The sacred-secular parallels between Jesus Christ and Kal-El/Clark Kent/Superman in Superman: The Movie (1978) and Superman II (1981) were explicated previously in the JR&F.

This research was followed by the identification of additional holy, but non-christic subtexts built into the films to complement Superman as a Christ-figure. However, the sacred-secular parallels did not stop there. In addition to this persuasive array of positive holy figurations, complementary unholy religious subtexts were also built into the films. They were designed to counterpoint the alien Messiah and his positive pals, plus accentuate the evilness of the unholy Kryptonian triumvirate and their disreputable earthly associates. These screen villains and their biblical correlates were identified and explicated herein. Also canvassed was a potpourri of other religious elements engineered within the films for potential sacred effect. They revealed an even greater degree of subtextual religious saturation than previously realised.

It was concluded that the first two Superman movies are profoundly religious and a pop culture site par excellence for contemporary theological discourse. Further research into this exciting interdisciplinary field was recommended.

Introduction

[1] Previously within The Journal of Religion and Film, Anton Karl Kozlovic explicates the sacred-secular parallels between Jesus Christ and Kal-El/Clark Kent/Superman in Superman: The Movie (aka Superman hereafter S1) and its partial back-to-back sequel Superman II (hereafter S2). Kozlovic subsequently explicated the holy, but non-christic biblical subtexts that were also crafted in these two classic SF films. These religious subtexts were designed to accentuate the alien Messiah and his positive pals. However, despite these persuasive holy subtexts and their numerous New Testament (NT)
associations, the extent of the Bible-film parallels within $S1$ and $S2$ did not stop with holy religious figurations. Additional *unholy* biblical correspondences were also deliberately crafted into the films to dramatically counterpoint Superman as a Christ-figure, and accentuate the evilness of the Kryptonian triumvirate and their disreputable earthly associates. Indeed, many other elements were also engineered into the Superman films for both potential sacred effect and subtextual religious saturation reasons. The religious themes explicated within broadly pertained to: (a) Unholy Foes: The Opposers of God, Man and Superman, (b) Unholy Collaptors: The Evil Earthly Enemies, and (c) A Religious Potpourri: Other Significant Biblical Associations.

1.0 Unholy Foes: The Opposers of God, Man and Superman

[2] Just as it is impossible to have only one side of a coin, it is impossible to value warriors of the light without contrasting them with their theological-cum-dramaturgical nemeses, the forces of darkness. The needs of $S1$ and $S2$ were no different and they were attended to with as much care as the crafting of Superman as an alien Messiah.

1.1 An Unholy Alien Triumvirate

[3] Biblically speaking, Jesus Christ had enemies, in particular, three unclean spirits to deal with, namely, "the dragon ... the beast, and ... the false prophet" (Rev. 16:13). Similarly, both Jor-El (Marlon Brando) and Superman (Christopher Reeve) had an unholy trinity of celestial enemies to contend with. In $S1$, Jor-El (and later his son Superman in $S2$) had the three imprisoned Kryptonian political subversives to attend to, namely, Ursa (Sarah Douglas), Non (Jack O'Halloran) and General Zod (Terence Stamp). In $S2$, Lara (Susannah York), Superman's biological mother, was presented as the keeper of the archives of Krypton and she characterised these unholy three as having "evil nature, evil ways," and thereby indirectly suggesting that superior technology does not necessarily mean superior ethics. More comically, while on Earth, the red-neck country sheriff (Clifton James) said to his less sophisticated deputy (Peter Whitman) that the three on-the-loose aliens were hippies from Los Angeles (no doubt, unwholesomeness of another sort compared to small town values)! This unholy Kryptonian triumvirate was appropriately dressed in full black (on a white planet under a white beam) to signal their "bad guy" status in the best iconic traditions of Hollywood. During their formal trial, it was revealed that they had tried to overthrow their own government and institute a new social order on Krypton, but they failed and were subsequently captured, tried, sentenced and punished for their sedition.

[4] For their political (and other) crimes, they were not killed, rather, they were socially ostracised by being literally cast out from their society "for eternity" into an undesirable liminal realm called the "Phantom Zone" (discovered by Jor-El, Krypton's chief scientist). Jor-El, as the foremost member of the ruling council, had to fulfill his law-and-order duty, and so he cast the final vote during their trial, thus sealing their doomed fate. In return, Jor-El (and his heirs) were immediately threatened by the prisoners, and an unholy vow was taken to do so again in the future. This passionate threat was eventually carried out in $S2$ when the evil three escaped their celestial confinement and subsequently attacked Superman. During $S2$, this specific plot point was verbally linked back to the $S1$ trial scene when General Zod proclaimed: "We shall kill the son of our jailer!" (i.e., Superman/Kal-El/Clark Kent, the son of Jor-El), or analogously speaking, Satan was trying to kill Jesus, the son of God.

1.2 Satan Cast Out from Heaven Towards Eden

[5] The triumvirate's banishment from Krypton into the Phantom Zone, and then to Earth was similar to the biblical fate of the would-be heavenly usurper, Satan. Scripturally speaking, Satan (aka the great dragon, old serpent, the Devil, Lucifer - Rev. 12:9; Isa. 14:12) tried to challenge God's divine order and
so he precipitated a war in heaven (Rev. 12:7). This was triggered by his pride and a desire to lord it over all of them (Isa. 14:13-14). Satan and his defeated evil angels were not killed, rather, they were socially ostracised by being cast out of heaven (Rev. 12:9). This eviction was done as quick as lightning (Luke 10:18), and later Satan was relegated to roaming the earthly realm like a roaring lion reeking havoc (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan and his evil coworkers worked miracles and confronted "the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:14). This biblical battle was subtextually re-enacted in S2 between the three Kryptonian subversives and Superman. Symbolically speaking, it was that ancient conflict between good and evil played out on the screen one more time.

[6] Interestingly, the director of S2 was Richard Lester whom Peter Tonguette considered had "an obsession with questioning authority" that also thematically jibed with the evil triumvirate as the stars of his Superman film. This personalistic trait was especially significant considering that Tonguette considered that Richard Donner, the director of S1, was "essentially reverential and respectful towards the subject" and which thematically jibed with Superman as the star of his Superman film. (However, to suggest that Richard Lester was "bad" and Richard Donner was "good" would be stretching this point too far).

[7] In S1, the unholy trio were expelled from their Kryptonian "heaven" into the starry heavens above via a rotating, two-dimensional, roaming, cosmic prison. Some film critics considered this alien device to be "a fragment of kryptonite," or "a sort of super-silicon chip," or "a bizarre time-warp." Nevertheless, this interstellar jail was a quick acting device of light that descended from the heavens, captured the prisoners, then cast the trio of trouble into the dark void of outer space. In S2, the three prisoners eventually landed on Earth and reeked havoc in a capricious fashion, thus turning America into the equivalent of "a despoiled Eden." Nor was it without iconographic significance that the first "alien" life-form that the evil trio met on a paradisiacal Earth was a snake. Ursa warmly greeted the snake until it bit her and she retaliated by warming it up into a flame-bursting death. These idyllic scenes were a resonate throwback to Eve in the garden of Eden and her encounter with another beautiful but nasty serpent (Gen. 3:1).

1.3 Satan Defeated and Cast into the Pit

[8] Scripturally speaking, at the end of Satan's dastardly reign on Earth, he was to "be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit" (Isa. 14:15). Similarly, in S2, General Zod along with Non and Ursa are cosmically castrated by the externalised radiation chamber inside the Fortress of Solitude (Superman's Artic retreat). The evil three are then physically subdued before they can realise their complete domination of the world. Very significantly, the now cunningly depowered General Zod was quickly defeated and lifted up, swing-bowing before Superman his conqueror. At Superman's instigation, Zod then violently disappeared into a deep, murky, pit-like crevasse not to be seen again, followed soon after by his evil coworkers Ursa and Non. Their on-screen fate prophetically resonated with Proverbs 14:19: "The evil bow before the good: and the wicked at the gates of the righteous." Their conquered fate also resonated with the on-screen street-walker's prophetic sign which had earlier proclaimed: "Prepare to Meet Thy Doom. The End of the World is Nigh." At least for Zod, Ursa and Non, this was an accurate prediction for we never see them again in the film or in either of the sequels, Superman III or Superman IV: The Quest for Peace!

1.4 General Zod as an Evil False Prophet

[9] In S1, General Zod was a former trusted defender of Krypton employed by the ruling council. However, he subsequently suffered a God-complex and wanted to be Krypton's absolute ruler and have
people bow down before him. General Zod was directly compared to the evil one because, like "Satan, Zod originally held a high position of trust in Paradise, but his overweening ambition and pride lead him to sedition. He is found out in his treason, and cast out of Krypton along with the other angels, Ursa and Non, whom he incited to rebel." Indeed, the first early scenes in S1 "involves the "eternal judgment" ... This itself may be a kind of parallel to the fall and banishment of Satan before the creation." The conflict between Jor-El and the other council members can be seen as another biblical war in heaven, followed by the break up of Krypton with its harrowing images of falling bodies. This scene was itself highly reminiscent of Hans Memling's falling bodies in his painting The Last Judgement, a fine arts depiction of another catastrophic end time scenario.

[10] This evil theme was advanced further in S2 where General Zod was described on-screen as a "son-of-a-bitch" by the county Sheriff and then this assessment was reified off-screen when a film critic perceived Zod as a "power-crazed evil incarnate." Another film commentator claimed that Zod represented "the Nietzschean side of the Superman potential." Indeed, this Nietzschean link was also musically forged in an "imaginative stroke by arranger Ken Thorne at the beginning [of the film when he] inverts one of John Williams' musical motifs and turns it into a direct quote from Richard Strauss' "Also Sprach Zarathustra."

[11] In S2, Zod eventually succeeded in getting his megalomaniac power wish. Not only was he ruler of a whole planet (Earth), but the U.S. President (E. G. Marshall) eventually knelt before him as an act of coerced submission. General Zod also attempted "to force Superman to kneel before him, just as Satan strives to make Jesus kneel before him in Matthew 4.9," and he even succeeded in that endeavour for a brief moment, but with unexpected disastrous consequences (i.e., pain and defeat). Evil is defined here as a violation of societal rules, brutal domination and an uncaring disposition. S1 and S2 also hint at three sorts of bizarre behaviours, namely: (a) intrapsychic megalomania (represented by General Zod), (b) child-hating perversity (represented by Ursa), even more "unnatural" in a woman due to their iconic associations with birth, nurturing and bonded infant love, and (c) genetic/mental abnormality (represented by Non). The planetary dimension of their combined evil was also symbolically indicated on-screen. This occurred when Non tossed aside the crumpled US and Soviet flags belonging to the now-destroyed international lunar expedition. Superman's equivalent earthly enemy to General Zod was the lying genius Lex Luthor (Gene Hackman), another megalomaniac with big ideas and extremely destructive impulses.

1.5 General Zod as the Anti-Christ

[12] General Zod was deliberately portrayed as an anti-Christ-figure in S2. He was defined as this by virtue of him being: (a) opposed to Superman (as a Christ-figure), (b) being opposed to Jor-El (as a God-figure), and (c) by being against the spirit of goodness and truth (aka 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7). Zod also displayed many anti-Christ-like behaviours. For example, when he and his two evil cohorts landed on an Edenic Earth for the first time, Zod floated down from the heavens into a stream, just breaking the surface of the water before promptly rising up again and then confidently walking on water to get to the nearby shore. Thus General Zod had paralleled Jesus who also walked on water (Matt. 14:25-26). Indeed, film critic Neil Sinyard considered General Zod's water-walking feat to be an act of "impudent blasphemy" that along with the unholo trio's other acts undermined "Superman's status as deity." It also emphasised "the godlessness of our universe," especially considering S1's death-of-God scene when Jor-El (as God-figure and Superman's father and Holy Father) was killed when Krypton was destroyed.

[13] Apparently, both S1 and S2 were suggesting that Nietzsche was right, God is dead (even if his influence lives on), which is given more resonant force when coupled with John the Divine's claim that Jesus Christ was "the first begotten of the dead" (Rev. 1:5). After all, Superman was the first born of the
now dead Jor-El, and baby Kal-El (an infant Jesus-figure in his celestial starship-manger) was the first one to leave the dying planet Krypton, and was thus the first alien immigrant to safely make it to Earth. When Lex Luthor's alpha-wave sensing device in S2 detected the unholy trio, it reinforced the blasphemous Lord theme again (aka Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13), for his machine could only detect Kryptonians who were the current Lords of the earthly universe.

[14] General Zod was also filmically stamped as a negative Jesus through his eye colour in S1. Superman as a Christ-figure had blue eyes (as did Jor-El as a God-figure) that even Jewish commentators acknowledged in Superman's comic book incarnation. For example, Scott Raab facetiously called Superman: "Mr. Krypton, Mr. Blue Eyes, Mr. Square Jaw." Within the Christian tradition, the colour blue is symbolic of "the heavenly origins of Christ (as the sky is blue)." Therefore, the blue eyes of the black clad General Zod visually supported his anti-Christ status, especially compared to his two evil partners, Ursa and Non, both of whom had brown eyes. Extreme close up shots of all three sets of unholy eyes during the Krypton judgment scene allowed for this degree of certainty, coupled with other eye symbolism implications (see section 3.1)

[15] The theme of General Zod's anti-Christ nature was also repeated in S2 when he and his evil cohorts confronted the two police officers on the country back-road. Particularly, when deputy Dwayne spontaneously yelled out "Jesus H. Christ" when Zod inadvertently shot himself with the deputy's own rifle, but Zod suffered no ill effects whatsoever. In fact, Christ related exclamations around or about Christ-figures (and anti-Christ figures) is a common Hollywood ploy. General Zod's bullet-proof nature also physically signalled Zod's negative deity status and thus put him into the class of what Subbulakshmi Ganapathy called "God-men." Later, Ursa assertively purloined the deputy's police badge (itself symbolic of congealed power) and used it as a personal symbol of the new power and law on Earth -- an evil cosmic dictatorship by ones who wore (and were) all black. The General Zod-divinity associations were later comically recalled when the defeated U.S. President capitulated and knelt before Zod muttering "Oh God" only to be linguistically corrected from "God" to "Zod" by the egotistical General. Lex Luthor also exhibited this subservient streak by referring to General Zod with such magisterial designations as "magnificent one" and "your grace."

1.6 Ursa the Perverse Dragon

[16] The evil, perverted, child-hating Ursa was a dragon lady that dressed like "a leather-clad dominatrix" and found delight in Earth serpents in S2. One wonders about her child-hating reputation that was dutifully acknowledged by the Kryptonian high council. Could she have been barren like the biblical Sarah (Gen. 11:30; 18:10-15; 21:1-2), and was this the root source of her rage (and the negative, alien correlate to the good, earthly Martha Kent, Superman's barren but blessed foster mother)? Superman's equivalent earthly female enemy was the seductive, dumb mistress, Miss Teschmacher (Valerie Perrine). She had no children or any motherly associations, which was reinforced when she was repeatedly referred to as "MISS Teschmacher" (i.e., the title designation of an unmarried woman or girl). Her brand of perversity was more of the mundane bad-girl kind, rather than twisted internal psychology like Ursa.

1.7 Non the Murdering, Mindless Beast

[17] In S2, before being captured, the hugely built Non is shown killing a white-clad Kryptonian guard (reminiscent of a cross between an imperial trooper from Star Wars and a rocketman as lovingly recreated in The Rocketeer). Non is continually portrayed as a bumbling, mindless aberration of "pure dumb brute strength." As the mute, beastlike sidekick of General Zod, the Kryptonian high council claimed that he was "without thought." Lex Luthor called him "a clod" in S2, while his evil Kryptonian
cohorts quietly and repeatedly despaired over his incapacities. Not only did Non display weak eye-ray powers compared to his evil peers (and itself a visual index of his lower brain power), but when he bashed his way through the walls of the Daily Planet building, Luthor complained: "When will these dummies learn to use the doorknob?"

[18] Throughout S1 and S2, Non demonstrated his ineptitude, destructiveness and animal nature via beast-like growls, cries and other emotive sound effects (i.e., not conversation, erudite or otherwise). His unnecessary destruction of the moon spacecraft following his release from the Phantom Zone prison, plus his Daily Planet rampage leaves little doubt about his animal brutishness. Even his name eponomously described him, for "Non" literally means: "negation ... failure ... lack or absence."26 Superman's earthly Non equivalent was the dumb sidekick and atrociously ineffectual Otis (Ned Beatty), another failed being who was co-opted by evil forces.

2.0 Unholy Collaborators: The Evil Earthly Enemies

[19] In both S1 and S2, the filmmakers mirrored the unholy Kryptonian foes with disreputable earthly associates who acted as collaborators, in short, they were constructed as "Evil lite."

2.1 An Unholy Earthly Triumvirate

[20] The unholy trio of Kryptonian evil was matched by an earthly trio of evil. This time the violation of American societal rules was being perpetrated by the megalomaniac Lex Luthor (paralleling General Zod), the childless, seductive Miss Teschmacher (paralleling Ursa), and the psychologically challenged Otis (paralleling Non). At the end of S2, Superman pridefully delivered Luthor and his dimwitted henchman Otis to prison and justice, just like Jesus: "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15). In particular, Luthor was a self-boasting genius whom Superman made to look foolish, just as "God made foolish the wisdom of this world" (1 Cor. 1:20).

2.2 Lex Luthor as the Personification of Earthly Evil

[21] Superman's main earthly enemy was the megalomaniac Lex Luthor. This nemesis was a master criminal with a name that suggested many negative interpretations. For example, "Lex" means "law; rule; standard, norm,"27 thereby implying "the Law of Luther - ie: justification by faith and not deeds."28 His surname "implies both Lucifer and Luther: Lucifer is God's rebellious angel who establishes a dominion of his own in another subterranean region and Luther as rebel against the established church who founds a religion of his own."29 Indeed, "Luther represents man's egotism, his pride in his own capabilities, especially his reason. (Luthor's name even points towards such an interpretation, being so close to Martin Luther and thus symbolizing - to Catholics, at least - man's pride in himself and his renunciation of the True Church)."30

[22] Whatever Lex Luthor was, he was certainly egocentric. He acted like a mini-king and lived 200 feet underground in an abandoned railway station. This was an appropriate subterranean lair for an evil one because beneath the Earth is the traditional location of the Devil's domain (and one of the most famous of metaphysical properties in human history). Luthor's lair was only accessible by descending (physically, spiritually and metaphorically) that involved tramping through train tunnels, which itself symbolically resonated with the proverbial "road to Hell." As Gene Hackman described his role: "Lex is so devious, he sometimes double-crosses himself...just for the practice. He lives under the city of Metropolis because he's too cheap to invest in above-ground property."31 Nor does Luthor's land-grabbing megalomania stop there, for in S2, he wanted to be the King of Australia, the largest island (or
smallest continent) on Earth.

[23] Despite his repeated self-boastings about his genius, Luthor's personalistic defects are dramatically indicated in S2. He kept serving the evil Kryptonian triumvirate even though they repeatedly ordered him neutralised when his immediate usefulness was at an end. Alternatively, he is so attracted to evil that he cannot live without it, despite its inherent dangers and potentially unsavoury consequences for him (and itself indicative of unwholesome obsession). Evil by its very nature is also deceptive. So, near films end, it was not too surprising to find Luthor dramatically removing his wig to reveal his signature bald head of Superman comic book fame. (Early hints of his iconic baldness occurred when Otis found many wigs in Luthor's bedroom, and when Luthor's hairstyles kept changing throughout the film). Lex's woolly wigs and deceptive behaviour metaphorically resonated with Jesus' warning against false prophets who were like ravening wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). And like wolves, Luthor was also a predator.

2.3 Miss Eve Teschmacher as the Mother of Harlots

[24] As an iconic sinner in S1, Miss Eve Teschmacher dressed in black with exposed fleshy breasts and tight pants. At one point, she is smoking a cigarette in a long-stemmed holder in the stereotypic salacious prostitute pose. Later, she dressed in a grey outfit wearing pearl earrings and necklace, the body jewellery favoured by the biblical whore of Babylon, the Mother of Harlots (Rev. 17:4-5). Interestingly, in real-life, Valerie Perrine was a nude Playboy centrefold which would have enhanced her erotic performance for the knowing viewer. Later, after being slowly redeemed by the knowledge and heroic reports of Superman, especially when physically saving him from drowning, she later wore plain, unsexual, unprovocative white clothing, the symbol of purity and chastity.

[25] However, in S2, she reverted to her bad old ways as a "dumb but compassionate moll" when she helped Luthor escape prison. Recidivism being a common feature of the truly bad. While travelling North on a sled through the snow with Luthor, Miss Teschmacher is wearing a brilliant red coloured fur/wool-lined coat (instead of white as you might expect in the Artic conditions), just like the scarlet colour favoured by the Mother of Harlots (Rev. 17:4). Indeed, biblically speaking, red (whether as scarlet or crimson) is also used to symbolise sin (Isa. 1:18) and at other times to represent evil (Rev. 12:3), especially in the form of a "great red dragon" (which also resonated with Ursa the dragon lady, Miss Teschmacher's Kryptonian equivalent).

[26] Interestingly, S2's use of the colour red, fur/wool and white snow matched the same elements used in the Lord's argument in Isaiah 1:18, namely: "saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The colour red also had other symbolic resonances for Superman. It was the red sun of Krypton that was the embracer and destroyer of Superman's home planet and the subsequent weakener of the Earth-bound Superman himself. Likewise, a scarlet harlot can embrace, weaken and destroy one's virtuous reputation. Red thus signals much more than just physical danger, human blood or war.

2.4 Miss Eve Teschmacher as Mary Magdalene

[27] The first person to witness Jesus' post-crucifixion rebirth and divine empowerment was Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:1-18), who was redeemed by Jesus when he cast out seven devils (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). She is traditionally seen as a sexual sinner (Luke 7:37) who was transformed into a penitent prostitute-cum-holy woman. Similarly, in S1, the first person to witness Superman's symbolic "rebirth" from Luthor's drowning pool was Miss Eve Teschmacher, Lex Luthor's soft-hearted, sexy paramour. In a reversal of Jesus' "Touch me not" incident (John 20:17), but resonating with the
sinner woman who kissed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:37-38), Miss Teschmacher deliberately kissed Superman's face while he was weakened. Why? Because she was fearful that he would not allow her to do so voluntarily after being freed and saved from drowning. Interestingly, the kissing scene caused filmmaking problems for the ex-
Playboy centrefold: "Despite several rehearsals, it looked more like an X-rated loop than a quick peck in a family film. (Dick [Donner, the director] kept screaming at Perrine: "I want a short, simple, high-school kiss!")." One wonders if Christopher Reeve complained about the number of retakes or not!

[28] Following Miss Teschmacher's conversion, her relationship with Superman was very different, as was the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene following her spiritual conversion. Miss Teschmacher's turning from evil to good was symbolised by the colour of her personal clothing. They changed from black to grey to white, thus ensuring (and signalling) a much better future for herself at the end of S1. Before Superman left the underground lair, he gave her a warm (but not hot) look and told her not to hang around the place any more (and by implication, leave her Lex Luthor lifestyle behind). This scene faintly echoed Jesus' advice to the woman taken in adultery, namely: "go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). At films end, Superman delivered Luthor and Otis to prison, but not Miss Teschmacher, whom he had apparently forgiven and left alone, just like Jesus who forgave the sinner woman (Luke 7:47) and let her "go in peace" (Luke 7:50) despite her unsavoury social crimes.

2.5 Miss Eve Teschmacher and Superman as Adam and Eve

[29] Miss Teschmacher's first name was "Eve." "Eve is also the Bible name of the first woman. Jesus is called the second Adam in the Bible." So, Adam (Superman) and Eve (Miss Teschmacher) who were tricked by the serpent (Lex Luthor) briefly lived together in an earthly paradise (Luthor's opulent lair) in this pop culture form of the Genesis myth. Superman even acted disreputably like his Edenic counterpart. For example, during S1, Superman disobeyed Jor-El's instructions not to interfere with humanity, but he did so by reversing time to save the dead Lois Lane (Margot Kidder). This behaviour echoed "another obedience myth, the Book of Genesis, in which disobeying the command of a Father-God because of a woman results in expulsion from Eden and the loss of immortality." These punishing events were prefigured in S1 when Luthor used green Kryptonite to render Superman helpless. The further loss of Superman's powers dramatically again occurred in S2 which tapped into another biblical referent, albeit, from the Old Testament (OT) this time. By "revealing himself to Lois Lane and subsequently going to bed with her, he [Superman] is shorn of his powers much like the biblical Samson at the hands of Delilah [Judg. 16:4-20]. He becomes human and vulnerable." Both Samson and Superman temporarily lost their God (Jor-El as God-figure) preordained strength and earthly missions.

2.6 Otis, the Big, Bad, Bumbling Kid: Evil's Inept Side-Kick

[30] The bumbling, inept and cheating Otis symbolised the stupidity of those who would side with evil to challenge God. This characterisation helps explain Craig Anderson's puzzlement, namely: "why a criminal genius would use such a klutz as his henchman is unfathomable." Just as choosing the Devil over God is unfathomable to many Christians. In S1, Otis was portrayed as being so ineffectual that he was unable to steal from a blind man, while in S2, the childishness of Otis is demonstrated during the prison escape episode. When both Luthor and Otis are hit with a blinding prison search light, Otis used that opportunity to play shadow games and mock Luthor! Otis' two fingers behind Luthor's bald head can be interpreted as either Indian feathers, bunny ears or devil horns. One wonders if Satan's henchmen are just as incompetent and irreverent.

3.0 A Religious Potpourri: Other Significant Biblical Associations
Both \textit{S1} and \textit{S2} are replete with significant biblical associations that may not be directly linked to Jesus and his enemies, but they helped uprate the sanctity of the two SF films by tapping into other religious resonances.

### 3.1 The Eye Symbol

Richard Combs argued that if \textit{S1} "has an overall image, it is of an eye --like the huge dome on Krypton," especially inside its justice building. This building was also internally ringed with the watching faces and judging eyes of the high council members as Jor-El summed up his case against the three prisoners. In this context, the eye-shaped building with its many faces can be seen as a biblical metaphor for the omniscience of God, especially his heavenly watchfulness and divine judgment of the wicked (1 Pet. 3:12). Indeed, the filmmakers had close-ups of the prisoner's eyes, as if inviting the audience to use this proverbial window into their souls to make their own judgments, and then conclude that they were not repentant at all. Biblically speaking, eyes in this filmic context were metaphors for the prisoners being without pity or mercy (Deut. 7:16, 13:8, 19:21), and thus worthy of their guilty verdict and mandated fate of eternal punishment in the Phantom Zone. Even Lex Luthor resorted to God-flavoured eye references to get his exacerbated point across (see section 3.5).

This global eye imagery was repeated on Earth in the city of Metropolis where the large globe upon the \textit{Daily Planet} building was the corporate trademark of Clark Kent's newspaper employer. Indeed, the journalists inside it kept an ever-vigilant view upon world events as the newspaper equivalent of private eyes. Its societal protective function was also prefigured in the film's "June 1938" prologue when it was claimed to be "a symbol of hope for the city of Metropolis." Metropolis being the Everyman equivalent of America-cum-the world. In fact, this world-affirming function was dramatically demonstrated in \textit{S2} when Lois flew by Concord to Paris to report upon a terrorist event, and then when the defeated U.S. President deliberately knelt before General Zod ostensibly "for the people of the world" (i.e., not just the USA). For Marie Jean Lederman, the globe symbolised "the endurance of both Earth and Metropolis" even if this symbolism failed dramatically for Krypton itself.

### 3.2 The Sun Symbol

Just as pronounced as the eye symbolism is \textit{S1}'s sun symbolism. Deep space Krypton was warmed by a red sun that became unstable, exploded and then destroyed the planet in its powerful wake. The red sun also took away the super-powers of Superman (and later, the evil Kryptonian triumvirate) while on Earth in \textit{S2}. Biblically speaking, the scorching effect of the sun's rays is a metaphor for a curse that resulted when mankind fell into sin (Isa. 49:10; Rev. 16:8). The Krypton high council suffered from the sin of pride and scientific arrogance (coupled with a fatal miscalculation), while Superman temporarily forsook his divinely pre-ordained protector path for the sake of earthly love with Lois Lane (after some intense personal suffering, it was subsequently corrected). On the other hand, Earth's yellow sun gave Superman (and the evil Kryptonian triumvirate) their super-powers. In this context, biblically speaking, the sun was used as a symbol to describe strength (Judg. 5:31), and in Superman's case, also endurance (Ps. 72:17, 89:36). Interestingly, Superman's family crest and chest emblem was a red "S" logo on a yellow background, thus symbolising his Krypton-Earth heritage. Like Jesus himself, the signs were plainly there for all those who had eyes to see.

### 3.3 The Bird Clash Incident

While Superman and Lois were flying together in \textit{S1}, a white bird suddenly crossed their path and startled them in mid-flight. This bird was dove-like in appearance, if not an actual dove. This incident resonated with the biblical account of God approving of his son's action via the medium of a dove, most
notably Jesus after his baptism (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22).

3.4 The Symbolic Significance of Christopher Reeve's Name

[36] There is an interesting correspondence between Christopher Reeve's Christian name and his screen role as Superman. Entomologically speaking, his first name "Christopher" is derived "from a Greek word meaning 'carrier of Christ', used figuratively by the early Christians to indicate that they bore Christ in their hearts." Just like Reeve-the-actor who carried the Christ story on-screen in the heart-felt guise of Superman-the-Christ-figure to a putatively Christianised world. Even more intriguing, as SI director Richard Donner reported, someone asked: "Where did you find Reeve?" And I said, 'I didn't find him, God gave him to us'. Divine truth, a brilliant PR advertising comment, or just coincidence? One often wonders about divine synchronicity.

3.5 Other Uses of Biblical Rhetoric

[37] Lex Luthor thematically mimicked Matthew 13:13 when he said to his clueless assistants Otis and Miss Teschmacher: "Oh Lord! You gave them eyes but they cannot see." This pseudo-biblical act tagged him as a false profit imitating divine wisdom. Lex Luthor being the weaker earthly version of the powerful, evil Kryptonian escapee, General Zod.

3.6 The Superman-Samson Linkages

[38] The biblical muscle-man Samson (Judg. 13-16), who began delivering the chosen people from evil oppression (Judg. 13:5), was viewed by some biblical scholars as the ancient world equivalent of Superman. His comic book creator Jerry Siegel claimed that he conceived of Superman as "a character like Samson, Hercules and all the strong men I ever heard of rolled into one." This Samson-Superman link is so intimate that when Cecil B. DeMille's Samson and Delilah was released, The Weekly Variety reviewer claimed that: "Samson is the greatest invention since Superman," and which also says something very profound and disturbing about the public's knowledge of the Bible! Indeed, even DeMille himself had envisioned his Samson (Victor Mature) as "Superman" in an act of sacred text-pop culture intertextuality.

3.7 The Superman-Moses-Jesus Linkages

[39] In SI, cherubic Kal-El (Aaron Sholinski) journeyed inside his celestial starship life-pod and flowed dangerously through the currents of space towards the loving arms of earthly ("alien") foreigners. This was reminiscent of the biblical river ride of the infant Moses in his slime-and-pitch coated ark of bulrushes (i.e., his Hebrew life-pod) into the arms of loving Egyptian ("alien") foreigners (Exod. 2:3-6). Indeed, this Old Testament biblical association was intended by the filmmakers: "Aaron was enchanting, coming out of the starship nude - as Dick finally decided - arms outstretched and a big grin on his face. It was a poignant moment; the intended allusion to Moses wasn't lost on any of us." So, Kal-El (if not Superman) was a Moses-figure as well as a Christ-figure here. No wonder Tony Richards considered that within SI: "Moses in the bulrushes, [and] the Christ story - are pulled into the open.

[40] Indeed, the Superman-Moses-Jesus linkage has been commented upon frequently within the critical literature. For example, Les Daniels had argued that Superman's comic book creator Jerry Siegel had originally tapped into "a mythic theme of universal significance" to create a "secular American messiah." He did this by fusing together the most archetypical OT and NT stories claiming that: "Superman recalled Moses, set adrift to become his people's savior, and also Jesus, sent from above to redeem the world." Or as David Michael Petrou put it, the films "draw heavily on familiar religious
elements, most obviously the discovery of the baby Kal-El, much like that of Moses, and the almost mystical bond between him and his father, Jor-El.”

[41] To reinforce Kal-El's divine associations even further, Perry White (Jackie Cooper), the newspaper boss of the Daily Planet argued that getting the Superman scoop would be "the single most important interview since God talked to Moses!" This Mosaic reference occurred again in the audio-visual form of lightning and thunder surrounding the construction of the Fortress of Solitude, and where the adolescent Clark Kent (Jeff East) received Jor-El's laws to live by while on Earth. These dramatic Superman events resonated with God's rumblings and pyrotechnic displays on Mt. Sinai (Exod. 19:16) prior to Moses getting his interview with God and receiving the ten commandments (Exod. 20), God's laws for humans to live by while on Earth. So, Clark Kent (if not Superman) was also a Moses-figure here.

3.8 Mythic Unity

[42] S1 consisted of a series of uneven story zones (i.e., 1938 prologue, 1948 Krypton, 1960s Mid-West, 1970s Metropolis) with each segment of the film having "its own mythic unity." In S2, some of it was pure repetition of S1 incidents, others were revisited expansions of S1 incidents, and the remainder of the S2 narrative advanced the S1 storyline into new territory. In many ways, this was just like the New Testament whose narrative segments also had their own interlocking mythic unity (e.g., the Gospels). Likewise, the NT repeated OT words and expanded OT incidents before moving off into new holy territory.

[43] Like all good myths (sacred and secular), it had a serious inner core. For example, Peter Tonguette considered S2 was "the only superhero film ever to grapple meaningfully with the notion of moral responsibility entailed by possessing the powers to prevent disasters and save the lives of millions." No doubt, Jesus grappled with the same issues, especially at the Mount of Olives when he sweated blood-like drops while seriously cogitating about his own holy mission (Luke 22:39-44). Overall, the correspondences between the two films and the Bible have not always been exactly identical, but nonetheless, they are fruitful areas still worthy of serious contemplation today.

Conclusion

[44] The unholy figurations, the evil subtexts, and the other biblical associations complemented Superman-as-a-Christ-figure and his holy family (whether biological, extended, oppositional or metaphoric). It is concluded that S1 and S2 are profoundly religious and a pop culture site par excellence for contemporary theological discourse. It certainly makes film appreciation, Scripture Study and the hunt for sacred subtexts even more exciting than ever before. If secular films with religious cores can lead viewers, students and non-believers alike to critically examine (or re-examine) the Bible, then this is a positive pedagogic result than should be coveted by religion teachers everywhere. This pop culture, visual piety tactic only needs to be officially valued, utilised and cherished like the rest of the religious scholars' critical tools before it can come fully into its own methodological power.

[45] Although not the same as formal Scripture Study, studying Superman and other alien Christ-figures within the popular cinema can turn dull and boring Religious Education classes into something truly exciting. And hopefully homework eagerly sought after by students, teachers and parents alike! This experimental aesthetic aide to religious contemplation does not replace the divine word, rather, it supplements Holy Writ with religious discourse through an audio-visual pathway that is both safe and overtly nonsectarian. The new postmodern eyes and ears that one has begun to develop herein can only get better and better with repeated practise. Further research into this exciting interdisciplinary field is a joy to conduct, a pedagogic need answered, and a long overdue demonstration of applied cinema in the
pop culture mode, and especially pertinent in this undeniable "Age of Hollywood." May the pedagogic adventure continue.

**Grouped Notes**

**References**


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