

WORLDVIEW GUIDE

The ILIAD



Dr. Louis Markos

canonpress
Moscow, Idaho



*For David Huffman
with thanks for twenty-five years
of vigorous Christian friendship*



CONTENTS

Introduction	I
The World Around	3
About the Author	5
What Other Notables Said	7
Plot Summary, Setting, and Characters	9
Worldview Analysis	13
Quotables	23
21 Significant Questions and Answers	27
Further Discussion and Review	39
Taking the Classics Quiz	43



INTRODUCTION

It is no exaggeration to say that every western and war movie ever made owes a debt to Homer's *Iliad*. All that man has thought or said about the glory and horror of the battlefield, the internal struggle of the soldier, and the inescapable nature of our mortality is contained within the pages of Homer's epic. It is here that western literature begins, here that the big questions begin to be asked, here that beauty meets truth.



WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS

It is a given, or at least *should* be a given, of the Christian worldview that human nature does not change. We are not simply products of our socioeconomic milieu, as the Marxists would have it, nor of dark subconscious forces over which we have no ultimate control, as the Freudians would have it. We are, rather, creatures who were made in God's image but are fallen. Whatever age or culture into which we have been born, we bear that dual mark of glory and depravity.

If we pay careful attention as we read Book I of the *Iliad*, we will recognize the struggle between Achilles and Agamemnon, not because we are projecting our own cultural baggage onto Homer's epic, but because we share a common humanity with Achilles, Agamemnon, and Homer. In a nutshell, the quarrel that breaks out between the commander-in-chief of the combined Greek forces and the greatest of warriors is the age-old struggle between

the politician and the soldier, the administrator and the teacher, the high priest and the prophet.

The first person in each of these pairs is the bureaucrat who must maintain law and order, while the second is the charismatic loner who has little regard for the rules. The former feels threatened by the latter, while the latter feels underappreciated by the former. Think of the relationship between the paranoid King Saul and the popular David in 1 Samuel, or the suspicious, ethnocentric leaders of the Jerusalem church and the newly-converted, iconoclastic Saul of Tarsus in Acts.

If we are to grow as Christians and as human beings, we must understand the nature of this struggle, and thus of our own capacity for self-destruction. We must seek out moderation when our passions would tear us apart out of fear or rage, suspicion or egocentrism. There is a wealth of wisdom in James's admonition to "be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19; ESV).

In the episode in Book I, Nestor, empowered by the proverbial wisdom of experience, is able temporarily to calm down Agamemnon and Achilles, but the two antagonists nevertheless set in motion the actions that will lead to tragedy. Desperate to save face before his men and to show the younger Achilles he is not afraid of him, Agamemnon unjustly steals away Achilles' prize. His ego wounded, Achilles pulls out of the war and utters the prayer that will bring death to his fellow Greeks . . . and to