

The Worldview of Star Wars

George Lucas

The Star Wars series has come to a climatic finale. Many of us can remember in 1977, standing in long lines at theaters that went for several blocks. It was not uncommon to hear of individuals who returned to see the movie, some over a dozen times. Few movies have generated the excitement and following as this series. Through its production, special effects, and cinematography, Star Wars made a tremendous impact on the arts setting a new standard for the movie industry.

Not only did Star Wars make an impact in the entertainment industry, it also opened our eyes to the worldview of pantheism. Pantheism comes from the Greek word “Pan” meaning all and “theism” meaning God. It is the belief that the impersonal God is one essence with the universe. God inhabits all things. The universe is God and God is the universe. In other words God is not separate from the universe but is contained within it. This worldview lies at the foundation of most Hindu, Buddhist, and New Age religions. This worldview was gaining popularity as eastern ideas entered the West in the sixties gaining public attention through celebrities such as The Beatles and Shirley McClain who embraced the teachings of the Eastern religions. Star Wars followed and its incredible success stirred interest in the ideas of pantheism.

George Lucas borrowed themes from several religions and ancient myths in creating the story line for Star Wars. He admits that he was not introducing or promoting a particular religion in his movie. However, he wanted young people to think about spiritual issues and the big questions about life. He created his movies to “. . . make young people think about the mystery. Not to say, "Here's the answer." It's to say, "Think about this for a second. Is there a God? What does God look like? What does God sound like? What does God feel like? How do we relate to God?" Just getting young people to think at that level is what I've been trying to do in the films. What eventual manifestation that takes place in terms of how they describe their God, what form their faith takes, is not the point of the movie.”¹

George Lucas should be commended in his desire to inspire people to wrestle with such issues. Lucas offers answers to these questions throughout the movie series derived from the teachings of pantheistic religions. C.S. Lewis gave us a classic work of fiction in the *Chronicles of Narnia*. In it he presented answers to life's questions from a theistic worldview. In Star Wars Lucas has accomplished a similar classic literary work which presents answers to life's questions from a pantheistic worldview.

In the next few days, we will examine how Lucas' pantheistic worldview is illustrated in Star Wars and present a biblical critique of this fine movie series.

¹ Bill Moyer, “Of Myth and Men,” *Time Magazine*, (26 April, 1999), 93.

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God and The Force

George Lucas stated that he wanted Star Wars to inspire young people to ask spiritual questions about God.² In Star Wars, the idea of God is found in the Force. Lucas states, “I put the Force into the movie in order to try to awaken a certain kind of spirituality in young people – more a belief in God than a belief in any particular religious system.”³ Master Jedi Obi Won Kenobi first introduces us to the Force in 1977. Sitting in his desert hut, Obi Won explains to Luke Skywalker the nature of the Force. He states, “The Force is what gives the Jedi his power. It is an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us, penetrates us, it binds the galaxy together.” The Jedi Knights and their adversaries the Siths use this cosmic energy to perform supernatural feats.

The Force reflects one of the main tenets of the pantheistic worldview, the concept of monism, that all is in essence one. The Force is not a personal being. It is an impersonal energy that is made up of and resides in all living things. Therefore, all of life has the spark of divinity because all is essentially one unified entity.

George Lucas borrows a lot of his ideas from several pantheistic religions, especially Taoism. In Taoism, this cosmic energy is called the Chi Force. Chi flows through every individual and therefore the powers of the universe reside in each individual. Through altering one’s consciousness and letting go of rational thought, one can look within and tap into this energy force and do supernatural feats.

Some Christians have mistakenly equated The Force with the Holy Spirit, however there is a big difference. The Force is an impersonal energy field while the Holy Spirit is a personal being, the third member of the Trinity. The Force is made up of all living things in the universe while the Holy Spirit is not contained in the universe. The Holy Spirit being the third member of the Trinity is an eternal being who was involved in creating the universe out of nothing (Genesis 1). Being God, the Holy Spirit is involved in the universe but He is not contained in the universe and exists independent of living things. The Force can be mastered and manipulated by the Jedi who have mastered their art and can use it to accomplish their will. The Holy Spirit being God, cannot be manipulated by those He indwells. Instead He guides, He teaches, and He empowers them to do the will of God the Father. Christians do not master the Holy Spirit to accomplish their will, the Holy Spirit controls them to do His will. The Force resides in all living things but the Holy Spirit dwells only in those who have trusted Christ as their Lord and Savior.

² Bill Moyer, “Of Myth and Men,” *Time Magazine*, (26 April, 1999), 93.

³ *Ibid.*, 92.

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Salvation

The story of Star Wars centers on one figure, Anakin Skywalker. Anakin is identified by the master Jedi Qui Gon Jinn as the “chosen one.” Anakin’s birth was miraculous in that he was born of a virgin and his body has a high level of midi-chlorians. Qui Gon states that the chosen one, Anakin will restore the “balance of the force” and this is the hope anticipated throughout the entire series. What does Lucas mean by this statement?

As we stated previously, George Lucas illustrates the teachings of the pantheistic worldview throughout the movie series. He borrows several concepts from Taoism and the idea of restoring the balance of the force is another example.

Taoism teaches that there are equal and opposing forces throughout the universe that balance one another. This is known as the yin/yang duality. Opposing forces such as positive and negative energy, light and darkness, life and death, have always been in an eternal state of opposition. Neither side has dominance over the other but there is a balance of these opposing forces. These forces are mutually dependent and one cannot know one apart from the other. When these forces are not in balance, there is disharmony. When they are in a balance, there is harmony.

Every individual must accept this balance and live in harmony with this balance of opposing forces. When there is an imbalance of one over the other in a person, there is disharmony in one’s life. This balance must be restored in the world and in the individual. Once balance is restored, harmony and peace returns. Darkness, death, and evil, are never defeated they are only to be brought into balance with the opposing forces of light, life, and goodness. In Star Wars, the force has two sides, a good and a dark side. Imbalance has occurred because one side, the dark side has become too pervasive and must be brought into balance by the opposing force of good. The dark side is not to be defeated permanently by the good but balance is to be restored to the Force. This is the concept George Lucas presents throughout the series.

In the Bible, the universe is not eternal but was created by God from nothing. The original creation was good. Evil, death, and suffering came as the result of the fall which marred creation. The conflict between light and darkness, life and death, good and evil has not been an eternal struggle. The two forces are also not equal and in a balance. The Bible teaches that God is light, holy, good, and the life. He is not locked in an eternal struggle with opposing forces. One day at His appointed time, He will not bring balance but restoration to the universe. This will occur when God judges the world, defeats evil permanently creates a new heaven and earth where sin and its effects are no longer present.

Star Wars

The Jedi Masters

The heroes in the Star Wars are the Jedi Knights. In the movie series, these select few individuals have mastered the use of the force and are thus warriors of tremendous power. They function as the guardians of peace in the galactic empire and use their powers only in times of danger to the empire. Where did George Lucas get his idea for the Jedi?

In a discovery Channel documentary titled, "The Science of Star Wars," Lucas reveals the source of his idea. Once again, he borrows concepts from the pantheistic religions. Lucas reveals that his idea came from studying the Shao-Lin monks of China. The Shao Lin monks are priests in China who are known for originating and becoming thus the masters of the Martial Arts. Their fighting skills were legendary throughout the land of China.

Not only are the Shao Lin monks skillful fighters, they were also men who mastered the use of the Chi force. As previously mentioned, Chi is believed to be the cosmic energy that flows throughout the universe. Chi flows through all things including individuals. The Shao Lin monks teach that through altering one's consciousness through meditation and other exercises, one can tap into the power of the chi resident in each individual and use it to perform superhuman feats.

Using the chi force, a Shao Lin monk can deliver punches and kicks with devastating force. He is also able to withstand punishing blows from opponents and objects. Some even believe a master can strike down an opponent without physical contact but using chi energy.

In Star Wars we see the parallel. The Jedi are dressed in garments similar to the Shao Lin monks, are headquartered at the Temple, and are masters of the Force. Using the Force, they are able to move objects, foresee future events, manipulate people's thoughts, and strike down opponents without any physical contact. For the Jedi, truth is ultimately found in their feelings. When in doubt, the phrase among the Jedi is, "Search your feelings. What do they tell you?" True knowledge for the Jedi is beyond the rational and found in feelings and intuitions beyond the rational mind. The Jedi are another example of Lucas' pantheistic worldview.

There is much to like regarding the Jedi. They are noble heroes who are selfless, self-sacrificing, disciplined and courageous. Although there is much to admire about the Jedi, Christians should reject the idea of the Force which is the power behind the Jedi. The Bible does not teach that there is a cosmic energy or chi that flows through objects and individuals. Christians do not base their knowledge of truth on their feelings primarily but on the Bible, prayer, circumstances and the insights of mature believers. The Christian discipline does not teach one to abandon their rational thoughts and rely on feelings. The mind and heart work together.

Star Wars

What Happens After Death?

What happens after death? This is another question George Lucas hoped young people would ask as they viewed this series. Star Wars presents an answer that once again reflects the teaching of pantheism. Pantheism teaches that we are all in an endless cycle of reincarnation until we attain enlightenment. It is then we escape this cycle and become one with the divine meaning we become absorbed into the cosmic energy of the universe.

In *The Revenge of the Sith*, Anakin Skywalker is haunted with nightmares of his wife Padme dying at the birth of their child. Tormented by this dream he seeks the counsel of Yoda, the master of the Jedi. Yoda gives Anakin the following response. He states that death is a natural part of the universe. In other words we should accept it without emotion. He adds that one should not grieve for those who have died and become part of the Force. Anakin must not become attached to things, including people for attachment to objects leads to jealousy and the dark side of the force. One must release all feelings from things for it is then, one's thinking will be clear.

In Star Wars then, those who die become absorbed into the Force. We also learn that the Jedi are able to delay this absorption and appear as spirit guides to aid those in the physical world. Those with special insight, they may learn how to communicate with these avatars.

This teaching is not new but a fundamental tenet of pantheistic religions. Pantheism teaches that the material world is an illusion. Therefore, one should not get attached to earthly things for they are just an illusion and are not permanent. Several schools of Hinduism and Buddhism teach that this world is an illusion and therefore, we must rid ourselves of all desires. The most holy of followers will therefore live lives of celibacy and poverty, releasing themselves from any desire and spending their days in meditation and study. Some holy men will delay their union with the divine and remain as spirit guides to aid those on the journey to enlightenment.

The Bible teaches that at death, we will not be absorbed into an impersonal energy field but we will retain our personhood and stand before God in judgment. There is no reincarnation or second chance. Hebrews 9:7 states that "It is appointed for each person to die once and then comes the judgment." For those who know Jesus, we will spend eternity with our Lord and fellow believers for all eternity. For those who have rejected Christ, they will spend eternity separated from God in Hell. The Bible presents a destiny that is just but also filled with hope for those who know Jesus.

The answer presented in Star Wars, the annihilation of one's consciousness and absorption into a cosmic energy field, is a false one that even if it were true would provide little hope.

The Worldview of Star Wars

How to Watch Star Wars

When it comes to movies, there are three basic responses among Christians. Some choose to avoid any movie that may teach contrary beliefs for fear that they or their children may be negatively influenced. Others are consumers and watch any movie believing it is harmless fun and entertainment. A third option is to select appropriate movies and then view with discernment. I take the third position. I believe the arts were meant by God to be enjoyed. Man however uses the arts for many times less than noble reasons. However, Christians can learn valuable lessons about other belief systems and use movies as great teaching tools to help younger believers be discerning and understand other worldviews.

In *Star Wars*, we have a great teaching and discussion topic. There is much we should commend George Lucas for in this series. *Star Wars* was creative, entertaining and family friendly. There were also some good themes of friendship, courage, and the dangerous temptation for power. We should also commend Lucas on his desire to make a movie that would inspire young people to think about deeper issues of life.

In a *Time Magazine* interview, Lucas states that he wanted young people to think about spiritual issues and the big questions about life. He created his movies to “. . . make young people think about the mystery. Not to say, ‘Here's the answer.’ It's to say, ‘Think about this for a second. Is there a God? What does God look like? What does God sound like? What does God feel like? How do we relate to God?’ Just getting young people to think at that level is what I've been trying to do in the films. What eventual manifestation that takes place in terms of how they describe their God, what form their faith takes, is not the point of the movie.”⁴ I certainly agree with Lucas and wish more movies were designed for such purposes.

Star Wars is a great discussion piece because it creatively reflects the tenets of pantheism. Christians can use this film to discuss spiritual lessons revealed in the series. I have had profitable discussions with teens and adults on the spiritual principles illustrated in *Star Wars*. Questions such as, “What do you think about the whole idea of the force? Is there such a thing as a cosmic energy field? Can we master the power of this energy? What did *Star Wars* teach regarding what happens after death? What do you think really happens after death?”

Answers to these questions often lead to great discussions regarding worldviews, what is truth?, and eternal life. *Star Wars* offers answers from a pantheistic worldview which we can point out and explain why these answers are false. Movies like *Star Wars* can be a great teaching tool when Christians are equipped and informed to discern truth from error.

⁴ Bill Moyer, “Of Myth and Men,” *Time Magazine*, (26 April, 1999), 93.

Worldview of Star Wars

The Worldview of Pantheism

George Lucas did not create Star Wars to introduce a new religion but much to our surprise, it has a religious following, those who call themselves believers in the “Force.” George Lucas did not create Star Wars to promote a new religion, but this series reflects his worldview. The worldview that under girds Star Wars is Pantheism.

Pantheism derives in meaning from the Greek word “pan” which means all, and “theism” which means God. Therefore, pantheism teaches that all is God. In other words God is the universe, he is not separate from the universe but is contained within it. There is no divine personal being who created the universe, there is a divine essence, an impersonal force, a cosmic energy that flows throughout all things in the universe. This energy is called the “One,” “the divine,” “chi,” or “Brahma.” In Star Wars, it is called the Force.

Since the universe is divine, the universe is eternal. The universe is flows out of the divine. In other words, creation is ex deo or out of God. Greek philosopher Plotinus stated, that everything flows from God life flower from a seed. Good and evil, light and darkness all flow out of God.

Since all is god in pantheism, mankind is in essence divine. God and man are of the same essence. Here is an illustration. God is the large ocean and we are all drops in that ocean. As a drop of water from a rain cloud must make its journey to unite with the ocean, so every individual must make their journey to becoming one with the divine. Spiritual guru Deepak Chopra writes, “Your body is not separate from the universe, because quantum mechanical levels there are no well-defined edges. You are like a wiggle, a wave, a fluctuation, a convolution, a whirlpool, a localized disturbance in the larger quantum field. The larger quantum field – the universe – is your extended body.”⁵ He also states, “In reality we are divinity in disguise, and gods and goddesses in embryo that are contained within us seek to be fully materialized. True success therefore is the experience of the miraculous. It is the unfolding of the divinity within us.”⁶

Hindu holy man Prabhupada states, “A drop of ocean water has all the properties of the ocean itself, and we, although minute particles of the Supreme Whole, have the same energetic properties as the Supreme.”⁷

True knowledge is attained by awakening the god within us or enlightenment. The One or the divine is not understood through the senses or rational thinking but by mystical union which is beyond the conscious self. This union comes through various means, meditation, yoga, channeling, etc.... The process includes letting go of our conscious self and reaching out with our emotions.

The ultimate destiny of man is to become absorbed into the divine. All individuals are involved in an endless cycle of reincarnation until they attain

⁵ Deepak Chopra, *Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, p.68, quoted in Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods*, p. 68.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3 & p. 96

⁷ Prabhupada, Bhaktivedanta, *Beyond Birth and Death*, (Australia: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1999), 5.

enlightenment and eventually break the cycle of reincarnation and be absorbed into the divine.

Here are some of the basic teachings of pantheism and I will present examples from Star Wars to show how these tenets are illustrated.

What are the basic tenets of this worldview? First, all is one. There are no ultimate distinctions between humans, animals, or the rest of creation. Second, since all is one, all is god. All of life has a spark of divinity. Third, if all is one and all is god, then each of us is god. Fourth, humans must discover their own divinity by experiencing a change in consciousness. We suffer from a collective form of metaphysical amnesia. Fifth, humans travel through indefinite cycles of birth, death, and reincarnation in order to work off what is called "bad karma." Sixth, New Age disciples think in terms of gray, not black and white. Thus they believe that two conflicting statements can both be true.