

FOREWORD BY

*Timothy Keller*

PERSONALITY  
& WORLDVIEW

J. H. Bavinck

TRANSLATED & EDITED BY

*James Eglinton*

*Personality and Worldview*



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*Personality and Worldview*

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*To the memory of my late and dear friend  
Dr. Javier Alejandro Garcia (1987–2021),  
a Christian theologian who excelled in personality and worldview.*



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## Foreword

I COULD NOT BE HAPPIER that Johan Herman Bavinck's *Personality and Worldview* has been made accessible to the English-speaking world. It is an important work, perhaps even what we call a "game changer."

The idea that Christian beliefs constitute a unique worldview—through which we view all reality and because of which we work distinctly in every area of life—has been influential in the United States for at least a century, as James Eglinton notes in his introductory essay. But the concept of worldview has lost its luster for many in the US church. I've spoken to numerous young Christians who want to lay it aside. Why? Because they say it is

- *too rationalistic*: It casts Christianity as a set of propositions or bullet points conveyed by argument in a classroom. The emphasis on worldview can give the impression that the work of the kingdom of God is mainly an intellectual or scholarly project. The role of imagination and story on worldview—or their function even *as* worldview—is simply not considered.
- *too simplistic*: The emphasis on the coherence of worldviews ("that these beliefs always lead to these outcomes") does not account for the reality that people are happily inconsistent and seem to live out of a patchwork of somewhat incoherent beliefs and worldviews.
- *too individualistic*: "Worldview thinking," at least as it exists now, seems to ignore the profound role of community and

culture on us. It implies that we are primarily the product of our individual thinking and choices. In this the current concept of worldview may be more American than biblical. We don't see that worldview is the product of communal formation and of the common stories that our community uses to make sense of life.

- *too triumphalist*: The emphasis on the antithesis of believing and unbelieving starting points, of foundational beliefs or presuppositions, can lead to a sense that we have all the truth and no one else has any at all. And in its worst usage, all sorts of contestable cultural and political opinions can be claimed to be simply part of *the* “biblical worldview” and therefore beyond questioning.

J. H. Bavinck's *Personality and Worldview* addresses these concerns and provides a far more nuanced understanding of worldview that, in my opinion, largely escapes these critiques.

His emphasis on worldview's relationship to personality shows that worldview is much more than a set of bullet points on a blackboard. This approach guards against seeing worldview as a mere intellectual framework passed on by intellectual means. *Personality and Worldview* casts worldview as not only something that forms but also something we deploy in becoming more thoughtful and “objective” in our formation.

His unique contribution—the distinction between a “worldvision” and a “worldview”—explains why so few people live out of a consistent and coherent worldview. The worldvision (or world “mindset” or “mentality”) is a set of basic intuitions picked up from our environment, consisting in simplistic and reductionistic ideas through which we view reality as through spectacles. A worldview, however, is more like a map, never fully finished in this life, in which we work out the implications of Christianity for every area of life in our time and place.

Bavinck's emphasis on psychology entails community formation (though he often leaves that implicit). *Personality and Worldview*

in many ways reflects the psychology of an earlier time, and yet it recognizes that our “personality” is not only, as Eglinton explains, the result of “the idiosyncrasies of [our inborn] temperament[s]” but “a set of intuitions about the world formed in all individuals by their family and home environment, their teachers and education, and the broad culture within which they live.”<sup>1</sup> Here *Personality and Worldview* anticipates Charles Taylor’s concept of worldview as a “social imaginary”—the way a community of people learn to imagine the world.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, the Bavincks’ emphasis on worldview as what James Eglinton, Gray Sutanto, and Cory Brock have previously described as mapmaking is a crucial idea.<sup>3</sup> Developing a worldview is an effort to transcend the limitations and reductionisms of our worldvision. If a worldview is something we painstakingly work out our whole lives, several things follow:

1. Worldview is not in this metaphor a finished weapon to be wielded against opponents—it guards against triumphalism in that regard.
2. It’s always somewhat unfinished and growing. That is humbling as well.
3. A Christian in Indonesia would not be developing the exact same map as a Christian in Scotland. If you are applying the Christian’s doctrines to all of life, the questions and issues one faces will differ in different places. As such, although *Personality and Worldview* doesn’t say this explicitly, it gives us the basis for the thought that there may be overlapping and noncontradictory but somewhat different Christian worldviews in different cultures. That also undermines triumphalism.

1 See p. 12.

2 See Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

3 Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton, and Cory C. Brock, “Editors’ Introduction,” in Herman Bavinck, *Christian Worldview* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 16–17.

For these reasons and more, I am so grateful for James Eglinton's translation of *Personality and Worldview* and his introduction. Read them both carefully, and think out the implications for how you are understanding and practicing your faith in the world today.

TIMOTHY KELLER

*New York City*

*May 2022*

## Acknowledgments

I AM GRATEFUL to a number of people whose kindness made this book possible, not least several members of the Bavinck family itself. Professor Maarten Bavinck, a grandson of J. H. Bavinck, graciously granted permission for the work to be translated into English. My own first exposure to *Personality and Worldview* came about in 2010, when Wim Bavinck and Emelie Bavinck–van Halsema gifted me several boxes of books by their illustrious relatives. It was a joy to discover J. H. Bavinck’s lost treasure in the midst of those works. To each of you, *van harte bedankt*. I hope you are pleased with the English version of this book.

Once again, it has been a pleasure to produce a book with Crossway. I owe a debt of gratitude, in particular, to Justin Taylor and David Barshinger, whose enthusiasm, professionalism, vision, and patience have played no small part in keeping this project moving along toward completion.

I am also thankful to a group of fine PhD students—Hunter Nicholson, Terence Chu, Israel Guerrero, Chun Tse, Ray Burbank, Henry Chiong, Sebastian Bjernegård, David Meinberg, and Nathan Dever—and to my colleague Ximian (Simeon) Xu, who gathered week by week at the University of Edinburgh to read through the chapters together. My friends (and former PhD students) Gray Sutanto, Cory Brock, and Greg Parker each read the manuscript and provided valuable feedback. As ever, Marinus de Jong patiently answered queries about grammatical complexities and fine shades of meaning in the original text. Thanks to you all.

Finally, I owe a special word of appreciation to Tim Keller, a friend and mentor who provided the foreword and has been a source of constant encouragement at each stage of translation and production.

## Editor's Introduction

PERSONALITY AND WORLDVIEW. In the early twenty-first-century West, those words summon a range of ideas—some bland, others deeply controversial.

### **Personality: Context and Knowledge**

To many, the language of *personality* is used to talk about an individual's capacity for extroversion and fun. In that manner of speaking, a particularly dull person might be seen as having no personality at all, whereas a very outgoing person is assumed to have personality in abundance. In that sense, it is a superficial term.

Increasingly, though, *personality* is used with more depth by a generation that relies on Myers-Briggs tests and the Enneagram to decode the reality that we all have a personality of one sort or another. To this more savvy (mostly millennial) crowd, personality involves introversion as much as extroversion. Their more nuanced approach assumes that every personality is ordered in a particular way—and that the makeup of your personality is both innate and unchangeable. As such, the result of a personality test functions as a kind of self-revelation: it purports to tell you who you really are, what you are truly like, so that a newfound self-knowledge will somehow reconcile you to yourself. Pay enough attention to your preset personality type, we are told, and you can more intentionally build your life around it.



That view is unsettling to some and is certainly met with skepticism by many: How do I know the test is reliable? And what if I dislike the personality type it reveals?

### **Worldview: Contested and Neglected**

Depending on where you are in the world, the term *worldview* is different. In North America, embattled and riven as it is by culture wars, *worldview* is a hotly contested term. For some in this setting, the notion of worldview functions as a source of stability. As a concept, it represents a grouping of basic, deeply held commitments that shape both a culture and the lives of those who inhabit it. Everyone has a worldview, the idea goes, for which reason it is important that you know which worldview you adhere to and whether yours is the right one.

As with the millennials whose personality tests serve to reveal who they truly are as individuals, worldview can also function as a source of self-revelation, albeit the revelation of who your group really is and what it is truly like. (And conversely, it reveals who the other groups are and what they are really like: those who have secular, humanist, Islamic, Buddhist, and so on, worldviews.)

In the context of culture-war America, the idea of a biblical worldview has a particular hold on the American evangelical imagination: there is no shortage of online “biblical worldview tests” that will quickly reveal the makeup of your own worldview and judge whether it is adequately biblical or of polls that assert a connection between worldview and lifestyle. In that culture, part of the allure of a biblical worldview is the apparent ease with which it can be attained. It lends itself well to a list of points on a whiteboard and to online videos that promise to equip the viewer with a biblical worldview in a matter of minutes. Assent to the key propositions presented, and you can confidently state that you “have a biblical worldview.”

In North America, of course, the notion of worldview also draws fierce criticism. Some see it as simplistic, reductive, and blinkered, arguing that its apparent transparency (in its emphasis on beliefs clearly projected outward) is an illusion. In that line of critique, worldview is

perceived as something of a Trojan horse—a word that distracts the listener from hidden assumptions that serve the interests of the powerful white evangelical men who support worldview-based thinking. Critics of worldview commonly assert that the idea was invented by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)—who coined the German equivalent, *Weltanschauung*—and has no prior history to that, a claim flatly contradicted by supporters of worldview who acknowledge that while the label is a relative newcomer on the historical scene, its substance has a much longer lineage. In *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, for example, David Naugle describes a theologized way of interpreting life and the world as far predating Kant's intervention, citing early-church figures such as Augustine (354–430) alongside medieval and early modern theologians such as Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), Martin Luther (1483–1546), and John Calvin (1509–1564) as older examples of those whose commitment to worldview-based thinking was identifiable in all but name.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, *worldview* is a largely unknown term that draws little to no reaction from most. In a culture profoundly shaped by the heritage of Anglophone philosophy, talk of worldview is far more likely to draw blank stares than heated debate. British culture is a distinct cocktail of common-sense epistemology and empiricism, and it rests on the belief that human beings are (or, if they learn to think properly, can become) epistemologically neutral, unbiased, and presuppositionless in their judgments. As such, the story goes, they are able to think with unclouded judgment about self-evident truths. As those who believe that their take on the world is both correct and obvious, most Brits feel no need for a worldview concept. Indeed, worldview is a strikingly un-British idea. It undermines the very notion of Britishness, recasting it as a kind of cognitive dissonance, a suspension of disbelief in the reality that all human life is grounded on *a priori* starting points that are often utterly arbitrary, unempirical, and in no

1 David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 5.

way common or sensical to all peoples. The language of *worldview* did not grow naturally in British cultural soil, tilled for so long, as it has been, by the philosophies of John Locke (1632–1704) and David Hume (1711–1776). Empires are not founded on admissions of arbitrariness or terms that point beyond themselves in the way that *worldview* gestures toward the heft of other worldviews. By necessity, an empire needs to be the only show in town.

None of this is to say, of course, that British culture has no need of a worldview concept. In the early twenty-first century, and due in large part to the history of immigration facilitated by Britain's colonial past, the United Kingdom is increasingly diverse in terms of culture, epistemology, religion, and ethnicity. Sustained immigration from the non-Western world has challenged typically British claims to neutrality, common sense, and obviousness. Seemingly universal ideas like *neutral* and *common* now look awkwardly parochial and untenable. To some, *these* are the words that distract the listener from hidden assumptions that serve the interests of those who claim to look on the world without bias or presuppositions.

Despite this cultural background, one segment of British society continues to cling tightly and loudly to the tenets of Anglophone philosophy: the secular humanists. Elevating the natural sciences into a form of scientism, secular humanism deals exclusively in the currency of non-subjective thinking, universally self-evident truths, and claims to the obviousness of an antireligious life. As a movement, it is as British as can be. Faced with this philosophy, British Christianity—in some quarters, at least—has begun to turn to the language of *worldview* in an attempt to articulate the sense in which secular humanism is not self-evident to those who are not secular humanists. The British church's efforts, however, are tentative. *Worldview* may be easier to pronounce than *Weltanschauung*, but in saying it, Brits are still learning to speak a foreign tongue.

### **The Americanization of a Dutch Idea**

In comparison to this, it is all the more interesting that a large section of American Christianity speaks the language of *worldview* with ease.

I describe this as noteworthy because, for the most part, American culture rests on the same bedrock of Anglophone philosophy. In complex ways, American evangelicalism is also influenced by the same philosophical tendencies. Why have British and American cultures been so different in their receptivity to *worldview*?

In the melting pot that is American culture, worldview-based thinking arrived through the sustained immigration of Dutch Reformed Christians to North America. Their Old World (Continental) philosophical heritage was shaped by a distinct breed of philosophers: the likes of René Descartes (1596–1650) and Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), who eschewed supposedly neutral starting points and instead spoke of presuppositions as universal but also as arbitrary and varied. From Spinoza, the Dutch imagination had learned to appreciate that all human thinking begins with untested assumptions. From Descartes, the Dutch mind learned to subject even those assumptions to critical scrutiny. On the path to his famous dictum “I think, therefore I am,” Descartes argued that everything—even the *a priori* presuppositions that steer our most basic intuitions—can and must be subject to radical doubt.

Alongside this philosophical heritage, Dutch Reformed immigrants brought with them a habit of instruction in the theology of the Heidelberg Catechism. That catechism's epistemology is far removed from the commonsense, evidentialist, empiricist philosophy (and theology) that emerged in the English-speaking world. Rather than addressing its readers on the basis of unaided human reason, it begins (as similar catechisms by Luther and Calvin do) with an exposition of the Apostles' Creed. The Heidelberg Catechism inducts its readers into an idiosyncratic message (“the holy gospel”), which is the source of knowledge of the Christian faith as summarized in the creed, which is itself confessed by an idiosyncratic community: the church of Christ.

The Heidelberg Catechism assumes that all knowledge—Christian and non-Christian—is based in faith and thus that Christianity provides a distinct view of life and the world that proceeds from this faith. As *worldview* implicitly nods in the direction of *worldviews*, the Heidelberg Catechism's induction into the Christian faith acknowledges that

human beings can also pursue a different view of life and the world that is not informed by the gospel. The Heidelberg Catechism treats Christianity as true but not as *obviously* true to all people. That distinction is both subtle and inestimably important to the kind of theology that developed in the Netherlands and that was then imported to North America.

Although the catechism does not contain the term *worldview*, its epistemology played no small part in the later growth of worldview-based thinking that would blossom in the Netherlands from the late nineteenth century onward. In that period, the Dutch Reformed church became the scene of an effort to articulate the historic Reformed faith in a way that was recognizably orthodox and modern: the neo-Calvinist movement. Led by the theologians Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) and Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), the neo-Calvinists spoke often and explicitly of the reality and inescapability of different worldviews. They shunned the idea that the human being was a blank slate capable of neutrality or freedom from presuppositions. That kind of typically Anglophone view, they thought, was hopelessly naive and a culture-wide delusion of sorts. The concept that best expressed those denials of commonplace Anglophone tendencies was *worldview*.

On the one hand, to a neo-Calvinist, worldview entailed an acceptance that human life cannot be lived without a faith-based acceptance of *a priori* starting points. On the other, it also accepted that those starting assumptions were disordered by sin and thus would vary dramatically across the human population. Echoing their catechism, the neo-Calvinists believed that the truth of Christianity was powerfully compelling, without assuming this to be obviously or self-evidently so to all people. In contrast to their catechism, however, they employed the language of *worldview* to make precisely this point.

In *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Mark Noll described the relationship between Dutch Reformed immigrants and the broader culture of American evangelicalism. Like American evangelicals, the

Dutch Reformed held a high view of the authority of the Bible and were committed to the notion of active personal piety. That proximity allowed for an exchange of ideas in both directions: the immigrant Dutch Reformed faith underwent a general process of Americanization (and evangelicalization), while American evangelicalism gained a taste for the Dutch legacy of “serious academic work and experienced philosophical reasoning.”<sup>2</sup>

That evangelical exposure to Dutch thought also included the notion of worldview. In that context, though, the neo-Calvinist concept of worldview also seems to have undergone a distinct kind of Americanization: subject to the conditions of American evangelicalism, the term remained the same, while the content changed somewhat. For example, when introducing our translation of Herman Bavinck's *Christian Worldview* (first published in Dutch in 1904 and released in English in 2019), Cory Brock, Gray Sutanto, and I described how Bavinck's early twentieth-century idea of Christian worldview was an essentially inductive thought process quite unlike much of the evangelical “biblical worldview” movement today:

A worldview is a map, drawn over time from careful research, derived from actual knowledge of the geography, from pious religion, from the desire for truth, and is amenable to updating. After all, maps are made from research—some careful, meticulous, and true and some not. Some maps account for the details as they are presented, and some are false. But mapmaking we must do.<sup>3</sup>

For Bavinck, the task of making such a map was question driven: What am I? Where did I come from? How does my mind relate to the world beyond my sense of self? Do I know? If so, how can I know?

2 Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 216.

3 Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton, and Cory C. Brock, “Editors’ Introduction,” in Herman Bavinck, *Christian Worldview*, trans. and ed. Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton, and Cory C. Brock (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 16.

How should I act? What is the point of life? What is my life headed toward? As such, it is a thoroughly inductive way of thinking and living in pursuit of godly wisdom. Viewed in this way, a Christian worldview expands with time. It is open ended and has a gaze that is as wide as the world itself.

By contrast, much American evangelical worldview thinking is deductive and by nature restrictive. It is often an exercise in list writing and in agreeing to the contents of those lists, rather than a slow process of exploration and cartography. It arrives as a complete package and, as noted earlier, in some forms at least, can apparently be acquired through a five-minute YouTube video. Although the term *worldview* diffused from Dutch America into the evangelical mainstream, it was not left untouched by the process. As a result, to read early twentieth-century neo-Calvinists and twenty-first-century evangelicals on worldview can be a jarring experience—almost as though we are left to deal with *faux amis* (false friends). As Timothy Keller has noted in the foreword to this book, from a neo-Calvinist perspective, the American evangelical rendition of worldview is often overly rationalistic (in approaching the world via a series of propositions rather than as a way of imagining the world through community and story), simplistic (in drawing tight connections between beliefs and outcomes, as though people generally lived consistently with their beliefs), individualistic (in neglecting the role of community and culture in shaping us and in treating us as though we are the product of our own individual thinking), and, as a consequence of all this, triumphalist.

For that reason, when we released the first English translation of Herman Bavinck's *Christian Worldview*, our goal was to show the English-speaking world that the neo-Calvinist tradition approaches worldview quite differently from much of current-day evangelicalism. Our hope was to make a sparkling—but otherwise forgotten—text on worldview available to a larger audience. The same hope undergirds the effort to translate this book, *Personality and Worldview*, by Herman Bavinck's nephew and former student, the theologian, psychologist, and missiologist Johan Herman Bavinck.

## Johan Herman Bavinck

Johan Herman (1895–1964) was the son of Herman Bavinck's brother Coenraad Bernardus ("Bernard") Bavinck (1866–1941), a Christian Reformed pastor and noted Augustine enthusiast. J. H. Bavinck studied under his uncle at the Free University of Amsterdam (1912–1918), where his circle of friends included Hendrik Kramer (1888–1965) and Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977)—contemporaries who would later be noted for their own respective contributions to missiology and philosophy. After his studies in Amsterdam, J. H. Bavinck moved to Germany to begin doctoral studies at the University of Erlangen (1918–1919), where he wrote a thesis on psychology and mysticism in the medieval German Dominican Henry Suso (1295–1366).

Doctorate in hand, Bavinck moved to Indonesia (1920), where he spent six years pastoring congregations attended by Dutch expatriates and Westernized locals. Returning to the Netherlands in 1926, he pastored a congregation in Heemstede for three years—publishing *Personality and Worldview*<sup>4</sup> in that period—before heading eastward again in 1930. This time, his work took a strikingly different shape. Rather than ministering to expatriates, he became something of a neo-Calvinist Hudson Taylor (1832–1905), first working as a missionary youth pastor before becoming a teacher of local pastors in Jogjakarta. He took on a Javanese name (Kjai Martawahana) and began to publish theological literature in the local language. In this second period, he gained the nickname "the white Javanese."<sup>5</sup> Eventually, in 1939, he returned to the Netherlands, where he spent the rest of his life teaching missiology at the Free University of Amsterdam and at the Theological School in Kampen.<sup>6</sup>

Some of J. H. Bavinck's works are relatively well known outside the Netherlands: among others, his books *An Introduction to the Science*

4 Johan Herman Bavinck, *Persoonlijkheid en wereldbeschouwing* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1928).

5 J. van den Berg, "The Legacy of Johan Herman Bavinck," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 7, no. 4 (1983): 172.

6 See Paul J. Visser, "Introduction: The Life and Thought of Johan Herman Bavinck," in *The J. H. Bavinck Reader*, ed. John Bolt, James D. Bratt, and Paul J. Visser, trans. James A. De Jong (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 1–94.



of *Missions, Between the Beginning and the End, The Church between Temple and Mosque*, and *The Riddle of Life* have all been available in English for some time and have their own devoted following.<sup>7</sup> Among his writings, though, *Personality and Worldview* is a uniquely important text. Biographically, it stands between his two (distinct) periods in the East and functions as a bridge that connects these phases of his life and thought. As such, it shows us a careful Christian thinker learning to develop categories that would enable him to serve as a Reformed missionary among non-Western people, while also sharpening his own view of the cultural shifts that affected twentieth-century Westerners. Beyond that, it is perhaps the most useful text in positioning him in relation to his uncle. *Personality and Worldview* can be read as an effort to advance and further nuance Herman Bavinck's own contribution to the conversation on Christian worldview.

### Worldview and Worldvision

If Herman Bavinck's *Christian Worldview* opened a new vista to Anglophone conversations around worldview, it was to show that the neo-Calvinist tradition construes worldview not as a rapid information dump—like Neo learning kung fu in *The Matrix*—or merely as a process of assent to a list of propositions. Rather, it showed that worldview is both something that is formative and something that is itself in a process of formation. It showed us Herman Bavinck's account of how worldview takes time. Properly speaking, of course, Bavinck presented a “world-and-life view” (*wereld- en levensbeschouwing*): an account of a lifelong pilgrimage toward wisdom about God, the world, and one's life within it. It encompasses both the truth about the world and about human life—your life and mine. That kind of thing cannot be rushed.

7 J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, trans. David Hugh Freeman (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2012); Bavinck, *Between the Beginning and the End: A Radical Kingdom Vision*, trans. Bert Hielema (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014); Bavinck, *The Church between Temple and Mosque: A Study of the Relationship between the Christian Faith and Other Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981); Bavinck, *The Riddle of Life*, trans. Bert Hielema (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).

In *Personality and Worldview*, J. H. Bavinck adds to that vista considerably and in important ways. Above all, he does this through a creative effort to supply working terms and concepts to explain every human's starting point on the path that eventually leads toward a rich and mature worldview, while also offering an account of why most people are happy never to take a single step forward on that path. While cultures might be driven by grand worldviews, Bavinck argues that most individuals are not. To borrow the language of Isaiah 44:19 (NIV), "no one stops to think" about worldview, despite the pervasive influence worldviews have on whichever culture they inhabit and the haphazard glimpses of those worldviews that can be seen in people's lives. That kind of claim offers scope to nuance the worldview conversation considerably, and as such, it merits our detailed attention.

Advocates of worldview tend to emphasize its ubiquity (which is to say, in effect, "Worldview matters because everyone has one"). With that in mind, it is perhaps surprising that in *Personality and Worldview*, J. H. Bavinck makes the paradoxical claim that worldview is both everywhere ("Everyone has a worldview") and nowhere ("Almost no one has a worldview").

How can both these statements be true? How is it possible that while all people live on the basis of *a priori* starting points (which are generally taken to be the basic building blocks of worldview), worldviews—or at least, worldviews truly deserving of that name—are nonetheless as rare as hens' teeth? J. H. Bavinck's answer lies in a novel conceptual distinction between *worldvision* (which all humans have, by necessity) and *worldview* (which drives entire cultures, while being possessed by very few people).<sup>8</sup> In this book, we see that while we all begin life with

8 Prior to the publication of *Personality and Worldview*, the Dutch religious socialist Henri Wilhelm Philip Elise van den Bergh van Eysinga (1868–1920) used the terms *wereldbeschouwing* (worldview) and *wereldvisie* (worldvision). His work, however, does not offer an account of how the terms differ and seems to use them more or less interchangeably. See, for example, Henri Wilhelm Philip Elise van den Bergh van Eysinga, *Apologie en bevestiging: Nadere toelichting bij "Het bankroet van religie en Christendom in de moderne maatschappij"* (Zutphen: J. H. A. Wansleven & Zoon, 1899), 7, 23, 29, 53. Twelve years before *Personality and Worldview*, the term *wereldvisie* also appeared in a publication by

a *worldvision*, a proper *worldview* is a momentous achievement. Few individuals move from one to the other.

To provide the reader with a short, preparatory introduction to this distinction, a *worldvision* is a set of intuitions about the world formed in all individuals by their family and home environment, their teachers and education, and the broad culture within which they live. It is also closely bound to the idiosyncrasies of an individual person's temperament. That particular combination provides a workable (albeit limited) frame of reference with which to live from day to day. Indeed, it is possible to spend the entirety of your life only looking at life and the world through the single lens that is your *worldvision*. In the same sense, it is possible to spend an entire life navigating the streets of New York City only in a first-person perspective, never seeing a map of the city (and all that lies beyond it) or climbing a skyscraper in order to move from the limitations of your individual *vision* of each street to a more capacious *view* of the whole city. *Worldview* relates to *worldvision* in that sense. It elevates the limitations of first-person vision to the breadth of a bird's-eye view. An individual *vision within the world* is a necessary starting point, certainly, but it should not be confused with a capacious *view of the world*. Every individual has a *worldvision*, but few have a *worldview*.

In that setting, J. H. Bavinck's provocative claim is that each worldvision is, in essence, no more than a set of untested presuppositions about life imbibed within our home communities. (Viewed as such, worldvision functions as an equivalent concept to Charles Taylor's no-

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J. R. Slotemaker de Bruïne, once again without an account of its relationship to *wereldbeschouwing*. See J. R. Slotemaker de Bruïne (1869–1941), *Dogmatiek en cultuur* (Utrecht: G. J. A. Ruys, 1916), 20. The only twentieth-century Dutch writer to use both *wereldvisie* and *wereldbeschouwing* in close textual proximity prior to J. H. Bavinck was the liberal theologian Gerhardus Hendericus van Senden (1884–1968). See, for example, G. H. van Senden, *Het vraagstuk van rechtzinnigheid en vrijzinnigheid* (Baarn: Hollandia-Drukkerij, 1912), 5, 24, 46. Like van den Bergh van Eysinga, van Senden does not deploy the terms as distinct concepts. Dutch sources that treat *wereldvisie* and *wereldbeschouwing* as conceptually distinctive only emerged in neo-Calvinist circles after the publication of *Personality and Worldview*. See, for example, N. W. van Diemen de Jel, *Niet onze wegen* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1932), 120.

tion of the “social imaginary”—the claim that humans “imagine” the world in an unconscious, pretheoretical way and live within it on that basis more so than on the basis of calculated, abstract reasoning.)<sup>9</sup> A worldvision is made up of utterly subjective working assumptions about the world and nothing more. It provides a means of functioning in the world but in no way offers the *truth* about that world.

Life is livable, to a degree, on the basis of a worldvision in the same way that life in the Matrix works for those who never ask, “What is the Matrix?” Some, however, desire to ask precisely that question. They become conscious that their working assumptions might not correspond to the truth, and as such, they want to put them to the test. In J. H. Bavinck’s terms, that kind of person has begun a pilgrimage from the realm of the wholly subjective (a *worldvision*) toward the truly objective (a *worldview*), which is most profoundly a pilgrimage from the finite to the infinite, from the creature toward the Creator as the only one whose *view of the world* is exhaustive in knowledge and perfect in wisdom.

With this distinction, J. H. Bavinck tries to provide tools with which to understand Herman Bavinck’s account of worldview as a slow process of mapmaking. To adapt one of J. H. Bavinck’s own illustrations, a worldvision is like a map of the world that has been crumpled up into a paper ball. Although that ball now feels manageable in your hand, and while its visible parts offer you some tools for navigation (and a limited degree of truth about the world depicted), it nonetheless must be uncrumpled. The map’s potential far exceeds whatever the crumpled ball can offer.

Although Herman Bavinck did not use the language of *worldvision*, his later interpreter Lolke van der Zweep (1891–1970) argued that J. H. Bavinck’s worldvision-worldview distinction was nonetheless present in his uncle’s thought in all but name.<sup>10</sup> Commenting on Herman Bavinck’s

9 See, for example, Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

10 Bavinck, *Christian Worldview*, 22; Lolke van der Zweep, *De paedagogiek van Bavinck: Met een inleiding tot zijn werken* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1935), 196.

statement in *Christian Worldview* that the modern age lacked a “‘unified’ world-and-life view,” van der Zweep claimed that this comment referred not to each individual lacking a coherent take on life and the world but rather to a problem that beset modernity more generally. The modern world was not able to unite what Bavinck’s nephew would term the ordinary person’s worldvision and the refined thinker’s worldview but instead set them in opposition. Modernity cast the untutored mind and the expert intellectual as mortal enemies.<sup>11</sup>

Despite that insight, however, Herman Bavinck did not provide an imaginative set of terms and concepts to articulate the complex process of worldview formation that would hold together worldvision and worldview. His work presents us with a form of mapmaking, certainly, but leaves us with important questions: What exactly does the process of cartography involve? And what of those who have no wish to consult that map as they go about their lives? In what sense is a worldview ubiquitous in such cases?

These questions are answered in *Personality and Worldview*. As a complement to the earlier cartographical picture, for example, Johan Herman adds a further useful illustration: if a worldview is a map, a worldvision is a compass. Those who have no wish to make a map, who reject the struggle to cultivate a worldview in order to remain grounded in whatever worldvision life happens to have given them, have something far more basic—a tool that orients and directs them, albeit without offering any grand *view* of the world in which they move. In that regard, the worldvision-worldview distinction is useful in building on Herman Bavinck’s earlier contributions. (The careful reader will also notice that Johan Herman also pairs Herman’s concepts of a world-and-life view with the terms *worldvision* and *lifevision*. Just as a world-and-life *view* deals with a true, objective knowledge of the world *and* human life, a world-and-life *vision* deals with an assumption-based, subjective knowledge of the world *and* one’s own *life* in it.)

11 James Eglinton, “Populism vs. Progressivism: Who Knows Best?” *Christianity Today*, November 20, 2018, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/>.

In *Personality and Worldview*, Johan Herman also addresses his uncle's criticism of the modern tendency to set worldvision and worldview in a posture of mutual antipathy—where the sophisticated thinker looks down on the ordinary person and his rudimentary worldvision as though the intellectual person had never relied on any such thing, and where the “ordinary” person views his intellectually sophisticated neighbor with all manner of bad faith assumptions because of her education. In *Personality and Worldview*, neither worldview nor worldvision is inherently bad. In fact, quite the opposite is true. A person's worldvision is a necessary starting point in life, a location in God's good creation, a set of home coordinates somewhere in nature and history. As such, we must all begin with a worldvision and should see it as a basic good. It is by God's kind providence that no one starts off nowhere. Alongside this reality, the pursuit of a worldview *is* a noble thing. Quite strikingly, J. H. Bavinck praises this exercise of virtue in the lives of thinkers—fellow mapmakers—as diverse as Kant, Confucius (551–479 BC), and Lao-tzu (fl. 6th c. BC).

Despite this, worldvision nonetheless becomes problematic when it is made a permanent abode rather than a starting point. A worldview shows you one way to live in the world on the basis of all manner of untested assumptions, and as such, it is utterly subjective. It is an assumption—but not the truth—about the world. It is life lived on autopilot by a passenger who as yet sits passively and unquestioningly. When a person remains in this state forever, worldvision changes from good and limited to life limiting. That person's unwillingness to ask, “What if my assumptions aren't true?” is, in effect, a self-imposed house arrest. His home coordinates become his prison because he lives without hunger for *the* truth about life, the world, and God. In light of that position, *Personality and Worldview* equips readers to think in deeply appreciative but also profoundly critical ways about worldvision. It offers a creative and somewhat experimental attempt to improve the conversation around worldview.

In what sense is the notion of worldvision experimental within this book? Although it is introduced as a prominent new concept early on,

*worldvision* more or less fades into the background as the book proceeds. Once the reader has been given a clear sense of what the author means by his awkward neologism, he substitutes it with “mentality,” a conventional term that has now been loaded with new meaning. Rhetorically, then, J. H. Bavinck prioritized the thinking that undergirds the idea of *worldvision* far more than he cared for the cumbersome label itself—a fact that might provide comfort to those who wish to explain his ideas in, say, Spanish or Portuguese, whose established terms for *worldview* (*cosmovision* and *cosmovisão*, respectively) already look and sound uncomfortably like *worldvision*.<sup>12</sup> Despite these limitations, J. H. Bavinck’s *worldvision* concept remains a valuable one. It explains why so few people live out a comprehensive, consistent, and coherent worldview, while also reminding us that each person’s *worldvision* is complex and highly individuated. Although it attunes us to the simplistic, inadequate, and reductionistic slogans that many people live by, the *worldvision* notion itself helps us guard against simplistic takes on the people who parrot them.

### An Augustinian Critique of Worldview

*Personality and Worldview* also equips its reader to think of the notion of worldview with the same blend of appreciative critique. J. H. Bavinck was profoundly influenced by the theology and psychology of the African church father Augustine of Hippo. Indeed, it would not be an overstatement to describe the broad shape of his work (in missiology and psychology) as a modern exploration of the paradox laid out in Augustine’s *Confessions*: that every human life is spent simultaneously

12 This may well explain why *worldvision* does not seem to become a long-standing part of J. H. Bavinck’s vocabulary in subsequent writings. After *Personality and Worldview*, it is used sparingly indeed. In a rare example in 1932, we find him using the term as a corrective to a speaker who used “life feeling” (*levensgevoel*) and “worldview” as synonyms. “Dr. B.,” we read, “would actually rather swap the term worldview for *worldvision*.” See J. H. Bavinck, “De Christelijke grondslagen van ons onderwijs,” in *Tweede christelijk onderwijs congres te houden op 11 en 12 april 1939 te Bandoeng* (Bandoeng: Visser, 1932), 212. The original Dutch reads, *Levensgevoel en wereldbeschouwing. Dr. B. zou hier eigenlijk het woord wereldbeschouwing willen vervangen voor wereldvisie.*

running toward *and* away from God. That psychological paradox plays a central role in J. H. Bavinck's understanding of worldview building, which he understood to be a very human attempt to move toward *and* evade God. In the same paragraph, for example, he writes that "all seeking for a worldview is, in the deepest sense, always a seeking after God" and that "every worldview . . . is a fleeing from God, a pulling back from God, a not daring to accept God."<sup>13</sup>

That kind of Augustinian reminder about human worldviews is a humbling one, and it bespeaks Johan Herman's own capacity for profound psychological insight. It also provides the backdrop to his account of the Christian gospel as a worldview unto itself, as something that rebuilds each uniquely disordered human being from the ground (which is to say, worldvision) up. As a worldview, the gospel remolds but does not destroy individual personality. By setting both concepts—personality and worldview—in relationship to the gospel itself, J. H. Bavinck aimed to show that worldview is much more than a list of bullet points to which one must assent. Rather, it is almost a synonym for sanctification. It lays hold on us, and we press on toward it. Worldview has a formative power over us, while also being something we deploy in learning to become more thoughtful and closer to the objective truth, as we live *coram Deo* in the world.

### Theology for Life in the World

Thus far, this introduction has said far more about worldview (and worldvision) than personality. Why did J. H. Bavinck write a book that attempted to deal with both? The contents of this book first saw the light of day as public lectures given to engineering students at the Delft University of Technology in the winter of 1927. Its original audience, then, was not made up of pastors or theologians. In fact, the clarity and originality of the talks meant that as his series progressed, the regular audience grew beyond the student community. He gradually found himself speaking to a broad and general public—which soon began

<sup>13</sup> See pp. 38, 39.



asking for the lectures to be published in book form (and they were the following year).

In those lectures, he primarily addressed a group of young Reformed Christians who had grown up in a culture dominated by neo-Calvinistic worldview thinking and within which Abraham Kuyper's own example had created a widespread tendency to reduce people (and their personalities) to whatever worldview they supported. In their youthful eyes, worldview seemed to quash the very thing that their lived, modern experience pointed toward: individuality. Although Bavinck's lectures were given decades before the outbreak of the revolutionary individualism of the 1960s, he was addressing precisely that mid-twentieth century context, albeit at an earlier developmental stage. The same sort of antiworldview critiques now heard in American evangelicalism were heard in the Netherlands in the 1920s: worldviews are facades, illusions, Trojan horses that subjugate us to the personality types of the men whose names they bear, whereas human life is spontaneous, free, and unbound by abstract worldview claims. To be sure, these critiques are neither unimportant nor foolish. As humans, we experience agency. We do not seem to be machines, despite the reality of our place in a cosmos that operates on the basis of cause and effect. Why shouldn't personality trump worldview?

In response to these criticisms, J. H. Bavinck believed that a livable philosophy must strive to hold to that particular paradox—the twin poles of freedom and boundness, of acting and being acted on—rather than invest everything on one side. His response to “personality *versus* worldview” was to write *Personality and Worldview*. Of course, he was certainly not the first thinker to demonstrate such harmonizing instincts. We might think of Kant's denial of the skeptical philosopher Hume's insistence that humans are only material beings in a material world. In response, Kant argued that human life is properly livable only if we see ourselves as subject to the laws of cause and effect *phenomenally*, while having free and active agency *noumenally*. Later, the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) argued that human consciousness senses itself to be both free and dependent within the

world. To insist on only one of these, he thought, was to do a grave injustice to our humanity. J. H. Bavinck follows in their nonreductionist line: to pit personality *against* worldview and insist that we must choose one or the other is no more tenable than the choice to affirm either our sense of free will or our sense of being bound. Both must be true, hence a book on personality *and* worldview.

That observation takes us to the book's closing argument, where the relationship of personality to worldview—and in particular, the place of each individual personality between the poles of worldvision and worldview—reaches a crescendo. Like an early twentieth-century Tom Holland,<sup>14</sup> J. H. Bavinck argues that the Christian worldview is far more important than individualistic late-modern Westerners usually realize. Although very few individuals master and embody a worldview, worldviews nonetheless master and animate entire cultures and civilizations. In that light, Bavinck portrays the late-modern secular West as unwittingly living off borrowed Christian capital in order to prop up new world-and-life views that, thus far at least, have only ever run at a deficit. While every individual is unique, there is a distinct kind of modern Western personality that takes shape through Western culture's love-hate relationship to Christianity. As Bavinck states,

Worldviews last for longer than one generation. One generation can celebrate worldviews that provide no foundation for its own life and without that generation's exterior taking on noticeable damage. This is so because for all of us, our hearts are unconsciously so Christian.<sup>15</sup>

The book ends, though, with an alarming call. Eventually, J. H. Bavinck forecast, this borrowed capital will dry up, and Western culture will become something new: a culture that “has no life-nourishing and life-directing idea and therefore also no unity in living and thinking.”<sup>16</sup> The “culture of death” that has marked the West from World War II

<sup>14</sup> Tom Holland, *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind* (London: Little, Brown, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> See p. 177.

<sup>16</sup> See p. 177.

onward, so ably described by the Jewish sociologist Philip Rieff (1922–2006), illustrates that warning.<sup>17</sup> In that regard, these lectures to engineering students have an edge that is almost prophetic.

Although the book is eerily ahead of its time in that regard, it also reads as dated in some respects. For example, the view of medieval monasticism advanced by J. H. Bavinck—that someone entered the monastery as a way of withdrawing from the study of nature—has now been thoroughly debunked by Seb Falk's outstanding *The Light Ages*.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, while Bavinck's account of the Renaissance as the birth of radical individualism (and a freedom from the tyranny of all prior sources of authority) had some support in his day,<sup>19</sup> contemporary readers will more likely see the Renaissance as a rediscovery of ancient (and non-Christian) sources. The book's handling of East and West will displease some readers, who will certainly find his brushstrokes uncomfortably broad—as, perhaps, they will also find uncomfortable his tendency to view the diversity of Eastern religions and cultures through what appears to be a primarily Buddhist lens.

Clearly, it is not a perfect book. Nonetheless, it received critical acclaim in its own day, even beyond the boundaries of Bavinck's own neo-Calvinist circles.<sup>20</sup> Although it featured regularly in Dutch discussions on worldview in the 1930s, those references began to peter out in the 1940s, after which it became a forgotten text. Opened afresh nine decades later, the book has aged remarkably well. Despite its imperfections, it speaks into our age's debates on personality and worldview—

17 Philip Rieff, *Sacred Order / Social Order*, vol. 1, *My Life among the Deathworks: Illustrations of the Aesthetics of Authority* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

18 Seb Falk, *The Light Ages: A Medieval Journey of Discovery* (London: Penguin, 2021).

19 Although J. H. Bavinck does not name the sources that shape his account of the Renaissance, he appears to hold to Jacob Burckhardt's (1818–1897) view that the Italian Renaissance birthed the modern individual. See Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London: Penguin, 1990).

20 In one memorable review, published in the theologically liberal newspaper *De blijde wereld*, the avowedly “not orthodox” reviewer praised J. H. Bavinck's writing as “orthodoxy at its best,” before concluding, “I hope very much that this book will be read in our circles.” See W. B., “Belangrijks uit boek en tijdschrift,” *De blijde wereld: Christen-socialistisch weekblad*, May 11, 1929.

addressing both those who think very highly of worldview and those who give it no glory at all—with a voice that is fresh and imaginative in equal measure. For that reason, and with the kind permission of Professor Maarten Bavinck, Johan Herman's grandson, now, at long last, it has been exhumed, dusted off, and given a new lease on life in the English language.

### **Note on the Text**

J. H. Bavinck was a master of clear, crisp, vividly illustrative Dutch prose. If anything, his skill in writing makes his work all the more challenging to translate, particularly if something of the liveliness of the original is to be carried over into a new language. For that reason, I have tried to balance, on the one hand, close equivalence of idiom and word choice between the Dutch original and its English rendering and, on the other hand, the need for the translation to flow smoothly for native English readers. The end result is, I hope, faithful to the Dutch but free from the subtle and unwieldy influence of Dutchisms. To achieve that aim, it has sometimes been necessary to clarify the meaning of Bavinck's sentences by adding illuminative words. These are always indicated to the reader in brackets.

The original text contains terms and quotations in German, Latin, and French, which needed no translation for the original audience. These have been retained (with foreign-language terms in brackets in the main text and foreign-language quotations moving into the footnotes) and translated in this edition. Where awareness of specific Dutch terms used by Bavinck might help some to read the text with greater nuance, I have retained the original Dutch in brackets.

In following the conventions of his day, Bavinck often referred to other works without providing references and mentioned many figures who were well known to his audience (playwrights, artists, scholars, historical figures, and so on) but who might be less universally recognized today. I have provided references to these works in the footnotes, as well as short historical introductions to the individuals named. These explanatory footnotes are clearly indicated as my own additions

to the text. Also, Bavinck included dates for figures in only a handful of instances; for consistency, I have moved those dates to the editorial footnotes, where I have also supplemented my historical introductions with other individuals' dates.

Beyond that, as a custodian of this text, I have tried to handle it with a light touch, leaving as few of my own fingerprints on Bavinck's work as possible and making my own presence as its translator and editor otherwise inconspicuous.

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## The Struggle for a Worldview

THE SUBJECT THAT WE WILL DISCUSS is beautiful and dangerous in equal measure: beautiful because it compels us to see [all] the worldviews that have been devised as expressions of personalities, as revelations of the soul, and dangerous because it could also cause us to lose our own firm foundations.

Before we move forward, it is necessary, first, that we consider the question [of personality and worldview] clearly and that we take account of the difficulties that will be placed before us. We should not walk into the labyrinth of opinions blindly. Rather, we must reflect beforehand on the problems that will be posed to us. If we fail to do this, we will be in great danger of losing our way.

The history of human thought presents us with a range of ideas, of systems, of worldviews. Some are elegant and religious, others crude and banal. Some are deep and beautiful, others hard and ugly. Some expand your view, lift you up, satisfy the heart, and make life appear different; others are like sticks of dynamite that possess the power to damage and destroy everything in their path. Some are poetic, intuitive, thoughtful; others are based on a mass of arguments, crawling forward, as it were, from one conclusion to another. Each of these worldviews has enjoyed a period of recognition. When each was first proposed, there was a group that received and honored its thoughts. But as the years came and went, the movement [generated by it] and faith [in it]

waned, and other thinkers arose to open up new perspectives. And so human thought developed, sliding from worldview to worldview. Each system of thought must always give way to another.

The question has been posed, Must we accept that a certain development can be perceived in all those worldviews? Is there an approach to the truth [in them]? Are we moving further [forward], step by step? Are the questions posed in a more refined way, the challenges better gauged, the puzzles better solved? In one way or another, that great competition of thought must have an end point, a goal. Can we say that the history of philosophy, of worldviews in general, is the history of the discovery of the truth? Or must we think of it in a completely different way? Must we declare that the truth has never been found, that we tumble from one confusion to the next, that no progress can be observed?

This question becomes more difficult when we notice that the number of worldviews is relatively small and that the same types [of worldviews] return again and again. Kant<sup>1</sup> has said that the great questions regarding worldview are always these three: What can I know [*weten*]?<sup>2</sup> What must I do? What may I hope? Now in broad terms, only a few answers are possible to each of these questions. What can I know [*weten*]? Can I indeed know something (skepticism)? Does my knowledge [*kennis*]<sup>3</sup> reach nothing beyond the phenomena, the externals (positivism)? Or can I proceed to the essential, the eternal, the idea, the very highest reason? In my knowing [*weten*], am I dependent, above all, on experience, sensation, perception (empiricism)? Or is it precisely the

- 1 Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), a Prussian philosopher whose work was central to the Enlightenment.—Ed.
- 2 Dutch uses two distinct verbs, *kennen* and *weten*, for “to know.” *Kennen* refers to immediate, personal knowledge, whereas *weten* refers to more objective, reflective knowledge. In English, this corresponds to the difference between an impersonal knowledge (*weten*) of facts about someone (for example, “I know that he has red hair”) and a personal knowledge (*kennen*) of that person (for example, “I know him”). Because these verbs deal with conceptually distinct forms of knowledge, where relevant I have indicated in brackets which verb the original text uses.—Ed.
- 3 *Kennis* (knowledge) is the noun corresponding to the verb *kennen*. It refers to knowledge that is immediate and personal.—Ed.

understanding, thinking, reason that must be honored as the highest source of knowledge (rationalism)? May I accept that my consciousness, my representations, correspond to a reality beyond myself (realism)? Or must I believe that only those representations, those concepts and thoughts, exist and that there is no material reality that corresponds to them (idealism)? Does a God who brought all things into being exist? And if he exists, how and where must I conceive of him? Is he only exalted high above the world, unknowable [*onkenbaar*], inaccessible (deism)? Or is he only in the world, a part of the world—that is, is the world itself God (pantheism)? Or is he both simultaneously in the world and also exalted far above it, immanent and at the same time transcendent (theism)? Or is there absolutely no higher power—that is, does everything boil down to matter and power (materialism)?

In this way, we can expand the questions on every side, although only a few answers are possible to each of these questions. The number of ideas, the number of worldviews, is limited and also must be limited. Naturally, all sorts of different forms and styles of worldview can be found. The great and basic assumptions, however, must remain the same.

It is also evident that in the course of history, the same ideas and systems return time and time again. In more recent philosophy, we find the philosophical schools of antiquity returning in new garments. We continually encounter the same constructions. It seems as though history is constantly repeating itself. What we think and the solutions we see were also grasped many centuries ago. The same forms return incessantly in the rhythm of human living and thinking. Yes, and not only that: even the order is often the same. The same development that you can see in Greek philosophy, the progress of the one system to another, you find returning at a number of points in the newer philosophy. It moves along the same paths from the one to the other:

What has been is what will be,  
 and what has been done is what will be done,  
 and there is nothing new under the sun. [Eccl. 1:9]



And yet we must be on our guard against all one-sidedness because while they often are the same systems, that does not mean that there is indeed no difference or even a certain kind of progress. On all sorts of points, the consequences are better felt, the gaps are better filled in. It is not in vain that our era possesses wonderful material from the experiences of previous generations. When the old returns, it is never entirely the same. There is always newness and freshness in it. But nonetheless, the fact that the history of human seeking always returns to older solutions is enough to make us skeptical toward the question whether we can speak of an approach to the truth.

That is also the reason that many in our time are inclined to consider the development of worldviews from a different angle. They ask the question differently and look for a different perspective. It is foolishness, they say, to expect any progress from all that thinking and seeking. We do not know [*weten*] and will never know. We act more smartly and precisely[, they say,] when we move beyond all those worldviews to the personalities that created them. Why is it that one person chooses materialism, while another despises and detests that same materialism? Why is it that that one thinker is immediately inclined to one solution, and another goes down a different path from the beginning? What phenomenon is the cause of Spinoza<sup>4</sup> thinking differently from Kant, of Kant seeing things differently from Hegel?<sup>5</sup> Is it not this, [they allege,] that Kant was a wholly different person, a wholly different personality, from Spinoza? Is each worldview not grounded in personality? As an approach to the truth, [we are told,] it is worthless. But as a revelation of the life of the personality, it is of great significance. From Kantian philosophy we get to know Kant himself; his soul is opened up before us. Each period, each century, has its own mentality and thus also its own worldview. From the history of worldviews, we become acquainted with the history of personalities. We understand the soul better; we

4 Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), a Dutch philosopher of Portuguese Sephardic Jewish extraction. Spinoza is considered one of the great rationalist philosophers of the Enlightenment.—Ed.

5 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), a German idealist philosopher.—Ed.

understand the idiosyncrasy of the different sorts of people who have spoken in those worldviews. That is the worth of all those systems. They do not bring us closer to the truth, but they bring us further in the knowledge of the soul, in the knowledge of personality. A materialist does not only think differently from an idealist; he also lives differently, and he is also different. Therefore, [we hear,] the arguments they use against each other are so fruitless. Each sees things from his own personality: “Whatever sort of philosophy one has is dependent on what sort of a person one is.”<sup>6</sup>

At first glance, there is much in this idea that is attractive. Is it not true that a person’s worldview is most closely connected to his personality? Is that not the reason that humanity continually returns to the same possibilities? The possibilities of the personality are, of course, always limited. Is that not also the reason that it is so difficult to resolve the striving between worldviews with arguments? An intimate connection must exist between personality and worldview; each worldview can be fully understood only from the personality that created it.

From the Christian perspective, these things are, in a certain sense, even more obvious. If the worldview one depends on is based only on a rational understanding, the only consequence would be a struggle of ideas, and then the struggle against the Christian faith would become incomprehensible. The reason the battle of worldviews is so often carried out with furious passion would not be understandable because everything would be a great and convivial discussion of proof against proof, of one theory against another hypothesis. That, however, never seems to have been the case in history. In worldviews, personalities—human souls—battle against each other. Each defends his own life, his own character. The arguments that were advanced serve his personality’s right to continue existing. That is also what every person,

6 The original German reads, *Was für eine Philosophie man hat, hängt davon ab was für ein Mensch man ist*. This is taken from Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Erste und Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1961), sec. 5, 21. Fichte (1762–1814), a German idealist philosopher, goes on to describe a philosophical system as “animated by the soul” of the one who adopts it, rather than merely as “a dead appliance” that will function identically regardless of which person uses it.—Ed.

armored as such, combats and must combat in the gospel of grace that is preached in Christ Jesus. That person's personality resists [the gospel], and thus, with all the might of thinking, he must wrestle himself free of the grip of that gospel. Precisely the fact that [worldview] is about his personality and that the actual combatants—the passions of the human soul—hide themselves behind their reasonable arguments is the fact that has given the age-old war of worldviews such depth and tension.

However attractive this thought might sound, it quickly appears to be the case that great dangers also lie hidden in it. There is even something burdensome about immersing oneself in it for a moment. The great thinkers of all ages have sought and ruminated, have striven to find the truth. There is a calling for the truth, for insight, for knowledge, in the world. What would it then mean if we, who stand behind all things, at once should announce, "All that you have done has been nothing other than a reflection of what you yourself are like. You have not brought the truth any closer; you have only shown us who you are, how your personality is composed"? Should the immediate consequence that we draw not then be, "We wish never to think again. What is the benefit of all study, of immersing oneself in the great questions of life?" With contempt, the next generation will erase all your efforts, [saying,] "You have [only] laid yourself bare." All passion, all striving, all seeking would immediately be lost. We would feel like children who frolic around and play with each other, who perhaps think that what we are doing will make humanity progress, but later, in our old age, we smile back at that delusion. Is then philosophy indeed anything else than a terrible frivolity? We imagine our worldviews, dress them up in a lot of learnedness, and say that we are dealing with the truth; we try to show how things are through many objective proofs, with great calculations, and that things cannot be otherwise. Later, another generation arises and says with hilarity, "This person thinks as such because he acts as such in all his behavior, because his personality was composed as such." In one fell swoop, all my investigations, contemplations, and proofs are made worthless.

The idea that a very close connection exists between personality and worldview thus seems to bring with it, as an undeniable consequence,

the idea that all our thinking and building of philosophical systems must be regarded as idle. The most complete relativism, the conviction that each thought is relative, that no truth exists that applies absolutely to all, is the logical consequence of such a probable (self-authenticating) presupposition. We never rise above the inclination, the character of our personality; we can never climb above the subjective to the objective truth. What I call truth is only true for myself; it only fits my character; I need that so-called truth, while someone else laughs at it.

A human being, however, naturally springs back from drawing this consequence. It would mean the disruption of all spiritual and moral norms. Someone who wishes to live completely free of morals would be able to say, "What do I have to do with someone else's norms and worldview? In my worldview there are no moral commands." Not only would psychology devour all philosophy, it would also devour all norms: to everyone his own standard and his own insight because there is no absolute truth and no absolute norm. Relativism is a deadly danger for each sincere and virtuous struggle for truth and right.

But alongside this, at the same time, we are given the question that we have to ask in these investigations. On the one hand, what is the connection between personality and worldview? In what sense do these two [things] belong together inseparably? And on the other hand, how must we nonetheless be on guard against the relativism that breaks up all norms? Is there an objective approaching of the truth? Does it make sense at all to think about the puzzles of existence?

We can also formulate this question differently: To what extent is each worldview the revelation of the personality that created or received it, in order that we can become acquainted with the person through that worldview? And conversely, to what extent is each worldview a more or less objective approach to the truth, so that it possesses significance and worth as such?

In these two questions, it is clear that we must guard against two answers. The first answer is, "Personality and worldview are actually one. Each worldview is nothing other than a reflection of a personality. It only bears the semblance of objectivity, but in reality it is subjective

through and through.” If that were true, all thinking really would be useless, and relativism in that absolute and obliterating sense would be unavoidable.

We must also be on guard against a second answer: “Personality and worldview are two utterly [different things]. You cannot come to know anything about someone’s personality from his worldview. Thinking is completely detached from being. Each worldview may be seen only as an approach to the truth and must be entirely detached from the personality that created it.” If that were true, the ferocity of the struggle of worldviews would be incomprehensible. In that struggle, it does seem that the personality is indeed at stake.

Thus, the truth must be enclosed between these two. It is neither the one nor the other, for which reason each worldview must be considered from a twofold viewpoint: [it is] just as much the revelation of the personality as it is an approach to the truth. These two, it seems, are intertwined, interpenetrated, and together add up to one whole.

Before we can move more deeply into this matter, we must address a few difficulties that might arise. Our subject is personality and worldview. Perhaps you might say, “Worldview? Who actually cares about worldview anymore? We are much too busy with the social survival of the fittest, and we are too engaged in all sorts of cares of a different nature to make an effort to think about a ‘worldview.’”

If you should think like this, I would immediately want to say something in response: every person has a worldview, whoever he may be. Later, we will make a distinction between a worldvision and a worldview. As soon as we make that [distinction], I must modify my statement: every person has a worldvision. [At this point,] it would be best to clarify this idea through some illustrations.

Let us imagine a driver, someone whose heart’s passion is racing, who functions as one with his steering wheel, and who would rather do nothing else than storm along the road at unimaginable speed. As soon as he sits at the wheel, he sees the world from a particular perspective. He has, if you will permit me this loanword, a “particular mindset” [*bepaalde instelling*]<sup>1</sup>—namely, he sees everything from the viewpoint of

speed. A pothole in the road, a goat, a grocer's wagon that comes around the corner, a couple of children playing, are just as much obstacles, limitations in his thirst for speed. And as such, he sees the world very simply. For him, all things are crumpled up together as obstacles. He sees them as obstacles. That the child who steps out into the road at the last moment is an only child, that he is the apple of his mother's and father's eye, remains out of view in that instant. He is a hindrance that must be avoided, that must be taken into account, but that beyond this is only experienced as an obstacle. While he is sitting behind the wheel, his "particular mindset"—which is entirely focused on the pursuit of great speeds—brings with it [the notion] that he perceives the entire world reality only as hindrance or as favor. This is then his foundation in reality, that is, what we could call his vision of things.

Now you will say, "That vision is the work of a single moment; it counts only for as long as he is driving his car." I agree with you, but we can also think about it in a more complicated, enduring way.

An officer in a war, for example, sees the enemy only from the viewpoint of combat value. That is his "mindset," which his profession, his lifework, entails. That the man before him is the father of a large family, for whom he is irreplaceable; that he is a genius, in whose death the whole world would suffer a great loss because he could bring progress to human seeking—all remains entirely outside the officer's consideration. He does not deny it, he knows well the possibility of it, but it has no significance to him. In his intuition, the great reality of the world is crumpled up in one concept: combat value. The man before him is a soldier and thus has combat value; the machine gun next to him also has combat value. The "particular mindset" in which he lives, the particular goal that he pursues, contains the [notion] that everything he encounters can be judged only on the basis of combat value. That is, to use that word again, his worldvision.

We can also think about this [concept] in ways that are firmer and less momentary.

Imagine that four people travel to a country. One is an engineer in heart and soul. He sees all that he encounters from the question "What

can be made from this?" In his thoughts he imagines lines where roads could be projected, and he bores tunnels through the mountains in the places he deems best. He comes across waterfalls and in his thoughts develops a plan for how a hydroelectric station could be built there. He comes to craters and considers the ways in which sulfur mining could be attempted. In short, in all that he sees, he plays with technical ingenuity; he sees everything from that same question.

The second traveler through the same land is an economist. He studies the varieties of soil and wonders what could be grown there. In his thoughts he weighs up the possibility of acquiring laborers; he calculates eventual rentability. Everywhere he sees something with which a profit could be made. He is constantly adding up all manner of possibilities.

The third is a geologist, not only by profession but with the full love of his heart. He looks at craggy rock formations and reconstructs their history. He sees the layers of sediment carved out by mountain rivers and asks himself how those layers developed in the past. He studies the layers of earth that are clearly visible here and there, in places where landslides caused the soil to sag. He wonders about the places from which he might expect important discoveries.

And the fourth, finally, is a poet, an artist. He listens to the secret rustling of the evening in the dark and ancient forest. He sees the mountains turn blue and is enraptured by the overwhelming majesty of pristine nature.

At the end of their journey, the four happen to come together and, when they speak to one another, ask each other, "What is the world?"

The world, so says the first, is an endless source of technical possibility. In itself, it is not yet anything, but everywhere it offers opportunity for the application of human faculties. It is a wonderful combination of energy that can be mastered and utilized by the intellect.

The world, so says another, is riches, a constant source of benefits, of the possibility of life.

The world, says the geologist, is history, always renewing itself and expanding into different formations. It is a steady process of transformation.

And the poet finally decides, the world is beauty, full of contrast and yet also of harmony, rugged and yet majestically united. It is a rhythm of flowing lines and mingling colors.

You yourself can feel it: every person sees the world from a particular perspective. That is his mentality, his goal. And that mentality always contains a particular vision of the world. The full reality of the world is never captured by any individual person. Rather, for each person it is crumpled up into a distinct whole that has meaning for him. Each mentality toward life presupposes and includes a particular worldvision.

And with this I come to the last and most difficult example. Imagine the person who lives, in practical terms, without God. If I may say it as such, God is not an item in his life's budget and plays no role in it. He acts as though there is no God. His life's mentality is atheistic. Naturally, this contains a certain worldvision, although he is not aware of it. It is the great *as though* that he has based his life on.

Or think of it differently still: in practical terms, a person lives without norms. He does what he wants, and he feels and recognizes no moral standards. In the practice of his life, he might well watch out for scandal, for punishment, but in his intimate life, he lives free of it. He also feels no sorrow for the wrong that he has done. At most, he can regret that he did not do it more efficiently. Behind that attitude to life lies a worldvision: the worldvision [that functions], namely, *as though* there are no norms, as though we are not bound by moral standards. I do not say that he would also declare this so clearly and consciously, but it is nonetheless the silent presupposition of his life. His life is based on that great *as though*. Every attitude to life, each way of life, always assumes a particular way of looking at the world, a worldvision. The simplest beggar or even a child has such a worldvision that lies at the foundation of his behavior. Life cannot be understood as anything other than a resting in a particular worldvision.

In the first place, a person makes this worldvision his own in his early years. The human being drinks in the considerations held up before him by his parents and teachers; they melt away into him and help form within him that worldvision that will serve him like a compass in later



years. That often happens uncritically, it is often unconscious, and the person often does not intuit that such things have formed a worldvision within him. But the influence of that worldvision is of inestimable importance on the whole of his living and acting. In the second place, a person's worldvision is most strongly influenced by his character, predisposition, orientation. It roots around in his person and connects closely to the entirety of the tendencies of his soul. In a certain sense, it is already the presupposition of his life, before the person begins to think and begins to give an account of life and the world. Perhaps he never comes to that contemplation, never brings this further than the intuitive worldvision, *as though* there is no norm, no God, no law. In that case, the intuitive vision remains his compass in the storms of life.

It is also possible, however, that the person begins to contemplate, that he begins to ask himself whether he has the right to let his life be lived on the weak foundation of the great *as though*. Then he begins to think through whether that intuitive grasp that he made is also objectively justified, whether there really is no God and no norm, whether he has a right to [carry on] living on the basis of that presupposition. Then he tries to climb up toward the objective. The vision objectivizes itself into a worldview. He only conquers such a worldview through a great work of thinking, through quiet contemplation, through giving account of reality objectively. A worldview is not just a loose, intuitive grasp. Rather, it is supported by arguments, by motives. It clothes itself in the form of reasonableness. It is supported by logical construction. That is tiring work, a work of patience and endurance. And the fruits of it are the things given to us to consider by the history of philosophy.

I am filled with respect when I think of the great series of thinkers who have worked at the task that is a worldview. Lao-tzu<sup>7</sup> and Confucius,<sup>8</sup> the thinkers of India and of Greece, Descartes<sup>9</sup> and Spinoza,

7 Lao-tzu, a semilegendary Chinese philosopher from the sixth century BC. He is regarded as the founder of Taoism.—Ed.

8 Confucius (551–479 BC), a Chinese philosopher whose teachings gave rise to Confucianism.—Ed.

9 René Descartes (1596–1650), the French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist. Much of Descartes's life was spent in the Dutch Republic.—Ed.

Kant and Hegel. In their works lies an earnest seeking for the objective, for the certainty of the truth, so that we would be able to build our lives on it. Their thinking is an attempt to approach the riches of reality without prejudice and to search through its secrets. They struggled to free themselves from all sorts of subjective prejudices in their worldvisions and to tread humbly toward the truth itself. We can indeed live *as though* there is a God or no God, *as though* there are norms or no norms, but ultimately we will want to know [*weten*] whether that great *as though* that we base our lives on can withstand the test of objective judgment. That is no game; it is not a hobby. It is alarming in its inevitability because otherwise, everything, our life itself, is a leap into the abyss. A certain self-denial is found in all philosophical thinking—the self-denial of a person who feels that the worldvision that his life's practice is built on and that is connected to his nature and character could indeed be wrong. Therein lies honesty, depth, and majesty.

As such, you sense that it is not easy to be objective. It is perhaps the weightiest demand that can ever be placed on someone—to make oneself free of the intuitive vision toward which he is naturally inclined. It is only with great difficulty that someone who is materialistic in the practice of life can proceed from objective considerations to the conclusion that it is precisely the spiritual that is central and dominant because at the moment he draws this conclusion, he judges his own life. And conversely, it is only with great difficulty that the idealist who is mystically and ascetically inclined will allow himself to be convinced of the hard, sober realness of material reality. The worldvision that lies at the basis of our character retains its influence in all thinking. In all his investigations, the person whose predisposition is strongly religious will continue to see reality differently from the person whose orientation is wholly different. Those are facts that are hard to erase. Or stated differently, a worldview distances itself from a worldvision with laborious effort, just as thinking [distinguishes itself] from living [only] with great effort. Few things require more self-denial of a person than the demand to arrive at a conclusion on objective grounds, with reasonable proofs, that is diametrically

opposed to the whole composition of his life. The tension between living and thinking is very difficult, and to the earnest person, it is also a very painful tension.

From that, it is also the case that two elements are found in each worldview: the intuitive element of the subjective vision and the objective [element] of the formal, reasonable consideration. The first is the grasp that a person has on reality, in which you know [*kent*] the character, the personality. Yes, the intuitive grasp is even a revelation of personality, a confession within which he lays bare the shape of his life. The latter is the attempt at conquering the self, the honest approaching of the rich reality that can be wholly different, and much greater, than we had originally, intuitively supposed. The two elements that are enclosed within each philosophical worldview are also often very difficult to untangle. They are intertwined with one another, so that their boundaries cannot easily be identified. Each philosophy flows from personality and is at the same time an effort at conquering the self, a questioning of the objective, through which the subjective must be defined.

Yes, conquering the self—that is it. Each objectively founded worldview is a conquering of the self. It judges how our lives are composed, lays bare the deep faults therein, corrects us in every step. Hidden within it lies a deep and rich power that builds up a worldview, that regenerates. A personality ascends upward with such a worldview; it offers him a firm foundation in the whole direction of his life.

A worldview is a glorious thing. It gives rest in existence. It makes us see seemingly confusing and jagged occurrences in a particularly ordered whole. It gives us farsighted perspectives in life and the world. Intuitively, we always grasp our lives wrongly; we always try to justify ourselves and always grope in a direction that carries us to our demise. A deep and rich worldview shows us this. It corrects us. I think here of one of the mighty sayings that never fail to bring those who hear them to their senses: “The truth will set you free” [John 8:32].

The truth is not a theoretical good that you keep in a chest under many locks. The truth is of practical worth in life. It lifts you above

yourself by making plain to you the faults of your own life orientation. It draws a line through your behavior; it judges your most intimate proclivities. It breaks into pieces the grasp of your worldvision, through which you had revealed your own personality and within which you could have peacefully carried on stumbling forward. It shows you the objective reality and does this with compelling power so that we should form our lives according to it. The truth sets [you] free with a great inner freedom. It sets [you] free from the sapping and errant powers that hide in a personality. It is the truth that the personality grabs onto to pull itself upward.

From that, each worldview that wrestles with an earnest and honest investigation ends with this practical demand: "If these things are so, direct your life toward them." All metaphysics ends in ethics. Every worldview ends up with "Repent! In the name of the truth, reform yourself!" Christianity wants nothing less than that. When it demonstrates the truth, it declares, "Believe and repent." There is nothing strange about that. Every worldview that lays claim to thinking—and in thinking, to life—must do the same.

A person without a worldview is a person without a firm foundation, without a compass, without a vista. He may have a worldvision; he might live, for example, *as though* there are no norms. But such a worldvision proceeds from himself and is rooted in his nature. He cannot pull himself upward on it, and with it he always remains on the same plane. A person with a worldview, in all cases, has light, sees more widely, more broadly, more deeply. And however much deeper and more objective that worldview is, the more it gives him stability to leave this maze of subjective inclinations and climb up to the height of the life that is grounded in the truth.

If this [principle] already applies in general, it counts in a very special sense for the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That gospel offers us a worldview that smashes a person's worldvision into pieces on every side, that opposes the most intimate inclinations of the person from every side, that a human being cannot think up or invent because it was thought of by God and is given to us from God. That worldview,

however, bears the objective within it to the highest degree. It cuts the human being down but at the same time gives him the stability with which he can build his life on the truth. His life's resting point is laid not in his thinking but in the truth that is shown to us in Jesus. Therefore, the worldview that is offered to us in the gospel is also of a wholly different order from every other that has been thought up and found by humans.

When we summarize our results, we then come in broad lines to the following conclusion: between philosophical worldviews (here we are treating Christianity separately because, as we said, it is of a different order) and personality, there is and must be a very close connection.

This connection is always twofold.

First, it is direct insofar as each worldview thought of by humans plays along with that person's intuitive worldvision. That vision is the revelation of his nature, of his personality. It takes root in his life, in his character. From that vision, you can get to know him.

In the second place, however, the connection between personality and worldview is also inverted insofar as each worldview is precisely an attempt to be freed from that worldvision and to approach that which is objective. There is a conquering of self in every worldview. As a rule, a person's thought is better than his life. It is by our thinking that we pull ourselves upward.

When you see these two pulling closer, you can express it in yet another way: each worldview is always two things at once, a moving toward the truth and a fleeing from the truth. It is an approaching of the truth insofar as it is supported by objective details, objective considerations and thoughts. And it is a fleeing from the truth insofar as a person can never give himself over to that which is objective in a wholly unprejudiced way, insofar as thinking always bends, to an extent, with his life.

We can also say in a religious form, all seeking for a worldview is, in the deepest sense, always a seeking after God. Above every worldview hang the words once written by Paul of the heathen world, "that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find

him” [Acts 17:27]. A human being needs God, his whole soul asks after God, and outside God his seeking and thinking cannot find any peace. And thus, every worldview ends in God. It is an approaching toward the power of God; it is carried and compelled by a longing for God. Conversely, it is equally applicable to every worldview that it is a fleeing from God, a pulling back from God, a not daring to accept God, because all recognition of God is a judgment of self. Finding God always means losing self. And thus, all seeking always pulls back. We can say, every person seeks God, and we can also say, there is no one who seeks God. No one dares to give himself over fully. That complete self-denial lies beyond human capacities.

Each worldview is a living proof of that notable discord that abides in the human soul. A human being does not rise above it. This is because the relationship between the human being and God is always awry. Sin’s delicate poison has sunk into all his powers and desires. A human being cannot do other than both seek God, because he longs for him in the deepest part of his being, and evade him, because he fears and hates him with every fiber of his being.

It is precisely this [dynamic] that makes the battle of the worldviews so great and wondrous. It is not a cozy discussion. It always contains tension and depth. In his worldview, a person often approaches God—the highest truth—more closely than he expresses through his life. Life is so clumsy and so heavy, so difficult to push and to move onto a different path. Life itself is much more godless than thinking is. In [the act of] considering, the longing for God can express itself much more tenderly and beautifully than in the rough material of hard, daily experience. Therefore, the struggle is much more refined and subtle here. It stirs the emotions to see that from all the ancient eras to the present day, almost every deeply thought-out worldview ascends toward God and ends in God. Then one feels, first, what is felt so little in life, that the urge toward God has taken hold of us much more strongly than we ourselves often think. That they might feel and find him [Acts 17:27]!

But even there, in that seeking, in that thinking about God, when listening to him, and actually fleeing him time and time again, evading

him in the semblance of seeking him, how very much the human being hides a discord within himself and how very much he wants what he does not want and seeks what he cannot seek are all the more starkly [seen].

Now that we have sketched out these thoughts in broad strokes, we must move our investigation over into concrete [terms] and thus pursue these different elements in the struggle [between] worldviews. Naturally, we cannot possibly tackle every worldview one by one and must limit ourselves to a few prominent sorts. That is also enough, however, to show how rich a thing it is to possess a worldview. The great danger in our age is precisely our fear of worldviews. People are tired of asking questions and skeptically turn away from each worldview with the doubt and reluctance [that asks], “What is truth?” [John 18:38].

May hunger for the truth fill us, doubtless because of the truth itself but also because the truth must be the foundation our life rests on and must set us free from ourselves. Whoever believes and does the truth will be free.