

Islam, Immigration and the Decaying Christian West

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I am an immigrant.

When my marriage brought me to the US, I spoke English, I was a PhD candidate, and I was a Christian. On top of all that, I was married to an American. Surely, my integration would be easy. Not so.

Everything was different in the West. I had first noticed it when I moved to England for my studies. Once the novelty of spongy crumpets, warm ales and gorgeous churches wore off, all that remained was a binge-drinking youth and indifferent adults. Nobody cared what anyone else did, and the efforts of the handful of those who helped others went unnoticed. The land of Shakespeare and Tolkien was nothing but a shadow of its glorious past.

Marriage took me even further from my homeland. Americans were easier to converse with, and small talk came more natural. But that indifference towards others and the ever-cherished individualism once again made this new life more isolated than I expected. Even in the Church, conversations and

relationships were superficial, and daily busyness got in the way of deep friendships.

After eight years, I am not sure how integrated I am. Sure, my accent is not as thick as before and I probably eat more hamburgers than what is good for me, but a big part of me is still an outsider. What sustained me as an immigrant was not the American culture, but my faith and marriage.

Now, consider being a Muslim who does not speak English. You grew up in a country where women never wore shorts, corruption was rampant and the thought of government paying you money for not working was laughable. Concepts like all men are created equal, freedom of speech, democracy or work ethic are either entirely meaningless or irrelevant.

From the other side of the fence, life in the West looks like paradise. Everyone lives in giant houses, everyone drives fancy cars, and food is plentiful. It is the promised land. But, in order to possess all those, you need to have the skill sets or the education, which would probably afford you a comfortable job in your home country, had you stayed. As a low or no skilled immigrant, however, the grass is not as green as you imagined. More than likely, you are not going to be able to find a lucrative job, especially if you don't speak the vernacular tongue. You would either have to move to a country where the welfare state is more liberal or fight for the scarce undesirable jobs. Suddenly, neither the big house nor the fancy car is within reach.

On top of the financial concerns, you realize the West is a truly strange place. Around every corner you see drunkenness, debauchery, adultery and foul language. With a religion that sees women as inferior and a worldview that depicts Western countries as colonizers and thieves, the only place you belong is with your own people. Why would you assimilate?

For the more militantly inclined, the West is ripe for the taking. Their immorality is a shame upon Allah. Whereas in the

past, the infidels had armies to defend themselves, now their weakness is an open invitation.

Don't get me wrong. There is nowhere else on Earth I would rather raise my children than America. My sons will learn the importance of human dignity, honest work, and freedom. My daughters will grow up knowing that they are cherished and protected. Everything the West holds in high esteem today can be traced back to Christianity, and everything that is going wrong in the West today is a departure from that Christian heritage. As Christ's influence leaves, so do all the good things that made the West enviable.

Here is my question, then: Is it merciful to encourage more immigration through an open door policy and through providing limitless government assistance?

The biggest problem with immigration policies is that they only offer bread. But as Christ told Satan in the desert, "One does not live on bread alone." When we divorce the physical from the spiritual, the result is the hollowed out culture we live in.

When the financial difficulties and the sense of superiority push an immigrant to become permanently dependent on what the states offers, despite being fed, he gets stuck in the fringes. These fringes are not places for anyone to thrive or assimilate. First of all, if there are enough people from the same source country, there is no need to learn the language or to integrate. With government assistance, there is no need to better themselves through education. It becomes a closed system where resentful and demanding immigrants become a permanent underclass. In the end, all the West is able to offer them is earthly bread.

As an immigrant, one is already an outsider. When you cannot find anything in your new country to emulate, then you turn to the familiar, regardless of how misguided and false it might be. When Western societies cannot offer an alternative to the seemingly wholesome culture of Muslim countries with their

emphasis on community, modesty, and masculine duty, what used to be moderate back home becomes radicalized in the Western migrant ghettos.

Had they stayed in their country of origin, assuming that their lives were not in danger, there was a greater chance for self-improvement or for political participation (with some notable exceptions). In their Western host countries, neither can they change the political mechanism without citizenship rights, nor is there an incentive to assimilate into the surrounding society.

Unfortunately, many believe that poverty is the cause of all evils. This leads Western countries to assume that as long as immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries are provided for, there is no cause for concern. Theirs is a world without sin, but that is a fictional world.

In the real world of sinful human nature, men will not be pacified with gold, political concessions or promises of freedom and democracy. Since Western Christian societies have lost their zeal for Christ's Great Commission, there is little hope for internal change, for a radical conversion. These children of God, who have been deprived of the Good News because of our love of political correctness and material comforts, are stuck in a place where there is no hope for spiritual betterment.

As we deprive them of the heavenly bread and the eternal gift, we dangle before their eyes the promise of a prosperous and fulfilled life. The sheer volume of migrants into Europe in recent years will invariably result in the dehumanization and mistreatment of the vulnerable, because no government is equipped to deal with such an influx, either during their initial arrival or when they are resettled. No amount of compassion and wishful thinking is going to change the fact that the future of both the host country and the immigrants look bleak unless Christ is once again the center of Western culture.

St. Peter Claver comes to mind every time I think about immigration. That holy man waited impatiently as slave ships

arrived in Columbia. He was impatient to serve these least of his brothers by not only providing what little physical comfort he could offer, but most importantly, by catechizing and sharing the Gospel with them. While we see immigration as a humanitarian problem by merely offering earthly bread, St. Peter Claver baptized over 300,000 souls, thus offering true freedom and happiness, the heavenly treasure. Church leaders and their secular counterparts who comment on immigration policy in the West would do well to remember the life of this saint whose aim was not merely to provide material comfort but to ultimately save souls. It has been awhile since Western governments divorced spiritual needs from the material, leaving not only its citizens but also immigrant communities inherently unsatisfied and underfed.

Therefore, a sensible immigration policy would ensure the welfare and protection of both citizens and potential immigrants. As long as the heavenly bread is withheld by political correctness and by our reluctance to share the good news, whatever material comfort the state offers will be insufficient. We must take immigration out of the realm of humanitarianism and bring it back into the realm of the Great Commission where every immigrant is a soul to be saved.

The Church and Islam: Nostalgia for the Sixties

By [William Kilpatrick](#)

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I recently received an email from a reader who took issue with my skeptical view of Islam. Between 1963 and 1965, he worked for the Peace Corps in a Muslim area of Nigeria. He came away from the experience convinced that “all people are basically the same” and “all want the same basic things.” Cultural differences, he maintained, were merely surface phenomena.

His view is common among people who came of age in the Sixties and Seventies. And, since many of our society's controlling narratives were developed in that period, that optimistic view is still widespread. But times change, even if narratives don't.

For example, the reality in Nigeria today is quite different from what my correspondent experienced in the mid-1960s. It no longer seems that all want the "same basic things." In fact, many Muslims want to deny Christians some of those basics – such as the right to worship in peace, and even the right to life.

[Bishop Joseph Bagobiri](#) of Kafanchan (in northwestern Nigeria) reports that in his diocese alone: "53 villages burned down, 808 people murdered and 57 wounded, 1422 houses and 16 Churches destroyed." Moreover, last year a report by the International Society for Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law revealed that 16,000 Christians had been murdered in Nigeria since June 2015.

What's happening in Nigeria has been happening all over the Muslim world. [Open Doors USA](#) reports that globally some 215-million Christians face severe persecution, mostly at the hands of Muslims. The question is, which is the real Islam: the peaceable Islam experienced by my correspondent in the mid-Sixties or the aggressive Islam of today?

In the context of Islam's 1,400 years of aggression, the relatively peaceful interval that began with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century seems to be the aberration. At the time my correspondent worked for the Peace Corps in Nigeria, the Muslim world was far more moderate than it is today or was in the past. The Islam he experienced was a marked departure from traditional Islam.

Some of the flavor of that period is captured in an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* by Ali A. Allawi, a former Iraqi cabinet minister:

I was born into a mildly observant Muslim family in Iraq. At that time, the 1950s, secularism was ascendant among

the political, cultural, and intellectual elites of the Middle East. It appeared to be only a matter of time before Islam would lose whatever hold it still had on the Muslim world. Even that term – “Muslim world” – was unusual, as Muslims were more likely to identify themselves by their national, ethnic, or ideological affinities than by their religion.



The face of Islam in Nigeria

In short, Muslim societies were more moderate in those days because they were moving away from Islam. As Allawi notes: “To an impressionable child, it was clear that society was decoupling from Islam. Though religion was a mandatory course in school, nobody taught us the rules of prayer or expected us to fast during Ramadan. We memorized the shorter verses of the Koran, but the holy book itself was kept on the shelf or in drawers, mostly unread.”

The more moderate Muslim world of the last century was not the result of deeper piety, but rather of increased secularization. There are still remnants of that moderation in Muslim lands, but it should be clear to anyone who is paying attention to current events that traditional, by-the-book Islam is once again

ascendant. Mini-skirts are no longer worn in Tehran and Kabul as they were in the Seventies, and the hijab has made a comeback almost everywhere in the Muslim world. In other words, the process of secularization has been reversed.

The amazing thing is that much of the Western world hasn't caught up with the changes. Why? Perhaps because the return of 7th century Islam undercuts the multicultural belief that all cultures share the same values. Hence, many prefer to think that the Muslim world is still much the same as it was in the days of King Farouk and the Shah of Iran – that relatively brief moment when “secularism was ascendant.”

Unfortunately, one of the important organizations that still lives in the past in regard to Islam is the Catholic Church. Many in the Church seem to think and act as though it's still 1965, and that *Nostra Aetate* (which was promulgated in 1965) is still the last word on Islam.

The section on the “Moslems” in [*Nostra Aetate*](#) reflects the multicultural notion that cultural differences are unimportant, and that all people have the same basic desires. Thus, the writers of the document took pains to emphasize the similarities between Christianity and Islam, even going so far as to suggest that the two faiths share the same moral values.

Of course, it's nearly impossible to ignore the radicalization that so many Muslims have undergone since 1965. But in their anxiety to preserve the *Nostra Aetate* “narrative” about Islam, Church leaders have found a way to get around this inconvenient fact. Muslims who persecute and terrorize non-Muslims are said to have “distorted” or “perverted” their religion because, in the words of [Pope Francis](#), “authentic Islam and a proper understanding of the Koran are opposed to every form of violence.”

Indeed, as recently as March 16, Pope Francis told the head of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that there is [no link](#)

between Islam and terrorism. On other occasions, the pope had even said that the remedy for radicalization is for Muslims to go deeper into their faith, and find guidance in the Koran. That, of course, is the very opposite of Allawi's first-hand observation that moderation is the result not of deepened faith, but of "decoupling from Islam."

Church leaders are still clinging to a view of Islam that should have gone out with the Seventies. Unless and until they acquire a longer view of Islam, they will continue to be part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

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