for-the-eu

theologian Giles Fraser wrote in *The Guardian* in a column entitled "Brexit recycles the defiant spirit of the Reformation":

> On 31 October 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of All Saints, Wittenberg, targeting corruption at the highest levels of the church. The scandal of which he complained was the sale of forgiveness to finance an ecclesiastical gravy train and lavish building projects such as that of St Peter's in Rome. From here the Reformation would spread out to become an across-the-board protest at the elitist and centralising philosophy of the Roman church. Here also we find the intellectual roots of Euroscepticism.[2]

In making this claim, Fraser drew on a study by the German sociologist Margarete Scherer, who found "that people from traditionally Protestant countries are less likely to support European unification compared to those from traditionally Catholic countries."[3] Fraser put this rather more polemically: there is, he wrote, "a considerably higher prevalence of Euro-scepticism in traditionally Protestant countries than in traditionally Roman Catholic ones."[4] He suggested that,

> the EU still feels a little like some semi-secular echo of the Holy Roman empire, a bureaucratic monster that, through the imposition of canon law, swallows up difference and seeks after doctrinal uniformity. This was precisely the sort of centralisation that Luther challenged, and resistance to it is deep in the Protestant consciousness.[5]

Apart from his problematic elision of – or indeed confusion between – the Church of Rome and the Holy Roman Empire, Fraser's presentation, like Martin's, raises questions about the legitimacy of this reading of the English Reformation. In a spirited response, Diarmaid MacCulloch, Professor

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/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter (accessed 19.11.2013; no longer available).

2 Giles Fraser, 'Brexit recycles the defiant spirit of the Reformation', *The Guardian* (5 May 2016); https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2016/may/05/brexit-recycles-the-defiant-spirit-of-the-reformation (accessed 22.02.2018).

3 Margarete Scherer, 'The Religious Context in Explaining Public Support for the European Union', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 53 (2015) 893–909. Scherer presented a summary of her findings in a blog post (from which the quotation is taken): 'United by Reformation: British and Northern European Euroscepticism is rooted in religious history', http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/united-by-reformation/ (accessed 22.02.2018).

4 Fraser, 'Defiant spirit' (as note 2).

5 Ibid.

of Reformation History at the University of Oxford, categorically rejected Fraser's historiographical assumptions:

> How wrong can you be, about both the English Reformation and the wider movement across Europe? After its first explosion in northern Germany in 1517, the European Reformation was a completely international movement, transcending and breaking down local boundaries. [...] So it is the Remain camp which represents the European and British Reformations, not Brexiteers. Remainers are the people who resist breaking the natural, wider ties in our continent. True, they know the system needs radical reform – and that was the starting point for many Protestants attacking the old Church, including Luther himself in 1517 – but once the corruption and the mistakes have been remedied, the prospect then as now is to look to a new continent-wide unity, not a muddle of division and weakness.[6]

MacCulloch's approach has been picked up by the Reformation historians Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie, who in a pair of articles provocatively entitled (by those who commissioned them) "Tudor Brexit" argued for the importance of understanding the Reformation as an international phenomenon, and one which shaped not only the emerging Protestant churches and nations, but also the Catholic church.[7] Marshall, himself a Catholic, draws some interesting parallels between the experience of those in Britain who voted to remain and the testimonies of Catholics in post-Reformation England with their sense of international belonging.[8]

In October 2017, the coincidence of the Brexit negotiations and the Reformation anniversary led the journalist Martin Kettle, an associate editor of *The Guardian,* to reflect on the significance of the Reformation, although not necessarily of Luther, for England and for Britain. Kettle identified what he saw as a formational English tradition, which, he argued, led to the Brexit vote:

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[6] Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'It's Remain not Leave that captures the independent spirit of the Reformation', *The Conversation* (27 May 2016); http://theconversation. com/its-remain-not-leave-that-captures-the-independent-spirit-of-the-reformation-59832 (accessed 22.02.2018).

[7] Peter Marshall, 'Tudor Brexit: Catholics and Europe in the British and Irish Reformations', and Alec Ryrie, 'Tudor Brexit: from *Ecclesia Anglicana* to Anglicanism', both in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 106 (2017) 417–424 and 425–430, respectively. The reference to "Tudor Brexit" is not only anachronistic, but also problematic in its elision of England and Britain. The Tudors ruled England and Wales, and at times Ireland, but not Scotland.

[8] Marshall, 'Tudor Brexit' (as note 7), 418–419.

the deeper legacy of the English Reformation was the tradition of English exceptionalism, which dressed itself afresh in Britishness after the acts of union. In this tradition, England (or Britain) was different, separate, better, blessed and free from the rules that constrained others. It defined itself against Rome and ultramontane ideas of every kind. And that legacy has certainly not disappeared.

Indeed, just when so many of the habits and manifestations of English Protestantism have continued to slip gently towards an ecumenical multicultural oblivion, Henry VIII's legacy has summoned itself for one final and contrarian outburst of the exceptionalist tradition. It has dumped us with Brexit.[9]

To some extent, Kettle here reflects the position taken by Scherer's study, which both draws on and confirms the work of, amongst others, the French historian René Rémond[10] and the sociologist Sigrid Rossteutscher.[11] Scherer's premise is that "the Reformist and the national project fit naturally together," so that "traditional state-church relations shape the political culture of each society in an enduring fashion and nowadays reflect distinctive attitudes towards EU institutions, even for individuals who do not belong to a church or who do not attend church services."[12] She recognises that there were different types of Protestant national churches, including "Anglicanism in England, Calvinism type in Scotland and Lutheranism in Scandinavian countries" (although she claims, erroneously in the case of Scotland, that in all of these, "the head of the state was simultaneously the head of the church"[13]); despite these difference, however, her research shows that "citizens from Protestant countries […] are overall less supportive of European unification than are citizens from a Catholic background."[14] Therefore, Scherer's study precisely does not argue for English exceptionalism; rather it suggests that English – or British – responses to Protestantism to a large extent tally with Protestant experiences elsewhere in Europe, and that these play out in attitudes towards the EU.

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[9] Martin Kettle, 'How the Reformation sowed the seeds of Brexit', *The Guardian* (27 October 2017); https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/27/protestantism-wane-reformation-brexit-martin-luther (accessed 22.02.2018).

[10] René Rémond, *Religion und Gesellschaft in Europa. Von 1789 bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 2000).

[11] Sigrid Rossteutscher, *Religion, Zivilgesellschaft, Demokratie. Eine international vergleichende Studie zur Natur religiöser Märkte und der demokratischen Rolle religiöser Zivilgesellschaften* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009).

[12] Scherer, 'Religious Context' (as note 3), 894 and 896.

[13] Ibid., 895.

[14] Ibid., 907.

Scherer's study makes the terms of the appeal to the Reformation in the Brexit debates all the more intriguing. The reflections, comments and exchanges cited above, which illustrate a range of different ways in which Reformation historiography has been instrumentalised in the political debate around the EU, offer a very English take on Reformation history. The Scottish Reformation, although it also (*inter alia*) rejected the papacy and broke with Rome, has not (to the best of my knowledge) been cited in the debate, and seems not to generate the same emotional impact. An exploration of the historiography of the English and Scottish Reformations may help to make clear why this is so.

2. Europe and the historiography of the English Reformation

Reading the historiography of the English Reformation against the background of the Brexit debate reveals that several aspects of English Reformation history – unlike the history of the Reformation in Scotland, to which I shall return – reflect precisely the ambiguities shown in the citing of the Reformation in the Brexit debate. In particular, the idea that the English Reformation is unique is a theme that runs through much of the historiography, exemplified by Christopher Haigh's assertion in his study *English Reformations* that the English Reformations "were not *the* Reformation, exported across the Channel and installed in England by Luther, Calvin and Co. Ltd."[15] Haigh's work, although fascinating and convincing in its account of English events, consistently underestimates the way in which English Humanists and Reformers were part of a European network, and overestimates the coherence of the forms taken by the Reformation locally elsewhere. There seems here to be a conflation of the result and the process. It is perfectly legitimate to recognise that the Church of England – the Anglican church – is not easily categorised on a view of Protestantism that takes as its baseline a Lutheran-Reformed confessional axis, or even a nexus of a Lutheran-Reformed-radical/free church. However, recognising this distinctive ecclesiastical result cannot – or at least should not – presuppose that the Reformation itself must therefore have been a quite distinct process, separate from any similar process elsewhere. In particular, the recognition of distinctiveness of the Church of England

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[15] Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations. Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 13.

has long led, as Diarmaid MacCulloch commented critically as long ago as 1991, to the "myth of the English Reformation":

> The myth of the English Reformation is that it did not happen, or that it happened by accident rather than design, or that it was half hearted and sought a middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism; the point at issue is the identity of the Church of England.[16]

MacCulloch sees two formational phases in this story: the mid-seventeenth century, and the mid-nineteenth century. In both cases, the intention, he argues, "was to emphasize the Catholic continuity of the church over the break of the Reformation, in order to claim that the true representative of the Catholic church within the borders of England and Wales was not the minority loyal to the bishop of Rome, but the church as by law established in 1559 and 1662."[17] In contrast, MacCulloch holds, in my view rightly, that the English church in the late sixteenth century was, despite its retention of the three-fold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, and its use of a formal liturgy, in all its essentials a Reformed church, influenced by the theological approaches of Zurich, Strasbourg and to some extent Geneva, but with a strong and close link between political and church structures which was closer to those seen in many Lutheran contexts. It was certainly not a church that would have been recognised as Catholic by its Catholic contemporaries. Even in the 1630s, when the efforts of Charles I's Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud (1573–1645; archbishop from 1633), to ensure conformity in worship according to the Book of Common Prayer in Scotland as well as England, together with his insistence on the importance of episcopal order, led to accusations that he was "papist", the English church remained recognisably Protestant.[18] However, as MacCulloch observes, the historiography of the English Reformation has too often been shaped by "misunderstanding or wishful thinking about the nature of the Elizabethan settlement" and by "acts of amnesia or censorship about the ethos of the Elizabethan and Jacobean church, with the result that we have more or less unconsciously seen that

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[16] Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'The Myth of the English Reformation', *Journal of British Studies* 30 (1991) 1–19: 1.

[17] Ibid.

[18] For Laud's career and influence, see Anthony Milton, 'Laud, William (1573–1645), archbishop of Canterbury', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16112 (accessed 22.02.2018).

church through a Laudian prism, central characteristics becoming marginalized and ignored."[19]

One of the questions that remains under-studied in the English historiography is that of the role of international networks in shaping the English Reformation. This is a growing field, with work on the reception of Luther and Melanchthon, the Zurich Reformation and the Strasbourg Reformers in England and in studies of the networks of English Reformers abroad.[20] Nonetheless, more remains to be done. Also notable by its absence has been any serious discussion of how the English church was perceived by its contemporaries. There is a striking parallel here to the current debates about the Brexit settlement negotiations in the British media, which seem oblivious to the idea that people in the other 27 countries of the EU might have a view on the terms on which Britain leaves. My recent research into perceptions of the Henrician Reformation in Wittenberg draws on the correspondence of Luther and Melanchthon to show their frustration with the lack of progress made in developing the Reformation under Henry VIII after his break with Rome in 1533/34, and also demonstrates Melanchthon's interest in and support for developments under Edward VI and in the brief period of Elizabeth I's reign that he witnessed before his own death.[21] In these later phases, the English Reformation took on a form which Melanchthon regarded as compatible with the wider Reformation movement. When he heard that the English exiles who had fled Mary I's reintroduction of Catholicism and arrived in Frankfurt and Wesel were not being made welcome because they were not Lutherans, he intervened, emphasising that they were "no followers of Servetus" and should be

[19] MacCulloch, 'Myth of the English Reformation' (as note 16), 14.

[20] Diarmaid MacCulloch assumes that this relationship is highly significant: see his *Reformation. Europe's House Divided 1490–1700* (London: Penguin, 2004). For more detailed studies see, for instance, Basil Hall, 'Cranmer, the Eucharist and the Foreign Divines in the Reign of Edward VI,' in: Paul Ayris/David Selwyn (eds), *Thomas Cranmer. Churchman and Scholar* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1993), 218–258; idem, 'Martin Bucer in England', in: David Wright (ed.), *Martin Bucer. Reforming Church and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 114–160; W. J. Torrance Kirby, 'The Civil Magistrate and the *Cura Religionis*. Heinrich Bullinger's Prophetical Office and the English Reformation', *Animus* 9 (2004), 25–36; idem, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[21] Charlotte Methuen, 'Luther, Melanchthon and England. Perceptions of the Henrician Reformation in Wittenberg', *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 20 (2018) 209–234.

"rightly taught and reasoned with, not expelled."[22] For Melanchthon, the English Reformation had under Edward VI achieved the clarity of theology and practice that had been missing under Henry VIII. By the latter part of the sixteenth century, therefore, for Melanchthon at least, England's "exceptional" Reformation was no longer any more exceptional than the Reformation anywhere else. There are questions to be considered here about the unique form of every Reformation: the (English) emphasis on English exceptionalism tends to mask the reality of exceptionalisms elsewhere. The story of the Reformation in Württemberg, for instance, is very different from the story of the Reformation in Wittenberg.[23] Historians of the Swiss Reformation are generally aware of the distinctive and yet interlocking developments which shaped the Reformation in, for instance, Zurich, Basel, Bern and Geneva. In contrast, there is sometimes a tendency in the historiography of the German Reformation – or more properly, the Reformation in the German territories of the Holy Roman Empire – to read the history through the lens of the theological continuities which were established in the late sixteenth century, obscuring the very different sets of individual circumstances into which reforming theological ideas and practices were introduced and the differences between the territorial churches which emerged.

In part as a result of Protestant periodisation, Reformation historiography has tended to focus on the sixteenth century. However, the influence of the seventeenth century, and in particular its violent religious struggles, was of immense importance in shaping not only churches but also their self-perception and their relationship to national and political identity. The case of England and Scotland provides an interesting example of the development of inner-Protestant conflicts with distinguishing identities. The Scottish Reformation took a quite different course from that in England, being much influenced by the theology of John Knox, who had spent several years in Geneva and was inspired by John Calvin. This Genevan link is emphasised in the Scottish historiography, which despite a strong nationalist flavour in the self-understanding of the Church of Scotland, sees the Scottish Reformation as an outworking of the international aspects of

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[22] John Schofield, *Philip Melanchthon and the English Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 181–184.

[23] One consequence is that the (Lutheran) Landeskirche in Württemberg is not a member of the United Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD).

Calvinism.[24] Indeed, the early Scottish proponent of Reformation theology, George Wishart (ca. 1513–1546), a popular preacher who was burned for heresy in St Andrews on 1 March 1546, has often been claimed as a Calvinist. Even though the date of his execution renders this chronologically highly unlikely, and the account of his trial suggests rather that Wishart had been influenced by Bullinger in Zurich and by his encounters with Reform-minded English theologians during his time at Corpus Christi College Cambridge in 1542.[25]

3. The theological shaping of national understanding: England

Alec Ryrie posits that the emergence of the language of "Church of England" was key to considering the English Church as a particular entity.[26] However, when in the seventeenth century the Commonwealth removed bishops and the liturgy from the Church of England, those who fought for their return needed a new way of describing themselves.[27] They coined the term "Anglican", derived from medieval references to the English church as *ecclesia anglicana*, with a similar ring to the references to the "Gallican Church" at a similar period in France. With the new name came a new myth about the origins of this Anglican church, as free from the influence of "foreign powers". In consequence, Ryrie argues, this period brought about a view of the English, Anglican church, in which "it was not only defined by its alignment with the kingdom, it was ancient, pristine and existed in splendid isolation, still reviling its old mother Church in Rome and now despising its sister Churches in Germany, Scotland and everywhere else."[28] Seventeenth-century English puritans and Scottish Presbyterians arguably had a much stronger sense of themselves as part of an international movement, whilst Anglicans were becoming increasingly insular and focussed in on themselves.

Indeed, Mark Royce, a political scientist, suggests that both the theology of the Commonwealth and that of the newly-constituted Anglican

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[24] See the discussion in section 4 below and the literature in notes 52ff below.

[25] The Condemnation and Martyrdom of George Wishart', Appendix III, in: John Knox, *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, ed. by William Croft Dickinson, (London: Nelson, 1949), vol. 2, 233–245.

[26] Ryrie, 'Tudor Brexit' (as note 7), 427–429. The terminology used to name national churches emerged elsewhere in Europe might also be explored.

[27] Ibid., 429–430.

[28] Ibid., 430.

Church of the Restoration fed into the language of nationalism.[29] Taking a very long view of the Reformation, he identifies five key theological points which, he argues, came to underpin the English constitution in the seventeenth century and which re-emerged in arguments against the UK's remaining in the European Community in 1975 and for Brexit in 2016.[30] First, the understanding of "popery" as a totalitarian ideology, as presented by John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1583) and by many authors subsequently, and which found its expression in the disqualification of Catholics from public office and from succession to the throne. Royce suggests that as a consequence of this understanding, "English liberalism was originally positioned against the perceived snares and menaces of the Roman See."[31] Royce observes that throughout the 1970s, the Ulster Protestant politician – later a Member of the European Parliament – Ian Paisley "openly spoke of the European Community as the whore of Babylon and the Roman pontiff at the back of it as the Antichrist."[32] Parts of Ulster continue to be strongly opposed to the EU; although overall Northern Ireland voted for the UK to remain in the EU, the constituencies that voted Unionist in the 2016 election also voted for Brexit.[33]

Royce's second theological argument is the conviction that Britain should be viewed as a divine commonwealth, put forward by Richard Baxter in his *A Holy Commonwealth* (1659). Royce argues that this was a "largely forgotten Christian theocratic contribution to the development of the modern state" which was rooted in the assumption that only Christians should make laws or vote, and which therefore called for "religious tests for public office and good behavior qualifications for the franchise;" such measures are tantamount to "restricting the entry and the rights of those

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[29] Mark R. Royce, *The Political Theology of European Integration Comparing the Influence of Religious Histories on European Policies* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017). I am grateful to Willy Maley for drawing my attention to Royce's work.

[30] The United Kingdom joined the European Communities on 1 January 1973; no referendum was held in connection with the accession treaty on 22 January 1972, or in connection with the European Communities Act 1972.

[31] Royce, *Political Theology* (as note 29), 208–211.

[32] Ibid., 228–232.

[33] For these results, see 'EU referendum: How Northern Ireland constituencies voted', BBC News (24 June 2016; http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-36616830 [referendum]) and '2017 Westminster Election Results Summary'(http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/ [2016 election]) (both accessed 22.02.2018).

who do not outwardly adhere to Christian ethics and theology."[34] The politician whose position Royce associates with Baxter's approach is the left-wing politician Tony Benn, and in particular his "campaign for all power to be returned to the people," which led Benn to deny the legitimacy of the structures in Brussels and Strasbourg.[35] Royce concludes that Benn "steadfastly opposed European integration because it conflicted with his Christian socialist agenda of leftist emancipation, a worldview which, by his own account, derives from divine commonwealth notions of English Reformation theology."[36] Benn's position has been taken forward by Gisela Stuart, another left-wing politician and Christian socialist, who also, Royce argues, "adheres to the normative values of the Divine Commonwealth" and "asserts the primacy of the majoritarian and participatory dimensions of the evolving constitution in order to produce a more just and egalitarian society."[37] This is for Royce the key factor in identifying this argument. His implication that the anti-immigration rhetoric of much of the Leave campaign might be rooted in this approach remains unexplored.

The third position identified by Royce is the belief that the monarch is inviolable, as maintained by the royalist Thomas Hobbes, for instance in *Leviathan* (1651).[38] The consequence of this argument is that "there can be no civil or ecclesiastical appeal above or beyond the sovereign, for the essence of sovereignty is to be in possession of the final decision."[39] The fourth emerged from the other side of the civil war: that Parliament is sovereign, was argued by supporters of the English Commonwealth such as the English Levellers.[40] Royce sees these two convictions as together informing the arguments of the Tory politician Enoch Powell,[41] and particularly his conviction that "the British people spiritually identify with [Queen] Elizabeth [II] as their head and temporally with members of Parliament as their officers of state; and they therefore cannot by right surrender their national sovereignty to foreign entities of which they no little and

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[34] Royce, *Political Theology* (as note 29), 211–213.
[35] Ibid., 235–236.
[36] Ibid., 236.
[37] Ibid., 245–248; quotations at 246.
[38] Ibid., 213–215
[39] Ibid., 215.
[40] Ibid., 215–217.
[41] Ibid., 237–240.

to which they owe nothing."[42] The conviction that parliament is sovereign underlies the position of many of those who wish the UK to leave the EU, including, as Royce shows, both Michael Gove and Boris Johnson,[43] and informs what Royce describes as "the passionate intensity with which many in Britain continue to seek to protect their ancient Parliamentary sovereignty from supranational European encroachment."[44]

Finally, the belief that "the people have liberties", as emphasised by John Milton, later author of *Paradise Lost*, in a speech of 1644, so that they are "always and everywhere at liberty to create, to hold accountable, and if necessary to depose kings."[45] Royce sees Michael Foot and Nigel Farage as building their anti-EU arguments on this foundation: Foot in his arguments in the 1970s that the membership of the European Economic Community would be tantamount to be "divesting [the British people] at a stroke of the liberty to decide their own course as a nation, a liberty acquired at such cost during the Reformation and Civil War"[46]; Farage in his emphasis – as he has put it – on the liberty of each individual "to define and govern him or herself without intervention from a self-appointed and self-perpetuating mediocracy [...] whose only loyalty is to tidiness, homogeneity – and power."[47]

Royce presents these as "the five main contentions of the English Reformation", a claim which might surprise students of Tudor political theology and which ignores the fact that four of these five principles emerged in the context of the seventeenth-century struggles over the religious make-up of England and Scotland. Nonetheless, his assertion that each of these principles "became embodied in English constitutional law, especially upon the Restoration of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660 and the Glorious Revolution of 1688, after which the English Constitution remained largely unchanged until as recently as the 1990s,"[48] is plausible, and his exploration of how these theological themes emerged as anti-European Community or anti-EU arguments used by politicians of very different ideological backgrounds is convincing. In his conclusion that

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[42] Ibid., 239.

[43] Ibid., 248–250.

[44] Ibid., 249.

[45] Ibid., 217–219.

[46] Ibid., 240–242.

[47] Ibid., 250–253, citing Nigel Farage, *Flying Free* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2010), 227.

[48] Royce, *Political Theology* (as note 29), 219.

"the champions of British Euro-skepticism have been consistently informed by theological teachings of the English Reformation,"[49] Royce's arguments buttress Ryrie's suggestion that it was not so much the Reformation *per se*, but the upheavals of the seventeenth century, with their profound effect on English identity and self-understanding, both religious and political, which made England more insular and less mindful of its European connections.

4. The theological shaping of national understanding: Scotland

Ryrie's and Royce's arguments arise from a consideration of English theological debates (although in the case of Ian Paisley the modern situation considered by Royce is Northern Ireland). The theological and ecclesiastical context in Scotland was significantly different. As Joanna Martin has argued in the context of her study of sixteenth-century Scots poetry, in the middle years of the sixteenth century, Scots were seeking "to define a Scottish identity in relation to the English (and French)."[50] At the turn of the seventeenth century, the national churches of England and Scotland were both clearly not Catholic. Both had been profoundly shaped by the Reformation, and, in his study of the practice of Protestantism, Ryrie has found "the same pious phenomena on both sides of the border."[51] However, constitutionally, the churches in the two countries functioned quite differently. In Scotland, in contrast to England, the Reformation had been introduced by a parliament acting not under the direction of the monarch, but against her will: until her (forced) abdication, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, remained Catholic and mass continued to be said at the Scottish court.[52] Her son, James VI, was Reformed, but in contrast to his cousin,

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[49] Ibid., 228–253; quotation at 253.

[50] Joanna Martin, 'The Border, England and the English in some older Scots lyric and occasional poems', in: Mark P. Bruce/Katherine H. Terrell (eds), *The Anglo-Scottish border and the shaping of identity, 1300–1600* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 87–102: 99.

[51] Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 471.

[52] For the Scottish Reformation, see Jane Dawson, *Scotland re-formed, 1488–1587* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008 [= 1960]); Alec Ryrie, *The origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

Elizabeth I of England, he had no constitutional role in the organisation of the church. When in 1603 James VI of Scotland succeeded Elizabeth I to become also James I of England, England and Scotland were united under one crown and the king found himself with quite different relationships to the two national churches.

Despite his earlier rejection of ritual, on his move to London James found a taste for Anglican liturgy and episcopacy. He subsequently sought to introduce reforms, both north and south of the border, intended to bring the Churches of Scotland and England into closer conformity with each other.[53] The reforms to be implemented in Scotland were, however, more far-reaching. In 1618, the so-called "Five Articles of Perth" were passed by the Church of Scotland's General Assembly; these required congregants to kneel to receive communion; allowed private baptisms and sick communions; instructed that confirmation should be carried out by bishops (thereby ensuring that bishops would be reintroduced into and retained in the Scottish church); and reintroduced a reduced calendar of holy days, including Christmas and Easter. These practices, all familiar in the Reformed church in England, albeit to some extent controversially so, were rejected in Scotland as "papist" practices. The subsequent rebellion against Charles I's attempt to impose a Scottish Prayer Book modelled on England's Book of Common Prayer, led both countries into nearly a decade of civil war, from 1642 until 1651, and, after the execution of the king on 30 January 1649, as a Commonwealth with a congregationally organised church until 1660. The Presbyterian Scots viewed the English church, both under Charles I and after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 under his son Charles II, as showing alarming pro-Catholic tendencies. However, no seventeenth-century Catholic would have viewed the English church as anything but Protestant.

Scottish resistance to these developments may have been as much an attempt to fend off an encroaching Englishness as about theological suspicion of these papist practices. Not all resisted: the political historian Colin Kidd observes that unionist thought in Scotland has been "quite compatible with strains of cultural nationalism, including legal nationalism and,

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[53] This is convincingly argued by Alan R. Macdonald, 'James VI and I, the Church of Scotland, and British Ecclesiastical Convergence', *Historical Journal* 48 (2005) 885–903.

most defiantly, religious nationalism,"[54] and that the accession of James VI to the English throne seemed to some "to confirm expectations the providence had foreordained a union of the two Protestant kingdoms."[55] Similarly, in Ryrie's view, "the two countries' Reformations had been interwoven from the beginning, and it was the vision of a shared Reformation which turned 'Britain' from a humanist pipe-dream into a serious cultural and political project."[56] Kidd sees James VI's attempts to reform the Scottish church and the king's "ambition for enhanced ecclesiastical uniformity in Britain" (as the Scottish historian Alan MacDonald describes it[57]), as part of his attempt to bring about a firmer union between Scotland and England, exemplified by his decision to style himself "King of Great Britain" rather than "King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland."[58] MacDonald, by contrast, regards James's reforms not so much as a scheme for political unity, but as the first stage to the realisation of a much wider vision, that of "European ecumenical convergence."[59] Another Scottish historian, Roger Mason, concludes, however, that "in the century following the Scottish Reformation in 1560, while the drive towards religious uniformity across the British isles was ever present and often powerfully articulated, the Stuart dynasty's new British imperium remained as much divided as it was united by its common Protestant faith."[60] Increasingly, Scottish theologians and historians emphasised the characteristic form of the Scottish church and defended it against the English. Thus, as Kidd observes, although the Scottish Reformation had consolidated the use of the English language, rather than Scots or Gaelic, histories of the Scottish churches sought to use the early history of Scottish Christianity to demonstrate its particular order; David Buchanan, for instance, presented "a distinctive case for Presbyterianism in Scotland as part of the historic fabric

[54] Colin Kidd, *Union and unionisms. Political thought in Scotland, 1500–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 7.

[55] Ibid., 43.

[56] Ryrie, *Being Protestant* (as note 51), 471.

[57] Macdonald, 'James VI and I' (as note 53), 899.

[58] Kidd, *Union and unionisms* (as note 54), 54–55.

[59] Macdonald, 'James VI and I' (as note 53), 899–900. For James's European ecumenical vision, see W. B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[60] Roger A. Mason, 'Divided by a Common Faith? Protestantism and Union in Post-Reformation Britain', in: John McCallum (ed.), *Scotland's Long Reformation. New perspectives on Scottish religion, c.1500–c.1660* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 202–225: 204.

of the national Church of Scotland before it succumbed to Romish corruption."[61]

The development of Scottish self-understanding was supported by the National Covenant of 1638, which, as Kidd puts it, "upheld the distinctive national traditions of the Scots Reformation Anglican encroachments", and by the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, which articulated "a sacred commitment to unite the churches of England, Scotland and Ireland on the common grounds of presbyterian church government."[62] Both were rooted in a strong sense that Scotland stood in a particular relationship to God. Scottish commitment to Presbyterianism was cemented by the weakness of the re-established episcopal church at the Restoration in 1660, and by the government policies which, as Alastair Raffe argues, "served as catalyst for Presbyterian non-conformity."[63] In the negotiations that preceded the Union in 1707, the Scots insisted that an Act preserving the Presbyterian church in perpetuity be passed before they would agree to the Act of Union.[64] This "Act for Securing the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government" in Scotland was matched by an "Act for Securing the Church of England as by Law Established" so that, as Mason points out, the Union "gave statutory backing to the idea that Britain was indeed divided by its common faith."[65] However, Kidd has also shown that in Scotland strongly international, Europe-focused discussions preceded the Union: in particular, "the case against the Union was strikingly cosmopolitan and far from insular."[66] Scottish identity was bound up with the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and forged with a focus on the covenanted relationship to God, but it was also developed in constant conversation with and as contrast to English identity. At the same time, geographically, Scots had a much shorter sea voyage to Scandinavia and the Baltic than to many English ports, and the economic situation of Scotland

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[61] Kidd, *Union and unionisms* (as note 54), 50–53; quotation at 53.

[62] Ibid., 61.

[63] Alasdair Raffe, 'The Restoration, the Revolution and the Failure of Episcopacy in Scotland', in: Tim Harris/Stephen Taylor (eds), *The final crisis of the Stuart monarchy. The revolutions of 1688–91 in their British, Atlantic and European contexts* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), 87–108: 92.

[64] Kidd, *Union and unionisms* (as note 54), 81.

[65] Mason, 'Divided by a Common Faith?' (as note 60), 225.

[66] Kidd, *Union and unionisms* (as note 54), 72.

meant that more Scots than English left their home country to seek work.[67] Perhaps Scots in general retained a stronger sense of European identity?

5. Religion and the EU Referendum

These questions of religious allegiance and identity play out not just in media debates about Britain's relationship to the EU, but also in voting patterns in the 2016 referendum itself. As is now well known, although 51% of those Britons who cast a vote in the referendum voted to leave the EU, there were considerable regional differences. Scotland (62.0%), London (59.9%) and Northern Ireland (55.8%) all voted to remain, whilst Wales (52.5%) and the rest of England (53.4%) voted to leave. However, this apparently clear confirmation of Scots as the more cosmopolitan and the English as the more insular represent just one snapshot. The 1975 British referendum on continued membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) shows a quite different picture: at that time Northern Ireland (52.1%) and Scotland (58.4%), whilst in favour of remaining in the EEC, were markedly the *least* in favour of doing so: Wales voted by 66.5%, and England by 68.7% to stay in. The shift between 1975 and 2016 offers an important reminder that whatever conclusions about perceptions of identity may be drawn from history – whether of the Reformation or more generally –, they cannot be viewed as deterministic. Moreover, it is also apparent from Scottish opinion polls that attitudes towards the EU are not independent of other political discussions. In a poll undertaken in March 2012, Scots were evenly split on the question of EU membership: 43% believed that the UK should remain in the EU, 43% that it should leave.[68] Autumn 2012 saw considerable political debate about the question of Scot-

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[67] See T. M. Devine, *Scotland's empire, 1600–1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), 8; for patterns of emigration, ibid., 5–7.

[68] See http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/w3436dvzzd/Democracy%20Results%20120124%20GB%20sample%20%282%29.pdf, 29 (accessed 22.02.2018). This poll showed that attitudes towards the EU varied significantly across England, Scotland and Wales:

	England (3119)	Scotland (1007)	Wales (1034)
Withdraw from EU	51	43	46
Remain in EU	35	43	38
Don't know / would not vote	14	14	17

land's membership of the EU in the event of a vote for Scottish independence. A subsequent opinion poll in February 2013 found that 53% of Scots would vote for the UK to stay in the EU, 34% would vote to leave,[69] and 61% believed that an independent Scotland should remain in the EU.[70] The Scottish referendum result, in which 62% voted for the UK to remain in the EU, must therefore be seen in the context of the wider political debate.

The results of the 2016 referendum showed considerable demographic differences in England (though this was much less the case in Scotland), and here religion also plays a role.[71] 54% of men voted leave, whilst 51% of women voted remain. Age was an important factor: 60% of 18- to 35-year-olds voted remain, whilst 61% of those aged 65 or above voted leave.[72] 51% of white British people voted leave but over 60% of every other ethnic group voted remain. 74% of those with a degree voted remain; 78% of those with no qualifications voted leave. In terms of religion, a majority of those self-identifying as Christians voted leave, whilst a majority of those of other religions voted remain (including nearly 69% of British Muslims). Those identifying as members of the Church of England were particularly likely to vote to leave: 60% as opposed to 40% voting remain.[73] Roman Catholics and Presbyterians (including members of the Church of Scotland) voted by a small majority to remain. Baptists and Methodists were equally divided. A small majority of Jews and other

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[69] See https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/migrations/en-uk/files/Assets/ Docs/Polls/scotland-attitudes-towards-EU-membership-2013-tables.pdf, 5–8 (accessed 22.02.2018).

[70] Ibid., 9.

[71] The following summary is based on Kirby Swales, 'Understanding the Leave vote', http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/1319222/natcen_brexplanations-report-final-web2.pdf, with statistical tables at www.natcen.ac.uk/media/1319221/understanding-the-leave-vote-formatted-table-annex-final.xlsx (accessed 22.02.2018).

[72] This demographic breakdown also shows a shift from 1975 when "pro-leave voting was more common amongst those in younger age groups." See: Ben Clements, 'The referendums of 1975 and 2016 illustrate the continuity and change in British Euroscepticism', http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2017/07/31/the-referendums-of-1975-and-2016-illustrate-the-continuity-and-change-in-british-euroscepticism/ (accessed 22.02.2018).

[73] Ben Clements, 'How religious groups voted in the 2016 referendum on Britain's EU membership', *British Religion in Numbers* (11 May 2017); http://www.brin.ac.uk/2017/how-religious-groups-voted-at-the-2016-referendum-on-britains-eu-membership/ (accessed 22.02.2018).

Christian groups voted to leave.[74] These results are particularly interesting given that the Church of Scotland, which had remained neutral during the independence referendum, in 2016 took a clear position advocating remain, whilst the official position of the Church of England was neutral.[75] However, a closer analysis of the voting of those who self-identify with the Church of England shows a complex and curious pattern: a smaller majority of those who see themselves as Church of England and are regular churchgoers voted leave (55%) than of those who see themselves as Church of England and do not go to church regularly (69%).[76] Non-churchgoers who identify with the Church of England thus emerge as one of the strongest groups of leave voters.

6. Conclusion

As already observed, history can never be deterministic. Nonetheless, it is striking that the appeal to the Reformation in the English debates about Europe in conjunction with the 2016 Referendum correlates with a complex historiographical ambivalence about the relationship between the English church and the wider Reformation movement. This historiography to some extent reflects and records actual differences in the progress of the Reformation in England, but it is also influenced by a retrospective reading of the history of the Reformation from the situation of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, much of which sought to position the Church of England in contrast to Puritans and Presbyterians and, later, evangelicals. By contrast, the historiography of the Scottish Reformation is far less equivocal about both the Protestant nature of the Reformation and the European influence. However, any sense that the Scots are intrinsically more European in approach needs to be balanced by a consideration of the 1975 referendum results and by the shift in attitudes related to the independence debates. What the appeals to the English Reformation in the EU debates do suggest, particularly when read in conjunction with the voting statistics in the 2016

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[74] Ibid.

[75] See Charlotte Methuen, 'Die europäische Krise und die Kirchen. Eine Perspektive aus dem Vereinigten Königreich', *Una Sancta* 72 (2017) 133–145.

[76] Greg Smith/Linda Woodhead, 'Religion and Brexit: populism and the Church of England', *Religion, State and Society* 46 (2018) 206–223 (doi: 10.1080/09637494.2018.1483861), 209–210. Smith and Woodhead consider the questions of religion and the voting in the EU referendum in much more detail than is possible here.

referendum, is (as Scherer's research indicates) that a cultural sense of religious belonging continues to form British identities, despite the significant drop in regular church-going and explicit religious allegiance. Religion, and religious history, still shape who we understand ourselves to be.

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Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag untersucht, wie die englische Reformation argumentativ in Debatten über den Brexit verwendet wurde. Derartige, oft ausserordentlich polemische Verweise spiegeln die Ambivalenz im Hinblick auf das Verhältnis zwischen der englischen Reformation und der Reformation auf dem europäischen Festland wider, die in der Geschichtsschreibung über die englische Reformation wurzelt. Im Gegensatz dazu anerkennt die Geschichtsschreibung über die schottische Reformation den klaren Einfluss Genfs und bestätigt die Verbindungen zwischen der Kirche von Schottland und anderen reformierten Kirchen. Im letzten Abschnitt des Beitrags wird die Beziehung zwischen konfessioneller Identität und Abstimmungsverhaltensmustern im Referendum über die EU des Jahres 2016 näher betrachtet, und diese werden den Abstimmungsergebnissen des Referendums von 1975 über die Mitgliedschaft in der Europäischen Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft gegenübergestellt.