



1917

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Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker (Dir. J.J. Abrams). Starring: Adam Driver, Daisy Ridley,

Oscar Isaac. And so it ends...one more time. Again. The *Star Wars* series comes to a close (so the powers-that-be say!) with this ninth installment in the Skywalker saga. It's a pedal to the metal affair and points to director and co-writer J.J. Abrams for keeping things brisk. Whether you give much of a toss for new trilogy characters like Kylo Ren (Adam Driver), Rey (Daisy Ridley), Poe (Oscar Isaac), and Finn (John Boyega) is another matter. This writer doesn't, though he'll certainly admit to getting a bit choked up over the fates of original series folk like Leia (the late Carrie Fisher, resurrected via archive footage) and Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams, the most dashing eighty-something you'll ever see). The film is otherwise a rehash of everyone, and everything that's come before—the big bad is once again Emperor Palpatine (Ian McDiarmid), thought killed in 1983's *Return of the Jedi*, but alive here for reasons more murky than mysterious. *Rise* passes by painlessly, at least. And evaporates from the heart and mind the second the lights come up. As Master Yoda might say, "Not strong the Force with this one is." [PG-13] ★★

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sisting that the Senate conduct an actual trial and weigh the House's allegations that Trump abused power and obstructed Congress. This simple stand for an impartial trial (if backed by several more brave Republicans) would restore sanity to this process. Trump would probably still be acquitted, but it wouldn't be in a firestorm of partisan rage.

Romney's collision course with Trump was set long ago. Romney tried initially to make peace after the election, but every time he has expressed an independent opinion, Trump has lacerated and belittled him.

Romney said in October that it was "wrong and appalling" for Trump to pressure Ukraine into investigating former Vice President Joe Biden. Trump tweeted in response that Romney was "a pompous 'ass'" and a "fool" and urged Utah voters to dump him, "#IMPEACHMITTROMNEY."

Romney is laying low for the moment. Asked whether he favors calling witnesses, he had the mumbles: "It's not that I don't have any point of view; it's just that I'm not willing to share that point of view." He told *The Salt Lake Tribune*, his hometown paper, "I will act as a juror and will be unbiased in evaluating the cases that are presented." But he hasn't explained yet what that will mean.

Romney and other Republicans might add to their reading lists a little book called *Profiles in Courage*, by President John F. Kennedy. It tells the stories of eight senators who resisted party pressure to do what they thought was right—from John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, the only member of the Federalist Party to support the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, to George Norris of Nebraska, who broke from his Republican Party in 1928 to oppose Herbert Hoover for president, fearing that his economic policies would be ruinous.

You're probably sick of quotes from the Federalist Papers, but try just one more, from Alexander Hamilton about the Senate's role in impeachment: "Where else than in the Senate could have been found a tribunal sufficiently dignified, or sufficiently independent? What other body would be likely to feel confidence enough in its own situation, to preserve, unawed and uninfluenced, the necessary impartiality between an individual accused, and the representatives of the people, his accusers?"

Read that passage carefully, Sen. Romney. Hamilton is talking across the centuries to you.

Sometimes politicians find a moment when their actions—their willingness to suffer criticism to do what they believe is right—can play a decisive role in the fate of the country. Such a moment is approaching for Romney. ■

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support to be. The president's most visible evangelical supporters—doing their best to mimic his tone and approach—brayed in agreement. And some conservative writers were highly critical of the editorial. My colleague Hugh Hewitt pronounced himself "bewildered" that anyone would "seek an absolutist political opinion from a website about evangelical faith." "Whether Trump is good or bad for the republic isn't a theological question," said Hewitt. "It is a political one."

Evangelical institutions like *Christianity Today*, in other words, should be content to stay in their lane. They should defer to the political experts. Like Fox News. Like conservative talk radio. Like conspiratorial internet sites. Wouldn't it be easier for all involved if evangelicals simply accepted the proposition that a political coalition with ethno-nationalists, led by a malicious, immoral buffoon, is good for the cause of justice and for the cause of Christ? Isn't it obvious that the appointment of conservative judges should satisfy all the other moral convictions of Christian citizens?

This, after all, isn't a theological matter. It isn't a theological matter that evangelicals—influenced by conservative media and white identity politics—have become the religious group most hostile to refugee resettlement and most supportive of a policy of family separation at the border. It isn't a theological matter that loyalty to Trump is making an older generation of evangelicals look like crude hypocrites in the eyes of their own children, who are fleeing the tradition in droves.

From the perspective of Trump partisans, a less carnal version of the Ailes arrangement still applies. Evangelicals will be given rhetorical deference, White House access and judges and regulations of their liking. All they need to do is set aside their criticisms of cruelty, deception, misogyny, racism and contempt for the vulnerable. All they need to do is forget decency and moral consistency.

From the standpoint of committed evangelicals, the calculus should be more complex. Christians are called to be representatives of God's kingdom in the life of this world. Betraying that role not only hurts the reputation of evangelicalism; it does a nasty disservice to the reputation of the Gospel. It is time, and past time, for Christian believers to listen to Christian sources on Christian social ethics, including the small, clear voice of *Christianity Today*. ■

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Richard Jewell (Dir. Clint Eastwood). Starring: Paul Walter Hauser, Sam Rockwell, Jon Hamm, Olivia Wilde, Kathy Bates. Everything you need to know about the motives behind director Clint Eastwood's drama about former security guard Richard Jewell, wrongly accused of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics bombing, is contained in the character of Kathy Scruggs (Olivia Wilde). She's the Atlanta newspaper reporter who breaks the story on Jewell's possible guilt, and Wilde plays her as a headline-chasing, sexed-up bimbo who seems meant to stand in for the entirety of the American media. It's a repellent role, though she's in good bad company: Her partner in crime is Jon Hamm's relentless FBI agent, who is convinced of Jewell's guilt to a near-psychopathic degree. Media and government institutions are in no way worthy of lionization—but they don't deserve simplistic demonization of the sort that Eastwood doles out here—a very 2019 pose to strike. On the flip side of these fiendish characterizations is Jewell himself, played by I, Tonya's Paul Walter Hauser as a saintly gentle giant whose biggest crime is that he believes in doing the right thing to a frustrating fault. He's barely a person, but Eastwood hasn't dealt with people in his movies for a while now. Every character here is made of straw, and the arguments for Eastwood as the last in a long line of no-nonsense Hollywood classicists hardly matters when the content of his recent art is so obviously ignorant. [R] ★

Atlantics (Dir. Mati Diop). Starring: Mame Bineta Sane, Amadou Mbow, Ibrahima Traore, Babacar Sylla. A superb feature debut by French actress Mati Diop, *Atlantics* initially appears to be a politically charged drama about a Senegalese construction worker, Souleiman (Ibrahima Traore), fighting for a better life. Slowly, the film reveals itself to be more about Ada (Mame Bineta Sane), Souleiman's independent-minded lover, who is betrothed to the much wealthier, extremely full-of-himself Omar (Sylla). When Souleiman and several of his fellow workers vanish after trying to reach the Spanish coast by sea, Ada is left to pick up the pieces and potentially go through the marital motions. Then the film takes a turn toward the supernatural that is both haunting and provocative, not to mention beautifully, evocatively photographed by Claire Mathon. Gender lines are blurred. Class and socioeconomic distinctions are probed with razor-edged precision. And all allegory aside, *Atlantics* works purely as a ghostly romance, the heart of which is Sane (in her first movie role) and her achingly expressive face. [N/R] ★★★★★1/2 ■