

# Christian Civilization

exploring  
CHURCHILL'S VISION  
of  
JUDEO-CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

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"...I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. ..."

**W**ITH THESE WORDS, delivered to the British House of Commons and broadcast over the BBC on June 18, 1940, Sir Winston Spencer Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, prophesied the coming dark months of Nazi air raids on London, later called "The Battle of Britain."

Churchill continued his speech:

"Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the light of perverted science."

Hundreds of thousands of men lost their lives defending what Churchill called "Christian civilization" in World War II. But no one—not President Roosevelt, nor Generals Montgomery, Eisenhower, Patton or MacArthur, nor any officer or soldier on the field—grasped the historical gravity of that moment as did Sir Winston Spencer Churchill.

What is most intriguing about Churchill's speech is his sacrificial vision. He recognized that a German conquest of Britain would have meant defeat not only for his homeland but for all of the Christianized western world for generations to come. During his service as Prime Minister, he nearly guaranteed victory by the sheer force of his words

alone! Here are just a few.

"... Victory - victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival.<sup>1</sup> Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valour,<sup>2</sup> We shall fight on the beaches. We shall fight on the landing grounds. We shall fight in the fields, and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender!<sup>3</sup> Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, This was their finest hour.<sup>4</sup> We are still masters of our fate. We are still captain of our souls.<sup>5</sup> Never give in—never, never, never, never, ... Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.<sup>6</sup>"

Churchill's words did more than inspire his countrymen. They changed the course of world history, galvanizing a nation to stand against staggering odds and turn back the onslaught of Nazi tyranny.

Such words could only come from one with vision. What did Churchill see?

Churchill's bold stance sprung from his vision of Christian civilization. Since Martin Luther's statement at Wittenburg, Christian principles, thoughts and ideas gradually overcame monarchs and sovereigns in the western world. From the Reformation forward, the rule of law slowly supplanted the rule of kings.

From these step-by-step refittings of human society, often accompanied by martyrs' blood, a new civilization emerged, framed in human dignity, devoted to freedom and held together by a commitment to basic decency and respect for all humanity. All of these

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values issued forth from the life and teachings of Jesus, the Old Testament and the writings of the apostles—the Bible.

It was this society, this Christian civilization, that Churchill so feared losing.

Obviously, not everyone in a Christian civilization has experienced the new birth in Christ. Not all who aim to live according to Christian standards have been transformed by His grace. But no society can flourish unless its people and its leaders are themselves responsible, self-governed individuals, willing to adhere to the basic principles found in Scripture, which hold the promise of dignity, contentment, purpose, vision, and a reason for sacrificing the self to a higher calling.

Churchill, a serious student of history, recognized the absolute superiority of Judeo-Christian principles over other cultural and religious systems. His fierce determination to defend, at any cost, what he and others called Christian civilization, is a sure testament to his spiritual insight and faith.

*"Study history. Study history.  
In history lies all the secrets  
of statescraft."  
Winston Churchill*

Much like the prophet Jeremiah, Churchill was gifted with vision and understanding. From that vision, he rose to the task and led the free world to victory over the tyranny of the Axis powers.<sup>7</sup> Both God and Christian civilization triumphed. One cannot study the life and writings of Churchill without concluding that he was a man of destiny, called and equipped by God for the role he filled in history.

What about Christians today? Have we lost sight of our role in history? Have we retreated from the idea of Christian civilization? Do we no longer care about influencing the culture in which we live? Do we believe that God cares only about rescuing individual souls but not about rescuing nations?

Christ says that we are the light of the world, the salt of the earth and a city set on a hill.<sup>8</sup> We have been given the goods. We possess the truth that sets men free.<sup>9</sup> Like Jeremiah, the Church has been set by God over nations and kingdoms to root out, pull down, destroy and throw down—to build and to plant.<sup>10</sup>

Most of our great early East Coast universities were founded to train young men for the ministry - to provide them classical instruction in the arts and humanities, a well-rounded, liberal education and a Biblical world view. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth and many other schools began as solid Christian institutions - launched to equip workers to build and plant a Christian society. Since their departure from sound Biblical doctrine began nearly one hundred and fifty years ago, our culture has slowly drifted away from its Judeo-Christian moorings.

Around the same time these great institutions began to stray from their original mission, much of the Church in America began to lose sight of its role in history. For many, our vision—to apply God's truth to all areas of life and thus shape nations, kingdoms and cultures—has departed. Gone are the grand purposes seen and promoted by previous generations of believers. Nearly vanished is our hope for a Christian civilization. What remains in our Christian hearts and minds is but a mere hint of what Churchill

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glimpsed—a shadow of the vision that guided our Christian fathers. They conquered nations and kingdoms. Sometimes we struggle to even exercise our privilege to vote.

What would happen if we took one hundred of today's foremost Christian leaders equipped only with their modern theology and placed them in Independence Hall in the late 1780s? Armed only with their knowledge and understanding of scripture and devoid of the benefit of our nation's history, would they possess the intellectual tools necessary to hammer out a new constitution and forge a healthy republic?

Modern-day Christianity often lacks a long-termed perspective. We are, to some degree, disconnected from the past and, as a result, unable to place our own generation into a proper, healthy framework. We are tempted to think of our generation as having more significance than our Christian predecessors. We think we know more and see more than we actually do.

But by stepping back and studying history, we gain humility. And with humility we avail ourselves of a greater grace.<sup>11</sup>

Christianity is more, much more, than just a personal relationship with Jesus. He, of course, is the bedrock, the cornerstone, the One upon whom all is built and constructed.

He is the One we serve and worship. He is the One we love above all others. He is the One to whom we owe our allegiance, our lives.

But He is also the One whose kingdom and government we labor to extend.

Christianity is an all encompassing way of life—a holy culture planted by God into the garden of civilization. We are to sprout and increase until we overwhelm all that we touch. Governments, educational institutions, the arts and even marketplaces should never feel safe from the reach of Biblical truth.

Christian civilization is not the kingdom of God. It is, however, the by-product of God's kingdom as it extends throughout the earth. For when governments are upon His shoulders and His truth is dispensed in ever-widening circles, His peace increases.<sup>12</sup> Nations find rest. Swords are beaten into plowshares and men practice war no more.<sup>13</sup>

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1. May 13, 1940

2. May 19, 1940

3. June 4, 1940

4. June 18, 1940

5. September 9, 1941

6. October 29, 1941

7. Axis Powers - Germany, Italy and Japan

8. Matt. 5:13-14

9. John 8:32

10. Jeremiah 1:10

11. I Peter 5:5

12. Isaiah 9:7

13. Isaiah 2:4