

>> Welcome to uncommon knowledge. I'm Peter Robinson. Joining me today, Prof. Bruce Thornton of California State University in Fresno. A classicist, Prof. Thornton sees in Europe a civilization that traces back at least 25 centuries. Today, he believes that long, long story maybe drawing to an end. His book, *Decline and Fall: Europe's Slow Motion Suicide*. Let's start with the cover. Flag of the European Union—

>> Right.

>> Doing a dissolve and for seeking into drain.

>> Yeah.

>> Seeking into a drain, Europe down the drain, explain yourself.

>> Well, as you know, I didn't design the cover but I love it.

>> You're okay.

>> I think it's -- I think it's great. There are several factors that most people who come in on Europe today identify. There is economic in the new globalized economy, European economies aren't as efficient and aren't as adaptable because of state regulation and other factors as certainly as the United States' economy and then cowboy economies of China and India. They are not really placed to compete as well. Second is the incredibly expensive social welfare entitlement.

>> Uhhh.

>> Europe has extremely generous retirement benefits, sick leave, et cetera. And as everybody knows, those expenses all are tied to payroll taxes, taxes on the economy. So those two factors interconnect. And then third, of course, is the demographic issue. The Europeans simply aren't reproducing, and again, modern capitalism is its greatest resource as the human beings. Those are the people who work and come up with the ideas to buy their products. It creates issues with labor, et cetera.

>> You placed that special emphasis on the loss of religious belief from decline of love, let me coach it to you something.

>> Uhhh.

>> Pride in the nation and belief in its unifying identity are abandoned, weakness work, disintegration or at least weakness of the nation's state as against the European Union superstate right? If the future is a matter of indifference for the child, less you have mentioned that, demographic question and most important if traditional Christianity is discarded; what values, ideals, and beliefs will then unify Europeans. Give me a word or two on the sinking of traditional Christianity.

>> Well, all these problems that I was enumerating, the real issues where why.

>> Right.

>> And then we get to the point, well, the loss of a foundational belief system that created the West in the first place, it created Europe in the first place. You know when somebody says, a certain policy should be pursued such as equality of income—

>> Right.

>> To me, the practical issues of that are interesting. To me what's interesting is why would somebody believe that in the first place? To me, everything goes back to foundational belief. So when Christianity begins to disappear, and that's a long obviously it starts in the late 18th century and so it's a long process but as it begins to retreat from the public square, it creates a vacuum. And I'm sure you've know the famous quote of G.K Chesterton, when a man stops believing in God, he doesn't believe in nothing, he believes in anything. So what we've seen in the last couple of centuries, particularly in Europe, are what I call in the book pseudo-religions substitutes for Christianity that gives us a sense of meaning and important of what we should pursue, et cetera.

>> Now, at the beginning of the 20th century, Europe is a continent of well-defined nations, check, we got nation states of high birth rates, check, we got no demographic problem and of both as best one can tell informal and certainly official adherence to Christianity. So we check that box. In the century that follows, Europe produces two world wars; fascism, communism, the extermination camp, the gulag. Why shouldn't a modern European look back at the old order and say, "No more".

>> Well, but that those conflicts were themselves a consequence of the decline in Christianity and the substitute of political religions.

>> Okay, let me get that right.

>> The 19th century of communism, you know, and socialism.

>> Good, you're coming out swinging. One more that's kind of introductory question. Beginning of the 20th century again, Europe accounts for a quarter of the world's population through their empires that ruling perhaps as much as a third of the remaining - - third and more of the remaining surface of the earth and population. They have all the major, by far, the most powerful navy is British. The most important land forces are Russian and German; today, 7 percent of the population of economic importance but not dominant and of no military importance.

>> Absolutely not.

>> To us whatsoever, why should Americans care what happens in Europe?

>> Well, because they are our cousins, our cultural cousins. They do have, you know, political freedom and representative government and they do represent a powerful economic force in the world, and they should be our ally and they should be contributing more so that the west can stand united against these threats.

>> Do you -- would you subscribe to the notion that if Europe drifts away, if Europe becomes weak or Islamicized, the temperature in the room goes up for us.

>> Absolutely.

>> Alright. The tide of faith goes up, you write, "Europeans may not have become outright atheist but their surviving faithful tend to be concentrated among the aged, the rural, and some Eastern European counties". Again, why should we care? Europe is still democratic. It still has free markets. Why should we care about the particular religious beliefs?

>> Well, if there was the whole issue of radical Islam and Muslim immigrants who are second in reproducing and disaffected and under employed, and right through Jihad's recruitment, probably, we wouldn't care that much but what are they going to call upon, what spiritual or if that word's not suitable, what cultural resources are they gonna call upon to resist of fanatical faith? If all of their goods are material, right, what material good is worth dying for and what material good is worth killing for?

>> So it matters because they're in a clash of values first and you can't beat something with nothing?

>> Exactly.

>> Now here's where this -- there are basically two narratives in my judgment about the role of Christianity in Europe. First is the Thornton Thesis. I'm quoting you. "The Christian tradition helped to create all the ideals Europe professes to respect; human rights, equality, tolerance, separation of church and state, respect for individuals". Christianity helped to create that. Now that's one. The other is let's call it the Voltaire/Christopher Hitchens' thesis, which is the opposite.

>> The enlightenment.

>> Which is it just start during the Renaissance especially during the enlightenment, Europe wins its beliefs, its understanding and the importance of human rights, equality, tolerance and so forth by struggling against oppression and superstition by the church. Now, how do you refute Voltaire and Christopher Hitchens? And believe me I wanna watch this happen.

>> Well, you know, that's the dominant enlightenment narrative that was created by Voltaire and his descendants and that has become sort of the received wisdom. I don't think historically it holds up to scrutiny. [Inaudible] it has a wonderful phrase in the

revolt or the masses, I believe, excuse me, the tragic sense of life, spiritual parasites. The enlightenment was parasitic on Christianity. It took over the high value on the individual, for example, and then slowly removed all of the spiritual or religious aspects of that. But that's its historical origins. I think, that's an issue that can be settled just by cultural history. And let me be clear about one thing if I may.

>> Right.

>> I don't subscribe to the thesis that all of these things were created by Christianity. I wrote a book called Greek ways, how the Greeks created western civilization and I document that that's the beginning of these but it is how Christianity holds those forward into its theology and its ideology and brings them into Europe and then they develop.

>> Okay, so would you -- I'm trying to, I don't know, stress well enough to give them a farewell presentation here. But do you subscribe to the Athens and Jerusalem thesis?

>> Alright. Well, Athens, Roman, Jerusalem, the three cities.

>> Alright, so it's the Greek insistence on rationality, the spiritual insights of Jerusalem—

>> That's correct.

>> Hebrew and then Christian tradition.

>> That's correct. All of these interacting in what is then the failing Roman Empire. Alright. Did you -- suppose you're a high school student or college student who has just finished reading Christopher Hitchens, or is about to be the same Voltaire, what do you -- can you name a book or two that they ought to read to refute this?

>> Oh, Christopher Dawson.

>> Christopher Dawson.

>> I mean, he wrote several books in this century that laid this all out. Of course, he is not as well known because he falls outside of the dominant enlightenment narrative that has affected, you know, curriculum and that determines how people think.

>> Christopher Dawson wrote about 20 books, maybe.

>> At least.

>> Which one would you—

>> Yeah, there's a reprint, Christianity and, I don't know.

>> Alright. So thank goodness for Amazon.

>> Christopher Dawson. Alright, now, take it down one more level.

>> Ummm.

>> "The sea of faith was once, too, at the full", you know what I'm quoting.

>> Right.

>> "And round earth's shore but now I only hear its melancholy long withdrawing roar". Matthew Arnold published Dover Beach in 1867. So the tide of faith has been going out, and of course it starts in the enlightenment. It's an 18th century phenomenon that begins there. The tide of faith has been going out for a long, long time. Why? Answer that question.

>> Well, there are a lot of reasons for that. One has been, I think, the incredible success of modern science in altering material world and improving people's lives materially because that's -- that you can't ignore.

>> It works.

>> It works and the material is more mediate to us spiritually, right. It's easier to grasp but, you know, and that success I think made it easier for people to start, you know, shrinking the role of the spiritual. Now other obvious influences; Darwin, Marx, you know, all of the determinisms, materialist-based determinisms that begin to sort of chip away at spiritual belief. I think that's one big reason why this happens.

>> Alright. I'll come back to this in a moment but what we have then is a phenomenon that's been going on for at least two centuries with very deep cultural and intellectual roots. But one person will be reigning at work on the question. How do we reverse that? And we'll come back right in a moment. The decline of Christianity, the decline of the nation, the nation state, you write again, "A factor that could fuel a hyper-nationalist revival". You're writing about the kind of thing that -- of course the great example here is Nazi Germany.

>> Right.

>> "That could fuel a hyper-nationalist revival is the animistic and its genuine patriotic sentiment that characterizes the jet setting post national EU elite". Alright. There are a lot going on in that sense. Let's just -- let's just pause for a moment to take that -- that's our text for a moment or two here.

>> Okay.

>> Distinguish between hyper-nationalism and genuine patriotic sentiment.

>> Well, mystic nationalism, I think, is another way of putting that, you know, which is one of the roots of fascism, a kind of a laden soil added towards the nation as tied to a certain ethnic group and blood, which is occlusive.

>> Right.

>> As opposed to a genuine and sincere pride in one's own way because it is one's own and because it's worthy of your admiration and your defense. But it is open and is not predicated on any kind of ethnic determinism, I think, that's the distinction. But if patriotism is denigrated and is not given respect, it's possible that it could sort of evolve into that other as a reaction.

>> And part of your thesis here in the Decline and Fall is that the European Union superstate is what? Doing what? Undermining the old nation state of England with France and Germany?

>> Absolutely. I mean the whole idea was that the horrors of the 20th century were because of nationalism.

>> Right.

>> Because of particularism and the enlightenment universalism is the superior way of organizing peoples implying that nationalism is some sort of atavistic, or like religion, a superstition that people need to grow out of instead, you know, relying on the transnational institutions of the EU or such organizations to resolve disputes. But this assumes or implies that national sentiment that is your affection for your own, for the people who live like you would believe like you do is either reprehensible or something that can just disappear rather than being a deep-seated need that people have and a good one.

>> Good, alright. Now since your classes, since you start with the Greeks and when Europe is in some ways that is cultural and intellectual zenith, it's Christendom. It's not Germany and France and England.

>>That's right.

>> It's Christendom. It's something that precedes the nation's state. So Rome falls. There is the Holy Roman Empire. There is a sense of culture. Everybody speaks Latin. There is a shared sense of learning, a shared sense of frankly religious and spiritual enterprise centered in Rome. We know that the Holy Roman Empire from Charlemagne and [inaudible] along and gets put back together and falls apart and gets put back together. That's a kind of recurring European dream to put it back together.

>> Right.

>> Napoleon, I've heard French -- I'm no great fan of Napoleon myself but I've heard Frenchman who love him, are you -- that Napoleon's fundamental impulse was to reestablish or unify Europe. So, if -- when Europe was at a zenith, it was Europe not nation states, why is that not a valid dream?

>> Well—

>> Why should they be trying to edge their way back toward then.

>> But at that point it also wasn't democratic. I mean, it took the nation's state to create the condition for parliamentary sort of government and democratic regimes, political freedom and so that was the nation state, was the community that fostered those developments.

>> It's also gonna happen in the -- it wasn't gonna happen in the feudal or aristocratic base.

>> So your objection to Brussels today is that it's a bureaucratic super state.

>> Exactly.

>> That it's muffling the wishes of the people which through a long tradition, hard one political constitutional victories, the England, I supposed, the mother of parliaments would be their leading example that represented a democracy. It does not have a place at the level of the super state.

>> Absolutely.

>> Well, now is there a way of -- so is it merely -- is your objection to -- what I'm trying to get to here is what is your objection with the European Union? Is this some sort of deep cultural objection or is it merely a matter of institutional arrangements? If they produced a constitution whereby there really were a European parliament that was popularly elected in a way we could figure out whether it's by country or by region, but there might be a way of satisfying you, is that right or not?

>> Well, I'm not sure because look at the variety and adversity of the peoples of Europe and the languages. I mean, it's countered to reality as my objection. It's the old enlightenment ideal of an abstract super -- a league of guardians that Plato dreamed about the republic.

>> These are the jet setting post national EU leagues.

>> Right, right. You know for a certain [inaudible] works wonderfully. They can buzz around here and there, but, you know, average people are rooted in the community, alright, it's the local. It's not the abstract.

>> You're pulling Aristotle versus Plato on me right now aren't you?

>> Absolutely.

>> There's a little Karl Popper working in here?

>> Absolutely.

>> Okay, so the EU, go ahead and pursue that for a minute. The EU is platonic.

>> Well, it's abstract, let's say. I mean it works in terms of abstract rules. It's totalizing, if not totalitarian, because it will suck in more and more regulatory power because the more variety you have, the more power you have to have to smooth differences and variety out. So it works, against particularly, against the local, and that necessarily, as we've seen will work against freedom.

>> Okay.

>> That's I think the main objection, and it just not gonna work.

>> And it ain't gonna work.

>> Just on the practical level. I don't think this will work.

>> Okay. Demographic suicide. You write a lot about the Muslim immigration to Europe but first the antecedent problem which is the hollowing out of Europe by sheer infertility. I Googled around yesterday and as best I can tell, there is only one exception to the following rule. Every nation in Europe, every non-Muslim population in every nation in Europe has a birth rate below replacement levels. And the only exception is Malta. Alright, so the question is why are Europeans so insistently declining to reproduce?

>> Well, that's an interesting question. Children are expensive. Children require that you sacrifice your time and your interest in your own comfort. Children are an investment in the future. If you have, you know, what—

>> Europe is richer than it's ever been though so they presumably -- their children were a luxury, could there be more right?

>> But there you are, you know—

>> The trouble.

>> A detriment to the enjoyment of life now. The dolce vita lifestyle does not include children, right? If you're high as good as pleasure, if your highest grade is the sophisticated life, then children get in the way of all of that. If you're indifferent to the

future because you think when you die that's it, there's nothing more anyway. Then why would you invest in the future and children? Why would you spend so much money, so much energy, some psychic energy in children if the highest good is simply material goods. And I think that's the sort of spiritual dimension of the problem.

>> So the loss of faith or belief leads to it is replaced by something as shallow as mere materialism, pleasure, children or pain no matter how much money you have, well, within certain limits, if you can file them all often—

[Laughs]

>> I suppose but children, changing diapers is unpleasant work.

>> Yeah, absolutely.

>> So you have few children or no children, and that in turn means that you're not thinking. It's really children who link us to the longer perspective that gets people thinking—

>> Absolutely

>> --beyond their lifetime about the health of the nation—

>> The community got it.

>> What you owe to the larger community. So the infertility in Europe is actually horrifying for what it says about the European set of values today let alone what about -- what it suggests about the future.

>> I think now, see, this is different from Russia. There is a lot of reason why Russia is even worse in terms of its fertility rate but they have, you know, all sorts of others which make it more understandable.

>> Such as?

>> You know, the economic dislocation.

>> They have been through a rough time.

>> Yeah, they have been through very, very hard time.

>> But the Italians haven't. The Italians since it -- in the Second World War have been and the French have not and the British have not.

>> No, I think it's just the consequence of affluence.

>> Immigration. Europe's evolution, you quote the scholar, Bat Ye'or, am I pronouncing this correctly?

>> Yeah.

>> "Europe's evolution from a Judeo-Christian civilization into a post-Judeo-Christian civilization that is subservient to the ideology of Jihad and the Islamic powers have propagated". You have large numbers of Muslims immigrating into Europe but isn't that Bat Ye'or, isn't that a little alarmist? They are not all Jihadists. In other words, what's the problem here?

>> Well, how do we know? I mean—

>> Well for example the Turks in Germany—

>> Right.

>> They are pretty well assimilated to maternity if not to German life, would you say?

>> Well, for me, Turkey just made a trip to Germany and said that assimilation to German culture was crime against humanity for Turks. I'm not sure they are.

>> I withdraw my history.

>> You have enclaves all across Europe in which there are non-permeable borders between many of these communities and the larger world in which they live, and in which they feel a little loyalty to those values, to the notions of tolerance, political freedom, free speech, et cetera. And when those quintessential European values, western values, are challenged by people who are living in Europe benefiting from this prosperity, it's freedom and you look at Europe's reaction. I mean it's amazing. You know, they have the cartoon controversy.

>> Right.

>> Now you have a parliament -- parliamentarian in the Netherlands Geert Wilders, I not sure I'm pronouncing it correctly who has made a film critical of Islam and the government of the Netherlands is meeting with the Islamic council in a way of saying, well, how do we, you know, how do we deal with this instead of saying, "Hey, tough, you know, this is the west. We have free speech, right? And that willingness to [inaudible] seems to be right? It sends a signal that, you know what, we have all of these ideals that we say we believe in, but we don't really believe in them because we will trimmed and we will compromise them at the first threat.

>> Can I -- I wanna go back one more moment to this demographic problem. The -- Mark Stein [phonetic] points out that if you have a country with a population, 90 percent of which has a birth rate of about 1, and 10 percent of which has a birth rate of about 3,

then the populations become 50/50 within just two generations and that is an accurate description of France today. So even without the immigration about what you write about—

>> Oh, absolutely.

>> Okay.

>> Absolutely.

>> Question. Immigration aside and as I say you write about that at great length, is it likely to be the case that the Muslim population of Europe reproduces that this higher rate even as through two generations? Isn't it -- I keep going back but aren't -- isn't the Turkish population in Germany, hasn't that—

>> Right, right. There's a valid point that over time, over generations, Muslim reproduction rates begin to lower.

>> Right.

>> But you still have the snake and the python, or excuse me, the mouse and the python. You still have this demographic bulge moving through over a course of decade in what can happen as it moves. Just look at the baby boomers in this country.

>> Right, right, right.

>> And the impact that the boomers in the ad on this country as they move through time.

>> Right.

>> So, you know, that maybe in a hundred years but a lot can happen between now and then.

>> Now, you write about something a book that was new to me and that is the Dream of El Andalus, that is that -- so would you just comment on that. First of all, tell us what the dream is and then go ahead and [inaudible] so robustly.

>> It's a 19th century myth that it was actually as I believe—

>> It's still current today.

>> Oh absolutely.

>> Alright, alright.

>> It was started by many Jews to sort of chastise growing anti-Semitism in Europe by saying, "Look, the Muslims treated us better in Andalus.

>> They occupy -- Muslims occupy the Iberian Peninsula for about 700 years and the notion is that life was pretty good there.

>> Right.

>> And that it was an open cosmopolitan kind of society.

>> Right.

>> Christians live there, Jews live there, and it was -- and fear not because that's the Muslim world of the future and you're saying—

>> Well, of course, that's historically false.

>> It is.

>> I mean there were brief moments when Jewish scholars, even Jewish, you know, viziers or whatever could have some sort of influence but in 1066, 5000 Jews were massacred in Granada, you know. The analogy that I use—

>> You point out, which I didn't know that [inaudible] who is one of the great Jewish scholars of all the centuries was a refugee from Andalusia.

>> The analogy I use is with the Jim Crow [phonetic] and you can go back and look at Black culture in the south in 1900 and 1960 and you can find poets and you can find business owners and you can find people getting college degrees. Nobody based on that—

>> But nobody wants to go back there.

>> Would go back and say, "Oh it was a wonderful" -- and in fact the old segregation is used to make that argue. I can remember them making it right?

>> Right, okay. Now we come to the section where we'll talk about what is to be done? Let me ask first about a couple of historic American policies and then I'll ask if there were mistakes from at least the administration of Dwight Eisenhower. It has been official American policy to encourage the political union of Europe. We have been officially—

>> Absolutely.

>> Among the European Union's biggest fans.

>> That's correct.

>> Terrible mistake?

>> Well, not at the time. I mean, at the time we're in the Cold War and there's a unified Europe is a better ally. You have friends in Italy, strong communist parties in France and Italy that represents the possibility that Europe could slowly be lost to the democratic camp. But a unified Europe would be a stronger Europe. So I think it made sense at that time.

>> But we need to adjust.

>> Well—

>> What about NATO? As long as the 1980s, Irving Crystal used to say, "Wait a moment. It made sense for us to be defending Europe after the war when they were still to getting back on their feet." But per capita -- in the 1980, I can't remember, his general argument was, "They're fine now. They are at least as wealthy as the United States now. They should be shouldering more of their burdens".

>> Absolutely.

>> And why not purely for economic reasons. Irving Crystal would warrant, a quarter of a century ago that we were going to infantilize the Europeans. We were going to make them incapable of facing reality and dependent on us. And it sounds to me as though that's part of the thesis right here.

>> Absolutely.

>> So NATO was a mistake.

>> Well, I think now [inaudible].

>> So why do we have 50,000 ships in Germany even now?

>> I don't know.

>> This is ridiculous on the face of it.

>> I think so. I think that we need some tough love with Europe.

>> Okay, tell me what the United States should do if there's anything that can be done?

>> Okay, the EU says, we're -- it's not a bipolar world anymore, it's a multipolar world and we're one of the major poles because of our population, of our wealth, et cetera, our influence.

>> Right.

>> Okay, but look guys, the only thing that makes you significant in global politics is in military, bottom line. Your ability to project force to work your will. Now, the disaster again in the 90s, in the Balkans exposed -- exposed the pathetic weakness.

>> Should we have refused to go in and force the Europeans to deal with that mess on their own?

>> I think that's a good argument to be made for that?

>> What about Kosovo today.

>> Kosovo today has a 90 percent Albanian ethnic population—

>> Muslim.

>> And Muslim population. The Serbs have historic claims to Kosovo. It's a mess and that population has just declared independence.

>> Right.

>> And we and the British, and the French, the Germans, I think, recognized this new country within 48 hours or so. It is utterly defenseless against the Serbs.

>> Absolutely.

>> Should we say to the Europeans, "Okay fine, you take care of that problem".

>> Well, let's say that the Russians begin to mess on divisions on the border.

>> Right.

>> At that point it would take, "Okay boys, it's time to step up to the plate", you know what I mean?

>> To the Germans and French?

>> Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely, because there are a free rider on NATO, let's be clear, they are a free rider. We pretend that NATO is just alliance with everybody. The United States provides the vast bulk of everything that makes NATO work. And at some point, we need to say "If you want this to continue, the contributions have to be equal." Look at Afghanistan now. The NATO troops from -- they don't wanna put it in harms way and the Canadians or is like, "Hey wait a minute" you know.

>> The Canadians are taking casualties right?

>> Exactly. It's like everybody contributes equally and we're letting them have a free ride. Let me make one—

>> Sure.

>> Another point I think that's important. If we have a globalized world, which we do, no question, a globalized economy, there has to be a policeman right? Somebody has to make sure that transports can sail the seas and who's going to play that role. Right now, the United States is playing that role. Europe is a free rider on that, right, they benefit from our security that we provide.

>> Right.

>> And so it's time to say, "We all have to contribute. We all have to provide the weapons, spend the money on battleships, you know, and all of those sorts of material to this work.

>> Digging around here to this question, you mentioned that the Canadians are actually putting their troops in harms way and I believe for the less couple of months that the Canadians are taking more casualties per capita even than we are in Afghanistan. Okay. Question. What you've been talking about in Decline and Fall predominantly a continental European phenomenon, should the United States be scrambling right now to put together some kind of set of relationships and what's -- you see this written about is the Anglosphere.

>> Absolutely.

>> The English speaking world. The Canadians are solid relatively speaking.

>> The Australians relatively.

>> The Australians, the British, the Indians. It's not an ethnic matter.

>> No.

>> Somehow rather it's the culture, the political culture and the attitude toward free markets, democracy that somehow where they got transmitted with the English language. Does that make sense to you?

>> I think so, yeah. I think so but here is what I would say, I think, that we should not be committed to permanent alliances anywhere. I see no reason for that. I mean, historically, what -- what are the reasons for that? I think that's a hold over from, you know, balance, early 1970, balance of power sorts of thinking. I think now we need to -- I would say India is of course the world's largest -- has problems but compared to Pakistan. You know Mexico right on our border. I mean, I think we need to be doing

much more there. And to say to Europe, you guys are rich. You wanna be a big important player.

>> And you're on your own.

>> Spend the money on the military and then we'll deal with it.

>> Last question about American policy with regard to Europe. Considered in light of Europe, does the war in Iraq become more important, that is to say -- I have no idea. We've never discussed this. We don't want talk about whether it was right or not to go into Iraq. So this is a real flyer of a question here, but the Bush plan from the outset, which has run into a few obstacles, needless to say, was to create a more or less democratic functioning government with more or less free markets. If you managed to achieve -- if they, themselves, manage to achieve economic growth in the Arab, in the Muslim world, that takes the pressure off on immigration to Europe. If there is an example of a genuine democracy, that again, takes some of the pressure off this dream of recapturing -- of rebuilding El Calafate or El Andalus. Does it have -- how does that play into Europe or not at all?

>> I don't think so. I don't think so. I think for 14 centuries, there has been a collision of Islam and what used to be Christendom and we didn't stop until 1683 and then Islam began to retreat.

>> What we've been seeing started in the early 20th century after World War I and laws of the Calafate has been various attempts to reverse that tide and to push back against it. And it's not a question of material goods. It's not a question of, you know, we want more internet service and we want more porn channels, you know. Again, we're back to where we've started with the attempt to negotiate spiritual goods in exchange for material ones, and it never works.

>> Let me name a few names, you give me once sentence on whether each of these people makes you feel more optimistic or less so about Europe.

>> German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

>> Less optimistic. She's had two years and has accomplished nothing and she is out to do in terms just in the economic sphere.

>> Okay, Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Zapatero.

>> Depressingly pessimistic.

>> I'm hoping to find a little uptake here. French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

>> A little bit more optimistic, but again, the obstacles in making these changes are so great that he's not gonna be able to, I think, do anything significant. He's already dropped in popularity so much.

>> Pope Benedict XVI.

>> The one -- the one figure I think in Europe that makes you feel some optimism although the news that he's gonna sit down with the Muslims [inaudible].

>> He did sit down with the Muslims. I have -- this is from yesterday. They announced that, excuse me, he did not himself yet but there were some sort of official event at the Vatican saying that there is going to be the establishment of the Catholic-Muslim forum which the Pope will get around to address that. Now why is it that -- you said Nicolas Sarkozy, it's impossible for him to make any change. He's the President of the Fifth Republic but the Pope can make -- why does the Pope encourage you, at his disposal?

>> Because he has seen in his works and his writing as to John Paul II. Both have seen the spiritual crisis that lies at the heart of the European crisis. And they are talking about that and nobody else wants to talk about that because we're all Voltaire. We're all rationalists. We're all [inaudible].

>> So counter Christopher Hitchens if you want to ask who is the greatest realist, not fabulous, but realist in Europe today, you would know knock on those big problems, stories at the papal apartments.

>> Absolutely.

>> Alright, last question Bruce. If you could give the next President of the United States, one -- two at the most sentences of instruction about what to do concerning Europe, what would you say?

>> Well, we've already said it. Sit down and re-negotiate NATO and re-negotiate any sorts of mutual defense treaties in which we foot all of the bills and they don't. Show some tough love. Make them start putting their money where their mouth is if they wanna be a big boy in global politics.

>> Bruce Thornton, thank you very much.

>> Thank you.

>> Bruce Thornton's book, *Decline and Fall: Europe's Slow Motion Suicide*. I'm Peter Robinson at the Hoover Institution for Uncommon Knowledge. Thanks for joining us.