

# **REFLECTIONS ON THE REVOLUTION IN EUROPE: IMMIGRATION, ISLAM, AND THE WEST**

(CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL)

January 15, 2018

This book, published in 2009, shows its age. It was written before the mass immigration to Europe of the past few years, and also before the increase in Muslim terror. While nothing the book says is wrong, and its analysis is sound enough (though it nowhere justifies, or even attempts to justify, the echo of Edmund Burke in its title), its problem is that nearly everything it contains is outdated. The future has arrived, and it is much worse than Caldwell pessimistically predicted, though at least we can now look forward to a fresh future for Europe that will be even farther downhill.

I'm actually bored with reading about the topic of European decay, so I think this will be my last book on it unless something fresh and new happens in Europe (which it will soon, I am sure). A variety of more recent books, written from perspectives across the political spectrum, have covered much the same ground, including Douglas Murray's *The Strange Death of Europe*, Rita Chin's *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe*, and James Kirchick's *The End of Europe*. Murray's book is, in particular, more worth reading than Caldwell's book. Again, that's not because Caldwell's book is bad, as such, it is merely past its use-by date. Moreover, because it is mostly tacked-together anecdotes, loosely grouped into modest, self-contained segments on a given subtopic, it does not pull or compel the reader in any meaningful way. It lacks a center, so the reader often feels adrift. Like too many books by authors who typically write in magazines, it reads like more of an extended periodical piece than a book.

The usual way of looking at Europe's problem with immigration, by which is universally meant mass immigration from non-European, almost exclusively Muslim, countries, is as point-counterpoint. On the one hand, we have Europe. On the other, we have Islam. These are separate cultures. Discussions revolve around whether and how to integrate them (in Europe, that is—there is no talk of integrating any aspect of European culture in any Muslim country, for both practical reasons (nobody wants to move to Muslim countries) and Muslim

theological reasons), as well as around whether the level of immigration is a problem, and whether immigrants pose challenges and cause problems, or are merely, or also, a benefit. Caldwell's thought falls into this general pattern of positing a direct contrast, and conflict, between Europe and Islam.

But this point-counterpoint is really the wrong way to look at the matter. What exists is actually a triangular relationship, with what Europe is, and what Islam is, forming the bases of the triangle, and the apex being what Europe was, before it went to hell. Why and precisely when it went to hell we can debate, but no clear-seeing person can deny that what Europe offers now, a wealthy land barren of children that worships the false god of so-called liberal democracy, is not the Europe that made Europe what it was, and the modern world what it is. Thus, counterpoising modern Europe to Islam, as the two alternatives on offer, is an overly limited vision. That's not to say it's wrong—just because there was an apex doesn't mean it's something we can climb back to. Maybe it's just gone, and these two are the nasty alternatives on offer. But you have to clearly strip out "European" characteristics that are not actually part of what Europe today, if you are comparing everything that today has to offer. Christopher Caldwell sees part of this, in that he pretty obviously thinks Europe has little to offer. Nature abhors a vacuum, and Islam flourishes in Europe because Europe is a continent of Lotos-Eaters. But he never takes the final step to fully appreciate the triangular relationship among the cultures being discussed.

Nonetheless, *Reflections* is serviceable enough, if you're looking for a readable overview of the basic problems afflicting Europe. Caldwell begins with a history of post-war immigration to Europe. This could more accurately be simply called a history of immigration to Europe, since until after World War II, mass migration had never occurred since the early Middle Ages, and England, especially, is the exact opposite of a "country of immigrants." As most authors do on this topic, Caldwell starts by noting that Enoch Powell was right, at least in his facts and predictions, and he similarly notes the predictive power of Jean Raspail's *The Camp of the Saints*. He discusses the reasons Europe encouraged this immigration, from postwar labor needs to left-wing guilt to "rescuing the welfare state." He states the commonplace, usually muttered *sotto voce*, that the vast majority of Europeans oppose, and have always opposed,

allowing Muslim immigration to Europe, yet their supposedly democratic rulers have always ignored this and aggressively suppressed dissent. He points out the well-known, yet suppressed, fact that diversity is the opposite of our strength—it is corrosive of social bonds and rapidly erodes social trust, with no corresponding benefits of any type, other than the only concrete thing ever adduced by its proponents, more food choices. He documents the criminalization of opinion if it runs contrary to ruling class dictates. And, to sum it up, Caldwell asks the question that frames his book: “Can you have the same Europe with different people?” The answer is “no,” to nobody’s surprise, and to his credit, Caldwell says “This book will avoid alarmism and pointless provocation, but it will also avoid euphemism and the kind of preemptive groveling that characterizes most writing about matters touching on ethnicity.” (Preemptive groveling is what characterizes far too much conservative writing; it is progressives who should begin every argument with an apology to the world for the enormous crimes they have committed and abetted.)

Caldwell is full of fun statistics and unpalatable truths. “The United Nations Population Division calculates that replicating the age structure and support ratio of [the welfare state] of Europe would require 701 million [new] immigrants” by 2050. He laughs at the UK Home Office’s optimistic belief that these new immigrants won’t themselves need old-age support, because they’ll mostly return to their home nations for their retirement. He points out that “Britain’s Muslims [join] the military at roughly one-twentieth the rate of other Britons,” and that only seventeen percent of British Muslims believe Muslims committed the September 11 attacks. He shows that “immigrants take more out of welfare than they pay in” (despite lies you often hear to the contrary). For example, in Germany between 1970 and 2000, the number of foreign residents doubled, to 7.5 million. Of those, two million were employed in 1970. And two million were employed in 2000. The rest were relaxing at the expense of working Germans. (In 2017, it was more than 10 million foreign residents, and climbing rapidly, and I wouldn’t be surprised if it’s still just two million working—that I can’t find the statistics suggests this is correct.) On the other hand, many of Caldwell’s numbers are behind the times. For example, he says “The refugee and asylum system has been tightened across Europe in recent

years, in the face of popular opposition. A report in 2006 by the UN High Commission on Refugees showed only 9.2 million refugees and asylum seekers worldwide—the lowest level in a quarter century, and probably indicative of nothing more than tougher European screening procedures.” Well, Angela Merkel and the rest of her odious ruling class companions have shot that all to hell, haven’t they?

In the second third of the book, Caldwell turns from immigration generally to an examination of Islam in the European context. He cites Hilaire Belloc’s 1938 prediction of the resurrection of Islam’s political power. He notes the ghettoization of Muslims in much of Europe and the existence (undeniable then and now, but nonetheless often denied) of European “no-go” zones, where the authorities have effectively ceded control to Islam. He offers clever phrases: “The first European generations in 1,300 years that did not see Islam as a threat turned out to be the last ones.” And, “How can you say you’re excluded, Europeans wondered, when I’m always saying how delicious your baklava is?” He points out that the first generation of Muslim immigrants was extremely law abiding, causing far fewer problems than, say, the Irish did in the United States. But the second generation, and the third—ah, there’s the rub. They not only offer more crime and terrorism, but more separatism and demands for Muslim supremacy (which, of course, is inherent in the religion of Islam, a major tenet of which is not that Christians and Jews must convert, which is a matter of indifference, but rather that they must submit). Whether or not these violent people, mostly young, are actually devout is beside the point—for them, as Caldwell notes, Islam is an “anchor of identity.” (We need to get back that anchor for ourselves, but that’s another discussion.) All this is measured and not at all frothing, but again, I think it done better in Murray’s book.

Along the way, Caldwell contrasts the vibrancy of Muslim religious belief with the hollowness of European atheism, as well as the effect the disappearance of Christianity is having and will have on Europe. Caldwell also notes that sexual matters are the only matters about which Europeans (sometimes) try to make Islam conform, something Rita Chin discusses at length in *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe*, and he notes all the other cultural differences of Muslim immigrants aside from religious belief, from polygamy to cousin marriage. This is the point at which it would make sense to analyze the triangular cultural

relationship among cultures I outline above, but Caldwell either does not see it clearly, or he does not want to spend too much time counterpoising modern Europe to what it used to be, afraid of losing too much street cred.

Still, he points out the lack of civilization and culture in Islam, noting “Spain translates more foreign books in a year [into Spanish] than all of the Arabic-speaking countries have translated [into Arabic] since the reign of the Caliph Mamoun in the ninth century.” Caldwell seems to have thought that Pope Benedict, reigning when this book was published, might lead a pushback, as shown by his entirely accurate and correct remarks at Regensburg in 2006, where Benedict pointed out that, unlike Christianity, Islam rejects that God is necessarily rational or cannot contradict himself, and channeled Manuel II Palaeologos in A.D. 1391, “Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.” Caldwell doesn’t actually quote Manuel II’s words, nor does he note that Pope Benedict wasn’t specifically aligning himself with the thought (though I do—but perhaps paradoxically, I see a possible alliance between Muslims and orthodox Christians, at least in America), but his point is that Benedict was vigorously mounting a long-overdue defense of Christianity. Unfortunately, Caldwell was wrong, for Benedict was immediately forced to retreat (which he should not have done), resigned for opaque reasons, and now we have the incoherent Pope Francis, who cannot mount a vigorous defense of anything at all, including, probably, whether and why he likes his eggs fried or scrambled.

A fascinating tangential topic, which Caldwell only touches on very briefly, is that Muslims almost never convert to Christianity. Belloc also pointed this out. Why this is so should get more discussion. It is not enough to say, correctly, Muslims are afraid because apostasy is punishable by death in Islam, or, put more broadly, in all Muslim societies extreme social pressure exists not to convert. Even aside from such pressure, theologically, Islam is a closed system, containing all the answers and aggressively discouraging any free inquiry, which may itself make conversion rare. Or perhaps lack of conversions is mostly the happenstance of how Christianity and Islam have historically found themselves aligned with respect to each other. True, few Christians

today convert to Islam, but historical examples of mass conversion to Islam are common. But all such occurred in areas conquered by Islam, in which over centuries conversion is inevitable, if for no other reason to avoid the taxes Islam requires to non-Muslims to pay. Since no Muslim countries have (yet) been conquered by Christians, in the sense of imposing permanent cultural control (colonialism doesn't count), maybe mass conversion of Muslims to Christianity hasn't been given a real opportunity, because there have never been significant numbers of Muslims contained in areas dominated by vibrant Christian rulers. In such a case, maybe there would be mass conversions—who knows? Of course, perhaps, or probably, the days when countries are “conquered” in the old sense are gone. Certainly, we can be sure Europe as it exists now will never conquer anything again, and would not resist conquest—which is why it is in the position Caldwell describes. But mass conversion of both Muslims, along with today's Europeans, to Christianity (real Christianity, not the insipid, sometimes poisonous, brew that passes for it in most of the West) might be a path backward and upward from the slough of despond in which Europe finds itself.

Finally, Caldwell turns to the West's ongoing reaction to these problems. He talks of Pim Fortuyn and Nicolas Sarkozy, of Tariq Ramadan and Hassan al-Banna. He talks of rising anti-Semitism, in words and violence. He calls the UK Independence Party, instrumental in Brexit, “eccentric hobbyists,” failing to foresee its future success (though that is hardly exceptional). None of this is all that exciting, and at the end of the day, Caldwell has little to offer. I suppose that's in the nature of a book that is a series of strung-together vignettes. His last paragraph, while not wrong in any way, is remarkably weak:

It is certain that Europe will emerge changed from its confrontation with Islam. It is far less certain that Islam will prove assimilable. Europe finds itself in a contest with Islam for the allegiance of its newcomers. For now, Islam is the stronger party in that contest, in an obvious demographic way and in a less obvious philosophical way. In such circumstances, words like “majority” and “minority” mean little. When an insecure, malleable, relativistic culture meets a culture that is anchored, confident, and strengthened by common doctrines, it is generally the former that changes to suit the latter.

True enough. Islam flourishes because Europe has nothing to offer. We get it. But this is defeatism, and defeatism is boring. If one thinks there is nothing to be done, why write a book? The world is not changed by lassitude. Rather, it is changed by a man riding a sealed train, nursing a spark readied to burn down the world; by a man wounded in battle who looked inward, found God, and then turned outward, wielding a spiritual sword across the globe; by a man who retreated to the mountains around Rome, fifteen hundred years ago, and founded monastic communities that transformed the world to be such even as we see it today. It is not changed by books like this one.