

Movies

**With Worldviews
in Mind**



Movies

With Worldviews in Mind

Gary DeMar

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Classic Family Films



Cheaper by the Dozen

1950



MPAA Rating: Not Rated
Running Time: 85 minutes

CAST

Clifton Webb	: Frank Bunker Gilbreth
Myrna Loy	: Lillian Gilbreth
Jeanne Crain	: Ann Gilbreth
Edgar Buchanan	: Dr. Burton
Barbara Bates	: Ernestine Gilbreth
Mildred Natwick	: Mrs. Mebane

Worldview Observations: The family is the foundation of society, and large families are a blessing.

The setting for the movie *Cheaper by the Dozen*, based on a 1946 novel of the same name written by Frank Gilbreth, Jr. and Ernestine Gilbreth Carey,¹ is New Jersey. The movie and novel tell the story of time and motion study and efficiency experts Frank and Lillian Gilbreth and their twelve children. It's unfortunate that this family-friendly movie has been eclipsed by the crude remake starring Steve Martin and Bonnie Hunt. There is no comparison with the original. Avoid the remake and its sequel like the plagues that they are.

Frank Gilbreth (1868–1924) started his work career as a brick-

layer and then advanced to contractor. It's the contractor's job to get efficient work out of his laborers while retaining quality. He noticed that his bricklayers were inefficient. From his observations, he developed a more efficient way to lay bricks. His recommendations were initially opposed by the unions because it meant fewer workers were needed on a job. Along with his wife Lillian (1878–1972), the Gilbreths made a career and science of studying the way people work. The invention of the motion picture camera assisted them in breaking down movements into fractions of minutes to time the smallest motions in workers.

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They originated micro-motion study, a breakdown of work into fundamental elements now called therbligs (derived from Gilbreth spelled backwards [with the t and h transposed]). These elements were studied by means of a motion-picture camera and a timing device which indicated the time intervals on the film as it was exposed.²

Repeated movements done the wrong way would result in fatigue and injury. They emphasized that there was only “one best way” to perform a certain task.

The Gilbreth’s were more than theorists. They put their observations into action in the real world. Frank Gilbreth was the first to propose that a surgical nurse serve as an assistant or “caddy” to a surgeon. A well-trained surgical nurse now hands surgical instruments to the surgeon as he calls for them. Armies teach recruits how to disassemble and reassemble their weapons while blindfolded based on studies and recommendations made by the Gilbreths. This ability undoubtedly has saved countless lives as soldiers learned how to clean and repair their machine guns day or night.

Frank Gilbreth used every opportunity to study motion and improve the way people work. When his chil-

dren came down with tonsillitis, he insisted that the operations be done in his own home so he could film the procedure. No doubt his observations went into his recommendations for more efficient operating room procedures.

There’s one particular delightful scene in the movie that shows the change in social and moral attitudes since the 1930s. Mildred Natwick’s character visits the Gilbreth household representing a Planned Parenthood-like organization. Mrs. Gilbreth is amused by the visit and calls her husband. Showing indignation, as only Clifton Webb can, he signals for the children to assemble in the living room. They come running from every corner of the house. The woman is shocked and bolts for the door muttering as she goes that someone was pulling her leg for recommending that she ask Mrs. Gilbreth to join the anti-child organization.

A second book, *Belles on Their Toes*, published in 1952, continues the family’s adventures after the unexpected death of Mr. Gilbreth in 1924. *Belles on Their Toes* was also made into a movie, starring Jeanne Crain and Myrna Loy (1952) and focused on the lives of Mrs. Gilbreth and her children. Lillian Gilbreth took over her husband’s work and advanced his recommendations and became a well respected advocate for the scientific study of motion in her own right.

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She graduated from the University of California with a B.A. and M.A. and went on to earn a Ph.D. from Brown University. Like her husband, she lectured at Purdue University.

This is a wonderful movie that shows how loving parents juggle raising children, education, and work without losing the focus on any of them.

NOTES

1. There is an extended bibliography on the Gilbreths at <http://gilbrethnetwork.tripod.com/gbooks.html>
2. <http://gilbrethnetwork.tripod.com/bio.html>

Trivia

- On the shelf in the living room is a picture of the real life Frank Gilbreth in uniform as an Army Major during WWI. This is visible outside the makeshift operating room during the mass tonsillectomies.
- Frank Gilbreth helped to train a fast typist to help the Remington Company win a world-wide typing competition. He trained the typist to focus on the copy he was typing, not the keys.
- Among other things, Lillian Gilbreth patented an electric food mixer and a trash can with a step-on lid opener.
- Frank Gilbreth, Jr. (1911–2001) wrote under the pen name Ashley Cooper for the *Post and Courier* in Charleston, South Carolina and compiled the “Dictionary of Charlestonese,” a pamphlet that poked fun at the Charleston accent.
- *For the creationist crowd:*
Man on street (as he sees the Gilbreth family out for a drive): Hey Noah, what are you doing with that Ark?
Frank Gilbreth: Collecting animals like the good Lord told me brother. All we need now is a jackass. Hop in!

Worldview Points to Ponder

Question: In what ways has the world changed for the average household when compared to the way life is portrayed in *Cheaper by the Dozen*?

Answer: There are obvious observational changes like hair styles, dress, and social attitudes. Consider what it would require to take care of a family of 14 in terms of washing clothes, shopping for food, and transportation. There were no large grocery stores for one-stop shopping. Fruits and vegetables were often sold by farmers who brought their produce to the city. Butcher shops were common. Most women baked their own bread and made their own pasta and pies. Hot water heaters were often a luxury. Water was heated on top of the stove, and many stoves were wood burning. Clothes were often handmade and passed down. Washing machines were a luxury, and even these were primitive. Clothes were placed in a tub of water and soap, scrubbed, rinsed, and then hand-cranked through a ringer to squeeze out the water. They were then hung outside on lines to dry.

Most women were up at dawn to begin their day of work and still working after their children were in bed. There were no dishwashers, electric appliances, garbage disposals, microwave ovens, or air conditioning.

The mass production of the antibiotic Penicillin was not readily available until the early 1940s. There was no television and no conception of the internet or email. There was almost no "Public Assistance," that is, government welfare programs.

I Remember Mama

1948



CAST

Irene Dunne	: Marta "Mama" Hanson
Philip Dorn	: Lars "Papa" Hanson
Barbara Bal Geddes	: Katrin Hanson
Oskar Homolka	: Uncle Chris Halverson
Cedric Hardwicke	: Jonathan Hyde
Rudy Vallee	: Dr. Johnson
Ellen Corby	: Aunt Trina
Edgar Bergen	: Peter Thorkelson

MPAA Rating: Not Rated
Running Time: 143 minutes

Worldview Observations: The family, not the State, is the basic government of society. "The nuclear family is the central building block of Western civilization."¹

Remember Mama is based on the memoir *Mama's Bank Account* written by Kathryn Forbes. The setting is pre-WWI San Francisco.

The irony of the setting should not be missed. Modern-day San Francisco is the philosophical center of familial redefinition incorporating everything from *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Daddy's Roommate* to *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dad* and *Who's in a Family?* *I Remember Mama* is the antithesis of the dysfunctional families portrayed as the normal families in so many of today's films, books, and television shows. After watching this moving drama of a struggling, hard working immigrant family from

Norway, you will really believe that such families actually existed and that it's possible that they can exist again. If this film teaches us anything, it's that high standards, faithfulness, commitment to principle, self-sacrifice, love, tenacity, forgiveness, and everyday parental involvement with our children in the end will make good families.

The film begins with the family's oldest daughter Katrin putting the final touches on her autobiographical story about growing up in what for many observers would be a less than remarkable family. As Katrin begins to reminisce, we are taken back to 1910 where Mama is preparing the weekly

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budget. It's a family affair with the father and children taking part. When Nels, the oldest child, announces that he wants to attend high school, each family member offers to sacrifice a bit to help with the costs.

We soon learn that the Hanson's have an extended family in the area. One of Marta's sisters arrives to announce that she is marrying Peter Thorkelson, an undertaker. Trina is easily intimidated and calls on Marta to break the news to their sisters Sigrid and Jenny. Trina fears that her sisters will disapprove of her choice of the mousey man "from der funeral parlor." As expected, the two laugh when they hear the news. Acceptance and approval of marriage partners were important to immigrant families. Family pride was at stake. Marta, using her often displayed wisdom, threatens to reveal embarrassing stories about her sisters if they don't approve of their sister's choice. As the movie progresses, Mr. Thorkelson turns out to be a loving and understanding husband to the shy and easily intimidated Trina.

While the Hanson's did not have much in the way of material possessions, they did value education. One of the ways to help them financially was to take in boarders. Jonathan Hyde, played wonderfully by Cedric Hardwicke, spends evenings reading classic works to the family. This is a time long before radio and television.

His resonating voice brings the classic work *A Tale of Two Cities* alive, especially for an aspiring writer like Katrin.

It seems that every family has a loud and domineering family member who has a tender heart. Uncle Chris scares the daylight out of the Hanson children and Marta's sisters. For all his gruffness, he cares deeply for his nieces and nephews, and he has great respect for Marta. When he learns that Dagmar is severely ill, he insists on taking her to the hospital. The hospital scene is memorable as Marta figures out a way to visit her daughter after she is prohibited from seeing her by the hospital staff. She disguises herself as the night-time washing woman. On her knees, scrubbing as she goes, she makes her way to the recovery ward where she finds Dagmar and sings a comforting Norwegian lullaby to her. As quietly as she entered, with no notice from the on-duty nurse, Marta leaves and returns home. It's truly a touching scene, especially when you see how the other children sit up to listen to the melodious voice that softly fills the room.

It seems that Mama can do anything. When Dagmar returns home, she learns that her cat, Uncle Elizabeth, is very sick. She just knows that her mother can make her well. Instead, Marta sends Nels to purchase chloroform from the local apothecary so she can put the cat out of her

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misery. To everyone's surprise, except Dagmar's, Uncle Elizabeth, while a bit drowsy, is alive and well.

When Mr. Hyde moves out, he leaves a check for back rent and his collection of classic books. It seems like an unexpected windfall until the Hanson's learn that Mr. Hyde has been passing bad checks all over town. Sigrid and Jenny, always ready with a word of denouncement, condemn the man. Marta takes a different approach. While not being able to pay with money, she realizes that their nightly introduction to the classics by this educated and cultured man was payment enough.

There are more everyday happenings portrayed in this film. One of the more interesting is when Marta learns that her beloved Uncle Chris is near death. She takes Katrin to his home in the country to say goodbye to him. Sigrid and Jenny are hoping to benefit from his estate until Marta tells them that there is no money. She reads from a small notebook that Uncle Chris left behind. It's revealed for the first time that he has been spending his money helping lame children. Jenny breaks down and cries when she learns that it was Uncle Chris who paid the medical expenses for her son's operation to fix his crippled leg.

Katrin, who so much wants to be a writer, is crestfallen when she receives a letter informing her that the story she submitted won't be

published. In one of the most endearing vignettes of the film, Marta takes some of Katrin's stories to noted author Florence Dana Moorhead. Marta entices Mrs. Moorhead to take the time to read her daughter's stories by promising to reveal the ingredients of her prized meatball recipe. It seems that Mrs. Moorhead likes to eat and has written a number of best-selling cookbooks. Just listening to Irene Dunne describe how she makes the delicacy will make your mouth water. It's a funny scene.

Marta returns home and has a mother-to-daughter talk with Katrin offering both bad and good news. The bad news is that her stories are not good. The good news is that Katrin is a gifted writer. Mrs. Moorhead offers a singular piece of advice: Write about what you know. How many times has a teacher told us the same thing? Every writer knows it's true. Marta urges Katrin to write a story about Papa. Katrin writes her story, sends it off to a publisher, and is shocked when a check for \$500 falls out of the return envelope. The family sits down to listen to Katrin read her story.... I'll save the ending for you.

NOTES

1. "A New Kind of Spouse in the House," U. S. News & World Report (August 21, 1989), 14.
2. Alex L. Peterman, *Elements of Civil Government: A Text-Book for use in Public Schools, High Schools, and Normal Schools and a Manual of Reference for Teachers* (New York: American Book Co., [1891] 1903), 18.

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Trivia

- Mr. Thorkelson is played by Edgar Bergen, the voice behind Charlie McCarthy, Mortimer Snerd, and the Looney Tunes character Beakie Buzzard. Bergen is also the father of actress Candice Bergen. Bergen appeared as Grandpa Walton in the original *The Waltons* movie *The Homecoming: A Christmas Story* (1971). Ellen Corby, who plays Trina, also starred in *The Waltons* as Grandma Walton.
- Oskar Homolka was the only member of the Broadway cast of *I Remember Mama* to reprise his role in the film version.
- The film version of *I Remember Mama* spawned a long-running CBS TV series that ran from 1949 through 1957. *Mama*, not to be confused with *Mama's House*, starred Peggy Wood in the title role with Judson Laire as Papa and Dick Van Patten as brother Nels. The show was produced live.
- Peter Thorkelson is the real name of Peter Tork of *The Monkees*.

Worldview Points to Ponder

Question: What is the relationship between good parenting, family government, and a righteous society?

Answer: Parents are the sovereign delegated rulers in family government. Authority has been delegated to parents from God, and parents ought to reflect the image of God as “Our Father who art in heaven” (Matt. 6:9). The Triune God is a model for family government. God the Father gives us “life and breath and all things” (Acts 17:25). Parents give good gifts to their children as a reflection of their heavenly Father’s good gifts (Matt. 7:9–11). Alex L. Peterson writes in his *Elements of Civil Government*, a textbook that was used in public schools around the time the events in *I Remember Mama* take place, states that “the family... is a form of government, established for the good of the children themselves, and the first government that each of us must obey. The family exists for the rearing and training of children, and for the happiness and prosperity of parents.”² The family

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should be the training ground for future leadership. Church leadership is cultivated in the family. The church leader “must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Tim. 3:4–5). Civil leadership also develops out of family leadership. The choice of rulers in Israel was based on prior leadership in the family and tribe: “Choose wise and discerning and experienced men from your tribes...” (Deut. 1:13; cf. Ex. 18:17–26; 1 Sam. 2:12–17, 22–36). Paul gives us a hint of the extension of godly leadership into the world: “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” (1 Cor. 6:2).

Goodbye, Mr. Chips

1939



MPAA Rating: G
Running Time: 115 minutes

CAST

Robert Donat : Mr. Chips
Greer Garson : Katherine
Terry Lillburn : John Colley, Peter Colley I,
Peter Colley II,
Peter Colley III,
John Mills : Young Peter Colley
Paul Henreid : Max Staefel

Worldview Observations: Being a teacher carries with it an awesome responsibility: "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment" (James 3:1). A good and beloved teacher can impact generations.

Teachers, both good and bad, leave lasting impressions. Some teacher told my parents that I was not "college material." This assessment was probably not far off the mark if grades alone were the only indication of my abilities. I shrugged off the assessment, went to college, and graduated. I went on to seminary where I received a master's degree and recently was awarded a Ph.D. Not bad for someone who had a less than stellar academic high school career.

What one teacher didn't see, another teacher did. His name is Richard Bower. He was my physical education teacher in junior high. He saw my ath-

letic ability and nurtured it. I played football and participated in track and field. I even performed in a gymnastic exhibition when I was in the eighth grade. My father wanted me to play football in high school. So did a lot of other people. Football was and still is king in Western Pennsylvania. Big and strong boys were expected to play football. It was seen as a patriotic duty. For me, football had been replaced by a 12-pound iron ball called the shot put. My father was very disappointed. I was ostracized by the athletic department. The athletic officials determined that I could not attend the letterman dinner my senior year even though I had

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lettered three times in track and field, held the Pennsylvania state record in the shot put, and was the fifth best thrower in the nation in 1968. Their reason? I had quit a varsity sport my sophomore year.

Mr. Bower was the only one who understood the decision I had made. He was taking tickets at the gate at a Friday night football game. He saw me approaching the entrance and pulled me aside and uttered these words: “You made the right decision.” He probably said some other things, but those are the words I remember. As I look back over 40 years, these few words of approval have stuck with me.

Goodbye, Mr. Chips is an inspiring story of how one teacher came to realize the impact his teaching and life had on several generations of young boys at an English prep school. The film opens with a shot of the fictional Brookfield School, founded in 1492, and the arrival of boys for the beginning of a new school year. It is the late 1920s, and the head of the school announces, “For the first time in 58 years, Mr. Chipping has been unable to attend first-day assembly. Chips—and you’ll allow me to refer to him as ‘Chips,’ seeing that thirty-seven years ago this autumn, he gave me a thrashing for sheer-bone laziness. Well, Chips has a cold, and a cold can be quite a serious thing for a young fellow of eighty-three.” He goes on

to tell the boys that it was hard to keep Mr. Chipping from the first-day assembly. In fact, “Chips” disobeys the doctor’s orders to stay at home and makes his way to the hall. The doors are locked, and he is unable to enter. A first-year student is also late. It’s at this point that the aged teacher rehearses a bit of the history of the school to relieve some of the anxiety the young boy was feeling.

Mr. Chipping is revered by the boys at Brookfield, but it wasn’t always this way. He remembers his first year at the school in a series of flashbacks. He arrived at Brookfield in 1870 as a 24-year-old Latin master. His first day as an instructor was a disaster. The students pull a series of pranks on him, and he does not handle the situation very well. To make matters worse, he is reprimanded by the head of the school for not maintaining classroom discipline. He overreacts by disciplining the boys which keeps one of the school’s star cricket players from participating in a championship match. He apologizes, but it is too late.

The passage of nearly 20 years turns Mr. Chipping into a loner among his colleagues and unapproachable to his students. He is passed over for a promotion, not because he is not a competent instructor but due to his lack of warmth and empathy toward his students. He retires to his on-campus room looking sullen and dejected.

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The holiday is approaching, and he is asked by a German master named Max Staefel (Paul Henreid) to join him abroad on a walking tour through the Austrian Alps.

Like his first day at Brookfield, his first day climbing does not go well. A fog settles in and isolates Chipping on a rock ledge. He is stranded until he hears the voice of a woman. He struggles to gain his footing with the help of his walking cane as he moves in the direction of the voice. He nearly falls down a rocky cliff and then bumps into a sign that reads, "In Memory of One who lost his life here." He finally meets the woman behind the voice. She turns out to be an outgoing English woman named Katherine Ellis (Greer Garson in her film debut). This providential meeting transforms Chipping. It's at this point that he wonders if it might be too late for him to change, to make a fresh start. She assures him that it's never too late.

One thing leads to another, and they are married. News of their marriage reaches Brookfield. One of the masters reads the wedding announcement from the newspaper:

Married at St. James' Church
Bloomsbury, Katherine Mary,
only daughter of the late
Henry Forbes Ellis, to Charles
Edward Chipping of Brookfield
School.

Of course, they are shocked. Given Chipping's austere countenance, they surmise that his choice in a wife would be "plain as a post." When Chipping returns to Brookfield with his bride, his colleagues are overwhelmed by her beauty and charm and the way she affectionately calls him "Chips." The name sticks.

Chipping is a new man, and he endears himself to the students as he's given a second chance at life thanks to the help of his beloved wife. There's much more to this film that I don't want to reveal in this review. Let me say that the ending exemplifies the impact that a single teacher can have on young men. Mr. Chips had a profound effect on thousands of young boys in his nearly 60 years of teaching at Brookfield. *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* is a movie that should not be missed. Watch it as a family, and keep a box of tissues nearby.

NOTES

1. William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 249.
2. Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 519.

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Trivia

- Robert Donat won an Academy Award for Best Actor for his performance in the lead role, beating out Clark Gable (Rhett Butler in *Gone with the Wind*), Jimmy Stewart (Jefferson Smith in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*), and Laurence Olivier (Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*).
- The setting for *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* is believed to have been based on The Leys Public School, Cambridge, where James Hilton, the author of the book on which the film was based, was a student (1915–1918).
- The inspiration for *Mr. Chips* was a professor Balgarnie. “When I read so many other stories about public school life,” Hilton wrote, “I am struck by the fact that I suffered no such purgatory as their authors apparently did, and much of this miracle was due to Balgarnie.”
- The “mutton chop” facial hair of one of the masters at The Leys School earned him the nickname “Chops,” a likely inspiration for Mr. Chips’ name.
- The movie was remade as a musical in 1969, starring Peter O’Toole and Petula Clark.

Worldview Points to Ponder

Question: How has education been used as a political tool?

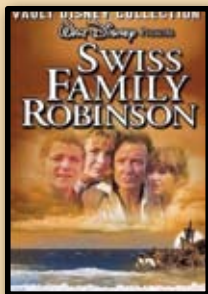
Answer: Nebuchadnezzar sought out the best and brightest of the Jewish youths and hoped to educate them in the Babylonian way of seeing the world so they would serve the State (Dan. 1:3–5). Nebuchadnezzar, like all tyrants, understood that if you want to capture the future, you must capture the present by melding the minds of the young. Adolf Hitler understood this principle. Like Nebuchadnezzar, he went after the German youth. On May 1, 1937, Hitler declared, “This new Reich will give its youth to no one, but will itself take youth and give to youth its own education and its own upbringing.”¹ Today’s new atheists understand the principle of ideological indoctrination. Daniel C. Dennett, a prominent evolutionist and author of *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, had this to say about the importance of education as a

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way to impose a secular worldview on young people. If parents insist on teaching their children what Dennett claims are “falsehoods,” like the claim that humans are “not a product of evolution by natural selection,” then he believes their children should be force-fed the new worldview. Dennett argues “that those of us who have freedom of speech will feel free to describe your teachings as the spreading of falsehoods, and will attempt to demonstrate this to your children at our earliest opportunity. Our future well-being—the well-being of all of us on the planet—depends on the education of our descendants.”² Notice that he describes children as “our descendants,” that is, belonging to the evolutionists.

Swiss Family Robinson

1960



MPAA Rating: G

Running Time: 126 minutes

CAST

John Mills	: Father
Dorothy McGuire	: Mother
James MacArthur	: Fritz
Tommy Kirk	: Ernst
Kevin Corcroan	: Francis
Jant Munro	: Roberta
Sessue Hayakawa	: Kuala, Pirate Chief

Worldview Observations: We shape our environment; our environment should not shape us. Our worldview goes with us and impacts those places where God sends us, whether to a desert island or a big city.

They are Swiss, but they're not the Robinsons. The *Swiss Family Robinson* was first published as a novel in 1812 as *Der Schweizerische Robinson* and appeared in English in 1813. A Swiss family is shipwrecked in the East Indies en route to Port Jackson, Australia. The film has them fleeing their native Switzerland for New Guinea to escape Napoleon's army in Europe. Their island adventure is like that of *Robinson Crusoe*, written by Daniel Defoe and first published in 1719, thus the name in the title. The surname of the family is never mentioned, either in the novel or the movie. The story was written by Swiss

pastor Johann David Wyss for his four sons to teach them about self-reliance as well as Christian values about the home and the world.

The film, while faithful to the book in a number of things, takes its own path in telling the story of the shipwrecked family with some additions. The most obvious difference is the large place the Christian faith plays in the novel. It is diluted but not altogether gone in the film. There is a moment of silent prayer at the beach. Self-reliance, initiative, resourcefulness, family solidarity, trust, and hopefulness come through in the movie loud and clear.

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The movie begins in the middle of a raging storm that nearly sinks the ship and sends the crew off in life boats. The “Robinsons” are left behind to fend for themselves. The calm of the next morning gives them relief, and they prepare to abandon ship and move to what looks like a lush idyllic island. The family’s resourcefulness is seen early as they salvage material from the ship and transport the stock of materials to the island. They improvise a small sailing vessel and pack it full of on-board commodities to help in their island settlement. The livestock, including a cow and her calf, a donkey (Lightning), chickens, geese, pigs, as well as the captain’s two dogs (Duke and Turk) also make the swim to the island. This part of the movie shows how the family members use their ingenuity to turn ordinary things into useful tools for transport.

The perceived idealism of the island quickly fades when they have a close encounter with a tiger. Their foresight in bringing the Great Danes saves the day. Pirates are seen off the coast, but are initially scared away when they see a “black death” quarantine flag posted. The Pirates will soon return. While the book mentions the threat of Pirates, there is no actual confrontation. The movie makes an extended battle with the Pirates a major part of the storyline. This is a reminder that there is no

way to escape the sinfulness of men. We bring it with us, and it follows us. There is no idyllic spot this side of heaven.

The building of the elaborate tree house with its many “modern conveniences” is one of the highlights of the movie. It’s every boy’s dream to be able to create something this grand. This father and sons task is a good model for families to see. They work together as a family with what God has given them. There is no complaining, grumbling, or resentment of their condition. God is not blamed for their predicament. They make the best of what is at their disposal and create their own new world out of the wilderness. Like with everything we do, our worldview arrives with us.

To learn more about the place where God in His providence had placed them, Fritz and Ernst sail around the island. The Pirates who had been scared off earlier are seen terrorizing an elderly gentleman and what seems to be a young man. This sets up a later conflict between the “Robinsons” and the Pirates and another kind of conflict between the two eldest sons.

This Walt Disney production was filmed on location in Tobago. The scenery is breathtaking, and the set designs are imaginative and inviting. An earlier black and white film version was produced in 1940. Preparing to live on the island is more realistic,

Goodbye, Mr. Chips

especially in building the elaborate tree house. Instead of a silent prayer in the 1960 remake, there is an audible prayer of thanks by one of the sons. As far as I know, the 1940 version is no longer available, although the bonus disc contains about 20 minutes from the earlier

film, but you'll have to hunt for it. (Go to "Swiss Family Robinson Production Archives." After clicking on the title, it will take you to another page. Click the "down arrow." There you will see "Excerpts: 1940 Swiss Family Robinson.")

Trivia

- The conflict with the Pirates was added to the film version.
- In the novel, the family constructs a number of structures. They begin with a tree house to protect themselves from predatory animals. It is much less elaborate than the one the men build in the movie. In the end, the family takes up in a more secure cave.
- A replica of the tree house is a Disney attraction at Adventure Island.
- There is a fourth son in the novel, Jack.
- One of the devices to stop the Pirates made its way into the Ewok battle with the Storm Troopers in *Return of the Jedi* (1983). Another piece of *Star Wars* trivia. George Lucas named Anakin Skywalker after the film's director, Ken Annakin.
- Dorothy McGuire, Tommy Kirk, and Kevin Corcoran also starred together in *Old Yeller*.
- The television series *Lost in Space* (1965–1968) and the 1997 movie are based on the novel. In both cases, the families are named "the Robinsons."

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Worldview Points to Ponder

Question: Study the novel and the two film versions of *The Swiss Family Robinson* and answer this question: How does a person's worldview impact culture?

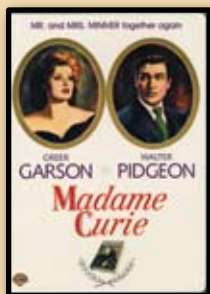
Answer: Adam and Eve were placed in an environment second-to-none, but it was their decision-making that changed them and their culture (Gen. 3–4). We can see the full flower of what belief systems have on culture in the period leading up to the flood (6:5), and “there is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9). The Apostle Paul demonstrates the truth of this in the first chapter of Romans (1:18–32). But everywhere the righteous walk, they bring their sin and their covenant life with God with them, whether it is in the wilderness (Moses and Joshua) or before kings (Daniel). Religion, good or bad, is the difference, because, as Henry Van Til states in his book *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (1959), culture is religion externalized. Cultures change, no matter how initially depraved, if the right religion is embraced and applied to every area of life. The Swiss family “Robinson Crusoes” could do nothing else but apply their worldview, which was distinctively and vibrantly Christian, to their hostile environment. The same would have been true if the story had been about a group of young boys who had not had the opportunity for extended worldview instruction and informed parental guidance. A look at William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* as an anti-Swiss Family Robinson story might be helpful for additional comparisons. Remember, it’s not whether culture will be impacted by religion; it’s a matter of what religion will impact culture.

Classic Biography Films



Madame Curie

1943



MPAA Rating: Not Rated
Running Time: 124 minutes

CAST

Greer Garson	: Marie Curie
Walter Pidgeon	: Pierre Curie
Henry Travers	: Eugene Curie
Albert Bassermann	: Prof. Jean Perot
C. Aubrey Smith	: Lord Kelvin
Van Johnson	: Reporter
Margaret O'Brien	: Irene Curie

Worldview Observations: The world God created holds untold treasures of discovery that can be used to enhance our lives, but when used in the wrong way can prove destructive and even life threatening.

MOST OF TODAY'S Hollywood-style biographies center on popular figures who had drug (Ray Charles and Johnny Cash) and/or sex issues (Ray Charles, Johnny Cash, Alfred Kinsey, and Truman Capote). An exception is *Something the Lord Made* (2004), an HBO movie that tells the story of Dr. Alfred Blalock and Vivien T. Thomas, a pioneering medical team that developed a surgical procedure to deal with "Blue Baby Syndrome" (Tetralogy of Fallot). It used to be that the heroes of film biography were substantial contributors to society, many of whom were inventors, discoverers, and scientists.

One of the best of the scientific biographies is *Madame Curie*, starring Greer Garson as the Nobel-Prize winning chemist and physicist. Garson gives a compelling performance in the role of Marie Curie just coming off her Academy Award win for Best Actress for *Mrs. Miniver* (1942). Walter Pidgeon partners with her character as Pierre Curie. The movie is based on the book written by the Curies' daughter and is balanced between the Curies' family life and their work as dedicated scientists.¹ This is an inspiring story, but it's especially good to see a woman accomplish so much while working with her husband and maintaining an intact family. Marie

Movies: With Worldviews in Mind

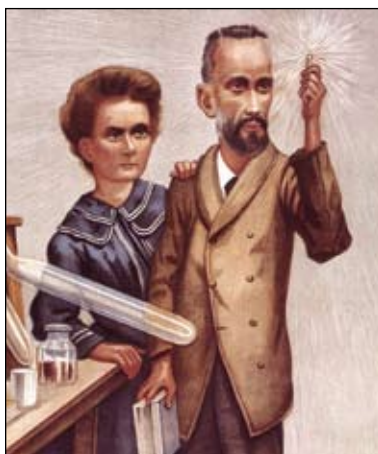
Skłodowska was a native of Poland. The movie begins with young Marie living in Paris and studying at the Sorbonne. It is here that she meets, marries, and partners with physicist Pierre Curie in their pursuit of the elusive element radium.

The film begins as most scientific biography pictures do, with humble beginnings, low expectations, and Spartan research facilities and ends on a high note of recognition by an esteemed body of peers acknowledging great achievement. The discovery of radium, a highly radioactive element, seems like a boring subject on which to base a feature film, one that garnered an Academy Award nomination. Radium is not something that impacted the average person when compared to the telephone (Alexander Graham Bell), the incandescent light and phonograph (Thomas Alva Edison), and pasteurization, a cure for anthrax, and rabies (Louis Pasteur). The human interest side of the story, the struggle, is what makes the film work so well.

Curie was the first woman to receive a Nobel Prize and the first woman to receive two Nobel Prizes, one in Physics (1903) and the other in Chemistry (1911). These were significant accomplishments for anyone, but for a woman to go so far in a field dominated by men was extraordinary. It was Pierre and Marie Curie's isolation of radium that led to break-

throughs in medical research, a field Marie dedicated her life to after the tragic death of her husband in 1906. At the Nobel Prize award ceremony, the president of the Swedish Academy referred in his speech to the old proverb: "union gives strength." He went on to quote from the Book of Genesis, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." The Curies had a wonderful partnership, both in work and family. But it was their work with these radioactive materials that made them known around the world. But with all their scientific acumen, they were careless when it came to handling the radioactive material they had discovered and isolated.

The film shows Marie sharing Pierre's lab where he recognizes that she is a gifted scientist. He encourages her to stay in France and pursue her research. Eventually, Marie and Pierre fall in love even though science seems to be their greatest devotion.



Madame Curie

At one point in the movie, Pierre expresses his love for Marie by an appeal to reason, logic, and chemistry. Their dedication to the scientific enterprise and each other leads them to the study of an anomaly. Unaccounted for energy in a pitchblende² rock intrigues Marie. She decides to make the rock's energy the subject of her doctoral study. Here experiments demonstrate that there is an unknown element present.

Here's where the conflict arises. The physics department at the Sorbonne will not fund their research without proof of the element's existence. Instead, the Curies are given access to a run-down shed across from the physics building. Finding this unknown element is an arduous task. Tons of pitchblende ore are needed to find the negligible element they will call radium. The

build up to this scene sets the mood for what science is all about. So much work for a small sampling of discovery that makes it all worthwhile. There's more to the story, but you'll have to watch it yourself to see what happens next.

NOTES

1. The best known and most popular biography is the one written by her daughter Eve, simply titled *Madame Curie: A Biography* (1937). With Marie Curie's research journal made available for the first time in 1990, a more comprehensive portrait of the famous scientist is developed in Susan Quinn's *Marie Curie: A Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).
2. From "pitch," because of its black color, and "blende," a term denoting the presence of minerals based on the weight in relation to size. Extraction of these metals was not economically feasible at the time.
3. Laura Lee Carter, "Glow in the Dark Tragedy," *American History* (October 2007), 32-37.
4. Loren Eisely, *Darwin's Century* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 62. Quoted in Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 18.

Movies: With Worldviews in Mind

Trivia

- If you went to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and wanted to study the three black notebooks in which the Curies recorded their work on radium, you would have to sign a certificate stating that you know the risks involved. The books won't be safe to handle for another 1600 years. They are radioactive.
- The film was nominated for seven Academy Awards.
- Radium was used in self-luminous paints for dials on watches and instrument panels.
- More than 100 former watch dial painters who used their lips to shape and point the brushes died from the radiation.
- The "Radium Girls," as the workers were called, painted their nails, teeth, and faces with the deadly mixture. When the lights went out, they would glow as would the handkerchief they used to sneeze into.³
- Marie died in 1934 of leukemia as the result of long exposure to radium.
- While a loyal French citizen, she never gave up her Polish identity. The first new chemical element she discovered was named "polonium" for her native country.

Worldview Points to Ponder

Question: What must scientists have to assume about the structure of the universe before they can do science?

Answer: If we are to believe secularists, religion has been the enemy of science. In reality, “it is the Christian world which finally gave birth in a clear, articulate fashion to the experimental method of science itself.”⁴ Before science could get started in proposing theories, certain assumptions about the way the world works had to be assumed to be valid and operationally consistent. Isaac Newton’s encounter with a falling apple and the theories that followed did not immediately change the way people lived. Everyone knew the effect of gravity, even though they did not always understand it. When people stepped outside, they never considered that they would float away. Rain always fell down from a cloud-filled sky. Water was wet, and when it got cold enough, it froze, even if no one knew its precise freezing point.

For millennia, people from around the globe operated in terms of these assumptions even though they did not always comprehend them theoretically or scientifically. They came to be designated as “natural laws,” the “laws of nature,” or the “laws of Nature’s God,” a critical assumption that did not exist in India, China, or among the Islamic nations. These universal laws operated predictably because the majority of people—scientists included—accepted that they were God’s laws, established and upheld by Him.

Life is predictable because God is predictable. Even those who did not embrace a biblical worldview knew that they could not develop an ordered world without the shared belief that God was necessary to make it happen.

Sergeant York

1941



MPAA Rating: Not Rated
Running Time: 134 minutes

CAST

Gary Cooper : Alvin C. York
Walter Brennan : Pastor Rosier Pile
Joan Leslie : Gracie Williams
George Tobias : "Pusher" Ross
Ward Bond : Ike Botkin
June Lockhart : Rosie York

Worldview Observations: The Bible is God's Word to us in this world and time in which we live. It has something to say about everything we think, say, and do. It even applies when civil governments compel us to do something that may be contrary to its instruction.

SERGEANT YORK (1941) is a war movie that carries an antiwar message. It's the true story of World War I Medal of Honor recipient Alvin C. York (1887–1964). The York family eked out a meager existence in remote Pall Mall, Tennessee. Like most of the people in this area, Alvin had almost no formal education. Subsistence farming, hunting, and railroad work got the family by economically. While Alvin grew up in a Christian home, he rejected the Christian faith after the death of his father in 1911. He writes in his diary, "I got in bad company and I broke off from my mother's and father's advice and got to drinking and gambling

and playing up right smart.... I used to drink a lot of Moonshine. I used to gamble my wages away week after week. I used to stay out late at nights. I had a powerful lot of fistfights."

This part of Alvin's life is portrayed accurately in the film, but the same can't be said for the depiction of his "conversion experience."

When his best friend was killed in a bar fight in 1914, York began to take stock of his destructive living. At a revival conducted by H.H. Russell of the Church of Christ in Christian Union, York realized that he needed to change his ways or suffer a similar fate. In time, he gave his life to Christ and became an active member of his

Movies: With Worldviews in Mind

church. The Church of Christ in Christian Union held to a strict moral code which “forbade drinking, dancing, movies, swimming, swearing, popular literature, and moral injunctions against violence and war.”¹ It was the church’s pacifist stance and his own personal beliefs that put York in conflict with the draft board in 1917. His logic was simple: “I ain’t a-goin’ to war. War is killin’ and the Book is agin’ killin’, so war is agin’ the Book.” Pastor Pile’s response is priceless. “Alvin, you’ve got the use’n’ kind of religion not the meet’n’ house kind.”

The irony here is that York was an expert marksman. He was not anti-gun, but he was against going to war against people who had not done him any harm. Through repeated efforts, his attempts to gain conscientious objector status failed. He entered the Army but with the tension between his religious views and his duties as a soldier still in conflict. He proved himself to be an able and willing soldier during his training at Fort Gordon in Georgia. There’s one scene in the film that shows his sharp shooting abilities did not impact his religious convictions. Guns were legitimate tools, even for someone who was opposed to war. York and the other inductees are taken to the firing range for target practice. York’s first shot is marked a miss. He protests that there is no way he “could miss that great big target.”

His sergeant is skeptical but calls for a remark. Sure enough, York had hit the bull’s eye. He is given several more chances and places each bullet in the center of the bull’s eye. After the completion of his marksmanship demonstration, and with the target in hand, York comments that the rifle “shoots a might bit to the right.” The first shot was off center, but he had made an adjustment in his subsequent shots.

At this point in the movie, York is still wrestling with his religious objections to war. While still not settled on how he might react in a combat situation, he and the rest of his company are sent to France in the Battle of Argonne Forest. It is here that York’s spiritual struggle forces him to make the most difficult moral decision of his life as he sees some of his fellow combatants struck down by enemy fire. York believed he was justified in taking action against the Germans to save lives. He might have recalled Ezekiel 33:6, a passage that Captain Danforth asked him to consider in light of his religious convictions: “But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand.”

For his actions, York received a number of commendations, one

Sergeant York



of which was the Medal of Honor whose caption reads as follows:

The Argonne Forest, France, 8 October 1918. After his platoon suffered heavy casualties, Alvin York assumed command. Fearlessly leading

7 men, he charged with great daring a machine gun nest which was pouring deadly and incessant fire upon his platoon. In this heroic feat the machine gun nest was taken, together with 4 German officers and 128 men and several guns.

While York returned home a "hero," he never lost his distaste for war. *Sergeant York* is a thought provoking movie that will make all who watch it consider God's commandments in light of the pressures of the world.

NOTES

1. Michael Birdwell, "Alvin Cullom York": www.alvin-cyork.org/AlvinCullomYork.htm

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Trivia

- Alvin York is part of a storyline in Newt Gingrich's novel, **1945**. In Pennsylvania, a paint ball establishment is named for him as is a sandwich in a San Diego eating establishment. The United States Post Office issued a stamp in York's honor and the army introduced the "Sergeant York Tank." Ironically, it could not hit anything it shot at and was decommissioned soon after its rollout.
- The movie shows York using a German Luger against the Germans. The actual firearm was a 1911 .45 ACP automatic. The Luger was used in the movie because they couldn't get the .45 to fire blanks.
- York had requested that the person who played Gracie not smoke. Joan Leslie, who plays Gracie, was only 15. Cooper was 40. She did her screen test with George Reeves who played one of the Tarleton twins in ***Gone With the Wind*** and ***Superman*** in the television series.
- Gracie's fictitious uncle is reading his Bible on the front porch while Gracie and Alvin are doing some verbal sparring. At one point he reads "The lion also shall dwell with the lamb." Actually, Isaiah 11:6 reads, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb."
- June Lockhart, who plays Alvin's sister, is best known for her roles as Ruth Martin in the 1950s series, ***Lassie*** and as Maureen Robinson in the 1960s series, ***Lost in Space***.
- Laura Cantrell's song "Old Downtown" devotes several stanzas to Sergeant York.¹
- York's moral distaste for war showed when he refused to shoot at targets that were human silhouettes.
- Sergeant York is listed as #57 on American Film Institute's 100 Most Inspirational Movies² and #35 on their list of the top 50 heroes in American cinema.³

1. <http://www.lauracantrell.com/inc/lyrics.asp?id=10>

2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AFI%27s_100_Years..._100_Cheers

3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AFI%27s_100_Years..._100_Heroes_and_Villains

Worldview Points to Ponder

Question: When is it right to fight?

Answer: In the movie *Ben Hur*, there is a discussion between Balthasar and Judah Ben Hur about seeking revenge.

Judah: I must deal with Messala in my own way.

Balthasar: And your way is to kill him. I see this terrible thing in your eyes, Judah Ben-Hur. But no matter what this man has done to you, you have no right to take his life. He will be punished inevitably.

Overhearing their conversation, Sheik Ilderim states the following:
"Balthasar is a good man. But until all men are like him, we must keep our swords bright!" If all those in the world had the heart of Balthasar, then there would be no need to discuss what the right response is regarding self-defense and war.

Jesus tells us "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9), but He doesn't tell us what our response should be when someone, despite our best efforts to be peaceful, still wants to steal, rape, and murder. Then there's Jesus' injunction to "turn the other cheek" (Matt. 5:38–39). There's quite a difference between slapping someone across the face and someone wanting to take a baseball bat to your head. Self-defense is a biblical option in such cases: "If the thief is caught while breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account" (Ex. 22:2). The homeowner can assume that someone breaking into his house at night has nothing but bad intentions.

Classic Science Fiction Films



The Day the Earth Stood Still

1951



MPAA Rating: Not Rated
Running Time: 92 minutes

CAST

Michael Rennie : Klaatu / Mr. Carpenter
Paricia Neal : Helen Benson
Billy Gray : Bobby Benson
Sam Jaffe : Prof. Jacob Barnhart
Lock Martin : Gort

Worldview Observations: War is the result of sin (James 4:1), and the consequences of war can have global ramifications. A “heavenly” reminder is always welcome, but the proposed remedy must take into account the real problem before a solution can be formulated.

THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (1951) is a very loose adaptation of the short story “Farewell to the Master” written by Harry Bates that originally appeared in *Astounding Science Fiction* magazine in October 1940. The film diverges significantly from the original story¹ and is set against the backdrop of Cold War tensions and the fear of nuclear annihilation by warring nations.

The story begins with the arrival of a spaceship carrying a humanoid alien who is immediately set upon by soldiers who panic when they think he’s about to zap them with a hand-held device that they mistake

as a weapon. A soldier panics and shoots the visitor. What happens next sets the stage for the coming conflict. A ten-foot metallic robot named Gort appears and emits an energy beam that melts the weapons that have surrounded the spacecraft. Only a command from the visitor stops the robot from completing the destruction. Military officials arrive on the scene and take the wounded alien (Michael Rennie) to Walter Reed Hospital where he seemingly miraculously recovers from his gunshot wound. It’s here that we learn that the alien’s name is Klaatu and that he’s an emissary from a group of planets that

Movies: With Worldviews in Mind

fears that Earth's nuclear proliferation might threaten their peaceful coexistence. He demands to see all the world leaders to deliver an ultimatum. Of course, the government official refuses, claiming that Earth politics are "complicated."

Meeting resistance, Klaatu escapes and decides to mingle with the people of Earth by taking on the identity of an earthling. It's at this point that a number of religious overtones become evident.

Scriptwriter Edmund H. North gives Klaatu the Earth name "Carpenter," a reference to Jesus who is described as "the carpenter, the son of Mary" (Mark 6:3). Government officials pursue Klaatu as a possible threat to the nation (Luke 23:2), someone whose views might "upset the world" (Acts 17:6). He will be called on to perform a "sign" to demonstrate that his words are true. Then there is the obligatory death and resurrection motif and the acknowledgment that only "the Almighty Spirit" has ultimate power over life and death.² North acknowledged that the religious overtones were always present in the film but that he wanted them to be "subliminal."³

While the setting for the film takes place in America (the spaceship lands in Washington D.C. on "The Eclipse" between the White House and the Washington Monument), the message is for the world to hear. With the help of an Einstein-like physicist, Klaatu is

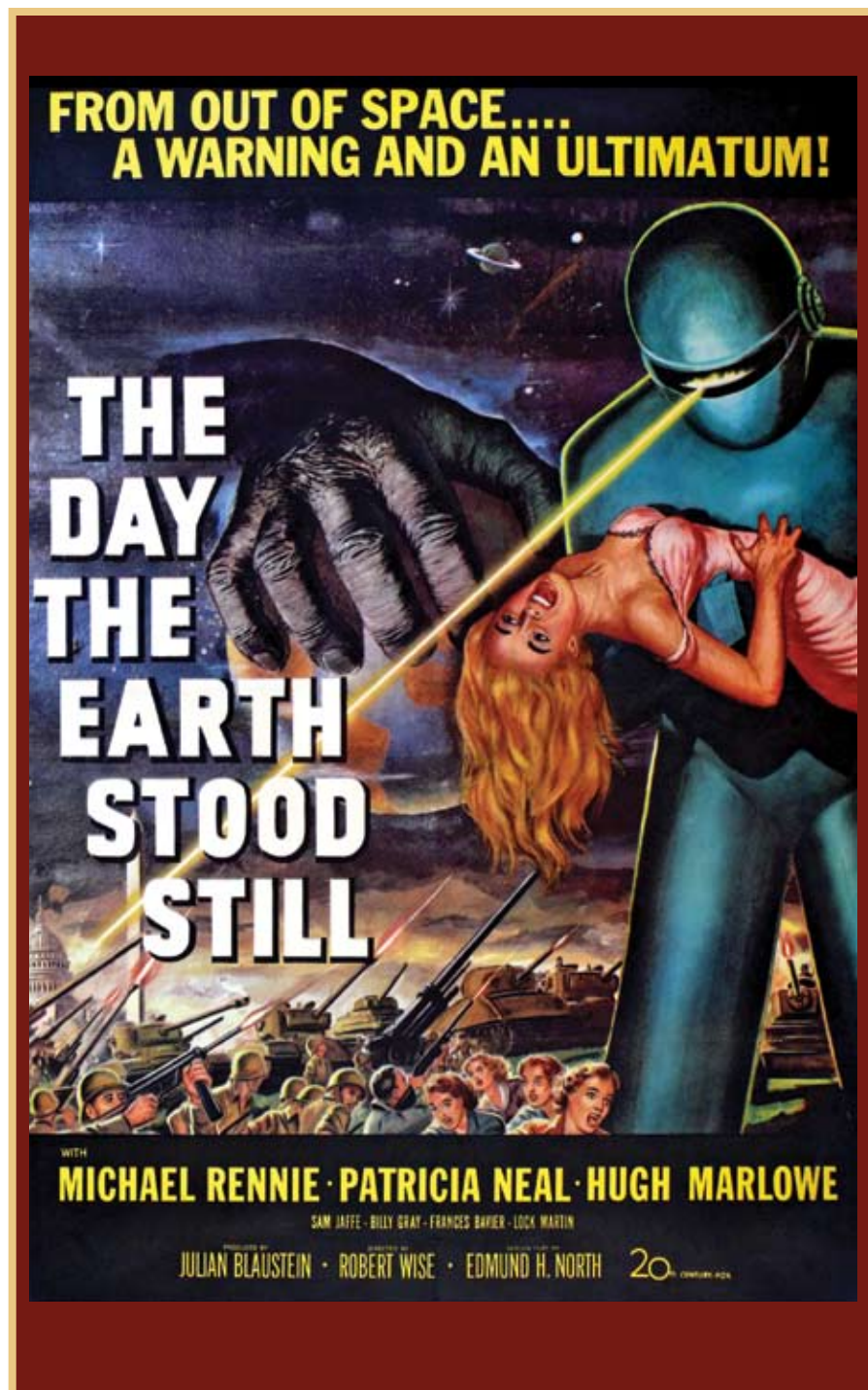
able to assemble the leaders of the world to hear an ultimatum. Here is his warning:

This universe grows smaller every day, and the threat of aggression by any group anywhere can

no longer be tolerated. There must be security for all, or no one is secure. This does not mean giving up any freedom except the freedom to act irresponsibly. Your ancestors knew this when they made laws to govern themselves, and hired policemen to enforce them. We of the other planets have long accepted this principle. . . . It is of no concern of ours how you run your planet, but if you threaten to extend your violence, this Earth of yours will be reduced to a burned-out cinder. Your choice is simple. Join us and live in peace, or pursue



The Day the Earth Stood Still



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your present course and face obliteration.

It's at this point that we learn how these once warring planets solved their disputes. They created a race of robots like Gort that have autonomous policing power. "Their function," Klaatu tells the world leaders, "is to patrol the planets and preserve the peace. At the first sign of violence they act automatically against the aggressor. And the penalty for provoking their action is too terrible to risk." By this technological concession, they now "live in peace without arms and armies." This speech has been

described as "the finest soliloquy in sci-fi film history."⁴ But is it?

NOTES

1. For a comparison of the short story and the film, see Leroy W. Dubeck, Suzanne E. Mosher, and Judith Boss, *Fantastic Voyages: Learning Science Through Science Fiction Films* (Woodbury, NY: American Institute of Physics, 1994), 249–253.
2. Bobby Maddex, "The Gospel According to E.T.," *Rutherford Magazine* (October 1996), 22.
3. Peter Biskind, *Seeing is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties* (New York: Owl Books, [1983] 2000), 152.
4. Jeff Rovin, *A Pictorial History of Science Fiction Films*. Quoted in John Brosnan, *Future Tense: The Cinema of Science Fiction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 84.
5. Robert Sheckley, "Watchbird," *Untouched by Human Hands* (London: Michael Joseph, 1955), 116–146.

Trivia

- Billy Gray who plays Bobby, was Bud on the television series *Father Knows Best*. Keep an eye out for Francis Bavier who was Andy and Opie's "Aunt Bee" on *The Andy Griffith Show*.
- Lock Martin, who plays the galactic RoboCop Gort, had two costumes: One with a zipper on the back and one with a zipper on the front so front and back shots could be taken creating the illusion of seamlessness.
- An original six foot diameter model of Klaatu's spaceship hangs on display at Disney-MGM Studios in Orlando, Florida.
- The film's most famous line, "Klaatu barada nikto," has found its way into popular culture and a number of other films, including *Tron* and *Army of Darkness*.

The Day the Earth Stood Still

Worldview Points to Ponder

Question: After watching *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, what do you think of the solution offered by the interplanetary alliance that has put its collective fate in the hands of a “race of robots”?

Answer: If sin is the festering place for war as the Bible makes clear (James 4:1–2), then there is no way ultimately to solve the problem by applying an external mechanical remedy. Putting machines in charge was the premise of the *Terminator* trilogy, and we saw how well that turned out. Detective Spooner’s comment about “robots building other robots” in *I, Robot* offers a similar chilling scenario. Totalitarianism by any other name is still totalitarianism, even when people vote for it (see 1 Sam. 8). Who’s ultimately in charge? Who gets to program the robots? What is the foundation of law? Who proposes the sanctions if the laws are broken? What constitutes “the preservation of peace”? If people speak out on what they believe are social evils (e.g., abortion and homosexuality), will these people be charged with disturbing the peace? In the short story on which the movie is based, we learn the robot is actually the master of Klaatu. If you can find a copy, read Robert Sheckley’s short story *Watchbird*⁵ and discuss how a society with robots as policemen might go very wrong.

Journey to the Center of the Earth

1959



MPAA Rating: G
Running Time: 132 minutes

CAST

James Mason : Prof. Oliver Lindenbrook
Pat Boone : Alec McEwen
Arlene Dahl : Mrs. Carla Goetaborg
Diane Baker : Jenny
Thayer David : Count Saknussem
Gertrude the Duck : Gertrude the Duck

Worldview Observations: God created the universe to be explored and studied scientifically so that in the process we learn unexpected things about Him, and our world.

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH (1959) is based on Jules Verne's 1864 science fiction novel, published originally in French as *Voyage au centre de la Terre*—A Voyage to the Center of the Earth. The story starts inauspiciously on the streets of Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1880. Before long you are taken to the depths of the Earth's core to encounter glistening caverns of quartz crystals, luminescent algae, a forest of giant mushrooms, long-extinct dinosaurs, and the lost city of Atlantis.

The adventure gets underway when Alec (Pat Boone) presents a rare geological find to Sir Oliver Lindenbrook (James Mason), a profes-

sor of natural science at the University of Edinburgh. The professor is intrigued with the lava's peculiar weight and spends an evening in his laboratory attempting to burn away the porous crust. Imbedded in the rock the professor finds a plumb bob with a message written on its surface and signed by the long-lost scientist and explorer Arnie Saknussem.

Nearly 300 years earlier, Saknussem had startled the world with his tales of a domain far below the Earth's surface, a world accessible to man through a crack in the crust. He was ridiculed for what seemed to be an outrageous hypothesis. The laughter stopped when the famed explorer

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failed to return from one of his adventures. Professor Lindenbrook believed that the iron artifact was empirical evidence that could test whether Saksussem's theories were true.

Professor Lindenbrook and Alec prepare to set off for Iceland to retrace their predecessor's steps as outlined on the steel tool. After securing equipment, the help of an Icelandic guide, and the widow of a scientific competitor, they begin their journey into the unknown depths with the prayer, "May the good Lord be with us."

They descend following the carefully notched marks chiseled in

stone by Saksussem three centuries before. Saksussem's relative, however, is out to sabotage the expedition. He follows behind, initially undetected by the Lindenbrook expedition. At one point, he chisels a new set of three notches to divert the quartet from the true path. In addition to this menace, there are numerous geological hazards that frustrate the explorers but offer the viewer an array of special effects and harrowing escapes.

At one point, Alec becomes separated from the expedition, and, through a freakish accident, the remaining trio is cornered in a ravine by



Journey to the Center of the Earth

a charge of rushing water. There is no place to turn but to float upward with the rising water. They are soon confronted by a rock ceiling seemingly with no way of escape. However, God answers the professor's earlier prayer by providing a passageway through a dislodged stalactite. When the profes-

sor sees the opening, he cries out, "Praise the Lord!"

I won't give away any more of the story. The entire family will enjoy this splendidly produced and color-enriched look into the imaginary world below.

Trivia

- The original story is set in Germany.
- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 1912 novel *The Lost World* has a plot line similar to *Journey to the Center of the Earth*.
- The "dinosaurs" were special effects creations—lizards with fins glued to their backs.
- Pat Boone's early singing career consisted of producing "cover versions" of songs originally sung by black artists, for example, "Ain't That a Shame" (1955) by Fats Domino and "Tutti Frutti" and "Long Tall Sally" by Little Richard.

Worldview Points to Ponder

Question: The Bible uses the phrases "center [navel] of the world" (Ezek. 38:12) and "center [heart] of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). Do these verses refer to the Earth's core?

Answer: Most likely "center of the earth" is a reference to the land of Israel. The Hebrew word *eretz* and the Greek word *ge* are often incorrectly translated as "world" or "earth." A more accurate translation is "land." Jesus wasn't buried at the Earth's core, but He was buried in the "land of Israel," the redemptive center of the world. It's from Jerusalem that Jesus' disciples were to "go into all the world [*kosmos*] and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15; John 4:42).

The Time Machine

1960



MPAA Rating: Not Rated. The *Morlocks* may scare young children.
Running Time: 92 minutes

CAST

Rod Taylor : George (H. G. Wells?)
Alan Young : David Filby / James Filby
Yvette Miniux : Weena
Sabastian Cabot : Dr. Philip Hillyer
Doris Lloyd : Watchett

Worldview Observations: The future matters. What a person believes about the present and acts in terms of those beliefs will have an impact on the future.

THE FILM IS BASED ON *The Time Machine*, a novel by H. G. Wells (1866–1946) that was first published in book form in 1895. In this Wells' classic story, a time traveler hopes to escape what he perceives to be the horrors of his present by rocketing through time to an age where he hopes people are more civilized. Given the evolutionary views of Wells, it's not surprising that he would conceive of such a tale. It is surprising, given the evolutionary optimism of his early years, that he did not envision a future that would extol the virtues of the Darwinian logic he embraced.

The movie begins with George showing a model of his time machine to a small group of his friends. (In the novel, the Time Traveler is never named. The story is narrated.) He explains the qualities of the "fourth dimension," the non-spatial dimension of time, and how it might be possible to travel through it. Of course, his guests are skeptical. They remain doubtful even when George sends the intricately designed model of his larger machine on its voyage into the future. Its disappearance is thought to be a clever magician's trick. Neither in the book nor the movie is the method by which time travel is made possible ever explained.

Movies: With Worldviews in Mind

A full-scale model of George's machine sits undisturbed in an adjacent laboratory and workshop. Throwing caution to the wind and embracing the unknown, he takes his seat in the time machine and ever so slowly pushes the time lever forward. He notices a few incremental changes in his workshop that prove to him that he has traveled through time.

For a movie made in 1960, these special effects are well done. It's at this point that the movie diverts from the book's storyline. In the book, the Time Traveler presses forward to the year 802,701 with no stops. He is more concerned with the

performance of his machine than any societal or political changes that have occurred. The film has him stopping in the war years of 1917, 1940, and 1966. It's the 1966 war that alters the future so much that humankind evolves into the charming but naïve and lazy Eloi and the brutish and ugly subterranean Morlocks who "raise" their terrestrial counterparts for food.

Wells intended *The Time Machine* to be a not-so-subtle indictment of English society and its capitalist ways. As a committed Socialist, Wells portrays the inevitable outcome of a class struggle fueled by the disparity between the idle rich and the indus-



The Time Machine

trial working classes. While the Eloi fritter their time away in the garden, “the Morlocks, busy little possessors of underground industrial complexes, represent the natural development of the working class. Kept in dark ‘sweatshops’ further and further from the homes and gardens of the rich, working all their lives, they developed through natural selection into the pallid, ever-busy, cave-dwelling Morlocks.”¹

The Time Traveler’s first impression of the future world is that of an idealistic society with no signs of conflict. War seemed to be a distant memory. The setting is pastoral without the polluting effects of industry. The Time Traveler supposes that medicine has advanced to the stage that disease is a thing of the past. There doesn’t seem to be any

defined leader class or social distinctions. There is ample food and leisure. “Communism,” the Time Traveler says to himself. As he soon learns, these were only surface impressions.

The film version takes a different approach. Wars cause the two-tiered society of the child-like Eloi and the cannibalistic Morlocks. Since the movie came out at a time when the prospects of a nuclear war were real, the story-line was updated to fit the realities of the Cold War 1960s.

NOTES

1. Leroy W. Dubeck, Suzanne E. Moshier, and Judith Boss, *Fantastic Voyages: Learning Science Through Science Fiction Films* (Woodbury, NY: American Institute of Physics, 1994), 278–279.
2. Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction: The Conflict of Christian Faith and American Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books [1983] 1990), 2.

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Trivia

- The “lava” in the volcano scene in the downtown area of London was actually oatmeal with orange and red food coloring spilled onto a platform and slowly moved down the miniature set.
- Wells was not the first writer to suggest time travel. Mark Twain’s 1889 *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* was a time travel story but did not incorporate a machine.
- Alan Young, who plays the elder Filby and his son, was architect Wilbur Post on the television show *Mister Ed* (1961–1966). Young made a cameo appearance in the 2002 remake of *The Time Machine*.
- The plaque on the control panel of time machine reads “Manufactured by H. George Wells.”
- During the air raid scene, when the people rush into the shelter, a little girl crossing the street stops to pick up a small Woody Woodpecker figure. This is Director George Paul’s salute to fellow animator Walter Lantz who worked with him on *Destination Moon* (1950).
- When George arrives in the year 802701 his time machine reads the date of October 12th. So George arrives into a future “New World” on the anniversary of Columbus’ arrival in his “New World” of the Americas.

The Time Machine

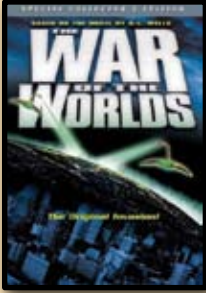
Worldview Points to Ponder

Question: What worldview differences do you see in the book and film version of *The Time Machine*, especially as they relate to how the future is seen and acted upon?

Answer: While the film version differs from the book at some major points, these differences help us understand something about worldviews. The socialist idealism of Wells was a myth. His pessimism grew as he saw the idealism of Communism and National Socialism (Nazism), the rotten fruit of a consistent Darwinian worldview, turn the twentieth century into the bloodiest century in history. By the 1960s, the capitalist system Wells disdained was outperforming the socialist states around the world. The movie version turns the tables on Wells. The Time Traveler returns to the future with hopes of changing it. He takes three books along to guide him in his future plan for moral and cultural reconstruction. The movie's ending implies a more optimistic future than the one Wells wrote for the book. In the book, our time traveler speeds ahead thirty million years where he finds a deserted earth and a cooling sun. A fitting epitaph to Wells' own worldview. "Shortly before his death, he wrote an aptly-titled book, *The Mind at the End of Its Tether* (1945) in which he concluded that 'there is no way out, or around, or through the impasse. It is the end.'"²

The War of the Worlds

1953



MPAA Rating: Not Rated.
Running Time: 85 minutes

CAST

Gene Barry : Dr. Clayton Forrester
Ann Robinson : Sylvia Van Buren
Les Tremayne : General Mann
Robert Cornthwaite : Dr. Pryor
Lewis Martin : Pastor Dr. Matthew Collins

Worldview Observations: If there is no God, and evolution is true, then we can't apply any moral judgment when a more advanced race of evolved beings who, out of necessity or just whim, feed on or destroy a less evolved species.

War of the Worlds (1953) begins in an idyllic setting in a small town in Pine Summit, California. Soon an invasion of unknown origin takes the town and later the world by surprise. It's an invasion of menacing Martians hell-bent on Earth's destruction. The end of the Earth seems inevitable as no man-made weapon can penetrate the Martian defenses. Even God seems powerless to help.

H.G. Wells (1866–1946), author of a number of classic science fiction works, most notably *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The Time Machine* (1895), and the novel on which this film is based, was not what one describe as a religious man. He reports in his autobiography that he lost his

religious faith when he was about 12 years old. He was an outspoken advocate of Darwinism, socialism, eugenics, and an advocate of “free love.” But Wells cannot help writing against the background of an intelligence operating in a moral universe. “‘The War of the Worlds’ is best interpreted as an aggressive statement of what C.S. Lewis called ‘Wellsianity’—the promotion of materialistic science as true faith. The moral of the story may be found in the novel’s first sentence, which describes the sobering reality of ‘intelligences greater than man’s and yet as mortal as our own.’ Humans aren’t noble creatures of God, but animal feed for hungry Martians. If we are to go on living, it isn’t for any

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purpose greater than 'the sake of the breed' (as one character says in a late chapter)."¹

A consistent Darwinist could not object to the Martian domination of Earth. At first sight, they seemed to be inferior to the earthlings except for their nearly indestructible machines. Evolutionary theory was working its random magic as an intellectually superior civilization was having its way with an inferior race of beings.

Even so, Wells could not escape the need for a God—the Christian God—to make sense of the world. The following quotations are from the novel:

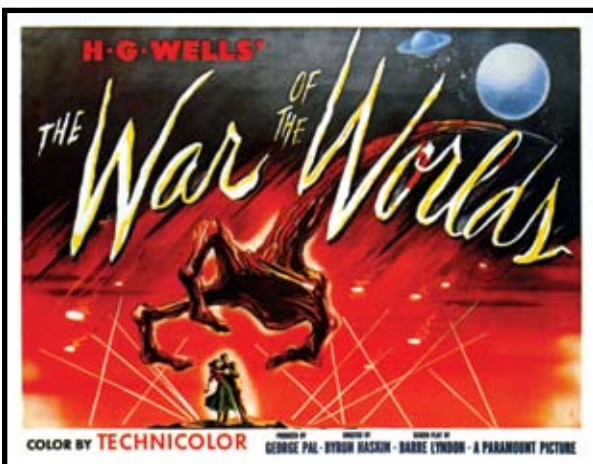
- "In another moment I had scrambled up the earthen rampart and stood upon its crest, and the interior of the redoubt was below me. A mighty space it was, with gigantic machines here and there within it, huge mounds of material and strange shelter places. And scattered about it, some in their overturned war-machines, some in the

now rigid handling-machines, and a dozen of them stark and silent and laid in a row, were the Martians—*dead!*—slain by the putrefactive and disease bacteria against which their systems were unprepared; slain as the red weed was being slain; slain, after all man's devices had failed, by the humblest things that God, in his wisdom, has put upon this earth."

- "The torment was over. Even that day the healing would begin. The survivors of the people scattered over the country—leaderless, lawless, foodless, like sheep without a shepherd—the thousands who had fled by sea, would begin to return; the pulse of life, growing stronger and stronger, would beat again in the empty streets and pour across the vacant squares. Whatever destruction was done, the hand of the destroyer was stayed. All the gaunt wrecks, the blackened

skeletons of houses that stared so dismally at the sunlit grass of the hill, would presently be echoing with the hammers of the restorers and ringing with the tapping of their trowels. At the thought I extended my hands towards the sky and began thanking God."

Wells' biographers



The War of the Worlds



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concluded that his youthful religious beliefs taught to him by his mother and his early religious schooling still influenced him; he “always sought to reconcile the scientific concepts he had acquired at South Kensington with the doctrines of evangelical belief.”² Could there be a hint of this in *The War of the Worlds*?

NOTES

1. John J. Miller, “War of the Worldviews” (June 21, 2005): www.opinionjournal.com/la/?id=110006849
2. N. Mackenzie and J. Mackenzie, *H.G. Wells: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 42.
3. *The War of the Worlds: Mars’ Invasion of Earth, Inciting Panic and Inspiring Terror from H.G. Wells to Orson Welles and Beyond* (Naperville, IL: Source Books, Inc., 2005), xvii.

Trivia

- The original story was set in England. A number of the places that are destroyed by the invading Martians were locations where Wells had spent an unhappy childhood. Both film versions set the story in America. So does the radio drama.
- The radio drama produced by Orson Welles and presented live over radio stations on October 30, 1938 “convinced more than a million Americans that a Martian army had come to Earth to annihilate the human race.”³ The 60-minute live broadcast was presented mostly as a series of news bulletins that continually interrupted a fictional radio program.
- A metal lid being turned on a glass jar was used to create the sound effect of the hatch being unscrewed on the Martian space ship.
- Sir Cedric Hardwicke is the unseen commentator. Hardwicke played the elder Pharaoh in *The Ten Commandments*.
- The actors who play the grandmother and grandfather in Steven Spielberg’s updated version of *War of the Worlds* (2005) are Gene Barry and Ann Robinson who starred in the first screen adaptation of the novel (1953). They both appear for about three seconds at the end of the Spielberg production where you will see them standing in the doorway as Tom Cruise arrives at his former in-laws home with his daughter in tow.

The War of the Worlds

Worldview Points to Ponder

Question: In the movie, you will see a minister approaching one of the Martian spaceships with a message of reconciliation and peace. What geopolitical events at the time (1952) might have been behind the inclusion of this scene?

Answer: A number of people believe that the 1953 film adaptation of *War of the Worlds* was a commentary on the Cold War that the West was engaged in with the former Soviet Union and godless Communism. In the novel, published in 1898, Wells intended the story to be an indictment of technologically advanced European colonialism: "And before we judge them [the Martians] too harshly, we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, but upon its own inferior races. The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit?" (chap. 1)