

FILM



Star Wars (1977) PG

Starring:
Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher
Written & Directed by:
George Lucas

Or as it is known now, Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope
A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away

Well, I thought it was suitable to comment on a film that was realised in the same year as the inauguration of the Uniting Church. I find it harder to believe this film is now 40 years old. It was a distinctly new and groundbreaking film, heralding in a new age of technology. Amazing special effects and it of course started a franchise and provided a toy and related-goods marketing bonanza.

There is a distinct religious and philosophical stream to Star Wars that is centred around 'the force', and this in many ways resonates with a popular view of religion that believes there is some higher force than ourselves out there that will provide help when we need. Other themes include people being tempted and won to the 'dark side', and some coming back to the 'right side'. There is also the idea that a simple good person will eventually prevail over a nasty evil person. Music is central, just like it is in our churches. In popular culture terms, who would fail to recognise the Star Wars introduction? And perhaps befitting a focus for some today on individual fantasy, it led to people stating Jedi as their religion in the census (approximately 65 000 in 2011).



Denial (2016) M 15+

Starring:
Rachel Weisz, Tom Wilkinson, Mark Gatiss
Directed by:
Mick Jackson

Denial is also a film based on a book, but in this case the non-fiction work "History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier," by Deborah Lipstadt, the US historian who had to defend herself against a libel charge by David Irving for calling him a Holocaust denier when she gave a lecture in England. In English law the burden of proof is on the accused, so the defence focussed on the facts of the Holocaust and by relation, proving that Irving was a liar. It is a well-made courtroom drama, with fine performances, though Rachel Weisz as Deborah Lipstadt has very much a supporting role as the legal eagles dominate the film. Deborah Lipstadt has often been asked about 'free speech' and among many comments, I thought it was helpful to consider the following quote from the film.

"Now, some people are saying that the result of this trial will threaten free speech. I don't accept that. I'm not attacking free speech. On the contrary, I've been defending it against someone who wanted to abuse it. Freedom of speech means you can say whatever you want. What you can't do is lie and expect not to be held accountable for it. Not all opinions are equal. And some things happened, just like we say they do."



A Man Called Ove (2015) PG

Starring:
Rolf Lassgard, Bahar Pars, Filip Berg
Directed by:
Hannes Holm

This Swedish film was recently released in Australia and has had a continuing run at some selected cinemas (I have been wondering if it may continue a run like *As it is in Heaven* (2004) – this ran for well over a year in Sydney, mainly by word of mouth).

I thought of briefly mentioning Ove because there is a similar philosophy about life and religion in the very popular Swedish film *As it is in Heaven*. I am sure that some people will see *A Man Called Ove* as simply a (mostly) charming and poignant film, but there are some questionable aspects, notably the theme of suicide. Ove consistently tries to kill himself, but is always thwarted, usually by the interruptions of neighbours, who are perhaps 'angels of mercy'. Overall, though the film promotes the idea that being good is the most noble way for a person to live. Ove hopes that when he finally dies, the church will be packed, and this clearly links with the concept of the 'good man'- people giving honour to him for what he has done.

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