

Into The Study Episode 209

Speaker Welcome to Into the Study, the podcast from the Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia. I am Tim Shaw, associate minister here at IPC, and I'm here with our senior minister, Doctor Terry Johnson. Doctor Johnson, you read any good books these days? I am reading I what I think is one of the great biographies of our age. I think I think good biographical writing, I think is difficult. It's it's hard to sustain the interest. This book that's by Andrew Roberts and it's his biography of Winston Churchill. And I'm about, I don't know, five hundred pages into it. And there's another four hundred or five hundred to go. And it's phenomenal about a remarkable person. And it's it's captivating from the from the opening chapter all the way through. I'm now at World War two has just begun. Uh, Churchill was just really a unique, remarkable person. He's his gift of language was extraordinary. Um, I mean, one of, one of his actually, one of his critics talked about how once the war broke out, they knew that, you know, that that was the time that he should be prime minister, that he was the guy to lead them in the war, and spoke of how he put the sent the English language into battle. You know, he's the one who came up with the blood, soil, blood, toil, tears and sweat. We'll fight them on the beaches. We'll fight them on the. Yes. And the great, great. Uh, you know, I think that was, uh, after the fall of France. Or I forget exactly in the sequence after Dunkirk. And we will never surrender speech. Just remarkable. But he has a whole lifetime of that. His speeches in the House of Commons and his wit, his retorts, his responses. Uh. On his feet. Uh, to people that are so, so clever. So in the moment, uh, and, uh, captivating, um uh, really and, uh, you know, some part part of what his life that people don't may not realize is that, uh, he had, um, what's the term I'm looking for? He had a natural fearlessness, um, a physical fearlessness, uh, physical courage. He talks about physical. Yeah. Physical courage. That's probably the right expression. He, you know, there are people who are brave, but who deal with their fear and overcome it, and they do brave things. He would go into battle as a young man into battlefields and put himself in dangerous situations, including during the Boer War, which was um. The war with the South Africa. South Africa, with the Dutch population there resisting British colonization and fighting for independence, which they lost, the Boers lost. But, you know, he put himself in harm's way and he did the same thing. Um, in the First World War he was in very, very dangerous places, you know, bullets whistling around his head. Yeah. After the Dardanelles. I mean, after all the disaster of being the head of the Navy, then he goes to the front lines and his tent gets blown up, you know, moments after leaving it, the whole thing. He's in the trenches. I mean, he loses all his all his brandy. But he didn't he didn't, uh, he didn't seem to be affected by physical fear. Yeah. What is it, Sandra? Is it called a man of destiny? Is that the subtitle? Yeah, I don't remember. I think it's something like that. But Roberts paints that picture so well that from his earliest memories, he always knew he'd save England. He really believed that about himself. Yeah. He did, he did. He believed that he had a God given destiny that he was going to fulfill. And I think that was part of his physical courage is that he knew he was, you know, like, like Stonewall Jackson said that he's safe in his bed as he was on the battlefield, that when, you know, his number was up, his number was up. That tends toward fatalism. And I don't endorse that view completely. But the result was great, great, great physical courage. Well, and I love to he's the last Victorian. And he, you know, the British Teddy Roosevelt, the way the two of them really embody that kind of physical courage

in a similar time. And our great men of great families that take upon the responsibility before them, the ambition. And I, I, I realized that he was in the wilderness. They talk about his wilderness years in the nineteen thirties. And I've known of that, that period of his life, but I didn't realize the extent to which he was isolated. You know, when Chamberlain Neville Chamberlain came back from the Munich Conference with Hitler with a piece of paper that he waved when he when he got off the plane. Uh, in the aftermath of that meeting. Celebrating what the quote is peace in our time. Mhm. And Churchill saw from the very beginning when Hitler became chancellor of Germany, he was sounding the alarm, and he was almost entirely alone. There was virtually no one who was supporting him. He was seen as a warmonger and a pessimist. And and it was, you know, sharply criticized by, you know, all the people whose thoughts were important in in England at the time are alleged to be important. Um, but he saw the danger. And here's the thing, it's kind of a prophetic thing. He could see the trajectory. He could see where this thing was going. He could see what a what an evil Hitler and Nazism was before, before he'd really shown his colors. Mhm. He knew. He knew where that was going. He knew what was behind it all. When? When virtually all the rest of the world was was blind and was taking a more benign and optimistic view of where Hitler and where Nazism was going. And so when the Munich pact was agreed upon, peace in our times, he went into the House of Commons, uh, and, uh, it was booed as he gave, I think in some ways, the greatest speech he ever gave was, you know, do not think this is the end. This is only the beginning of a bitter cup that will be proffered to us year after year until we recover our, our, our martial strength and, and courage. It was all about armament. Oh my God. And so anyway, I've thoroughly been enjoying that. I've been reading it at the beach and just loving, loving reading that and celebrating what was a great life by a great man who was used by God, though he does not seem to have ever been any kind of a have any kind of a credible Christian faith. He like himself to a flying buttress that was outside of the cathedral supporting the walls, but outside. Uh, of course, that's not that's not possible to be outside the church, but supportive of it. And, and any, you know, ultimate or eternal sense. But he was supportive of the church and of Christian civilization. He saw the benefits of a Christian civilization and really realized that that it was important that those foundational truths that, uh, that were at the, at, at the very basis of the British Empire and Western civilization be maintained. And they were under threat and they were under threat from Hitler and from other sources as well. I think it was the Lord Roberts and Alan Eleanor conversation where they compare Churchill and Abraham Lincoln and their their view of Providence and of history. But aren't really Christians in any meaningful or theological or spiritual sense. But I mean our products of Christian civilization, of course, in the greatest of ways, especially in the rhetoric. Yes. And because they were brought up in a Christian civilization and because they were saturated with with Bible, particularly in the King James Version, then then you'll see both, um, Lincoln in powerful ways and Churchill bringing Bible, uh, expressions in this, this, uh, House of Commons speech following the Munich pact with Hitler. Um, he he he he he he he went to, he went to the book of Daniel and the pronunciation there against the Persian king. Many, many tickle parson. Oh, you've been weighed and measured. You've been weighed in the balance and found wanting. He quoted that verse against the settlement with Hitler that that those words would come back to us, that we have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. And, you know, being able to draw because he was brought up in a Christian civilization saturated with biblical truth and biblical

expression, he was able to draw upon that language in a powerful way. And, you know, Karl Truman just wrote a, an article, the the essence of which was England is no more. Very, very first things very, very sad, very, very pitiful. He says the England in which I was reared was is no is no more. Well, the way he even talked about, he was the last one to receive the Latin primer in his, his little grammar school. They gave him the book that belonged to the school because they were discontinuing the the the the program, the last Latin scholar of his little local grammar school. And so giving up Latin is giving up Western civilization. I think that's the way Carl Truman saw it and the technocrats taking over. Yeah. So the England that I knew was the England that he grew up in my years, there were seventy seven to seventy nine. And he's you know, he's a decade younger than I am. He's coming of age in that England and England is still England. And there's still the pervasive Christian influence though it's on. It's waning. And he's able to say some forty years later that the England that we've all known for centuries, it is no more especially the decency he defines as respect for other people, no matter their beliefs. He talks about the cancel culture in Britain today, the way the the Dutch lady is kept out because she's not she's anti-trans and and how how they're allowing, you know, third world immigrants to come in who have questions about whether rape is a moral gray area or not, and how confused the ruling classes are in Britain today. Morally, the Islamic immigration is an entirely different definition to rape if it even recognized it as being such. And almost. If a woman dresses immodestly that she deserves whatever happens. Um, and that's that's an ethic that's alive and well in the Islamic world. So you bring in massive numbers. A third of the England's England's population now is not English. Yeah. Uh, so it's I think it's a sixty forty split right now. Um. England is gone. Yeah. London itself is fifty, fifty point five percent white and the rest would be none. I mean, not, you know, not native in that way. So it's um. Yeah, the, you know, even when I was there in the seventies, the, the, the packy's, they called them, the Pakistanis were, were, were, um, they basically owned all the restaurants. They were a significant presence. Today, the mayor. The mayor is Muslim. Yeah. Um, so it's londonistan. Yeah. It's a it's a it's a great civilization. Um, you know, it's a Protestant England. Uh, we are, as a nation indebted to Protestant Britain more broadly are immigrants. The founding generations were mainly English Protestants, Scottish Protestants. Secretary Rubio, you know, gave it as a as a you know, we inherited our idea of Western civilization from the English in that way, directly the line draws through there. Certainly. Right. So that it was, you know, our heritage is not only Christian. It's it's it's more strictly speaking, Protestant and even more strictly it's reformed Protestant. We were we were founded and populated in those early centuries, But by a. In terms of the free population was English, Puritan, Scotch-Irish, Presbyterian, Dutch, Dutch, reformed, French, Huguenots. Speaking of which, I'm speaking at the French Huguenot Church in Charleston this Sunday, so I won't be here this Sunday. But I do have this opportunity to, to speak, um, to speak there for their service in which they remember the revocation. It's called the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Yes. The revocation of the, uh, the revoking of the Edict of Nantes. The Edict of Nantes was, was declared by Henry the Fourth of Navarre, who, who became King Henry the Fourth of France, uh, which um legalized Protestantism, the Toleration Act of Protestants. Yes. Edict of toleration, edict of Nantes. And so they were they were given, you know, property rights, freedom, rights, and even military rights to maintain, you know, a military element. And a hundred years later, sixteen and eighty five, then that was revoked by Louis Quatorze, Louis the fourteenth. And

that led to the estimates. I've seen the estimates ranging from two hundred thousand to a million Huguenots then fled. Others were forcibly converted, others converted, you know, willingly saw the way that the wind was blowing. And they were, you know, second, third, fourth generation Huguenot and not quite as devout as their parents, but, um but they fled. And the beneficiaries of that were Germany and Switzerland and Holland and England and America, because the beneficiaries, not just because they were godly, but because they were a very talented, uh, basically, uh, middle class artisan class. And forty percent of the nobility was Huguenot forty percent. Yeah. And maybe ten percent of the population overall, but sort of the middle upper middle class shopkeepers. Um. Well, Paul Revere is an example. Yeah. Paul Paul Revere was a silversmith. That was very typical of the class of person that embraced reformed Protestantism at the time of the Reformation and post-Reformation, uh, years. So they then fled to these other countries. Well, these other countries all benefited from what they what they brought. In fact, my, my theology teacher at Gordon-conwell, Roger Nicole, he was a French speaking Swiss. His argument was France never recovered from the right to speak in your voice, Roger Nicole. He said that the French. The France never recovered from the loss of the. Of the Huguenots because it was such a gifted, talented, educated class of person that was lost. Have you been listening to the rest is history on the French Revolution. I haven't. I knew it was bad. It's way worse than I ever thought. Really? And you think that this happened? Yeah. I mean, this happens within one hundred years of the dance. I don't know, but there's. There's no middle upper class, reasonable Protestants left to slow down the excesses of the revolution. I mean, it really isn't. So the revocation of sixteen eighty five, the French Revolution in sixteen eighty seven, there's seventeen eighty seven. So it's almost exactly. I would love to know. I'd love to hear somebody, you know, give their thoughts on the relation of the two. Well, this was Nicole's point is that France France, in effect, never recovers the the revolution, you know, it attracts more than Frenchmen. And, uh, there's a, there's a revolutionary fervor that that takes over if there's no upper middle class, there's only aristocrats and, you know, lower classes, then you have the recipe for the revolution. Right. Yeah, I think, I think that there's, there is that element. Um, but I think, I think as well, you deprived, you deprive the nation of, of talent. Yeah. Um, of gifted people of, of, of the salt and light. Right. I mean a faithful Christianity, biblical Christianity, not idolatrous Catholicism. Yes. And one of the great stories from out of that period is the story of Marie Duran. And she, she nineteen years old. And this is in the she was born in seventeen eleven. So this is, you know, this is twenty years after the revocation. And so she's growing up nineteen years old. She gets engaged. Well, she and her fiancé are arrested. They're sent to different prisons, um, because they're Protestants and they will not renounce their faith. She spends thirty eight years. She goes in as a nineteen year old. She comes out and in. She's fifty seven years old. Her whole life has gone by. She was never allowed out because. Because she wouldn't renounce her faith. And, you know, there's many letters that she wrote. And we have we have some of those letters. And she is very godly. She's reading leading Bible studies. Um, she's writing these very, you know, spiritually insightful letters, uh, thirty eight years. And she etched into the stones out of which, uh, her imprisonment, uh, his prison was made. She, she writes in French resist. Amazing. Mhm. And she resisted. I need a French history. You know, I never learned it properly. I'm always imagining she's in prison. Like. Like the guy in the book. The TV show. We all just watched the BBC. What's the. What's the show? We all watched, you know, with the Alexander

Dumas writes the book and, uh. Hamas. Yeah. Yeah. Um. No. Count of Monte Cristo. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. She was in a in a similar kind of situation. Yeah. I think a larger room. And there was a gathering place where the other prisoners, um, could, could, could get together. But um. Yeah, there still you can, you can go to that, that prison and you can see still today the etching, I've seen pictures of it. Mhm. Just, I think is something like the French word. Um, she resisted to the very end. She never would renounce her faith. Well, we do also have some questions from our beloved tens of listeners. One comes from a pastor in Delaware. Having read your books and hoping to read still more of your books, he has questions about your view of the five evangelical feast days traditionally observed by the Continental Reformed as opposed to the the English Puritans that kind of reject any kind of feast days, the Continental Reformed observe Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost. And he says, you seem to embrace the Continental Reformed view. And he's wondering what was the biblical reasoning and any practical suggestions you might have for pastors planning these services. So I don't I don't have a biblical reason. I have a, I have a a wisdom reason. I think this is a wisdom issue. I don't think it's a Bible issue. So what am I trying to say by that? Well, in the Westminster confession, it recognizes that there are times where you call for national days of fasting. Yeah. And so you can do that. Why, why, why would you not be able to do that on an annual basis? Then? I, I think that what the confession and what the reformed tradition is against is seeing them as some kind of a holy day. They're not holy days. They're not we're this is not the Old Testament where there are there are designated holy days like Yom Kippur, you know, the Yom Kippur day or pass over. We don't have a calendar of Holy days. One in seven. Yes. What we have is a weekly Sabbath. And otherwise we don't have holidays. That word holidays. Holy day, you know, shortened. Um, so so can we, um, on an annual basis though, set aside a day in which we focus on the incarnation. Yeah. We can. Christmas is not the greatest name. I mean, in the romance languages, it's, you know, Navidad, Feliz Navidad. It's it's the nativity that's being celebrated. So the Christ mass, that's a very Roman Catholic legacy that we we have. It's not a mass. It's it's a celebration of the of the Nativity of the birth of Christ. Can we celebrate the resurrection of Christ on an annual basis? Set aside a Sunday in which we feast. We celebrate that? Um, yes. What about, uh, what about Good Friday, where we, we remember in particular, um, the suffering of Christ or do that on a, on a Thursday night, a Maundy Thursday where we, um, you know, where we gather and, and conduct a service where we're remembering the, you know, the night that he was betrayed and the institution of the Lord's Supper and the suffering that was to follow. I to me, that's a Christian liberty thing. The church has the authority to gather or to designate a Sunday to gather on on a particular day, or designate a Sunday in which there's a particular focus to either feast or fast. But we're not canceling services the day after Christmas. In other words, this kind of celebration is always subservient to our Sabbath observance. Yeah. I mean, we had we've had churches in recent years canceling the Sunday service. I mean, it's happening again this year, I'm sure. This is just craziness. This is what what? So you're kind of a pragmatist in some ways when the cultural winds happen to blow in our direction. What's so ahead and use them rather than fight those winds? Yes, I think so. I think so when it's a matter of Christian liberty and of wisdom. Yeah, we can have a feast day. We can have a feast day. And if everybody in the whole world is going to celebrate the birth of Christ, why would we ignore that? I don't understand. We can sing the hymns of the incarnation. Yes, and of the resurrection. And a

special emphasis, it seems wise. Yeah. Why would we not? Everybody in the world is going to be celebrating the resurrection of Christ. Why would we not? Why would we ignore that when there's all this momentum in the culture to do so? And they're going they're going to fill our church. And so we're going to talk about something else. Why would we do that? I just think it's foolishness. It's essential aspects of the gospel. Yeah. Any practical suggestions for pastors planning these services? I mean, just the common sense things. I mean, sometimes you you could just continue on and you're preaching expositions. Sometimes, I guess you give a special sermon, Christmas sermon for Christmas Eve, but the Christmas Sunday or even Easter Sunday morning, sometimes you stay in your depending. I think if it fits. Yeah. Yeah. I think if it fits, I usually have an Easter sermon. I usually have a Christmas Eve sermon. That's that's distinctive. Um, I might not on the Sundays before and after. Right. Uh, with the new year, we don't really do advent. Places do advent. We don't really do that. No, I think that that's a concession to the calendar. That's unwise. I think that Lent and Advent, now you're committing yourself to a whole months, months and multiple weeks where the calendar is going to drive what the church is doing. I don't want that. I don't I don't think that's wise to. Well, I mean, besides the, the, the rootedness of those. Calendar items Lent and advent rooted in in basically what they were were fasting calendars. Right. Making yourself fasting so as to be worthy of receiving the benefits. That also happened to jive very well with the with the the grain calendars, the very agrarian reality of monastic life. That's right. Right. But in terms of the way that the fasting, the fasting for advent, fasting for lent worked was it was all about making yourself worthy. So it's rooted in a works righteousness, outlook and mentality. Hughes old says pointed this out years ago. So do we really want to to, number one, be dominated by the calendar in that way to where it's determining, you know, the themes that we're going to feature on any given Sunday for weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks on end. Um. Is that really something that we should be doing? I don't think so. I think that we should be doing lectio continua readings and preachings. So we're you know, we're not let the Bible guide. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Sequential reading, sequential preaching is, I think, a much wiser course to take. And I think once you get into the calendar, then the calendar is dictating your themes and your readings and what's going to be emphasis on and on any given Sunday. And I think the church is better off in the long run with systematic, um, planned systematic, um, readings, preaching and coordinating all that with what's being sung and prayed. We have another question coming from a friend in the presbytery who appreciates the old liturgical forms, the Book of Common Prayer, and even your book leading in worship where there's fixed prayers. He's wondering, you know, should we cite sources in the bulletin for those prayers or give credit before or after the prayer? Do we apply the same standard to leading in prayer preaching? You know, what are your thoughts about how to use fixed prayers and how we do it? Um, I think that I think that if you want to put a note in the bulletin, I think that's fine. I don't think it should be something announced. Yeah. Join with me now as I pray Thomas Cranmer's prayer of confession. So we have done it. We've we've used Calvin's prayer during a Reformation Sunday. It's in the bulletin. And I think you mentioned it. And, you know, we do use fixed prayers whenever we're doing the Lord's Supper. We use the. I think it's the book of Common Prayer. Prayer of confession. That's a prayer. And so most of the time, you know, I don't know, eighty percent of the time we're praying free prayer, but but prepared prayer. I don't think any of us are up there going just from our own mind. We have some level of

preparedness, whether it's written out or in bullet point form. Our prayers and the services. But but you're against giving credit or citation. I think that, again, I think that if it's from a source like the Book of Common Prayer or the Book of Common Worship, and it's word for word, I think to put a note in the bulletin is fine. I just don't like that intruding into the flow of the service. Yeah. Um, I don't think it helps anything for us to say, join with me now as I pray from the Book of Common Prayer. Yeah. Yeah. I don't think that helps anyone. I think it's a distraction. I think you may notice I use very, very limited quotations during sermons because I think they're more a distraction. I don't think they're that helpful. Now, in the written copy, there's a bunch of them. Yeah. And that's so that when people people want to follow up on what I've said and they're wondering about whether or not what I said was in the tradition. Yeah. So they can follow up and say, oh, yeah, I can see here where, you know, this is well attested. Yeah. Archibald Alexander Hodge said the same thing. Calvin said that or Matthew Henry said that or. Yeah. So they're checking up to see to make sure that I'm sort of in the Orthodox reformed tradition. And then you do advocate free prayer, but you also do kind of advocate fixed, fixed prayers. I think there's a place for both. I think that by I think one of the strengths of reformed worship is free prayer. Yeah. That's adapted to the moment and the time and the circumstances. Um, and, um, brings the whole body of scripture, uh, brings that content into the prayer life of the church. And I think if you have the same prayer every every week, I think that that's very, very, very limiting. I think that, you know, we have lots and lots of prayers in the Bible, and we have lots of lots of language that informs our prayers. And so that whole, that whole variety and that rich wealth of language should be brought to bear in the praying of the church. And so I, I think to limit yourself to a book, I think it's, it's, it's, I think it's unwise in terms of the edification of the church. I think it's like singing the same hymn every week. Why would you do that? Why would you sing the same hymn when you've got this wealth of devotional language in the hymnal, you've got, you know, six or seven hundred potential hymns or psalms to choose from, you would you would want to bring that, that richness to bear on the life of the people and forming them and shaping them in their own prayer life and their own devotional habits. So, I mean, that's what I've spent a lifetime trying to do that, trying to take the richest and most meaningful and accessible Bible language and working that into our prayers. And because I also think that nothing so inspires us or comforts us is to hear, um, you know, significant Bible promises and, uh, uh, and even Bible commands. I mean, to hear the preacher praying, oh Lord, we pray that you would so shape us that we would be poor in spirit and we would be meek, and that we would be merciful and that we would hunger and thirst after righteousness. I mean, that's what we aspire to, to. But to make that a, a part of the prayer I think is inspiring for God's people. One of my favorite benefits of fixed prayers is the way is the common language that's developed within a church and a tradition. So that my children, you know, here, they're here for church every Sunday, thirteen Sundays. They are hearing the fixed Cranmer's prayer of confession. They do, and know it, but by the time I. My twelve year old. She basically has memorized. She just heard it enough that she knows it. And that's a great benefit. Well, and in that case, um, most of our people know the language of thoughts, words and deeds. Evil done, good, left undone, ignorance, weakness, our own deliberate fault. I mean, there's phrases that I think are very helpful if you want to pray a comprehensive prayer of confession, how about thoughts, words and deeds? Evil done, good, left undone. We are catechists and sometimes our forms and prayers are

helpful in that. Yeah. Well, this has been another episode of Into the Study. Allow me to remind our listeners that we'd love to receive your questions. Please email them to the address listed in the show notes. This has been into the study, the podcast from the Independent Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Georgia. This is Tim Shaw and Terry Johnson. Hoping you found it helpful. Until next time.