

## HISTORY

## The Basque Invasion

**THE SOURCE:** "Myths of British Ancestry" by Stephen Oppenheimer, in *Prospect Magazine*, Oct. 2006.

DNA TESTING HAS SPRUNG the innocent from prison, nailed the guilty with child support, and may now have finished off the concept of the WASP, the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant, in favor of the unpronounceable WBP. It turns out that the ancestors of most English are not Anglo-Saxons at all, but Basques, writes Stephen Oppenheimer, author of *The Origins of the British: A Genetic Detective Story* (2006).

For the past few centuries, the Anglo-centric world has believed that the English are descended from the Angles and the Saxons, who supposedly took over southern England after the Romans decamped. As for the rest

of the kingdom, the Scots, Welsh, and Irish have been thought to be the successors of the indigenous Celts, who had a glorious culture of spiral art forms and gold metalwork. Some Viking progeny were understood to have been sprinkled around the edges.

The genetic evidence is quite different. Three-quarters of the ancestors of the English arrived on what became the British Isles between 15,000 and 7,500 years ago, at the end of the last ice age, when England was still attached to the mainland of Europe, Oppenheimer writes. They were hunter-gatherers, and shared a genetic heritage with the Basques, who lived in the mountainous former ice-age redoubt their descendants still inhabit.

Periodic invasions of the British Isles began in the Neolithic Period, when humans took to farming, about 6,500 years ago. But these incursions had little effect on the basic Basque genetic heritage. That heritage is

strongest in Ireland, where only 12 percent of the population descends from migrants who came after the Basques. In southern and eastern England, nearer the Continent, the figure is about one-third.

Oppenheimer studied DNA samples collected in small, long-established towns in the British Isles from residents whose grandparents had lived in the same place, and compared them with similar samples taken from the ancestral homes of Celts, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Belgians, Vikings, Normans, and other ancient peoples.

The Anglo-Saxons and the Celts were small immigrant groups. "Neither group had much more impact on the British Isles gene pool than the Vikings, the Normans or, indeed, immigrants of the past 50 years," he writes. After the Basques, no single migrant wave contributed more than about five percent of today's genetic mix.

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

## Reason and Religion

**THE SOURCE:** "Socrates or Muhammad? Joseph Ratzinger on the Destiny of Reason" by Lee Harris, in *The Weekly Standard*, Oct. 2, 2006.

ALL BUT LOST AMID THE firestorm of responses to Pope Benedict XVI's September 12 speech about faith and reason was the argument he was trying to advance. Muslims, along with major news outlets, focused most of their attention on a

small section of the speech, in which the pope quoted Manuel II Paleologus, a 14th-century Byzantine emperor: "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you

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will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached."

The pope did not mean to inflame—or even to address—Muslims, says Lee Harris, the author of *Civilization and Its Enemies* (2004). Rather, he was taking aim chiefly at secular thinkers in the West, by pointing out the severe limitations of modern reason—scientific reason, which excludes whatever is not scientifically provable from "the universe of reason." Modern reason has nothing to say on questions of ethics and religion, and no response to offer Islamic radicals because matters of faith be-

long to the irrational. In the pre-Enlightenment world, the pope relates, reason emanated from the questioning model established by Socrates, and it was possible to confront issues in ethics, just as Manuel II did over the relative merits of Christianity and Islam. "To convince a reasonable soul," the emperor asserts, "one does not need a strong arm, or weapons of any kind." Reason will yield the answer as to which faith is the truer one.

The pope's larger point is precisely that reason has strayed so far from its roots that it has lost the ability to render such judgments. It is profoundly significant to the pope that the Greek word *logos* means both "reason" and "word"—as in "In the beginning was the Word . . ."—and that this conjunction forms, in the pope's view, "an encounter between genuine enlightenment and religion. From the very heart of Christian faith . . . Manuel II was able to say: Not to act 'with logos' is contrary to God's nature."

The pope recognizes that this same conjunction of Greek thought and religious faith that led

to the Enlightenment in the West also spawned philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781). Under Kant's withering gaze, Harris writes, "all religious faiths are equally irrational, all systems of ethics equally unverifiable." The pope finds this state of affairs not only unacceptable but even "dangerous . . . for humanity." He has no desire to reject modernity, but asks, "Can modern reason really stand on the sidelines of a clash between a religion that commands jihad and a religion that forbids violent conversion?"

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

## No Consensus on Census

**THE SOURCE:** "Religion as Identity in Post-war America: The Last Serious Attempt to Put a Question on Religion in the United States Census" by Kevin M. Schultz, in *The Journal of American History*, Sept. 2006.

IN TRADITIONAL HISTORIES of the 1950s, religion united Americans in a way of life that

contrasted with that of their godless Soviet counterparts across the Cold War divide. Not so, writes historian Kevin M. Schultz, a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia. In 1956 and '57, deep rifts among American Catholics, Protestants, and Jews became evident in a fierce debate sparked by something no less mundane than the U.S. Census. On a 1956 list of official considerations for the 1960 census, one question topped them all: Should the census for the first time gather data on religious affiliation?

Catholics came out in strong support. Knowing where their parishioners resided would enable them to better locate hospitals and parochial schools. Less overtly, many Catholics hoped that statistical proof of their numbers would enhance their political power. Protestants largely steered clear of the debate, realizing that the data would probably affect them little.

The Jewish community, however, raged in opposition. Publicly, Jewish leaders built their

## EXCERPT

## One Nation, Under Four Gods

*America, it turns out, is not one nation under one God. We answer, in actuality, to four Gods. . . . The most popular God, backed by 31 percent, is an "authoritarian" father figure who takes a very hands-on approach to his domain. He rewards the faithful and smites the sinful. Another 23 percent envision God as essentially "benevo-*

*lent"—a loving spirit who provides help and guidance when asked. For 16 percent, God presides over the universe like a taciturn judge, . . . tallying up sins and virtues, and rendering a verdict when people die. Finally, 24 percent see God as a mysterious prime mover who engineered the Big Bang and evolution, . . . then backed off to watch how it would all come out.*

*These differing conceptions of God, [a new survey by Gallup for Baylor University] found, are ultimately more important to people's political and social views than their party registrations or church affiliations.*

—WILLIAM FALK, editor in chief, in *The Week* (Oct. 6, 2006)