



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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Power of
Image & Symbol:
Superman



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Dear Friends,



A picture is worth a thousand words.

Images and symbols wield great power over the human imagination, tapping into deep emotions and evoking behaviors. This is obvious in the light of billions spent on advertisement. Yet many are oblivious to the reality of what images do in us. The symbol itself is powerful enough. But when we add motion, story, and music, a spell can be cast that transforms entire moral value systems for good or for evil.

It is such a prevailing force in our society that analyzing and objectifying the power of movies on our psyches has become almost like fish analyzing water, so drowned are we in it all. This failure to objectify leaves us vulnerable. We must defend ourselves from being simply taken. Yet most people do not even attempt such objectivity and are drowning in the flood.

Over the past few months we have increasingly backed away from the monthly attempt to analyze film. Many of you have protested and asked for a return to periodic reviews. Because there are now many online resources which do a much better job (Movie Guide, Focus on the Family, etc.) we gladly passed on the task. Still, when a film comes along we think needs attention we will try to examine it. Here is one: **MAN OF STEEL**. Why another treatment of Superman? Well, it sells. Why it sells is a whole other subject. But for now, we want to examine the unusual focus this film version took on the parallels between Superman and Jesus. Yes, if you didn't see it yet, you might be amazed at the not so subtle comparison; so blatant that many anti-Christian voices were raised in protest.

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But just as it is ludicrous for critics to try to expunge the Christian elements from **NARNIA** or **LORD OF THE RINGS**, since their authors were obviously Christian in the stories' formation, so it is with Superman. The Messiah image is in the very DNA of the man of steel. Only his creators were not blatantly Christian but Jewish. (Same DNA.)

Two Brooklyn New York teenagers devised the story in reaction to the rising Nazi evil and Hitler's *Urbarmensch*. Did they overtly seek to use Christian imagery? Unless I am misinformed, the answer is no, not consciously. But their Jewish souls could not help it. They thought they were just making up a great comic book story, about a Father named Jor EL who sends his only Son Kal EL, from outerspace to earth, where he will have power to save and protect while defending against evil.

In the 1978 film version, the scene of Kal's departure from Krypton in a star-shaped craft includes the father's blessing on the son: "The son shall be the father and the father shall be the son." In this most recent film, a conversation between Superman and his father's computer-generated persona closes with Jor El saying, "Son, you can save them; you can save them all." As this is said, Kal steps into midair in a cruciform pose that cannot be mistaken: it is a direct reference to Calvary. The Jewish soul **MUST** prophesy.

After he emerges from his peasant family and goes into the wilderness, he comes forth at seemingly around age 30 to begin his public work. With

eyes of fire he destroys evil. The demon image bad guys refer to Kal as holding all the DNA of his world inside his own body. We could go on with these types of symbols. Enough said. Superman, Kal EL, sent to earth to save, in the father's name, always awakens the everlasting craving in all of us for a Savior. At this hour of darkness in the world, the longing is wide awake. And sometimes even Hollywood cannot help it, and truth shines through in spite of their focus.

There are problems, of course. Lois Lane is a foul-mouthed hairy-chested macho girl. A few references are made juxtaposing God with space aliens, implying that we are indebted to them instead of Him for our existence. But just as clearly, the space alien makes a direct reference to evolution of evil as being superior to the weakness of love, making evolution wear a black hat to Superman's white one. Evolution is devolution. The Hero is the Lover.

The battle scenes will wear out most folks over 30, male or female. And the contrived ending seems as if they simply ran out of ideas and finally just had to kill off the bad guy even though it is illogical the way they do it. But by then we are just glad he's dead.

Still, it would be a very interesting conversation stirrer to discuss these possibilities with your teens or college-age kids. **MAN OF STEEL** will be on DVD in a few weeks. It is now at the dollar show where you can buy a dollar show ticket for three dollars. One last thing: how can Superman SHAVE????

When I was a very small boy, Superman was the protector from the monsters under my bed and out my bedroom window. In 1961, George Reeves who played him on TV, was killed in Hollywood. Some say it was suicide; some say it was his ex-girlfriend. Either way, as a five-year-old, I remember the cold creeping feeling that came over me as my grandmother innocently and casually explained to me why Reeves picture as Superman was on the front page: "Oh, he's dead." Going to bed that night was terrifying for me.

Never underestimate what is going on in the imagination of your child. Never assume too much. Ask. Talk. Listen. And most of all be present to them as God's voice to them, God's presence in the shape of a godly discerning parent. And never believe it is ok to just let the TV talk on its own. It long ago lost any credibility as a teaching tool. You can't even trust Sesame Street. And Disney will have a Lesbian parents' sitcom in its line-up this year. Maybe it is time to turn off you TV, disconnect from your server, and save some money, all at the same time!

How about reading to your children? There is nothing that awakens the imagination more than listening to a story. You can also use your TV to watch what you choose by renting/buying/or checking out for free movies and materials you can trust. Defend yourself and family from being overrun by Hollywood. Image and symbol matters!! What kind of pictures are you painting on the hearts of your children? How about your own heart? You become what you behold. What do you look at?



...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right,
whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable
- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about
such things. *Philippians 4:8*

*Turn my eyes away from worthless things; renew my life
according to your word. Psalm 119:37*

*To those who can't see it yet, everything comes in stories,
creating readiness, nudging them toward receptive insight.
Mark 4:11 The Message*

*(Jesus) was never without a story when he spoke.
Mark 4:34 The Message*

With Love, Clay & Mary



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