

Example of historical accuracy of the film essay

[Countries](#), [England](#)



Introduction

This paper is an analysis of the film Chariots of fire that premiered in the 80's about the contrasts between Christianity and Jewish religion. It elaborates the different views of the competing parties in terms of what motivated them to participate in the race. The setting of the film is the 1924 Olympics in Paris, France.

The main characters in the film include Harold Abrahams and Eric Lindell who both ran for different reasons. As explained in a commentary for the film, Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell both ran, but for different reasons, both ran on the same team, but yet competed against each other, and each had a completely different goal in his mind while he ran.

Harold Abrahams is not only famed for being one of the fastest runners but is also known to be a runner who would do anything, and I mean, anything, to win. He however had a strange reason for his desire to win. This was mainly because he was Jew, and believed that he had to prove a point by winning all his races. His being Jew was reason enough for him to do all he could to ensure that he won all the races. This is premised on his belief that his Jewish origin was ridiculed in Britain and was actually for his scolding and mockery by the British therefore vowed to make a name for himself, as it was the only way that he could earn respect from his fellow countrymen as well as the hosts. His philosophy was that he ran to win, and that there was no reason for him to contest in any race if he would not win. To him, it was either he wins, or he doesn't contest at all. Although it was rather unconventional, Abrahams went ahead and hired a personal trainer, Sam Mussembini to coach him so that he would be ready for the 1924 Olympics.

He felt very strongly that he needed to win and would only do so if he had a trainer, but most importantly, he wanted to win against his major competitor, Eric Liddell.

Eric Liddell was a foreign missionary from Scotland to China. He was another very fast athlete and would casually justify it saying that he ran for the pleasure of God, since God must have created him with a purpose. He believed that the only way of pleasing God was through his running and that is mainly the reason why he took a lot of time to train for these events, because he would not like to fail in an event that is life changing. He ran to glorify God, to please God, and would even go to the extent of preaching immediately after meets. He used his talent to glorify and further the gospel of Jesus.

When Eric Liddell won, he had joy. Not the joy that comes through a victory, but the joy of God was with him. This joy came from the knowledge that God was well pleased with Eric. However, the reactions of Abrahams were completely the opposite. When he lost, he would pout and throw a pity party. Winning was different story all together though. After a win, Abraham would brag at his prowess and since he had no true joy, he would drink for lack of the same. His not having God by his side is believed to have derived him the joy that comes with such a win. God had however given Liddell something far more than victory. He had given him the joy of the Lord.

Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell both went on to win, but only one of them truly WON. God had given Liddell something far more than victory. He had given him the joy of the Lord. Abrahams, however, did not accept this gift and therefore, never was happy with his winnings. Winning is not everything,

especially when it comes to eternity.

This is an enactment of religion in modern society. The characters in this film both represent the different factions of the modern religious divide. Of importance in this film is the commitment that people have in their religion and its impacts on their actions. The film also depicts British aristocracy, nationalism, anti-Semitism as well as religion.

We are informed of the heartbroken Liddell after learning that his 100m heat would be run on a Sunday. According to his religious teachings which he vowed to follow, Liddell states that he would not compete on a Sunday, regardless of what amount of effort he has put into this training. On that same Sunday, 'Lindel teaches in the church and informs the congregation by quoting Isaiah 40 which states But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint'.

He therefore misses his Sunday race, but by the Grace of God, someone relinquishes his position for the 400 m race, which Lidell hopes to participate in. Everyone seems to dismiss him that he would surely not make it but his is a story of courage. He contests and wins and is happy for the favor that God has done for him. Abraham also competes and wins in the 100 metres race, and he and his coach are happy that many years of efforts have borne fruit. In this film, Liddell's siblings accuse him for devoting so much time in his sport that he has forgotten to serve the Lord. He answers then ' he was made by God for a purpose, and it's for that purpose that he is trying to win the race and to win the race is to honor God. To him, the race was not only meant to attain victory but also to redeem his and other Jews image that was

bad in Britain, and he did succeed (Jeffrey Richards, 2012).

Interestingly, although it's assumed that Liddell ran with an objective of breaking the prejudice that the British had attached on the Jews, historical knowledge reveals that Britain was a rather accommodating society and we see no actual discrimination. In fact, Britain was said to absorb foreign elements without them having to suffer an identity crisis.

The strong belief that Liddel has in the bible enables him to devote time for the race. After being scolded by British officials, an American competitor hands him a note that says that in the bible its written that he that honors that Lord will be honored. This is a conviction to Harold who believes that all what he does is for the Lord.

The directors of this film intimate that it's based on a true story. However, a closer analysis of the historical facts reveal that while some of the items presented as well as activities indicate that some truth resides in the story, a great portion is still far from the actual events that transpired in the 1924 Olympics athletics in Paris.

First and foremost, according to the film, Abraham attends Cambridge College. As a fact, Abraham was a student in Oxford, and competed in the 1924 Olympics. Evidence available indicates that one of his compatriots sent letters about his life at Oxford as well as the Olympics, and these letters form a significant portion of most of the narration in the film.

One fact though, about the race is an event where liddell was tripped by another competitor and falls, before waking up and still managing to win the race. This is actually a fact. The race was a 440 yard in between England and Scotland in which he had a remarkable win as he managed to bag gold for

both 100 and 200m races (Ed Carter, 2005).

Another great inaccuracy in the film is the issue of Abraham not knowing that his 100 m heat will be held on a Sunday. This is not true, since the calendar of events and races was and had been released a couple of months before the race. However, his refusal to compete on a Sunday is a truth in which he was summoned for questioning by the British authorities and adamantly refused to compete, a clear indication of his commitment to his Christian faith.

Other inaccuracies in the film with regard to the real 1924 marathon include the order of the 200m and the 400m as well as the actual winners with the facts being that the winners of were different people. The win by Liddell however came as a surprise to many as it was largely unexpected.

The 100m race in the film was won by a person called Tom Watson while in reality; this was won by a Kiwi called Arthur Porritt who denied the use of his name for the produces purely out of modesty.

Additionally, Jackson Scholz is seen as handing Liddell the note to the effect that God Honors those who honor him. This was not true in since the note was actually handed by the British team members.

In totality, the film manages to bring out the contrasting religions of Christianity and Jews and their various beliefs. It depicts their commitment to their religions and belief, with contrasting views on a number of issues, with each one trying to make their religion look the better of the two.

While one of the main characters Liddell runs to prove himself and for the Glory and honour of the Jews whom according to the film were rather prejudiced in the 20th century Britain, his compatriot runs for the Glory of

God, and feels that whatever he achieves is due to the strength that God has given him as well as his efforts.

Interestingly, these two runners are in the same team, but are actually competing against one another. Eventually, both attain their goals by winning their races. The conclusion of the film brings out both the Jews and the Christian in their own good characteristics. The lessons learnt in this film point to the fact that regardless of one's religion, as long as they follow it with their hearts, then it should not be a bother to others who follow different religions.

Despite the film being a classical, it has been enacted in the 2012 Olympics with the film's theme tune being featured at the opening of the London 2012 Olympics. The iconic beach scenes in the film were also run by the Sun in their call "Let's Make It Great, Britain". The film has been reviewed by many renowned film directors and specialists and a lot of praises heaped on the production as directorship for a spectacular job.

References

Ed Carter Chariots of Fire Traditional values/false history, 2005. Adopted from: <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC28folder/ChariotsFire.html>

Jeffrey Richards. Film Review: Chariots of Fire. History today, 2012. Adapted from: <http://www.historytoday.com/blog/2012/07/film-review-chariots-fire>