Europe's Two Culture Wars

George Weigel

At the height of the morning commute on March 11, 2004, ten bombs exploded in and around four train stations in Madrid. Almost 200 Spaniards were killed, and some 2,000 wounded. The next day, Spain seemed to be standing firm against terror, with demonstrators around the country wielding signs denouncing the "murderers" and "assassins." Yet things did not hold. Seventy-two hours after the bombs had strewn arms, legs, heads, and other body parts over three train stations and a marshaling yard, the Spanish government of José María Aznar, a staunch ally of the United States and Great Britain in Iraq, was soundly defeated in an election that the socialist opposition had long sought to turn into a referendum on Spain's role in the war on terror.

So, evidently, had the al-Qaeda operatives who set the bombs. A 54-page al-Qaeda document, which came to light three months after the bombings, speculated that the Aznar government would be unable to "suffer more than two or three strikes before pulling out [of Iraq] under pressure from its own people." In the event, it was one strike and out—as it was for the Spanish troops in Iraq who were withdrawn shortly thereafter, just as the newly elected prime minister, José Luis Rodríguez

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Zapatero, had promised on the day after Spanish voters chose appeasement.

Earlier this year, five days short of the second anniversary of the Madrid bombings, the Zapatero government, which had already legalized marriage between and adoption by same-sex partners and sought to restrict religious education in Spanish schools, announced that the words "father" and "mother" would no longer appear on Spanish birth certificates. Rather, according to the government's official bulletin, "the expression 'father' will be replaced by 'Progenitor A,' and 'mother' will be replaced by 'Progenitor B.'" As the chief of the National Civil Registry explained to the Madrid daily *ABC*, the change would simply bring Spain's birth certificates into line with Spain's legislation on marriage and adoption. More acutely, the Irish commentator David Quinn saw in the new regulations "the withdrawal of the state's recognition of the role of mothers and fathers and the extinction of biology and nature."

At first blush, the Madrid bombings and the Newspeak of "Progenitor A" and "Progenitor B" might seem connected only by the vagaries of electoral politics: the bombings, aggravating public opinion against a conservative government, led to the installation of a leftist prime minister, who then proceeded to do many of the things that aggressively secularizing governments in Spain have tried to do in the past. In fact, however, the nexus is more

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complex than that. For the events of the past two years in Spain are a microcosm of the two interrelated culture wars that beset Western Europe today.

The first of these wars—let us, following the example of Spain's birth certificates, call it "Culture War A"—is a sharper form of the red state/blue state divide in America: a war between the postmodern forces of moral relativism and the defenders of traditional moral conviction. The second—"Culture War B"—is the struggle to define the nature of civil society, the meaning of tolerance and pluralism, and the limits of multiculturalism in an aging Europe whose below-replacement-level fertility rates have opened the door to rapidly growing and assertive Muslim populations.

The aggressors in Culture War A are radical secularists, motivated by what the legal scholar Joseph Weiler has dubbed "Christophobia."[1] They aim to eliminate the vestiges of Europe's Judeo-Christian culture from a post-Christian European Union by demanding same-sex marriage in the name of equality, by restricting free speech in the name of civility, and by abrogating core aspects of religious freedom in the name of tolerance. The aggressors in Culture War B are radical and jihadist Muslims who detest the West, who are determined to impose Islamic taboos on Western societies by violent protest and other forms of coercion if necessary, and who see such operations as the first stage toward the Islamification of Europe—or, in the case of what they often refer to as *al-Andalus*, the restoration of the right order of things, temporarily reversed in 1492 by Ferdinand and Isabella.

The question Europe must face, but which much of Europe seems reluctant to face, is whether the aggressors in Culture War A have not made it exceptionally difficult for the forces of true tolerance and authentic civil society to prevail in Culture War B.

WESTERN EUROPE's descent into the languors of "depoliticization," as some analysts have called it, once seemed a matter of welfare-state politics, socialist economics, and protectionist trade policy, flavored by irritating EU regulations on everything from the circumference of tomatoes to the care and feeding of Sardinian hogs. And indeed there has been no let-up in Europe's seeming determination to bind itself ever more tightly in the cords of bureaucratic regulation. Thus, visitors to Poland after its 2004 accession to the EU could not help noticing that every egg sold in Polish grocery stores now bore an official, multi-digit EU numeric code, and every Polish sheep had an official EU tag stapled to one of its ears. Then there is Big

Brother's regulation of the workplace. Last year, thanks to the EU's "Schedule Six of the Working-at-Heights Directive," electricians in the British village of Eccles, Suffolk, were precluded from using ladders to change five light bulbs in the ceiling of St. Benet's church. An enormous scaffolding had to be erected, and the cost of the two-day job worked out to about $500 per bulb.

What does all this have to do with Culture War A? The plain fact is that even as Europe's regulatory passions continue to bear deleterious economic consequences, they have also been sharpened to a harder ideological edge, not least where religion is concerned. Last October, for example, the official custodians of Dutch orthographic probity decreed that, beginning in August 2006, "Christ" will henceforth be written with a lower-case "c," while "Jews" (*Joden*) will be spelled with a capital "J" when denominating nationality and a lower-case "j" when indicating members of a religion. Earlier this year, an atheist math teacher in Scotland won an anti-discrimination case after claiming that his application for a "pastoral-care post" at a Catholic school had been declined on the grounds that the school reserved such positions for Catholics.

In part, then, Culture War A represents a determined effort on the part of secularists, using both national and EU regulatory machinery, to marginalize the public presence and impact of Europe's dwindling numbers of practicing Christians. Relatedly, it also involves crucial questions about the beginning and end of life, nowhere more sharply posed than in the no-longer-tradition-bound Low Countries. The Netherlands has long enjoyed a reputation for legalized libertinism involving drugs and prostitution, while also leading Europe along the path to euthanasia and same-sex marriage. Now, the formerly stolid Belgians seem determined to catch up. In addition to matching their Dutch neighbors' embrace of same-sex marriage and euthanasia—half the infant deaths in Flanders in 1999-2000 were from euthanasia—the socialist/liberal coalition governing the country recently adopted legislation permitting rent-a-uterus procreation.[2] As the Italian philosopher and government minister Rocco Buttiglione has put it, "Once, we used to quote Karl Marx when protesting against the 'alienation,' 'ob-

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[1] See my article, "The Cathedral and the Cube: Reflections on European Morale," COMMENTARY, June 2004, and my subsequent book, *The Cube and the Cathedral*, recently released in a revised paperback edition by Basic Books.

[2] A legal struggle ensued when one incubator-mother, who had been impregnated by the seed of a member of a homosexual couple, found a better buyer while the child she had conceived was still gestating, and sold the unborn child to a traditional couple.

jectification,' and 'commercialization' of human life. Can it be possible that, today, the Left is inscribing on its banners precisely the right to commercialize human beings"—and all in the name of tolerance and equality?

Culture War A finds expression as well in efforts to coerce and impose behaviors deemed progressive, compassionate, non-judgmental, or politically correct in extreme feminist or multiculturalist terms. In recent years, this has typically taken the form of EU member-states legally regulating, and thus restricting, public speech. Morally critical comments about homosexual behavior, for example, have been deemed "hate speech," and a French parliamentarian was fined for saying that heterosexuality is morally superior to homosexuality.

At the transnational level, pressure from the EU recently brought down the governing coalition in one of the EU's new members, Slovakia. The issue was a concordat with the Vatican stipulating that Slovakia would respect the decision of doctors who, for reasons of moral conviction, chose not to perform abortions. This provision was bitterly attacked by the EU's Network of Independent Experts on Fundamental Human Rights, which held that the right to abort a child is an international human right and that therefore medical professionals cannot be permitted *not* to participate in the procedure. The ensuing debate in Bratislava over the risks of offending the human-rights mandarins of Brussels and Strasbourg destabilized the government to the point where the prime minister had to dissolve parliament and call new elections.

This creeping authoritarianism was also evident in a January 2006 resolution of the European Parliament condemning as "homophobic" those states which do not recognize same-sex marriage and referring to religious freedom as a "source of discrimination." During the debate on that resolution, a British Euro-MP, equating traditional marriage laws with a "breach [of] the human rights of gay and lesbian people," raised the specter of the suspension of EU membership against dissenting countries like Poland and Lithuania. Poland was also threatened with a suspension of its voting rights in the EU's ministerial meetings if it were to reinstitute capital punishment.

W HATEVER ELSE might be said about these developments, that Europe should find itself, at this particular moment in its history, embroiled in a sharp-edged conflict over the legal imposition of political correctness must strike even the friendliest observer as a bizarre distraction from the most

dramatic fact about the continent in the early 21st century: Europe is committing demographic suicide, and has been doing so for some time.

In the late 20th century, some environmental extremists confidently predicted that, as the world ran out of various things—gold, zinc, tin, mercury, petroleum, copper, lead, natural gas, and so forth—humanity would be crushed beneath rampant "overpopulation." At the beginning of the 21st century, the world is still chock-full of natural resources. Europe, however, is running out of the most crucial resource—people.

The overall picture is sobering enough. Not a single EU member has a replacement-level fertility rate, i.e., the 2.1 children per woman needed to maintain a stable population. Moreover, eleven EU countries—including Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary, and all three Baltic states—display "negative natural increase" (i.e., more annual deaths than births), a clear step down into a demographic death-spiral.

These figures are striking enough in the aggregate. But the devil is in the details, which graphically illustrate what happens when a continent healthier, wealthier, and more secure than ever before declines to produce the human future in the most elemental sense. Thus, barring a sharp reversal, the same Belgians who are adopting ever more advanced forms of political correctness will see their population drop from 8 million in 2001 to 7 million in 2020 (a decline of 12.5 percent); by mid-century, Belgium could be home to as few as 4.5 million people. The Spaniards whose government is busily dismantling traditional social and cultural life may see their population cut by almost 25 percent by 2050.

In Germany, neither last year's election campaign nor the recently installed Christian Democratic government of Angela Merkel has addressed the impending distress of Germany's state health-care and pension systems, in which a shrinking number of taxpaying workers will have to support an increasing number of retirees. Meanwhile, thanks to the same demographic trends, Germany will likely lose the equivalent of the entire population of the former East Germany by mid-century. Although German president Horst Köhler has publicly campaigned for raising the country's fertility rate, now standing at 1.39, a recent poll indicates that 25 percent of German men and 20 percent of German women in their twenties intend to have no children—and see no problem with that choice.

Then there is Italy, whose large extended families have long been a staple of the world's imagina-

tion. The truth of the matter is far different: by 2050, on present trends, almost 60 percent of Italians will not know, from personal experience, what a brother, sister, aunt, uncle, or cousin is. But this is perhaps not surprising in a country in which the average age of a man at the birth of his first child is thirty-three and the number of those over sixty-five considerably exceeds the number of those under fifteen. (Germany, Spain, Portugal, and Greece also have more over-sixty-fives than under-fifteens.) Nor is the meltdown limited to "Old Europe"; by 2050 Bulgaria's population is projected to fall by 36 percent, and Estonia's by 52 percent.

Over the next quarter-century, the number of workers in Europe will decline by 7 percent while the number of over-sixty-fives will increase by 50 percent, trends that will create intolerable fiscal difficulties for the welfare state across the continent. The resulting inter-generational strains will place great pressures on national politics, and those pressures may, in a variety of ways, put paid to the project of "Europe" as it has been envisioned ever since the European Coal and Steel Community, the institutional forerunner of today's European Union, was established in 1952. Demography is destiny, and Europe's demographics of decline—which are unparalleled in human history absent wars, plagues, and natural catastrophes—are creating enormous and unavoidable problems.

EVEN MORE ominously, Europe's demographic free-fall is the link between Culture War A and Culture War B.

History abhors vacuums, and the demographic vacuum created by Europe's self-destructive fertility rates has, for several generations now, been filled by a large-scale immigration from throughout the Islamic world. For anyone who has taken the trouble to look, the most obvious effects of that immigration have been on display in continental Europe's increasingly segregated urban landscape, in which an impoverished Muslim suburban periphery typically surrounds an affluent European urban core.

Far more has changed than the physical appearance of European metropolitan areas, though. There are dozens of "ungovernable" areas in France: Muslim-dominated suburbs, mainly, where the writ of French law does not run and into which the French police do not go. Similar extraterritorial enclaves, in which *shari'a* law is enforced by local Muslim clerics, can be found in other European countries. Moreover, as Bruce Bawer details in a new book, *While Europe Slept*,[3] European au-

thorities pay little or no attention to practices among their Muslim populations that range from the physically cruel (female circumcision) through the morally cruel (arranged and forced marriages) to the socially disruptive (remanding Muslim children back to radical madrassas in the Middle East, North Africa, and Pakistan for their primary and secondary education) and the illegal ("honor" killings in cases of adultery and rape—the rape victim being the one killed).

Indeed, it is not simply a case of European governments choosing to avert their gaze from such things. Europe's welfare systems generously *support* immigrants who despise their host countries or turn violently against them—most notably, in the London Underground and bus bombings of July 7, 2005. As Melanie Phillips writes in *Londonistan*,[4] the London bombers were

> British boys, the product of British schools and universities and the British welfare state, [who] behaved in a way that repudiated not just British values but the elementary codes of humanity. Nor were they oddball loners. What had caused them to go onto the Tube with their backpacks and blow themselves and their fellow Britons to bits was an ideology that had taken hold like a cancer, not just in the *madrassas* of Pakistan but in the streets of Leeds and Bradford, Oldham and Leicester, Glasgow and Luton.

Thanks, moreover, to the liberality of European criminal law, seditious Muslim criminals are often treated in ways that seem reminiscent of the Red Queen's world of "impossible things before breakfast." Thus, Muhammad Bouyeri, the Dutch-Indonesian who murdered the filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004 in the middle of an Amsterdam street and then affixed a personal fatwa to his victim's chest with a kitchen knife, retains the right to vote—and could, if he wished, run for the Dutch parliament. Meanwhile, at least two Dutch parliamentarians critical of Islamist extremism have been forced by Islamist threats to live in prisons or army compounds under police or military guard.

Sixty years after the end of World War II, the European instinct for appeasement is alive and well. French public swimming pools have been segregated by sex because of Muslim protests. "Piglet" mugs have disappeared from certain British retailers after Muslim complaints that the A.A. Milne character was offensive to Islamic sensibilities. So

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[3] Doubleday, 248 pp., $23.95.

[4] Encounter, 214 pp., $25.95.

have Burger King chocolate ice-cream swirls, which reminded some Muslims of Arabic script from the Qur'an. Bawer reports that the British Red Cross banished Christmas trees and nativity scenes from its charity stores for fear of offending Muslims. For similar reasons, the Dutch police in the wake of the van Gogh murder destroyed a piece of Amsterdam street art that proclaimed "Thou shalt not kill"; schoolchildren were forbidden to display Dutch flags on their backpacks because immigrants might think them "provocative."

The European media frequently censor themselves in matters relating to domestic Islamic radicalism and crimes committed by Muslims, and, with rare exceptions, their coverage of the war against terrorism makes the American mainstream media look balanced. When domestic problems related to Muslim immigrants do come to light, the typical European reaction, according to Bawer, is usually one of self-critique. In Malmö, Sweden, the country's third-largest city, rapes, robberies, school-burnings, "honor" killings, and anti-Semitic agitation got so out of hand that large numbers of native Swedes reportedly moved out; the government blamed Malmö's problems instead on Swedish racism, and chastised those who had wrongly conceived of integration in "two hierarchically ordered categories, a 'we' who shall integrate and a 'they' who shall be integrated."

BELGIUM, FOR its part, has established a governmental Center for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (CEEOR) that recently sued a manufacturer of security garage gates whose Moroccan employees work only in the factory and are not sent out to install the gates in Belgian homes. By contrast, according to the Belgian journalist Paul Belien, whose online "Brussels Journal" (www.brusselsjournal.com) is an important source of information on Europe's culture wars, CEEOR declined to prosecute a Muslim who created an anti-Semitic cartoon series, on the grounds that doing so would "inflame the situation."

Perhaps predictably, European Jews have frequently played the role of the canary in the mineshaft amid the trials of Islamic integration. Two years ago, a Parisian disc jockey was brutally murdered, his assailant crying "I have killed my Jew. I will go to heaven." That same night, another Muslim murdered a Jewish woman while her daughter watched, horrified. Yet at the time, as the columnist Mark Steyn has written, "no major French newspaper carried the story" of these homicides. This past February, the French media did report

on the gruesome murder of a twenty-three-year old Jewish man, Ilan Halimi, who had been tortured for three weeks by an Islamist gang; his screams under torture were heard by his family during phone calls demanding ransom while, Steyn reports, "the torturers read out verses from the Qur'an." He quotes one police detective shrugging off the jihadist dimension of the horror by saying that it was all rather simple: "Jews equal money."

These patterns of sedition and appeasement finally came to global attention earlier this year in the Danish-cartoons jihad. The cartoons themselves, depicting Muhammad, caused little comment in Denmark or anywhere else when they were originally published last year in the Copenhagen daily *Jyllands-Posten*. But after Islamist Danish imams began agitating throughout the Middle East (aided by three additional and far more offensive cartoons of their own devising), an international furor erupted, with dozens of people killed by rioting Muslims in Europe, Africa, and Asia. As Henrik Bering put it in the *Weekly Standard*, "the Danes were suddenly the most hated people on earth, with their embassies under attack, their flag being burned, and their consciousness being raised by lectures on religious tolerance from Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other beacons of enlightenment."

The response from Europe, in the main, was to intensify appeasement. Thus the Italian "reforms minister," Roberto Calderoli, was forced to resign for having worn a T-shirt featuring one of the offending cartoons—a "thoughtless action" that, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi deduced, had caused a riot outside the Italian consulate in Benghazi in which eleven people were killed. Newspapers that ran the cartoons were put under intense political pressure; some journalists faced criminal charges; websites were forced to close. The pan-European Carrefour supermarket chain, bowing to Islamist demands for a boycott of Danish goods, placed signs in its stores in both Arabic and English expressing "solidarity" with the "Islamic community" and noting, inelegantly if revealingly, "Carrefour don't carry Danish products." The Norwegian government forced the editor of a Christian publication to apologize publicly for printing the Danish cartoons; at his press conference, the hapless editor was surrounded by Norwegian cabinet ministers and imams. EU foreign minister Javier Solana groveled his way from one Arab nation to another, pleading that Europeans shared the "anguish" of Muslims "offended" by the Danish cartoons." Not to be outdone, the EU's justice minister, Franco Frattini, announced that the

EU would establish a "media code" to encourage "prudence"—"prudence" being a synonym for "surrender," regardless of one's view of the artistic merits of, or the cultural sensitivity displayed by, the world's most notorious cartoons.

For all the blindness of the politicians who in the 1930's attempted to appease totalitarian aggression, they at least thought that they were thereby preserving their way of life. Bruce Bawer (following the researcher Bat Ye'or) suggests that 21st-century Europe's appeasement of Islamists amounts to a self-inflicted dhimmitude: in an attempt to slow the advance of a rising Islamist tide, many of Europe's national and transnational political leaders are surrendering core aspects of sovereignty and turning Europe's native populations into second- and third-class citizens in their own countries.

Bawer blames Europe's appeasement mentality and its consequences on multiculturalist political correctness run amok, and there is surely something to that. For, in a nice piece of intellectual irony, European multiculturalism, based on postmodern theories of the alleged incoherence of knowledge (and thus the relativity of all truth claims), has itself become utterly incoherent, not to say self-contradictory.

Take, for example, the case of Iqbal Sacranie, general secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain, whom Prime Minister Tony Blair appointed as one of his advisers on Muslim affairs and for whom Blair procured a knighthood. In a series of episodes that indeed seem like something from beyond Lewis Carroll's looking glass, Sir Iqbal soon went on the BBC to announce that homosexuality "damages the very foundation of society"; following the protests of a British gay lobby, he was investigated by the "community safety unit" of Scotland Yard, whose mandate includes "hate crimes and homophobia"; then, when a Muslim lobby demanded that Blair scrap the "Holocaust Memorial Day" he had created several years earlier, Sir Iqbal backed the demand, informing the *Daily Telegraph* that "Muslims feel hurt and excluded that their lives are not equally valuable to those lives lost in the Holocaust time."

Yet to blame "multi-culti" p.c. for Europe's paralysis is to remain on the surface of things. Culture War A—the attempt to impose multiculturalism and "lifestyle" libertinism in Europe by limiting free speech, defining religious and moral conviction as bigotry, and using state power to enforce "inclusivity" and "sensitivity"—is a war over the very meaning of tolerance itself. What Bruce Bawer rightly deplores as out-of-control political

correctness in Europe is rooted in a deeper malady: a rejection of the belief that human beings, however inadequately or incompletely, can grasp the truth of things—a belief that has, for almost two millennia, underwritten the European civilization that grew out of the interaction of Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome.

Postmodern European high culture repudiates that belief. And because it can only conceive of "your truth" and "my truth" while determinedly rejecting any idea of "the truth," it can only conceive of tolerance as indifference to differences—an indifference to be enforced by coercive state power, if necessary. The idea of tolerance as *engaging* differences within the bond of civility (as Richard John Neuhaus once put it) is itself regarded as, well, intolerant. Those who would defend the true tolerance of orderly public argument about contending truth claims (which include religious and moral convictions) risk being driven, and in many cases are driven, from the European public square by being branded as "bigots."

But the problem goes deeper still. For one thing, however loudly European postmodernists may proclaim their devotion to the relativity of all truths, in practice this translates into something very different—namely, the deprecation of traditional Western truths, combined with a studied deference to non- or anti-Western ones. In the relativist mindset, it thus turns out, not *all* religious and moral conviction is bigotry that must be suppressed; only the Judeo-Christian variety is. In short, the moral relativism of Europe is often mere window-dressing, a mask for Western self-hatred.

For another, related thing, Europe's soul-withering skepticism goes hand in hand with what Allan Bloom once styled "debonair nihilism"—a nihilism that, in its indifference to everything beyond the imperial self, has made its own contribution to the continent's unwillingness to create the future by creating successor generations. Bruce Bawer left America for Europe because of what he saw as the baleful influence of the religious Right on American politics, and because Europe was far more "open" than the United States to same-sex marriage. He cannot seem to grasp that what made Europe attractive to those like himself—its putative moral openness—is what has made it so vulnerable to radical Islam.[5]

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[5] In another new book, *Menace in Europe* (Crown Forum, 261 pp., $25.95), Claire Berlinski aptly quotes the French thinker Chantal Delsol on the philosophical origins of today's appeasement mentality in Europe: "Our contemporary cannot imagine for what cause he would sacrifice his life because he does not know what his life means."

Bawer suggests that Europe can regain its nerve, and defend its free societies, by rejecting multicultural political correctness while retaining the political expression of skepticism and relativism: freedom concretized in law as radical personal autonomy. But it is radical personal autonomy that has helped lead Europe into steep demographic decline; it is radical personal autonomy that has brought Europe to denigrate its own civilizational achievements, seeing in its history only repression and intolerance; and it is radical personal autonomy that underwrites political correctness and its corrosive effects on Europe's capacity to defend itself against internal Islamist aggression.

A DIFFERENT AND much more persuasive analysis of Europe's culture wars has emerged from a remarkable dialogue that took place in 2004. The partners in this conversation may seem an unlikely pair: Marcello Pera, an agnostic Italian academic turned politician (and president of the Italian Senate), and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the principal theological agency of the Catholic Church.

Pera had given a lecture on "Relativism, Christianity, and the West" at Rome's Pontifical Lateran University; Ratzinger, at Pera's invitation, gave a lecture in the Italian Senate on "The Spiritual Roots of Europe." The two men then agreed to exchange letters exploring the striking convergence of analysis that had characterized their two lectures. Both the lectures and the letters were published in a small book in Italy in early 2005 and created something of a stir, which only intensified in April when Joseph Ratzinger became Pope Benedict XVI. The Ratzinger/Pera volume has now been published in the United States under the title *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam.*[6]

Long before becoming pope, Joseph Ratzinger, a widely respected intellectual who had succeeded the late Andrei Sakharov in the latter's chair at the prestigious French *Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques*, had been warning his fellow Europeans that their dalliance in the intellectual sandbox of postmodernism was going to cause severe problems for their societies and their polities. Those problems, he argues here, are at once intellectual, spiritual, and moral. The "crumbling of [European] man's original certainties about God, himself, and the universe" has led to "the decline of a moral conscience grounded in absolute values" and to the "real danger" of "the self-destruction of the European conscience." Why is it, Ratzinger asks, that

Europe "has lost all capacity for self-love"? Why is it that Europe can see in its own history only "the despicable and the destructive . . . [and] is no longer able to perceive what is great and pure"?

Europe's secularists have heard critiques like Ratzinger's before, and dismissed them as the special pleading of committed Christians. The welcome surprise in *Without Roots* is Marcello Pera's answer: in effect, a parallel critique from a self-described non-believer and philosopher of science. "Infected by an epidemic of relativism," Pera writes, Europeans believe "that to accept and defend their culture would be an act of hegemony, of intolerance, [betraying] an anti-democratic, anti-liberal, disrespectful attitude." But precisely this toxin has led them into "the prison house" of political correctness, a "cage" in which "Europe has locked itself . . . for fear of saying things that are not at all incorrect but rather ordinary truths, and to avoid facing its own responsibilities."

Pera is also blunt about Europe's unwillingness to defend itself against radical Islam. Do Europeans understand, he asks,

> that their very existence is at stake, their civilization has been targeted, their culture is under attack? Do they understand that what they are being called on to defend is their own identity? Through culture, education, diplomatic negotiations, political relations, economic exchange, dialogue, preaching, but also, if necessary, through force?

In his own essay in *Without Roots*, Ratzinger, adopting an idea from Toynbee, proposes that any renewal of Europe's civilizational morale can be effected only by "creative minorities" who will challenge secularism as the EU's de-facto ideology by means of a re-encounter with Europe's Judeo-Christian religious and moral heritage. For his part, Pera suggests that the needed "work of renewal . . . be done by Christians and secularists together." That work, he writes, will involve the development of a "*civil religion* that can instill its values throughout the long chain that goes from the individual to the family, groups, associations, the community, and civil society, *without* passing through the political parties, government programs, and the force of states, and therefore without affecting the separation, in the temporal sphere, of church and state" (emphases in the original).

Pera's proposal for this "civil religion" is left rather vague, but in February its contours came

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[6] Basic Books, 159 pp., $22.00. I have contributed a foreword to this book.

into somewhat clearer focus when he launched a new movement called "For the West, the Bearer of Civilization." The movement's manifesto begins by briskly describing Europe's two culture wars, goes on to affirm Western civilization as "a source of universal and inalienable principles," and commits its signatories (who include a center-Right spread of Italian intellectual and political figures) to a broad agenda of renewal: to "deprive [terrorism] of every justification and support"; to integrate immigrants "in the name of shared values"; to support "the right to life from conception until natural death"; to dismantle unnecessary bureaucracy; to "affirm the value of the family as a natural partnership based on marriage"; to spread "liberty and democracy as universal values"; to maintain the institutional separation of church and state "without giving in to the secular temptation of relegating the religious dimension solely to the individual sphere"; and to promote a healthy pluralism in education. The manifesto concludes with a call to arms and a warning: "People who forget their roots can be neither free nor respected."

IT REMAINS to be seen whether initiatives similar to Marcello Pera's, or analyses similar to those he has advanced in intellectual tandem with Pope Benedict, can begin to get a purchase on the cultural high ground in Europe. Some would argue that it is already too late, that the demographic tipping point has been reached and that, as Mark Steyn puts it, with "the successor population [i.e., Islam] already in place, . . . the only question is how bloody the transfer of real estate will be." But if Europe's two culture wars are not to result in the accelerated emergence of "Eurabia" (in Bat Ye'or's coinage), something resembling Pera's initiative will have to lead the way, and soon.

The alternative approach to Europe's future was graphically on display last August upon the death of Robin Cook, the former British foreign secretary (and critic of the Iraq war). The funeral service was held in the historic "High Kirk" of Edinburgh, St. Giles, and led by Bishop Richard Holloway, the erstwhile Anglican primate of Scotland, who some years ago wrote a book attempting to reconcile his readers to what he termed the "massive indifference of the universe." Holloway later described the funeral in these words: "Here was I, an agnostic Anglican, taking the service in a Presbyterian church, for a dead atheist politician. And I thought that was just marvelous."

Nihilism rooted in skepticism, issuing in the bad faith of moral relativism and Western self-loathing, comforting itself with a vacuous humanitarianism: not only is this not marvelous, it has contributed to killing Europe demographically, and to paralyzing Europe in the face of an aggressive ideology aimed at the eradication of Western humanism in the name of a lethally distorted understanding of God's will. Those who love Europe and what it has meant and still could mean for the world had better hope that Marcello Pera and his allies among believers, and not Bishop Holloway and his fellow debonair nihilists, are the ones who will prevail in the contest to resolve Europe's two culture wars.