



NightLight

A NEWSLETTER OF McLEAN MINISTRIES

"take heed....as to a light that shines in a dark place." II Peter 1:19

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Dear Friends,

All that I have written seems like straw...

St. Thomas Aquinas, 1273



There have been many who are better equipped than me who have commented on this statement by Aquinas. Those who make their academic focus of study on his voluminous writings naturally dismiss it from being some final verdict by him on his own life's work. Aquinas was a short dumpy Dominican who was abused and mocked by even his own fellow Dominicans, was doubted by his family, and was persecuted by those who differed with him theologically. He wrote continuously all his life, and has been understandably called the father of western philosophy. His great attempt at a summation of theology, *Suma Theologica*, was left unfinished. On December 6, 1273, Aquinas had some encounter which caused him to lay aside his life's work. He returned to his teaching and relationships, but never wrote another word. When pressed about it, he replied that he could no longer write because he

had seen things so beyond words that it made all he had written seem like straw. He was not yet fifty, but died only a few months after. Did he die? Or did he simply no longer feel the need to remain here grappling with straw, and simply went on forward, higher, to the Real?

I do not tell this story because I consider myself to be anywhere in the same league as a genius such as Aquinas. But I do deeply empathize with his statement. Some commentators interpret his statement as an overly negative possibly emotional lament caused by exhaustion from the many conflicts he encountered. Maybe. I personally don't think so. I believe (we will have to ask him one day for the final answer) he had meant exactly what he said. He had seen Something. Something so wonderful, so all consuming, that the Reality of it made all his best intellectual grappling with high philosophical/theological issues appear to be nothing more than straw.

I sit here in my study trying to forge out for you some meaningful helpful nuggets of truth. I have hundreds of hours of recorded and written work on many topics, all of which at the time, seemed important. Yet I am tempted to consider it all straw. But not because I've had a higher vision. No. It rather comes out of my own frustrated ego to be meaningful and relevant in the eyes of others, as I make my profound and memorable mark for God. All straw. Just wood, hay, and stubble. Yet there are rare moments when I come closer to what Aquinas must have encountered: Reality. And in those moments, I lay aside what I do, and put my face on the floor and cry, "Holy, holy, holy." And in those moments I get what Aquinas was saying. After what I have seen and experienced from and with Him, how can I find the words to write only ABOUT Him?

Well, I guess it is obvious that I cannot say I will not write another word, because I am writing this to you. My hope is that as you read these meager scratchings, you will be moved way beyond just reading them to seek His Face in the Reality of the present moment. For that event that made Aquinas shut down his writing was not one caused by frustration or defeat. It was caused by seeing the Real on a level he had not ever seen it before. And once you see the Real on that level, you are no longer interested in grappling with how to understand it. Writing about God pales in comparison to being with Him. For me, I will keep grappling a bit more. For the present, certain issues compel me to try and communicate a better understanding to you. But more and more, I am drawn away to that Place. To that Person. To that Face. We are all invited.



Movie Review: *A Dog's Purpose*

*I would have a hundred dogs if I had a place to put them, and if I could do justice by every one of them, and if my wife would let me. (Mary loves dogs too, but she is far more realistic than I am.) The closest I can come to scratching my itch for dogs is to watch **A Dog's Purpose**. Be ready to laugh as well as cry. I don't think (contrary to some paranoid Christian reviews I have seen) that watchers will be seduced into believing in reincarnation (the dog keeps coming back in different doggy forms). This film will not convert the world or make any dramatic ethical transformations (except maybe better treatment of animals? which is good!) but it is FUN to watch. And don't we need a break sometimes and just watch something for FUN? And yes. I believe our beloved pets will be in Heaven with us.*



Film Series: *The Chosen*

I don't care for the title. There are many film projects that go by that name, some good, some not so good. And I would rather refer to the Lord Jesus in more exact terms. The chosen can be misunderstood as the idea of a mere human that is special because he is chosen. Jesus is referred to as chosen in a couple of places in Scripture, but that is minor when compared to others of far greater importance. I would have 'chosen' a different title. Having said all that, **THE CHOSEN** is unique in all of television bible films. I won't go into details here which you can read on line. But the few clips I have been able to see, as well as the first entire episode, plus the 25-minute long Christmas film called *The Shepherd* is like nothing that has been done before. There is a freedom from the 'bible movie' atmosphere that has plagued former attempts. It is grabbing young audiences with an emotional force that other formats failed to do. So it is worth your time to pursue it. You have to do some homework to know how to access it because the producers are not interested in being just another Netflix offering. There is not one penny of Hollywood money in the production, which FYI is outstandingly good, along with the acting, writing, and cinematography. Most important is the power flowing through the presentation. It is deeply moving. It is the first series of its kind, designed to be watched in episodes. And so it is educating an entire generation of kids (and adults alike) who don't know the Story well. Sadly, for the purists who think only exact detailed bible stories are permissible, these will be anathema to that mindset. But if you believe the Holy Spirit wants to use the present cultural formats to reach people, this is now reaching them in new and profound ways. You can get an introduction to **THE CHOSEN** (director Dallas Jenkins) by going to YouTube and searching for the title and director's name.



Closing Thoughts...



I still get doubled-minded over the whole question of film. I often settle temporarily into the mind that says, "This is all fluff compared to the real world. Let's get on with ministry to real people and not spend so much time on movies." And that seems noble until you realize that film has for good or ill, become our culture's fireplace storytelling time. And we need to be up on what stories are being told. It is not the facts but the STORY that will reach and disciple hearts.

In His Joy, Clay & Mary



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