



## Mission after Brexit

Eighty-six years ago, Winston Churchill wrote “We are with Europe, but not of it. We are linked but not combined. We are interested and associated but not absorbed.”<sup>1</sup> The 2016 referendum on the UK’s continuing membership of the EU was not the first time UK voters had gone to the polls in an EU referendum, but it is certainly the one that history will recall in any post-2016 account of Europe.

In 1993, with the emergence of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), voters had a determinedly Eurosceptical political option. The threat posed by UKIP to the electability of the Conservative party and its former leader and Prime Minister, David Cameron, was serious enough for him to support an EU Referendum Bill, first presented to Parliament in May 2013, and the subsequent European Union Referendum Act 2015 with provision for a non-binding referendum on the 23rd June, 2016.

After the referendum votes had been counted, it became clear that 52% of UK voters wanted the UK to leave the EU with 48% wanting it to remain. The stock markets reacted badly, the British pound collapsed, the political establishment was visibly shaken, businesses began calculating the cost of an independent UK, and the Prime Minister announced his resignation. Cities across Europe, including Paris, began immediately wooing the financial institutions that were deeply embedded in the City of London.

The newly elected Prime Minister, Theresa May, is now managing a post-referendum governmental machinery that is wholly consumed with the question of how and when to invoke Article 50 of the EU Treaty, the mechanism by which a member state leaves the EU. Her EU counterparts, especially the French, German and Italian leaderships, are beginning their own Brexit discussions.

CONTINUED INSIDE

## EDITORIAL

### A Lament for Europe

The four co-editors of Vista are all British missiologists with a love for Europe. In our first post-UK referendum edition of Vista we take a distinctly personal approach to what has been, for us and for many across Europe, a deeply-felt and disturbing moment in our recent history.

The sense of disappointment, disbelief, anger, grief, and embarrassment, has mellowed somewhat but the note of lament is evident in every article in this edition of Vista. But just as evident is our unshaken confidence in the gospel and the need for deep reflection on the implications of this decision for Britain and the rest of Europe.

The two lead articles by Darrell Jackson and Jonathan Chaplin encourage church and mission leaders to use this moment to ask fundamental questions about their values and practice and their future political engagement in Europe.

Chris Ducker looks at the role that identity played in the decision and what this means for mission post-Brexit, and Jim Memory considers some of the controlling narratives that may have motivated many British Christians to vote Leave.

This edition of Vista concludes with three shorter articles: an abstract of a Redcliffe MA dissertation exploring the attitudes to mission in mainland Europe in UK Anglican churches; a review of “God and the EU”, Chaplin and Wilton’s collection of essays on political theology and the EU; and a personal piece by Jo Appleton that reminds us of the sovereignty of God even over Brexit and all its implications.

A future edition will feature non-British perspectives on this issue but, for now, we would really encourage you to leave your comments on the Vista blog: [europeanmission.redcliffe.org](http://europeanmission.redcliffe.org)

Jim Memory

## BREXIT: What are the implications?

When the UK invokes Article 50 it will take many years to deal with the political and economic fall-out as it establishes a new relationship with its European neighbours. Politicians concede, or capitalise on, the need to address England's historic and constitutional relationship with the strongly pro-remain countries of Scotland and Northern Ireland.

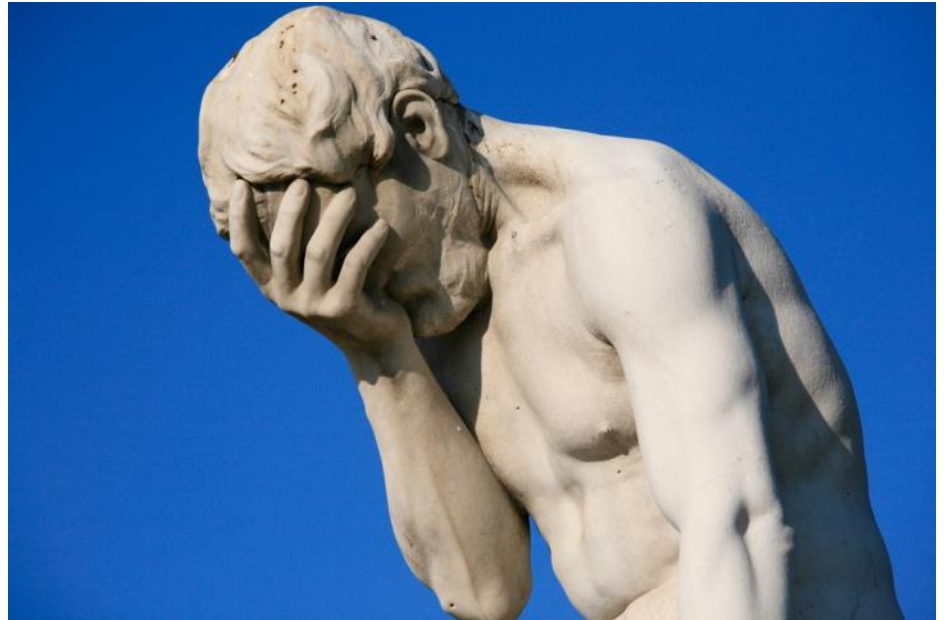
Ordinary UK and EU citizens who have relocated to another country will face the uncertainty surrounding EU residency, continuation of employment, and the threat to the status of missionaries from the UK working in other EU countries. British nationals who have retired to European countries face an uncertain future. Some of these are serving as pastors in British migrant churches in Europe.

Reports of racially motivated hate crimes have risen fivefold since the referendum results were announced. Polish residents have been called 'Polish vermin' and 'Polish scum!', verbally and as graffiti in the UK neighbourhoods where they live. Muslims, Romanians, and Middle Eastern origin people have all been abused.

It is highly unlikely that the UK will wish to do anything other than negotiate access to the single market of the EU. The EU insists that the UK's access to the single market will come at the cost of the free movement of people. Ironically, after a Brexit, there will be no legal mechanism by which the UK could return refugees, travelling from the European mainland, to the European country that they had first arrived in upon entering the EU.<sup>2</sup>

Soul-searching within the EU institutions laments the perceptions of its democratic deficit, its mismanagement of the migration crisis, the threat to the Schengen zone as a result of its failure to increase external border vigilance, and its failure to promote the benefits of the single market (especially the labour, digital, energy, and telecommunications markets).

The EU also has to deal with the consequence of Article 50 being invoked by the UK government. Initial indications from the President of the European Commission pointed to the desire for rapid exit. Since then, leaders from various member states have urged that pressure be taken off the UK government and that, in the interim, the EU should make every effort to help the UK understand what would be lost by its departure. Ironically, the presence of Article 50 in the EU Treaty weakens the case advanced by critics that the EU is an irreversibly federalist project. Whatever conclusion one draws about the inclusion of Article 50, it has been made clear by the



Statue of Cain in Tuileries Garden, Paris

Photo: Alex Proimos, Wikipedia Commons

EU leaders that no negotiation concerning terms of withdrawal will be entered into until Article 50 is invoked. When, where, and by whom this is invoked remains to be seen.<sup>3</sup>

### EUROPE: The implications for mission within and beyond the EU

I arrived in Hungary to begin a new mission posting in January 2004, several months before Hungary joined the EU. Serving as missionaries after Hungary joined the EU was immeasurably simpler. Four years later I joined the faculty of a mission-training College in the UK where I was assisted by a Lithuanian intern and taught many EU students. Over the next five years the immigration screw was gradually tightened on non-EU students and the College was forced to re-focus its programmes. In the event of the UK leaving the EU, UK Bible and theological Colleges will face the increasing challenge of recruiting non-UK students from the EU.

I am a Board member of a European mission agency deploying UK and other EU citizens across Europe. We don't work only in EU countries, but our operations are simplified significantly by our freedom to live and work freely across the EU. The likelihood is that a significant part of the UK conservative evangelical community voted to leave the EU. Their right to do so is not in question, but I wonder whether they have made the connection between their vote and the economic consequence of having to support missionaries across Europe. Currency fluctuations are not new to overseas mission agencies but an economic downturn that is

**If the current situation has encouraged mission agencies in Europe to ask questions about their core business and the values of service, radical availability, and sacrifice that shape this, then God will continue to be glorified.**

the direct consequence of a decision for which many evangelicals probably voted, surely requires those sharing responsibility for it to dig deeply into their pockets to ensure the continued presence of UK missionaries in Europe.

Of course, some European missionaries who voted to remain have suggested that we need to have an ongoing confidence in God's faithfulness, in our identity in Christ, and in confessing our primary loyalty to Christ, "for He was, is, and always will be the only hope for Europe; that did not change yesterday." Less prosaically, another mission leader based on the continent simply wrote on his Facebook page "silly, silly, silly, silly, silly Britain!"

Much as the churches spanned the political divide during the Cold War in Europe, it may prove to be the case that European churches manage to rise above mere nationalist agendas and share their witness to a missionary God whose heart of love

extends to people of every nation. Playing their part in the move of God's Spirit across the European continent, mission agencies will continue to engage the Good News of Jesus despite any increase in

the levels of complexity involved in funding, placing, and supporting missionaries working within the context of any new political realities of Europe.

Missionaries and mission leaders across Europe have encouraged European Christians not to lose hope. They have urged those who support, those who pray, and those who are sent, to remain confident in their identity in Christ, to



condemn of all forms of xenophobia, to continue supporting vulnerable refugees, and to work for societies that are genuinely open and welcoming.

If the current situation has encouraged mission agencies in Europe to ask questions again about their core business and the values of service, radical availability, and sacrifice that shape this, then God will continue to be glorified, even in the midst of political turmoil and uncertainty. Pray for the light of Christ to continue shining in Europe!

Darrell Jackson

Senior Lecturer in Missiology, Morling College, Sydney  
Board Member of European Christian Mission International

*This is a condensed and revised version of an article published in the September 2016 edition of the Lausanne Global Analysis.*

<sup>1</sup> Winston Churchill, "The United States of Europe," in *The Saturday Evening Post* and *John Bull*, 15th February 1930.

<sup>2</sup> EU legislation currently allows for a refugee who has been detained in the UK, and who can be shown to have travelled to the UK from another EU country, to be returned to the EU country that they first entered when they arrived in the EU.

<sup>3</sup> The origins of Article 50 were sown in the 2004 draft versions of the EU Constitution (rejected by two referenda in the Netherlands and France in 2005). The insertion of Article 50 envisages a Europe of a rather different nature to that of the indissoluble nature of the federation of the USA (established by decision of the US Supreme Court in 1869).

## FAITH IN THE EU — EVEN AFTER BREXIT?

JONATHAN CHAPLIN

This article is based on a paper delivered by Jonathan Chaplin at the Redcliffe College Summer School on 13th July 2016. Those who would like to watch that presentation can do so via the following video link: <http://tinyurl.com/jchaplin>. A review of *God and the EU*, edited by Jonathan Chaplin and Gary Wilton can be found on page 9 of this edition of Vista.

**As a nation, Britain was extremely badly prepared for the referendum on EU membership. There is a longstanding legacy of British neglect of the EU, indeed of all things 'European', not least among those who shape public debate in politics and the media.**

Unlike many Europeans, few UK citizens master European languages or learn about European history, culture or politics. Even after 40 years of EU membership the UK still remains far more fascinated by American politics than European politics (we might, perhaps, be excused for being so just at the moment, although not for the best of reasons).

Turnout at elections to the European Parliament have been almost as low as at local elections – well below 40%. Little of the vast experience of EU affairs many British politicians have accumulated over decades gets much airing at home. UK politicians never return from EU meetings praising its achievements or informing citizens of its key debates. Notoriously, the new foreign secretary Boris Johnson made his journalistic career in Brussels by sending a constant stream of negative, often misleading and in some cases simply false, messages about the EU, thereby helping to create the very climate of ignorance and suspicion that he then sought to exploit in the campaign.

The result of our longstanding aversion to taking 'Europe' seriously is that we faced the most momentous constitutional debate Britain has known for decades utterly ill-equipped to choose wisely. What we needed was something like a royal commission meeting over several years, engaging in extensive consultation and analysis, and then a campaign of intensive citizen education and participation. What we got was an abrupt, narrow-minded and deeply dispiriting contest over the net individual economic benefit of staying or leaving. Remain's 'project fear' could not compete with the simplistic, visceral appeals to 'taking back control', although the Leave side failed to spell out what they would do with their newly regained control and how it would shore up a British identity which they also couldn't define. But on the day, 'identity trumped economics'.

**The result of our longstanding aversion to taking 'Europe' seriously is that we faced the most momentous constitutional debate Britain has known for decades utterly ill-equipped to choose wisely.**

Christian political theologians have been part of this neglect – even though there were valiant last minute efforts by some Christians to remedy the gaping knowledge deficit, such as *Reimagining Europe*.<sup>1</sup> There isn't today a single available academic monograph on the EU by a British political theologian – even 60 years after it was created.<sup>2</sup>

But while the future course of events remains very uncertain, we must reckon with the results of a clear democratic vote for Brexit and prepare for

an EU without the UK. The questions of whether we can retain faith in 'the European project', and what Christianity's contribution to that project might be, will, however, remain with us even if Brexit happens.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF



The EU will continue to matter enormously to the UK. We will continue to relate to the EU as our largest neighbouring political institution in multiple ways, and we'll need to keep clarifying our national attitude to it. This won't only be a matter for government. Non-government institutions such as churches, universities, NGOs or businesses will need to define how these entities relate to the EU or to the European states that will continue to be shaped by the EU. We may be exiting the political institution called the EU but we will not be leaving 'Europe' or European civil society or the European economy. Indeed our relations to 'Europe' – at both governmental and nongovernmental levels – will become even more important after Brexit because there will be so much that we can no longer take for granted, so much that will need to be rethought. Perhaps, after all, some good may come of that.

But the EU should continue to matter to us also as Christians and not only as citizens; or, rather, it should matter to us as *Christian citizens*. We'll need to define what is our faith perspective on the EU, just as we need to continually define our perspective on our own nation-state and its component parts and to all other international institutions with which we necessarily interact in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world – a world in which, like it or not, we are all global citizens.

Yet most British people, including most Christians, have no idea that most of the key founders of what became the EU were devout Christians who saw the initiative as flowing directly from their faith and, specifically, their rich and deep Christian Democratic commitments to peace, solidarity, subsidiarity, justice and liberty.<sup>3</sup> Most Britons, including most Christians, went to vote on 23 June knowing nothing of this remarkable, transformative political movement or its unique role in the founding and evolution of the EU. But the achievement of these post-war Christian statesmen in creating a historically unique transnational political structure that made lasting European peace, and the prospect of Europe-wide solidarity and justice, possible, was remarkable. Some might think it is now too late to bother to acquaint ourselves with this unique history. On the contrary, as the EU, with or without the UK, faces its greatest threats ever, it becomes even more pressing to do so, especially for Christians with a heart for Europe.

**(As Christian citizens) we'll need to define what is our faith perspective on the EU, just as we need to continually define our perspective on our own nation-state and its component parts and to all other international institutions with which we necessarily interact in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.**



UK Prime Minister David Cameron meeting with President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz

The Christian founders of the EU were far from saints but they brought an inspiring vision of transnational cooperation to their work. We still have much to learn from this vision even as we must critique and reconstruct it for our very different times. Yet on both sides the referendum campaign was almost entirely couched in the insular language of the 'British national interest' – as if we knew exactly what we were talking about when we use that phrase and as if it were a self-justifying objective – a kind of argument-clincher. As if British citizens could not be brought to care about the wider interests of Europe at a time of multiple and serious crises, or indeed the interests of those of the wider world in which the EU is major global player and in which the UK could exercise significant leadership if it finally resolved its relationship with the EU.

But almost all political leaders passed by opportunities to ask the searching question that Archbishop Justin Welby admirably did pose in an important interview that was only fleetingly reported: 'how can Britain best continue to offer its distinctive services to Europe and the wider world?'<sup>4</sup> That is: how can we *stand in solidarity* with our European neighbours rather than, repeating the UK's familiar 'transactional' mentality, only asking what we can *get out of* the relationship?<sup>5</sup> That challenging and radical question will remain before us as we negotiate a new and likely difficult relationship with the EU in the unsettling months and years ahead. As we define our answers to that question, we will even more need to join together – after 23

June, with even greater humility – with other Christians across Europe who have been reflecting on the imperatives of European solidarity for many decades.<sup>6</sup> We will most certainly need their help, and they may even need ours.

Jonathan Chaplin

Director, Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics, Cambridge ([www.klice.co.uk](http://www.klice.co.uk)).

*His most recent book, co-edited with Gary Wilton, is God and the EU: Faith in the European Project (Routledge 2016) which is reviewed on page 9.*

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.reimaginingeurope.co.uk/the-eu-and-the-culpable-silence-of-english-speaking-political-theology/>. See generally the *Reimagining Europe* blog hosted by the Church of England and Church of Scotland: <http://www.reimaginingeurope.co.uk/>. See also the EU referendum, page of the KLICE website: <http://klice.co.uk/index.php/eu-referendum-2016>

<sup>2</sup> But see Jonathan Chaplin and Gary Wilton, eds, *God and the EU: Faith in the European Project* (London: Routledge, 2016)

<sup>3</sup> See Ben Ryan, *A Soul for Europe* (London: Theos, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/home-affairs/house/72877/justin-welby-eu-debate-not-all-about-us-its-about-our-vision-world>

<sup>5</sup> See Guy Milton, 'The outcome of the EU referendum viewed from Brussels', KLICE Comment July/August 2016, <http://klice.co.uk/index.php/news/15/125/KLICE-Comment-July-August-2016>

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g.: 'What future for Europe? Reaffirming the European project as building a community of values'. An open letter of CEC to churches and partner organisations in Europe and an invitation to dialogue and consultation (Council of European Churches, 8-10 June, Belgium); and K. Beidenkopf, B. Geremek and K. Michalski, *The Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe: Concluding Remarks* (Vienna: Institute for Human Sciences/Brussels: European Commission, 2004).



**“Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union?” is, at face value, a straightforward question, even if there are complex issues to be considered in answering it.**

In part voters in the UK’s EU referendum were weighing up economic costs and benefits, and political advantages and disadvantages to staying within the EU (which have been well described elsewhere). But in no small measure the British electorate was making a decision based on two competing narratives about who we are and what is our place in the world. This was a vote about *identity*. As one analyst<sup>1</sup> wrote the morning after the referendum, “Identity has trumped economics.”

In some ways this was instinctive, rather than deliberative, a reflection of voters’ values and core beliefs. This explains the feelings of shock, anger and, especially, mourning described by many on the losing Remain side: they had not merely lost an argument – rather, their understanding of themselves was challenged, and their identity as “European” or “global citizen” threatened.

With the benefit of two months’ reflection since June’s referendum, what can we say about Brexit and issues of identity from a specifically Christian (and missiological) perspective?

**Three issues of identity**

Firstly, there is an ongoing struggle between different identities and loyalties.<sup>2</sup> This is illustrated by the fact that, of those considering themselves “English not British”, 79% voted to leave; of those considering themselves “more British than English”, only 37% voted to leave.<sup>3</sup> In this instance, there is greater compatibility between the notions of Britishness and Europeanness than between Englishness and Europeanness. For those interested in issues of identity and the success of the ‘European project,’ one key question is whether multiple identities are understood (and felt) to be compatible and mutually supportive, or in conflict and contradictory.<sup>4</sup> Does feeling European necessarily make us less British, Dutch or Romanian?

Secondly, Christians are absolutely right to stress that our ultimate identity is in Jesus Christ and this surpasses all other, earthly, identities (Galatians 3:27-28). However, we remain human beings located in time and space and with cultural, ethnic, geographic



and other identities, even if these are to be considered either temporary or less significant than our Christian identity. The response of many Christians who voted Remain has been to reassert their identity as Christians but there is a great danger that in their disillusionment they will disengage from politics. It is imperative that this does not happen. The voices of those disagreeing with Brexit (a not insignificant 48.1% of voters) should not be silenced; political debate must continue.

Thirdly, we are faced with the question of *missiological focus*. What is the respective significance of the local, regional, national, international and global within our faith and our understanding as a community of believers? For the modern day missionary, what is the scale we ought to relate to? If a majority of Londoners relate to being (in some sense) European but others in the South East identify as English and yet others understand themselves as British, what should be our missional horizon?

Contemporary European history is a tale of growing, even resurgent, nationalism, from Britain in the West to Russia in the East. National identities will continue to have a strong appeal, despite – or because of – concerns over the future survival of the nation-state. The grand project that is the European Union will be tested by Brexit but it is almost certain to survive this test; it may even be strengthened by it. But those involved in Christian mission

across Europe would do well not to ally themselves too closely with either national or supra-national identities, ideologies, or institutions. These are social constructs – not just the EU but even the idea of Europe as a distinct entity.

**Local and universal perspective**

Christian mission in Europe must creatively engage with two areas which at first may seem contradictory: the local, and the universal. Firstly, the local – we are each located in a particular neighbourhood, a community, amongst citizens perhaps most likely to share our understanding of identity but who ultimately we should understand as our immediate mission field; our immediate neighbours. And secondly, the universal – we each find ourselves on the same fragile planet, children of the same loving Father and equally created in His image. These fellow humans may migrate to Europe, or live elsewhere in our ‘global village’, but either way they too are our neighbours.

**Christian mission in Europe must creatively engage with two areas which at first may seem contradictory: the local, and the universal.**

The UK has long been a reluctant or “awkward partner” within the EU, so in some ways Brexit should not have come as the surprise it did. Whilst

Article 50 has not yet been invoked to formally start Britain’s withdrawal from the EU, Prime Minister Theresa May has reaffirmed that “Brexit means Brexit,” and there is seemingly no turning back. Could other countries follow suit, or is this another case of British exceptionalism?

As we have seen above, citizens of modern day Europe continue to connect with multiple identities, which may at times be portrayed or understood as contradictory, in which case national identities may well be asserted over European or international ones and dissatisfaction with the 'European project' could conceivably lead to further exits from the European Union. However, the rise of global culture and global citizenship may come to test national identities more comprehensively in the future.

Either way, the missiological focus need not shift, if we are committed to a strong presence in our local environments, and a

parallel commitment to a global perspective embracing all of humanity. Whilst Brexit can partly be understood to have been a defensive, nationalist response to increased internationalisation and globalisation, it is unlikely to have checked for long the relentless process of globalisation. As Christians respond to problems that are increasingly global in nature (climate change, terrorism, refugee crises, etc.) and continue their commitment to the local, we might see nationalist perspectives as less persuasive, even if such a local-global emphasis is countercultural.

Chris Ducker  
Lecturer in Missiology, Redcliffe College

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Goodwin, 'Brexit: Identity trumps economics in revolt against elites', *Financial Times*, 24 June 2016

<sup>2</sup> Alastair Roberts identifies the two main conflicting identities within the UK as 'cosmopolitanism' versus 'provincialism', see 'Brexit and the Moral Vision of Nationhood,' <https://mereorthodoxy.com/political-social-earthquake-brexit-future-britain/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/>

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, *A Community of Europeans?: Transnational Identities and Public Spheres* by Thomas Risse (2010)

## BREXIT: THE STORIES WE LIVE BY

JIM MEMORY

**For the last seven years I have been researching and lecturing on mission in Europe at Redcliffe College. In the months leading up to the referendum vote I was invited to help the UK Evangelical Alliance to prepare materials<sup>1</sup> to help UK Christians think through the issues. In April I gave a public lecture at Redcliffe College called: *In or Out? How should Christians approach the EU Referendum?* And during May and June I delivered this material on ten further occasions at churches of many different denominations around the UK.**

I tried to represent the Leave and Remain campaigns fairly, to pierce through the misrepresentation of facts (on both sides) and give a balanced consideration of the arguments for and against the UK's membership of the EU from the perspective of Christian mission. In the end I just wanted to help Christians, and anyone else who cared to listen, to understand the issues and make an informed and prayerful decision.

What I learned though, particularly in the Q&A times after my presentation and in subsequent conversations, was that many Christians who said they were going to vote Leave had narratives that dominated their perspective. They didn't all use the same language but three distinct controlling narratives were repeated over and over again.

### 1. "We are a Christian country"

Many UK Christians continue to believe that Britain's history sets it apart from

the rest of Europe. Christianity, the Bible and the Reformation have shaped its identity and institutions. Furthermore, its sovereignty and borders have remained intact for the best part of a thousand years. Yet alongside this there is a narrative about the EU. Many of the Christians I spoke to saw the EU as a threat to Christian Britain: "The EU is secularist. As a Christian country we should have nothing to do with it".

### 2. "The EU is Babylon"

David Hathaway<sup>2</sup> is not the only Christian author to draw eschatological parallels between Babylon and the EU but he is probably the best known. It was clear to me that some Christians have incorporated his ideas into their thinking. Several people I spoke to were convinced that the European Parliament Building in Strasbourg had been constructed according to the exact design of the Tower of Babel.

Whereas the "We are a Christian Country" narrative emphasises Britain's unique identity this parallel narrative draws on prophecies of Daniel and Revelation to portray the EU as a demonic "other", a revived Roman empire that will pave the way for the Antichrist.

### 3. "The nation-state is a God-given institution"

A third narrative was put forward by others who observed that the Bible is supportive of nations but critical of centralised power. Michael Schluter<sup>3</sup> argues this point in his writings: "In both Old and New Testaments, people are differentiated by culture, language and national identity; this is seen positively as God's will, and thus we should not discard it lightly". At the same time, the dangers of concentrating political and economic power



The European Parliament Building in Strasbourg, inaugurated in 1999



Pieter Bruegel's painting (c.1563) of the Tower of Babel at Boijmans Museum, Rotterdam

in the hands of a king or controlling elite are made repeatedly in the Old Testament. This narrative argues that the EU fails on both counts, in that it wrests sovereignty from the nation-state and centralises power in Brussels.

### Controlling Narratives

Evidently not all British Christians support these narratives nor were they the main reasons why the general British populace voted Leave. However my impression was that they were operating as controlling narratives for some Christians. What do I



mean by that? Firstly, a controlling narrative is a dominant narrative, one which in some sense trumps all other considerations. And secondly, it is a narrative that controls the other stories that we tell, frequently distorting our perspectives so that all other stories fit our controlling narrative, even to the extent of affecting our perspectives on mission in Europe. Let's take each of the narratives in turn. I am not going to critique them *per se* but rather consider how when they operate as controlling narratives they distort our perspective.

1. "We are a Christian Country" Evidently this Anglocentric view of history downplays the impact that Christianity, the Bible and the Reformation has had on the rest of Europe. Yet perhaps more significantly it ignores the reality of secularisation. Results from the British Social Attitudes Survey<sup>4</sup> across the last few years have consistently shown around half of Britons saying they have "no religion" as compared to 42% who say they are "Christian".

But this narrative also distorts our perspective on mission. It reinforces the old paradigm of Britain as a Christian heartland which "sends" missionaries but more importantly it undermines the mission challenge on our doorstep – Britain isn't Christian: it needs the gospel. And furthermore it turns the arrival of migrants of other faiths into a threat rather than a tremendous opportunity.

2. "The EU is Babylon" Very few British Christians seem to be aware that the European Coal and Steel Community, the forerunner of the EU, was the brainchild of Christian politicians seeking to build peace in Europe.<sup>5</sup> Putting to one side the hermeneutical questions around the identification of the EU with Babylon, or the absurd argument on the basis of the similarity of a contemporary building with a painter's imagination, what is clear is that the demonization of the "other" inspires hatred not love.

The identification of the EU with Europe in the UK is so strong that when the EU is demonized it has an impact on many fronts. Firstly, it distances us Brits from our fellow Europeans. Even after leaving the EU we will still be Europeans: our histories and cultures are too interconnected for us not to be. But it also has a negative effect on our attitudes to mission in Europe (something which Rosemary Caudwell's research echoes). Other Europeans are not objects of love but of derision and fear. Rather than reaching them we want to distance ourselves from them and keep them out.



"Life Raft" (Ellie Harrison), part of *Doug Fishbone's Leisureland Golf*, a crazy golf art installation. This hole illustrates the plight of migrants risking their lives to enter the UK.

3. "The nation-state is a God-given institution" This narrative argues against the EU but also against the integrity of the United Kingdom, as a nation of nations. The argument that "centralised power in Brussels is bad but centralised power in Westminster is OK" will be received very differently by Christians in Gloucester and Christians in Glasgow.

Yet the theological reification of the nation-state is not only historically anachronistic - nation-states didn't exist until the early modern period; the Bible talks more often than not about *ethne* (tribes or peoples). It is also turns into an absolute something which is temporary. As Revelation 7 reminds us, all the peoples of the earth will come and as one, bow before the Lamb who was slain. As Christians we are called to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to "all peoples" but to bring the eschatological kingdom into our present ("Here there is no Jew or Greek...but Christ is all, and is in all" (Colossians 3:11)). At a time when nationalism is on the rise again across Europe it is a concern that nationalism is becoming a controlling narrative for some British Christians too (see Chris Ducker's article for a more detailed treatment of this).

### The story that we live by

Of course, there is some truth in these stories. British Christians should give thanks for the historical influence of Christianity on their country. There is a place for rebellion against the demonic in all human power structures, even the EU. And we should defend the modern Western nation-state which provides structures of value to all (democracy, rule of law, human rights, etc.). Yet these must never be our controlling narratives. Our controlling narrative as

European Christians, the one which must be at the centre so that it keeps all other narratives in check, was, is and always must be, the Lamb who was slain who sits upon the Throne. To Him alone we bow. His story alone must be the story we live by.

Jim Memory

Lecturer in European Mission  
Redcliffe College

<sup>1</sup> The UK Evangelical Alliance "What kind of EU?" materials are still available on their website along with my article on the missiological perspectives: <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/politics/eu/a-christian-mission-perspective-on-the-eu-referendum.cfm>

<sup>2</sup> Hathaway (2016), *Babylon in Europe*, New Wine Press

<sup>3</sup> Schluter (2016), "Brexit Unless...Three Fundamental Conditions for Staying in the EU", Jubilee Centre, May 2016, <http://www.jubilee-centre.org/brexit-unless-three-fundamental-conditions-staying-eu/>

<sup>4</sup> *British Social Attitudes Survey* (2016), "Change in religious affiliation among adults in Britain", August 2016, <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/1236081/religious-affiliation-over-time-british-social-attitudes.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Jeff Fountain does an excellent job of telling this story in his book *Deeply Rooted: The Forgotten Vision of Robert Schuman*, Eastbourne: Seismos Press (2014)

For many years I have been interested in mission in Europe, encompassing the preaching of the gospel, justice ministries, and engagement in the public square. This deepened when I had the opportunity to live in Brussels in the 1990s, working in the Legal Service of the European Commission.

From my own observations, however, I felt that within churches in the UK there was a lack of engagement or understanding about mission in the continent of Europe. This was reinforced by conversations I had with those involved in a variety of different mission agencies working in Europe, including those engaged in church planting, incarnational ministries, and involvement in the public square in Europe.

It was both my conviction and observations that prompted the research topic for my MA dissertation. Limiting myself to the Anglican church, I surveyed a number of church leaders, and also interviewed church members and leaders from two mission-focused Anglican churches. I also interviewed leaders of three mission agencies based in the UK who work in Europe.

The hierarchy of the Anglican Church takes a positive attitude towards engagement in mainland Europe in mission through the role of the diocese in Europe, its chaplaincies, its links with mission agencies and partners, and through the work of the Conference of European Churches, which is involved in dialogue with the Institutions of the European Union.

Officially the stance of the Church of England in the referendum campaign was neutral. However during the course of the referendum campaign, the Archbishop of Canterbury made clear his decision to vote to remain in the EU. While acknowledging that the EU needed renewed vision and reform, he based his decision on the contribution to peace and social care and the importance of being an outward looking nation. The Bishop of Europe expressed deep disappointment at the outcome of the referendum, describing it as a failure of vocation.

#### Attitudes of church leaders

Thirteen church leaders were asked how they decide what missions to support. Nine leaders gave 'personal contact/

### Study at Redcliffe College

Rosemary has been studying European Mission at Redcliffe College part-time for the last three years. She has had the opportunity to think about the crucial issues that mission in Europe must engage with and to write a Europe-focused dissertation on a subject of her interest.



If you are involved in Christian mission anywhere in Europe (and that includes the UK even after Brexit) and want the opportunity to reflect on it further the European stream of the Contemporary Missiology MA gives you the opportunity to do that.

Find out more at [www.redcliffe.ac.uk](http://www.redcliffe.ac.uk)

member of your church' the highest rating and over half respondents put emphasis on evangelism in one of the top two categories. As one church leader indicated, their involvement in Europe was "not because of any leadership policy or stance; it is because of personal relationships and God's call to people to get involved."

When asked whether they thought there was a need for mission in Europe today, twelve either agreed or strongly agreed. Ten agreed or strongly agreed that it was important for their church to give and pray for mission in mainland Europe, and eight said their church gave regular support to organisations and mission partners working in Europe. While they prayed for members of the UK parliament on a regular basis, none did so for the European Parliament.

#### Attitudes of church members

Like church leaders, the most important factor for almost all the church members interviewed was a personal relationship with the person they were supporting. One interviewee said: "personal relationship is definitely the top... a belief in the person and what they are doing." Hearing personal stories and reports was also important, and for the majority of interviewees, this meant from people involved rather than second-hand reports from mission organisations.

Eight of the eleven respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there was a need for mission in mainland Europe, however the majority felt it should be aimed at poorer and more disadvantaged areas, such as Eastern Europe. Those who disagreed did so on the basis that Europe was not

sufficiently needy, needs being defined in material terms. There did not appear to be any difference in perceived need for mission according to whether a country had a Catholic, Orthodox or indeed a Protestant heritage.

Almost no one got their information about the EU from Christian organisations and churches. When asked what would help stimulate mission in Europe, alongside personal contact and stories, a short-term mission trip was considered important. Despite this, some interviewees felt that it was more important for the church to engage in mission to the local area.

#### Conclusion

Overall, my dissertation would tend to suggest that the perception that there is little interest in mission in mainland Europe might be correct. However, further research is needed to confirm this. The lack of interest would need to be addressed by restoring a commitment to global as well as local mission and re-emphasising the important of evangelism and church planting as an essential component of the *missio Dei*. Finally, and particularly as personal contact is key to inspiring churches in mission, much more needs to be spoken and written about mission in Europe to highlight the urgent need for mission in European countries, and for a new vision for the public square in Europe so that the Body of Christ in the UK can play its part fully in the spiritual renewal that this continent so desperately needs.

Rosemary Caudwell

MA student at Redcliffe College



**Chaplin and Wilton (Eds.), *God and the EU: Faith in the European Project*, Routledge: Abingdon, 2016**

This collection of essays on the contemporary relevance of Christianity to the European Union makes an important contribution to debates on the current travails of the EU and its future. Published just a few months before the UK's referendum on EU membership it provides a long-overdue "political theology of the EU" and a necessary challenge to secular political discourses. The chapters dovetail with each other very well and authors often direct the reader to a more detailed treatment of a topic in another chapter making it a more coherent work than is often the case of multi-author books. For this the authors, and editors, are to be commended.

The book is divided into two parts. The first presents the Christian "inspirations" that contributed to the origins of the EU or which illuminate our understanding of its contemporary structures and aspirations. Chapter 1 examines the Christian foundations of the EU and in particular the content and significance of the Schuman Declaration (1950) which, following its evaluation, is included as an Appendix.

### Christian Foundations of the EU

Chapters 2 to 4 provide accounts of the contributions of Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox voices to the evolution of the EU. Of particular interest is Sander Luitwieler's analysis of the reasons for the often ambivalent attitudes of Protestant leaders towards European integration namely the Protestant understanding of the church as a universal but invisible reality in contrast to the Catholic visible centralised institution.

Three further chapters conclude part one. Economist Werner

Lachman describes the emergence of the German Social Market Economy from its roots in Protestant ethics. He highlights six biblical themes that were hugely influential in SME: human dignity, economic "blessing", justice, love, human freedom and truthfulness. He argues that the Treaty of Rome and the creation of the euro required compromises between the French

state-led model and the German market-led one which have contributed to the EU's current economic problems. And Joshua Hordern explores what a "theology of place" might contribute to a renewal of local, national and Europe-wide political consciousness.

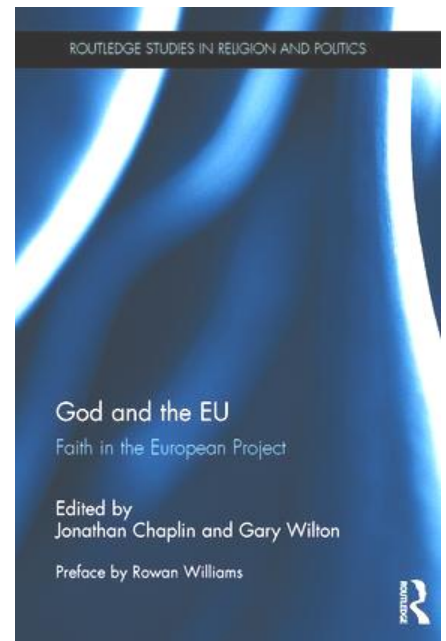
Yet it is Adrian Pabst's chapter that provides the most penetrating analysis of the EU's current crisis. He suggests that the push for European integration has not just contributed the so-called "democratic deficit" but to a much more serious crisis of legitimacy. He locates the reasons for this in the ideology of the secular "market-state" which sacralises politics and economics over life and land.

Furthermore he suggests that the EU lacks what Charles Taylor has called a "social imaginary" which, though unstructured and unarticulated, frames our social coexistence and mutual expectations. Pabst's critique hits the proverbial nail on the head: "The EU has helped create a sense of Europe as an economic-political entity but no shared imaginary that translates into mutual understanding and sympathy among European citizens". His chapter ends with a proposed alternative vision for Europe, a civic commonwealth which is sustained by the renewed Christian polity that can be a "bastion for people of all faiths and none".

### Political Theology and the Future of the EU

Part two of the book moves beyond theory to consider EU policy areas and the contribution that political theology might make. The areas covered include religious freedom, the Eurozone, environmental and science policy. The two standout chapters were Johan Graafland's "Christian economic ethics and the euro" and Diana Jane Beech's "A soul for European science".

Graafland uses the Christian values of human dignity, common good, justice, solidarity and subsidiarity as a way of evaluating five Eurozone policy options with a particular focus on Greece. Following a detailed treatment of the roots of the euro crisis, the policy options, his evaluation of them both from the economic perspective and that of the aforementioned Christian values, his striking conclusion is that "solidarity with Greece would actually



require a Grexit" (Greece leaving the Eurozone though not the EU).

The vacuum of values in current EU science and research policy is the focus of Diana Beech's chapter. She recalls the signing of the EURATOM Treaty (1957) which put scientific research, specifically European atomic energy research, to the service of international diplomacy giving CERN as a concrete example of this. This is contrasted with current policy which is dominated by the drive "to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Europe's research systems to ensure maximum output". The original moral and spiritual drivers of European science policy are a distant memory.

Editor Jonathan Chaplin concludes that political theology contributes "a critical, constructive voice to the common discourse of the EU", "a role of resistance" in every area of the EU's political agenda.

At £90 (105 euro) this book will be well out of the price-range of most Vista readers. For that very reason we thought it was worth a detailed longer review. Though we might not agree with the conclusions of all the authors the book's main thesis is powerfully made: the displacement of Christian voices from the European political discourse has left the floor to secular voices alone. Christian values had a vital role in the EU's foundation: if the house we inhabit is to stand its Christian prophetic voices must be heard again.

Jim Memory

Lecturer in European Mission,  
Redcliffe College

**The EU has helped create a sense of Europe as an economic-political entity but no shared imaginary that translates into mutual understanding and sympathy among European citizens**

Photo: <http://www.trazetravel.com/trends/vacation-like-hobbit-air-new-zealand.php>

Mt Ngauruhoe, aka Mount Doom, New Zealand

**It is said that there are three things British people don't talk about: money, sex and politics. Now there are only two. Both before the referendum vote and especially afterwards, politics was a frequent – and at times the only – topic of conversation.**

Like many people across Europe, I woke with a sense of disbelief on the morning the results were announced. In the weeks immediately following there was a sense of surrealism as political leaders resigned (or didn't) and others rose to take their place. And people who had said beforehand they would vote leave no longer admitted to doing so.

Among our church small group, prayer points reflected our concerns. One friend is being made redundant from a large multinational company. Another, from India, said she has experienced increased racial discrimination at work – a large bank in a city known for its ethnic diversity. And our small group leader, who works for a large Christian development charity, reported that £5 million was wiped off the value of the support they could give to projects overseas, because of the exchange rate with the dollar.

With the summer and the distraction of the Olympics it feels like things have quietened down and Brexit has not been quite so high on the news or conversation agenda.

As the autumn approaches I am sure it will come to the fore again. Everyone has a

different opinion of what was going on, informed by their newspapers, blogs or TV programmes of choice. But there is also the sense that nobody really knows what is going on, it is all so complex and the negotiations removed from our everyday life which seems to continue regardless. I may have opinions, but do they count and can they make a difference?

And so how should I as an ordinary Christian with not a lot of power or influence on the wider national agenda, act now?

On the Sunday after the vote our church congregation read together Psalm 46 from the Message version. There were wry smiles exchanged as we read the second verse:

*We stand fearless at the cliff-edge of doom,  
courageous in seastorm  
and earthquake,*

*Before the rush and roar of oceans,  
the tremors that shift mountains*

But it's true. Even though we may feel we are at 'the cliff-edge of doom', we can stand fearless, because *God is a safe place to hide, ready to help when we need him* (v1)

The future looks uncertain. People will be impacted in different ways over time, and it will not all be negative. But I am convinced that what I can do is to not let fear of the future overcome me and to continue to pray and act as God leads. The context may end up being different than what I thought it would be, but God is still God.

As Psalm 46 reminds us:

*Attention, all! See the marvels of God!*

*He plants flowers and trees all over the earth,  
Bans war from pole to pole, breaks all the  
weapons across his knee.*

*“Step out of the traffic!  
Take a long, loving look at me,  
your High God,  
above politics, above everything.”*

Jo Appleton

**Vista**

Editorial Team: Darrell Jackson,  
Jim Memory, Jo Appleton & Chris Ducker

[europeanmission.redcliffe.org](http://europeanmission.redcliffe.org)

**redcliffecollege**

Redcliffe College  
College Green  
Gloucester, GL1 2LX

Telephone: 01452 308097

[www.redcliffe.ac.uk](http://www.redcliffe.ac.uk)

Please Note: The views expressed in Vista are those of the authors of each article and do not necessarily reflect the position of Redcliffe College.