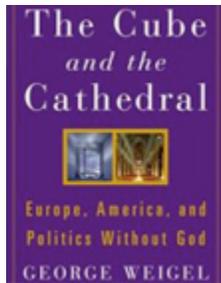




The Cube and the Cathedral: Europe, America and Politics Without God

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Introduction

JOANNE MYERS: Good morning. I'm Joanne Myers, and on behalf of the Carnegie Council, I want to welcome you to our 2005-2006 season.

As you are aware, there are a few changes at the Carnegie Council. The name "Merrill House Programs" has been changed to "Public Affairs." But please note that we will continue, as we have done in the past, to host speakers with the expertise and insight that you have come to rely on.

Also this year you will notice that, while continuing to look at the challenges presented by our changing political, economic, and cultural environment, within our Public Affairs Programs we have chosen to focus on two main topics: religion and the American military power.

For the first lecture in our "**Religion in Politics**" series we are very pleased to welcome George Weigel, a Catholic theologian who is also known as a leading thinker on Just War and democratic institutions. As the NBC news consultant for Vatican affairs, his voice was a familiar one last April, as the world watched and waited for news about Pope John Paul's death and the election of his successor, Pope Benedict XVI.

Mr. Weigel is the author of [*Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*](#), which was published to international acclaim and translated into at least eleven languages. A documentary film based on this definitive biography of the late pontiff was released in 2001 and won numerous prizes.

Currently, Mr. Weigel is a Senior Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.

Today our guest will be discussing his most recent publication, [*The Cube and the Cathedral: Europe, America and Politics without God*](#), in which he expresses his concerns about what he believes to be the struggle for the soul of Europe and his alarm as he watches Europeans deny their Christian cultural heritage.

Observations of this kind are not new. In June of this year, the Associated Press published a survey indicating that secularism was on the rise in Western Europe. The polls found that in France 19 percent of the people are atheists, and in Spain, where the government subsidizes the Roman Catholic Church, and in Germany, which is split evenly between Catholics and Protestants, the people are about evenly divided over whether they consider faith important. In Britain, where the Church of England is struggling to fill its pews, the results are almost identical.

On the other hand, the polls found that Americans profess an unquestioning belief in God and are far more willing to mix faith and politics than people in other countries are. In this sense, religious devotion

has come to set the United States apart from some of its closest allies in Europe, a fact which deeply concerns Mr. Weigel. Noting how deeply imbued secularism is in European politics, he worries about the future of Western democracies. To be more precise, he wonders whether Europe's postmodern culture is compatible with traditions of democracy and human rights, and whether modernized Christendom just may have things to offer that a secularized European society does not have.

Today, this question regarding religion's proper role in democratic life is not just limited to the West. In fact, the Islamic version of this question is at the very core of the constitutional struggles being addressed in the emerging democracies of Afghanistan and Iraq. In the end, it is Mr. Weigel's belief that if we deny that Christianity had anything to do with the evolution of free, law-governed, and prosperous European societies, we would not only be falsifying the past but creating a future in which moral truths have no role in governance. As Mr. Weigel states, that would have consequences for us all.

Please join me in welcoming our guest today, George Weigel.

Remarks

GEORGE WEIGEL: Thank you, Joanne. That was a marvelously succinct summary of the book.

This book began when I was in Paris in 1997. I hadn't been in the city for decades and wanted to see the new development of La Défense on the west side of the Seine, which has as its centerpiece one of the great projects of President Mitterrand, [the Great Arch of La Défense](#), completed in 1989 as a memorial to the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. It is a stunning piece of contemporary design; forty-some stories tall, acres of white Carrara marble, blindingly clear in the August Paris afternoon sunlight, but an essentially featureless cube, very much unlike the other triumphal arches to be found around Europe. The top three stories of the Great Arch house several international human rights organizations, because the idea was to link 1789 to contemporary human rights work.

As I was walking up on the roof admiring the cityscape, I was looking at a guidebook which explained that you could fit the entire Cathedral of Notre Dame—towers, spire, and all—inside this colossal cube. That and the attempted juxtaposition between this memorial and contemporary human rights issues raised a question in my mind: What culture would better create the moral foundations to sustain human rights and democracy, the culture that produced the starkly modernist, indeed rationalist, featureless, cube of the Great Arch of La Défense, or the culture that produced the gargoyles and bosses, the stained glass, and the carved stone—the "holy unsameness"—of Notre Dame?

Proponents of the cube imagine that the cathedral has little or nothing to do with human rights and democracy. Might that be a problem?

These questions were sharpened in my mind as the 1990s gave way to a new decade in which Americans and Europeans seemed to have evolved dramatically different views of the world, the dynamics of contemporary history, and the appropriate response of the world's democracies to those changing dynamics and history. That was a question in itself.

Then, there was the question of why Europe seemed to be wrapping itself ever more tightly in the cords of bureaucracy, both national and EU. Most urgently of all, as I began to look at the demographics of contemporary Europe, the question occurred to me: Why is Europe depopulating itself in numbers not seen since the Black Death of the fourteenth century?

Bob Kagan, who was thinking of at least some of these problems as well, took a cut at an answer in his provocative and controversial book, [Of Paradise and Power](#), in which he described the widening gap between European and American perceptions of world politics as due to various strategic cultures rooted in different experiences of the twentieth century. True, as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough, because the question then became: why did Europe have the twentieth century that it did? Why did a century that began with high hopes for a great burst of cultural, artistic, scientific, political, human achievement, produce within six decades two world wars, three totalitarian systems, oceans of blood, mountains of corpses, a cold war—what [Jeane Kirkpatrick](#) once described as the "seventy-seven-year

emergency that ran from 1914 to 1991?" Bob Kagan's answer didn't seem to probe deeply enough into the roots of this problem.

The more I thought about this, the more I discovered Europeans and others who were thinking along similar lines—the French political theorist Pierre Manent, in his critique of what he called the "depoliticization of Europe," and the international legal scholar at New York University, Joseph Weiler, himself an Orthodox Jew, born in South Africa, having lived in Europe for many years, who wrote quite provocatively about Europe's "Christophobia," as an important dynamic in contemporary European high culture and politics.

Yet the more I pondered this, the more I kept coming back to the population question. I am not a demographer, but one has to be struck by certain hard statistical realities of contemporary European life. Based on current reproductive trends, Germany between now and 2050 is expected to lose in native population, the equivalent of the entire population of the old East Germany, while Spain in that same period is expected to lose more than 35 percent of its population. Perhaps most astonishingly to Americans, who have a certain image of Italian life in their minds, 60 percent of the Italian people forty-five years from now will not know from personal experience what a brother, a sister, an aunt, an uncle, or a cousin is.

When an entire continent, or at least a half continent—healthier, wealthier, in many respects more secure than it has ever been in history—is failing to create the human future in the most elemental sense of producing successor generations, we have to look toward answers or analyses deeper than conventional political and strategic analyses. Something is going on in the culture of Europe that is producing this remarkable and disturbing demographic phenomenon.

These concerns are not the questions and concerns of a Europhobe. I have spent much of my life in Europe. I am profoundly aware of the debt that the United States owes to Europe. Moreover, I suspect that Europe's crisis of civilizational morale could be replicated in the United States under certain conditions.

As I continued to think about these questions, something I had learned during my work with and on the late Pope John Paul II began to frame my thinking. John Paul II's view of history and the dynamics of history was profoundly influenced by his place of birth. History looks different from the Vistula River basin than it does from Berlin or Paris or London or New York or Washington, D.C.

In that part of the world, as manifest in the late Pope's understanding of the dynamics of history—or going back even deeper to a remarkable figure like the late nineteenth/early twentieth-century Russian thinker, [Vladimir Soloviev](#), or [Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn](#)—one gets a sense that there is a Slavic view of history. That is, that history is not primarily driven by the conventional metrics of politics and economics with which we are so familiar: history is driven by culture over the long haul, by what men and women cherish, honor, and worship; by what men and women are willing to stake their lives on, by the artifacts that they create in literature and art, to give expression to those deep cultural commitments.

If we look at history in those terms, not simply in the conventional political and economic terms, we may begin to get the sense that David Fromkin was right in his book, [Europe's Last Summer](#), that the real trap-gate of the twentieth century in Europe was not the Second World War. The placement of the World War II Memorial in the middle of the Mall suggests what many Americans believe, that that was the pivotal moment in twentieth-century history. Yet a culturally driven view of history suggests as Fromkin does, that the real trap-gate was 1914; that this was, as Solzhenitsyn would say in his Templeton Prize address in 1982, a moment of civilizational self-destruction.

The question of not so much why it happened but why it continued can only be answered by looking at the changes in European moral culture over the nineteenth century, which had created a conviction throughout European high culture, eventually affecting European politics, that renewal only comes through destruction, in a four-year series of events, in which the civilization that gave the world the concept of moral reason, abandoned any pretense to moral reason in its public life and settled down to a slaughter from which Europe has not yet recovered.

So that took me back to the nineteenth century. There I take my cues from a mid-twentieth-century French Jesuit theologian, [Henri de Lubac](#), who in the middle of the Second World War wrote an intriguing book, called [The Drama of Atheist Humanism](#), in which he suggested that the shift in consciousness in European high culture in the nineteenth century, manifest in such figures as [Auguste Comte](#), [Ludwig Feuerbach](#), [Karl Marx](#), [Friedrich Nietzsche](#), was an attempt to jettison all that the God of the Bible had meant in the history of European civilization, precisely in the name of human liberation.

It was not in the sense of the village atheist trying to be different, not in more conventional private skepticisms about the claims of biblical religion, but an atheistic humanism that was a cultural project, insisting that the God of Abraham and Moses and Jesus was, in fact, an enemy of human freedom and had to be thrown over the side if a maturing humanity was to take advantage of the new possibilities created by science. That drama of atheistic humanism, de Lubac proposes, played itself out in the marriage of defective ideas of the human person to modern technology, producing the great slaughters of the mid-twentieth century in Europe.

However one accepts or does not accept de Lubac's tracing back of these problems to a massive nineteenth-century *bouleversement* in European high culture, one ought to note recently that this notion of biblical religion and the moral understandings that derive from or are informed by biblical religion still seem to many in European high culture and politics today to be an enemy of the democratic project in Europe.

The evidence for this is the quite extraordinary debate in Europe in 2003-2004 over whether the preamble to the European constitution— in fact, it was a constitutional treaty to regulate the lives of the now twenty-five members of the EU—in discussing the roots of contemporary Europe's commitment to human rights, the rule of law, civility, tolerance, democracy, the method of persuasion in politics, should mention Christianity. This argument continued most fiercely for the better part of a year-and-a-half. It was finally decided that there would be no such mention, that the sources of contemporary European commitments to the good things we all acknowledge in public life in the democratic world were the classical world and the Enlightenment, which is to say that the claim was being made that nothing of consequence for contemporary Europe's commitment to human rights, democracy, the rule of law, had happened between [Marcus Aurelius](#) and [Descartes](#). It is rather a long time to suggest that nothing of consequence happened.

Why was this argument so fierce? Why was this "Christophobia" driving, in such a passionate way, the drafting of a new constitutional document for the European Union? Part of that was a deliberate reading of history through a particularly narrow lens, which I would call a deliberate act of historical amnesia. But this was not only a question of a rereading of the past; it was a program for the future. Implicit in this refusal to acknowledge that biblical religions, Christian culture, had anything at all to do with the production of a Europe, peaceful, free, and secure—was a program for the future in which secularism of a particularly narrow sort would be *de facto*, if not *de jure*, established as the official ideology of the European Union, with the skepticism that informs secularism as the *de facto*, if not *de jure*, official EU epistemology, and the relativism that is secularism's partner, the official EU moral philosophy.

This raised another set of questions: Can a political community established in an act of historical amnesia defend itself by giving an account of its commitments and its aspirations? Can a political community deliberately founded on principled skepticism about the human capacity to know the truth of anything give an account of its commitments to human rights, democracy, the rule of law, civility, and tolerance, beyond the very thin account that it works better, it's a less sloppy way to conduct public affairs, and things move more easily if we are all good to each other?

Particularly, can a political community in the midst of depopulating itself and having that demographic vacuum filled by people from another cultural experience, who in some instances take a very aggressive stance towards the host culture in which they find themselves, defend itself against that kind of cultural transformation, which, if successful, would mean the end of, or at least the severe attenuation of Europe's commitments to human rights, democracy, the rule of law, civility, and tolerance?

Those are the questions on the table today. That the EU constitution project has been derailed, at least for the moment, by the French and Dutch referenda does not suggest that the questions have disappeared. Indeed, one has to hope that the pause that has been created in this process of figuring out how to make the new, broader EU work structurally creates the opportunity for a deeper reflection on the costs of historical amnesia, and the possible dangers of the attempt to create a democratic political community on the basis of principled skepticism about the capacity of the human person to know anything. Perhaps the new pope, himself a major European intellectual figure for the last thirty years, successor to [Andrei Sakharov](#) in the chair reserved for foreigners in the French Academy, may be able to ignite that kind of a conversation.

Why is this of consequence for us on this side of the Atlantic? Because the European story is our story, too; because, in a profound sense, America is "Europe Transplanted." The withering of the civilizational roots from which our own democracy arose cannot be a happy circumstance for us. There are grave security issues involved, especially in light of the Islamist threat. Europe's continuing depoliticization, the rule of bureaucrats and judges over the rule of legislators, as Pierre Manent described it, will encourage similar trends here in the United States. So there is a sense in which *The Cube and the Cathedral* is our question, too. Whether one thinks of this in terms of red America and blue America or more refined images, these same arguments are going on in our own country.

I conclude the book with four possible European futures:

- That the attempt to build the EU on its present foundations is sustainable, that Europe figures out a way to deal with its impending fiscal crisis, as shrinking worker populations are expected to provide the wherewithal to sustain an ever-larger welfare state, that Europe sorts out its security position.
- The second possibility, which I borrow from the British historian, [Niall Ferguson](#), is what I call—not he—the muddle, in which some European countries maintain working democracies, while others experience a backlash against immigrants, and still others become slowly but steadily Islamicized.
- The reconversion of Europe, the return of Europe to its civilizational, cultural, and indeed religious roots.
- The most draconian option, is what I call 1683 reversed, 1683, being [the Battle of Vienna](#), the last military repulse of an Islamic assault on Europe. This time, 1683 reversed would not involve the armies of the prophet marching across Europe. It would happen through demographic change and the political change that would result. But is it impossible to imagine a situation in which Europe becomes increasingly dominated by radicalized forms of Islam, what [Bernard Lewis](#) and others have called "Eurabia," such that by the beginning of the twenty-second century, the cathedral of my title, Notre Dame, has become [Hagia Sophia](#) on the Seine. A great Christian church become an Islamic museum? It's one possible European future.

All four of these futures suggest issues, problems, possibilities which deeply involve "Europe Transplanted"—namely, the United States—as well.

Questions and Answers

JOANNE MYERS: I would like to open the floor to questions.

QUESTION: Is it not possible that the Europeans do not suffer from historical amnesia, but rather from a very vivid recollection of history, which goes back not only to the two World Wars, but to the wars of religion before that? They will reject Islamicization in the same way that have rejected war now for fifty years. They have become a tolerant and secular people from having had bad experiences being ruled by both kings and popes, and certainly not by an Islamic leader.

GEORGE WEIGEL: Very much part of the dynamic in understanding the history of the emergence of democracy in Europe is the role played by the wars of religion.

On the other hand, to reduce the history of Europe to the wars of religion is a shortsighted view of things. The notions of the dignity of the human person, the moral superiority of persuasion over coercion in politics, the notion that there is an inherent sense of justice in the people to which governments must attend, the idea that government itself is under moral scrutiny, that what is right is not simply what a prince says is right, but his concept of the true and the good is itself susceptible to moral judgment—these were not the products only or, even primarily of the Enlightenment, but of the Christian civilization that emerged from that remarkable marriage of Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome that took place in the early years of the Middle Ages and created a rich civilizational subsoil which eventually proved incapable of disciplining the political and religious institutions which had been built on top of it, thus leading to the wars of religion.

But I would say that that civilizational subsoil remained fertile, such that those good ideas of how public life ought to be conducted, which do go back much deeper than the Enlightenment, could be recovered subsequently.

If one looks at the contemporary origins of the European project, [Robert Schuman](#), [Alcide de Gasperi](#), and [Konrad Adenauer](#) were self-consciously Christian men—and Catholics—who understood what they were doing as a reaching-back to a Europe pre-Reformation, pre-wars of religion, pre-absolutism, brought into the contemporary world and given a certain set of institutional structures that would be barriers against the slaughters of the twentieth century. That these three men understood this to be a project of Christian civilization is indisputable.

So while it is important to acknowledge that Christianity could be and was at certain moments in European history its own worst enemy, in transmitting these understandings of human goods, to reduce the Christian historical role in Europe to providing the bad example of the wars of religion, which so many of these contemporary European secularists seem to do, doesn't make sense historically.

QUESTION: The underlying message of your talk seems to be that a society that has a belief in God—and, belief in a Christian God, such as the Bible puts forth—is ultimately superior to those that don't. There is a huge literature about this subject, comparing Europe and the United States, the problems of each, the role of religion in dealing with those problems, the cost of religion in this country. Many people in this blue state do feel that religion in terms of intolerance, of the politics of homosexuality and abortion, may produce costs as well.

Europe has many problems. It is wrestling with immigration. Europe contributes much more to humanitarian aid than America. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the existence of two Americas has raised questions about America and the type of commitment it has to dealing with the poor in its midst.

To focus so much on the debate in Europe over whether to acknowledge their Christian background is a sideshow to a much broader debate. Both societies have many problems. They are dealing with them in different ways. The role of religion is fascinating, but for your argument to convince skeptics, you need to wade into that debate much more than you have.

GEORGE WEIGEL: There's only so much you can do in one book. The new pope had a fearsome reputation as the "panzer cardinal." When he was asked during a press conference on the publication of his memoirs in 1996 in Germany why there was no discussion of his girlfriends in the section on his adolescence, he replied, "The publisher told me I had to keep it under 200 pages." Perhaps there is something of an analogy here.

The notion that to be tolerant requires one to bracket one's own deepest convictions, which is a blue-state way of thinking, does not make sense philosophically or practically, when I look at where people are locked into patterns of stereotype in our country, as in Europe. Surely, on the question of religious freedom, for example, it is a more secure ground on which to assert one's own religious freedom, but also to defend the religious freedom of others, including the freedom not to believe, if, as

most Christians in America believe, it is the will of God that we be tolerant of and civil to those who have a different view—or no view—of what constitutes the will of God. That's a thick way of accounting for one's commitment to tolerance: God requires this of me.

With all due acknowledgement of the historical issues that were raised earlier, that there are intolerant religious people today, if the question is, is that a more secure account of toleration or is the only account that blue America can come up with—namely, a utilitarian account, a pragmatic account; "this simply works better"—I'm not sure. I'd rather stake the future of freedom, including religious freedom, on an account that is theologically grounded than one that is merely grounded in utilitarian terms.

There are other ways to do this, philosophically. But the currently available ways, in large-scale terms, both in the United States and Europe, are through the moral convictions that derive from biblical faith or in utilitarian terms.

I don't mean to be impolite to our European guests and friends here today, but the extraordinary America-bashing that has gone on in the European press over Katrina is quite unbelievable. I doubt that Europe in such a situation would have, in eight days, raised hundreds of billions of dollars of private aid. I don't take the foreign aid figure seriously, because if you add private sector and independent sector work from the United States on international relief and development, it dwarfs anything that anyone else in the world is doing.

This is not to at all deny the deep divisions in our own society on any number of urgent questions, including the question of what is the moral ground on which we make the case for the democratic experiment.

I was attempting to put the counter case to the conventional case—at least conventional in mainstream media and coastal high-culture terms in America— as sharply as possible, somewhat in the manner of hitting the donkey over the head with a two-by-four and seeing if that wouldn't start a more useful argument.

The book would have been strengthened if I had dealt directly with the question of the sixteenth century. I intend to take up that particular question, both in its real meaning and some of the mythologies that have grown out of it, in a preface for the paperback edition.

QUESTION: As a further refinement of the questions about wars of religion in the sixteenth century, isn't it true that in the nineteenth century, the organized Christian churches in Europe, in particular the Catholic Church, were bitter enemies of the democratic movements, and it was only in the twentieth century that Christian churches, and specifically the Catholic Church, have endorsed democracy? How do you answer the concern that perhaps the devotion of Christianity and Catholicism to democracy has to be proved, in light of historical experience, where Christianity and Catholicism were such bitter enemies of the democratic experience?

GEORGE WEIGEL: We need a broader and more nuanced view of nineteenth-century European history than I was taught or than is conventionally in play in the United States. The papal critique of what called itself democracy on the continent of Europe was shaped in no small part by a century of assault on the institutions of the Church, beginning with [the French Revolution](#) in the late eighteenth century, continuing up to 1905, when [the Third Republic](#) shut down every Catholic school in France and exported huge numbers of monks and nuns, in an attempt to destroy monastic life in Brittany. The nineteenth century was also the century of the [Kulturkampf](#) in Germany, of [Febronianism and Josephism](#) in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

This story is more complex than the conventional reading of it. [Russ Hittinger](#), at the University of Tulsa, will be publishing in the next couple of years what will be a breakthrough book on the popes in the modern state.

Let's connect this to America. What produced the theoretical turn that one sees in the Catholic Church, beginning in the mid-twentieth century and eventually cashing out forty years ago in the [Second Vatican](#)

[Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom](#), the first Catholic articulation from within specifically Catholic self-understandings of pluralism, toleration in matters of religious conviction? It was the experience in the United States. The Catholic Church never had a problem with democracy in the U.S. Indeed, a democratic polity in which the institutions of church and state were separate, but where religiously informed moral conviction played an enormous role in public life, was good for Catholicism, had an enormous impact on this.

The only place in the developed world where Catholicism did not lose the allegiance of the working class in the nineteenth century was here. That in itself began to provoke a reconsideration that this profoundly difficult experience of the collapse of the Ancien Regime, which carried with it in many instances a deep anticlerical bias that had real-world consequences in the destruction of institutions of Catholic life—that's a complex history on which we all need to reflect more, but I would hope our European friends reflect more as well. The nineteenth-century experience of what imagined itself to be democracy in Europe—and it's hard to imagine Bismarckian Germany, for example, as qualifying, although they had a parliament—was a tough business.

QUESTION: To what extent do you see Europe's apparent reluctance to bring Turkey into the EU a matter of continuing Christendom ideas in Europe?

GEORGE WEIGEL: A lot of interesting survey material indicates that a substantial majority of Europeans, while having nothing to do with institutional Christianity, completely non-practicing, still have what one might call an open-to-transcendence world view, that is not so completely carapaced over as the world view that one associates with radical secularism. There are people who would say, look, this is a bad use of language, and Europeans have a religious or transcendence-driven sensibility not dissimilar from everyone else.

That may be true in terms of personal musings, but it is certainly not true in terms of public life, where religiously informed moral argument, has played very little role in European public life in recent decades, although the recent referenda on reproductive technology and embryo-destructive genetic research in Italy may suggest different patterns emerging.

Most of the resistance in European corridors to the Turkish application for the EU, which, as a practical matter, is a dead issue, given the general chaos within the EU structural situation, is driven by economic concerns, perhaps demographic concerns, far more than a reflection on what it would mean were an Islamic state culturally to become part of the EU. Some have indeed made the argument, that to admit Turkey to the EU would be to finally recognize that the Schuman-de Gasperi-Adenauer project—the EU as a project of Christian civilization, Europe as a cultural entity formed by the marriage of Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome—is over. But my hunch is that most of the resistance to that is a variant on the French nervousness about Polish plumbers overrunning their households.

I heard a semi-flippant comment on this: "When they change the name from Istanbul to Constantinople, we can talk."

QUESTION: The condition of Europe that you describe is unnerving, not to say frightening. What do you predict will be the relationship of the United States to Europe, given their hostility to us and given our need to save ourselves, culturally speaking?

GEORGE WEIGEL: I can imagine a variety of scenarios. My hopeful side about the European future is at least based in part on demographics, but in a different way. 1968 was a very bad year in the United States, and it was a colossally bad year in Europe that shattered a culture again and that produced a political culture that continues to play itself out almost forty years later. The children of 1968 are passing from the scene in Europe. The question is whether a generation of European political leadership, not stewed in the juices of that period as their formative political experience, would provide a different style of political leadership, and would have more of a view of a common civilizational enterprise to be defended together with the United States. This is at least a possibility which should be encouraged by a much more effective American public diplomacy in Europe.

If, on the other hand, the "Eurabia" scenario plays out over the next forty, fifty, sixty years, if Europe begins to come apart at the seams politically because of the fiscal chaos created by the commitments to social welfare systems that are unsustainable economically, then we have a real set of problems. One scenario, which we have seen something of a preview of in the strong alliance between the United States and Australia over the last four years, would be a preview of a reorientation of our primary set of concerns.

When I was last in Rome with a free Sunday afternoon, I went to the Villa Borghese to see those astonishing three sculptures of Bernini. On the way out, the question occurred to me: will any representational art survive in Europe fifty, sixty, a hundred years from now, were this to go the way Bernard Lewis and others suggest? That's a pretty unpleasant thought.

On the other hand, we will see over the next several years, with shifts in government in Germany and France, whether something of the loggerheads of recent years are removed. Those million kids in Cologne recently around a seventy-eight-year-old Bavarian [Pope Benedict XVI] who had not previously had a reputation as a Pied Piper for the young—that's an interesting phenomenon, as were the kids that his predecessor ignited. I see the kids I've trained in Poland over the last fourteen years spreading out throughout Central and Eastern Europe in leadership positions, both the private sector and government. There must be some good stuff going on there.

What it means for Europe to have reintegrated intensely religious societies like Poland and Slovakia and Lithuania remains an open question.

I'm trying to raise an alarm bell here. Numbers don't lie. Declining birth rates function like the opposite of compound interest. You get a certain takeoff point in compounding the principal. The same thing happens in reverse demographically. You hit a certain point, and then you just fall off the ledge. Europe is perilously close to that right now. We'll see if Madrid, London, the Van Gogh murder in the Netherlands begin to get people thinking about this.

JOANNE MYERS: Thank you very much, George.

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