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The New Christ of Star Wars
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The recent release of Episode I of Star Wars confirms George Lucas as a great Christian publicist. Reaching millions, if not billions, of people all over the world, the Star Wars films bring a symbolic retelling of the gospel story to the screen.

Lucas almost admits as much in his recent Time magazine interview with Bill Moyers. Both of them refer to the notion that Star Wars consists of old myths told in new ways. While admittedly not all elements of Star Wars' cosmos are modeled on Christianity (the Force is decidedly a Taoist concept), Christianity provides the main source of Lucas' "old myths."

To illustrate my claim, let's take one example, Christ-figures. Not just vaguely defined redeemer figures and heroes, which Luke Skywalker and others have played in the three earlier films, but characters who show specifically Christ-like features.

In the first Star Wars film (now known as Episode IV), Obi-Wan Kenobi portrays Christ's passion -- his death and resurrection. In a one-on-one battle with the villain Darth Vader, Obi-Wan suddenly ceases to fight and gives up his life for his friends. This self-sacrifice brings salvation, for it enables them to escape from the Death Star. But Obi-Wan refuses to stay dead and is resurrected in the Force, becoming "even more powerful than before."

In Episode I, by contrast, Lucas depicts Christ's birth and identification. Anakin Skywalker is born "of a virgin," somehow being conceived without a father through the power of the Force. His mother plays the role of Mary, noticing the abilities of her son and "keeping them in her heart." Her calm demeanor and

willingness to allow Anakin to pursue his future echo the portrayal of Mary in the 1960s blockbuster portrayal of Jesus' life, "King of Kings."

Like Jesus, Anakin is skilled beyond his years, although in the use of technology rather than the ways of God. But when the "temple priests" of the Jedi examine Anakin, they find that his connection to the Force is highly developed. In a blood count representing a scientific measurement of this connection, his rating is "wonder-fully" high. The Jedi recognize Anakin's uniqueness and immediately start to think of him as the "one who will restore balance" to the Force. That is, he is seen as fulfilling the ancient prophecy of a savior who will have the power to alter the cosmos and even the Force itself. Rightly does Yoda call him "dangerous," such power cannot be otherwise.

But the Jedi Council's fear of Anakin's dangerous power initially leads them to reject him, a decision which can only serve to destroy any loyalty he might have felt towards them. Since Anakin will become Darth Vader in future episodes, we know that this will turn him towards the Dark Side of the Force. As Vader, Anakin will become the Anti-Christ.