



"To Kill a King" joins the long line of "This is a true story - only the facts have been changed" films. This re-writing of history through films is actually quite serious because, as most people do not read history, public perceptions about pivotal events in history are being distorted by revisionist filmmakers.

Of course, one understands the need for some artistic licence for filmmakers to telescope some events, but when the central facts of historical events are fraudulent, most of the dialogue is fictitious and anachronistic, when the heroes are vilified and villains are vindicated, then reality is turned upside down.

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil. Who put darkness for light and light for darkness...." Isaiah 6:20

"To Kill a King" ignores the pivotal role of Oliver Cromwell in the English Civil War of the 17th century. Instead it portrays Sir Thomas Fairfax as the military genius and architect of the victories of the parliamentary force. In fact, Oliver Cromwell became the general commanding the parliamentary forces. In this horribly inaccurate film, Fairfax is made the central figure and Cromwell is depicted as his unimaginative sidekick. Actually, Cromwell was the innovative military strategist who built up the New Model Army and won the stunning victories at Naseby and Marsdon Moor. Numerous books list these as amongst the greatest battles ever fought and

Oliver Cromwell as one of the greatest military commanders in history.

By starting the film in 1645, when the war was almost over, the film fails to show why there was a war in the first place and why King Charles I finally had to be executed.

The brutal tyranny and treachery of the king and his intrigues and plots are not even dealt with and Charles I is portrayed more as a victim than the tyrant he was. Actually, Charles I was granted ample opportunity to speak in his defence at his 3 day trial, but he refused to co-operate. Due process of law was carefully observed in the parliamentary trial.

Instead of depicting the tortures, mutilations, brandings on the face, slitting of nostrils, cutting off of ears of critics of the king - all of which happened in reality, this film depicts Oliver Cromwell as the blood thirsty tyrant lusting for power at all costs, arbitrarily executing a person in the street, having corpses hanging publicly for display. In fact, it was never the practise of the Puritans to show such contempt for human life. It was, however, the practise of both Charles I and his son, Charles II, to have the corpses of "traitors" hanging and rotting in public.

Far from Cromwell desiring power he desperately tried to resist his appointment to high office. He handed over the reigns of government on more than one occasion and he refused the crown when Parliament tried to make him king.

The reason why there is a statue of Oliver Cromwell in the grounds of the Houses of Parliament in London is because he laid the foundations for the rule of law and a freely elected Parliament in England.

In the light of the facts of history, "To Kill a King" presents a malicious slander against one of the greatest generals and statesmen in history. Even in his own lifetime Cromwell was described as "Chief Amongst Men" and respected as a Christian leader of the highest integrity who fought to establish the rule of law and Biblical justice.

Not that you would guess that just from watching "To Kill a King"! The film portrays Cromwell as a small minded revolutionary tyrant without any human warmth, religious convictions, depth of

character or humour. The scriptwriter couldn't have read any of the published speeches of Cromwell, because all the public statements depicted in the film are hollow, fictitious and unbelievably anachronistic. This revisionist film has "Cromwell" saying: "You are now your own masters - commanding your own fate!" No Puritans ever talked like that. Such humanist pronouncements would be more likely in the mouths of 20th century revolutionaries, than from one of the most outstanding and eloquent Puritan Statesmen of the 17th century.

Almost every aspect of this new film is fictitious. The film starts with a grotesque heaping up of naked bodies after a battle. Such a callous lack of respect for their war dead was alien to 17th century England. Nor were prisoners of war chained. The assassination attempt on Oliver Cromwell as he was being declared Lord Protector of England obviously did not happen either. Oliver Cromwell's son Richard actually fought in the war - yet in this film he is depicted as a young child.

The highly improbable feat of Fairfax hitting a moving assassin in a crowd with a smooth bore pistol from such an impossible distance while on horseback strains all credibility.

The kissing of one's leader's ring was a papist practise rejected by the Puritans and definitely not practised by Cromwell.

"To Kill a King" is a failure, because it neglects the facts of the English Civil War and fails to show what it was about, how it was fought and why it was fought. It ignores the Christian convictions of Oliver Cromwell, his strong sense of justice, mercy, integrity, warmth and humour. Oliver Cromwell, for example, was the first to introduce freedom of religion to a country. He legalised the "dissenters" and removed all discriminations against independent churches and Jewish people. Cromwell welcomed the Jews back to England and he launched one of the very first missionary societies - to evangelise the Indians of North America. It was Cromwell who also successfully campaigned for religious freedom for the Waldensians in Northern Italy who had been suffering the most severe persecution at the hands of the Roman Catholic kings of France and Savoy. The survival of the Waldensians to this day owes more to Oliver Cromwell's intervention than to any other man.

At the conclusion of the film Cromwell's reformation of England is likened to the bloody French revolution of 1789. In fact there is no similarity between the orderly resistance of Parliament to a tyrannical king and the lawlessness of the humanist revolution in French. Rather one should compare the English Civil War with the American War of Independence.

I do not think that anyone should waste their time viewing this travesty of a film, "To Kill a King". Instead I would recommend that you see the excellent 1970's film Cromwell (staring Richard Harris in the title role) and read The Christian Revolution by Otto Scott.

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