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## Smith's "Duty & destiny: The life and faith of Winston Churchill" (book review)

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# Book Reviews

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Smith, G. (2021). *Duty & destiny: The life and faith of Winston Churchill*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 253 pp. \$28.99. ISBN 9780802877000

Since there are an abundance of biographies on Churchill available, one might wonder if there is need for another one. However, Gary Scott Smith's new book is not only a biography but also an analysis of Churchill's faith, as shown in different periods of his life. Smith is professor of history emeritus at Grove City College, and he has written books discussing the faith of American presidents. While some biographers have viewed Churchill as being a Christian, others have considered him to be an agnostic or an atheist. Smith sees Churchill's faith as more nuanced. Churchill viewed Christ as a great moral teacher rather than as the Son of God. He also disliked the Catholic Church, particularly in its expression and source of influence in England. Yet he also frequently used religious language in his speeches and had a sense that God had called him to accomplish important things in the political realm, ones perhaps that only he could do. Also, while he generally did not attend church services, he was visibly moved by ones he experienced with President Roosevelt. Thus, Smith argues that Churchill believed in God and that belief was important to him, yet he was not a Christian. The book has nine chapters, with the first two providing background and context concerning Churchill as well as his faith, and the following seven chapters examining specific periods of his life. Of particular importance is the chapter on Churchill as Prime Minister during World War II. Here one sees his frequent use of religious ideas and imagery in his rhetoric, and here also one views his sense of destiny as guided by God. This book makes a significant contribution to the scholarly literature on Churchill's life and religious views, yet it is written in a way that is accessible to the general reader as well. The book would make be an excellent addition to the collections of libraries not only of faith-based institutions, but also of other academic libraries and public libraries as well.

## Reviewer

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