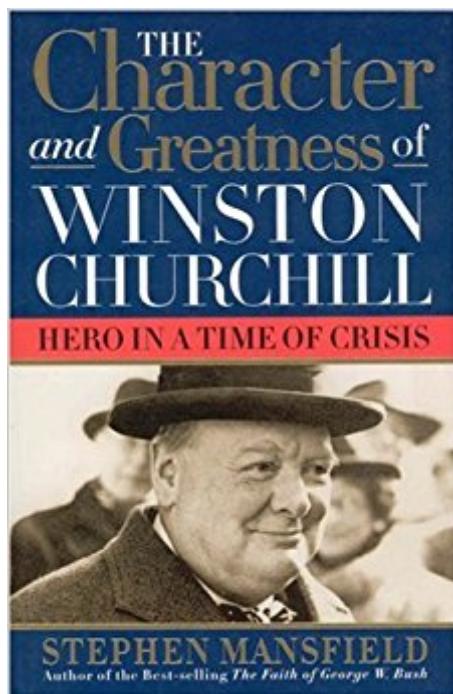


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Character And Greatness Of Winston Churchill: Hero In A Time Of Crisis



Synopsis

Winston Churchill was one of the most extraordinary leaders of the twentieth century. What enabled him to stand so steadfastly when all those around him seemed to turn back in fear? What enabled him to inspire whole nations to endure the unendurable and to achieve the unachievable when all those around him had already surrendered all hope? The Character and Greatness of Winston Churchill is a remarkable study of Churchill's leadership skill and answers these questions and more. The result is an account that is no less inspiring today than it was three-quarters of a century ago when the great man's shadow fell large across the world stage. According to Henry Kissinger, "Our age finds it difficult to come to grips with Churchill. The political leaders with whom we are familiar generally aspire to be superstars rather than heroes. The distinction is crucial. Superstars strive for approbation; heroes walk alone. Superstars crave consensus; heroes define themselves by the ... future they see it as their task to bring about. Superstars seek success as a technique for eliciting support; heroes pursue success as the outgrowth of their inner values." Winston Churchill was a hero.

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Customer Reviews

STEPHEN MANSFIELD is the author of several books on history and leadership, including *The Faith of George W. Bush*, *Then Darkness Fled: The Liberating Wisdom of Booker T. Washington*, and *More Than Dates and Dead People*. He lives in Nashville, Tennessee.

To his credit, Stephen Mansfield illustrates the decisive importance of religious faith in the life of Winston Churchill since his encounter with his influential nanny, Mrs. Elizabeth Everest (pg. 41, 50, 192). The vision of death that Churchill experienced when he was a teenager could also have fortified his faith (pg. 212). Too often, Churchill's faith is downplayed in the abundant literature available about his words and deeds (pg. 34, 221-227). Churchill was a strong-willed nonconformist who rarely chose the well-worn path for which he sometimes paid a heavy price in his life as Mansfield correctly states (pg. 43, 99-100, 203-206). Randolph Churchill, his emotionally distant father, had no much faith in his son until his premature death in 1895 (pg. 160). Randolph Churchill thought that Winston was just good for a military career, not clever enough to go to the bar (pg. 47, 96-97). During his military service in India, Churchill realized that he had huge gaps in his learning in contact with men of his own age who benefited from both breadth of knowledge and ease of discourse. Driven by curiosity and ambition, Churchill embarked on a demanding program of readings on his weakest subjects. This eager pursuit of knowledge was a turning point in Churchill's life (pg. 54, 99-102, 161-162). It marked the end of youth and progressively revealed Churchill's emergence as an exceptional man (pg. 101). Churchill probably best summarizes his life's philosophy in a three-tier question and answer in *Savrola*, his only novel: 1) Would you rise in the world? You must work while others amuse themselves (pg. 57, 131). To merely exist was no better than death (pg. 134). Churchill's high talent and amazing energy were both praised and criticized (pg. 69-70, 85-86, 120, 129, 178, 188-190). Churchill could not stand the routine and the tedious. He was never idle. History transfixed Churchill and fed his vision of the world (pg. 70, 108, 139-141, 144-145, 209). Churchill deeply believed in action; he had a goal, a plan and an iron will to get things done (pg. 109-110). Churchill possessed an almost mystical knowledge in knowing the facts and seeing them as they were, as a critical step towards ultimate triumph (pg. 144). As Mansfield correctly points out, Churchill's weapons were his words, passionate words loaded with faith and vision (pg. 84, 147-150, 174, 179). 2) Are you desirous of a reputation for courage? You must risk your life (pg. 57). Churchill had little regard for his personal safety, was not concerned with criticism where his principles were involved, and regularly stood firm before the most determined opposition (pg. 77, 79, 82, 120, 123-126, 130, 195-198). Churchill, however, was open to genuine self-criticism (pg. 155-158, 160). Unsurprisingly, Churchill was perceived as a political opportunist, a maverick without deep loyalty to any political party as he switched back and forth between Conservatives and Liberals between 1904 and 1924 (pg. 66). Furthermore, Churchill regularly flirted with death first during his military career and then in politics (pg. 57, 104-106). Yet behind the public persona that radiated an aura of power and confidence, Churchill could sink in periods of depression that

reminded him of his weaknesses (pg. 155-156, 171, 213). Churchill acknowledged that without the help of the Almighty, he could have never succeeded (pg. 64, 72, 84-85, 115-117, 152-153).³ Would you be strong morally or physically? You must resist temptations (pg. 57, 132, 161). Churchill only asked of others what he required of himself (pg. 57, 106). Churchill never gave in except to convictions of honor and good sense (pg. 151). Churchill was not ashamed to show his emotions and compassionate nature (pg. 163, 172, 184). Churchill's happy marriage to Clementine Hozier is a testimony of their faith in each other, despite the many differences existing between them (pg. 119-122, 135-138). Churchill and his wife had to show much fortitude when dealing with the troubles of three of their four children (pg. 138, 153-154). Churchill's character was forged in adversity. Churchill often learned the hard way. This rich experience he gained progressively turned him into a towering presence that could see farther than most people did. Churchill's enduring faith in both his destiny and the future of mankind was the ultimate driving force behind his greatness.

This could have been a very interesting book; however, in order to truly examine how Churchill's faith and worldview made him a great leader, Mansfield would have risked disproving his primary "black and white" thesis: Winston Churchill was a great leader because he was a Christian... or at least "Christian" as defined by Mansfield's largely conservative, evangelical American audience. However, much of this audience would likely have major issues with Churchill's Freemasonry and later Druidic involvement, or in Churchill's belief in and reliance upon oratory-which included evoking British mythology-to rally the undermanned and underarmed British and hold the Germans at bay until more substantive military assistance arrived. In some Christian circles, particularly those up in arms over the Harry Potter books that draw upon much of the same British mythology Churchill did, this might be considered borderline sorcery. As the Nobel committee noted when awarding him the 1953 prize for literature (not peace), "His every word is half a deed." Going to the other untenable extreme as conspiracy theorists across the 'Net have done, claiming that Churchill's involvement with the Freemasons (like FDR's) and Druids proves that he is just as Satanic as Hitler, is certainly not an academic nor intellectually honest alternative; however, glossing over and outright avoiding relevant facts and sketching Churchill as a two-dimensional "Christian" hero any good card-holding Christian Reconstructionist could proudly hold up as a Christian leadership paradigm does nothing more than cast this complex man (who apparently had a more complex, idiosyncratic, and potentially problematic faith and worldview than Mansfield lets on) as a modern-day King Arthur. However, given Churchill's love of and belief in the power of myth, particularly English myth, perhaps Mansfield's speaking the Myth of Churchill into existence is perfectly appropriate in

Churchillian terms. If this were truly Mansfield's motive, the book might have been more accurately titled, The Greatness and Power of the Churchillian Myth. [...] Structurally, Mansfield's brief case-study examination of Churchill as leader bears a passing similarity to how Howard Gardner examined the various internal/cognitive and external influences that create and shape leaders in *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership* (even though I personally thought Gardner did a better job of applying Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi's theories in an earlier book, *Creating Minds*). Based on a passing reference to Gardner's multiple intelligence theories in one of his other books, *The Faith of George W. Bush*, I wonder if Mansfield's treatment of Churchill isn't at least somewhat inspired by Gardner's work. However, reading this glossed-over, thesis-driven "study" just made me wish that Gardner had conducted this case study of Churchill in the first place.

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