



**ISSUES  
IN  
MISSIOLOGY**

**VOLUME IV**

**WORLDVIEW AND WORLD RELIGIONS  
SECOND EDITION**

**ROBERT D. PATTON, M.D., D.D.**

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**IN**  
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**Second Edition**

**ROBERT D. PATTON, M.D., D.D.**

Issues in Missiology, Volume IV  
**Second Edition**  
September 2021

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this volume to Dr. H. D. Williams and his wife Patricia. Without their expertise, constant encouragement, and sacrifice, these volumes would never have been written. Instead of a comfortable retirement as a physician, Dr. Williams and his wife give themselves sacrificially to serve the Lord. May He bless them with many years still to serve Him.

Dr. Bob Patton  
May, 2012

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## **Preface to Second Edition**

The original text of this book was published in 2012 when I was a missionary in Suriname. The same year my wife and I relocated at The Crown College of the Bible, where I have been teaching courses in missions, the Bible, and Human Anatomy and Physiology. After nine years of teaching, I believe that this volume would be best updated and some additional information added. I trust that it will prove both useful and a blessing to the reader. May you use this to understand other religions, and as you do so, understand our Christian faith better, and may the Lord enable you to witness effectively to others through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Robert Patton  
The Crown College of the Bible  
Powell, Tennessee  
September 2021

## **PREFACE TO VOLUME IV**

When I was challenged to write a book on missions three years ago, I had planned to write a single large volume on the broad subject of missions from a fundamental Baptist perspective. I wanted to write especially to help those future missionaries going to the field so that they could avoid some of the mistakes I have made. I encountered problems in a number of areas for which I was ill prepared, including Spiritual Warfare, the Spirit-Controlled Life, Missionary Finances, Persecution of Christians, and Translation Issues. My wife and I also experienced first-hand the difficulties of adapting to living in a developing country, and saw others struggling in their relationships within their own families as well as with the nationals.

While I do not have outstanding depth in any single area of missions, both my wife and I spent part of our early childhood as missionary children during World War II in the Far East. We spent five years raising our young family of four children when I was Professor of Internal Medicine, teaching in Liberia, West Africa. And we have spent 26 years in Suriname, South America with a rather broad-based ministry including

church planting, training national leadership, starting Bible Institutes, translating the Bible into Sranantongo, writing discipleship material and commentaries in Sranantongo, and broadcasting on both radio and television. Hopefully these varied experiences can help give a relatively broad view of the area of missions, although there are many areas in which I have had no experience.

Over the last three years, I have had the opportunity to teach and preach in a number of Christian colleges, and learned much, both from the teaching experience and from the students. I decided to break down the topics into smaller units consisting of several small volumes rather than a single large textbook. I was encouraged in this approach by Dr. H. D. Williams, and also by the support of Baptist World Mission in allowing me to write as well as to teach. We hope this approach will help both students and interested pastors or faculty.

In *Issues in Missiology, Volume I*, we looked briefly at the subjects of Persecution in the Church, and Missions and Money. In Volume II, we briefly covered the topics of Spiritual Warfare and The Spiritual Life of the Missionary. Both topics are vital for missionaries, especially those working in developing countries, although Satan is active in the “developed” world as well. Neither subject is covered exhaustively, but I trust in enough detail to help the missionary in both understanding and practicing Spiritual Warfare effectively, and in walking in the Spirit. Volume III looked at translation issues; I have a special burden to see accurate translations from the proper ground text in the mother tongue of those language groups who do not yet have the Word of God.

In Volume IV, we study Worldview and World Religions. Effective missionary church planting requires the missionary to understand not only the worldview of the nationals to whom he ministers, but also his own worldview as well as the basic belief systems of the people he is called to reach. Otherwise, his own blind spots may block him from reaching his mission field effectively.

Future volumes are planned to explore Cultural Anthropology, the Adaptation of the Missionary to the Mission Field, and History of Missions.

We pray that these small volumes will help the missionary to be more effective for the Lord in his chosen field of ministry. May God not only empower us as missionaries, but also may we give

Him all the glory!  
Robert D. Patton  
Paramaribo, Suriname  
March, 2012



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**PART I: TRANSFORMING  
WORLDVIEWS**

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# INTRODUCTION

As missionaries, our goal is to see our people converted. However, conversion involves more than simply altered behaviors or revised underlying beliefs. Below that level is the underlying worldview. If the behavior and the beliefs change, but the underlying worldview remains unchanged, the individual may continue to think in the framework of paganism. Therefore, we must consider transforming, not just the external behavior and intellectual beliefs of the individual, but also changing the very humanistic worldview to a Biblical pattern.

When I first received Jesus Christ, although I had grown up in a Christian home, I did not have a totally Biblical worldview. After salvation, my worldview changed gradually over at least a year as I began to study and apply the Bible.

Our worldview is the way we perceive reality around us. It has been defined as: the fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative presuppositions of a group of people about the nature of things and how they organize their lives. In simpler language, when people share the same worldview, they tend to see things the same way, feel the same way about each other, and evaluate each other with the same value structure. Thus, a worldview is a way that a person sees the world around him, feels about the world around him, and evaluates the world around him. Often an entire group of people share the same worldview.

When I was a young person, color photography was new, and we worked primarily with black and white film. I bought several color filters to change the appearance of my photographs, and of course they changed how I saw the scene before taking a picture. If I put a red filter on the lens, everything looked red; with a green filter, everything looked green. But with a red filter, any red objects looked much lighter in color, and with a green filter, the green objects were lighter. I think of worldview in a similar light. The worldview colors how we picture reality, but the way our worldview reflects reality is not always uniform. Some aspects of reality are more emphasized by our worldview, and others seem less important to notice. Only God looks at the world with a clear lens and everything in focus.

I must agree with Ken Ham, that there are really two religions and two basic worldviews – one based on the Word of God, and one based on the ideas of man. This division was begun very early in the history of mankind in Genesis chapter three. In the first two chapters, God created the universe, and culminated with mankind, His greatest creation in His own image. Man was able to communicate with God directly, and he received a direct command. He was not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or he would die. In chapter three, Satan, at that time the anointed cherub, approached Eve and implied that God's Word could not be trusted. "Yea, hath God said: Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Satan misquoted God and implied that He was unreasonable and unloving. Eve misquoted God by saying that they could not eat or touch the fruit. Then Satan told her that she would not die, stating that God was lying. Eve believed Satan, ate the fruit, and gave it to Adam, who also ate.

Thus, Satan works in man by attacking God's Word and accusing God of lying and withholding the best for mankind. His methods were effective with Eve and have continued through the centuries. He seeks to replace God's Word with doubt, and substitute man's word for God's Word. Because Satan is the God of this world, this results in God's Word often being replaced with satanic substitutions.

Let us remember that our God is the God of truth. God the Father speaks the truth, and He cannot lie. God the Son is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the only way to the Father. God the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. And Jesus proclaimed in His high-priestly prayer to the Father: "Thy Word IS truth." We have an all-powerful God who is eternal, who knows everything, can do everything, who loves enough for God the Son to die for us, and has given His infallible word. This Word is a solid foundation on which to build our faith. Why then should we build our world view on something else, and substitute man's fallible word for it. Man does NOT know everything, lives a transient temporary life, and is known to distort reality or lie. Truly man's word is fallible, and we are building our lives on sand instead of our foundation on a rock.

## INTRODUCTION

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Ken Ham has made some vital observations about the conflicts which erupt between those supporting such subjects as abortion, transgender and homosexual rights, marriage, critical race theory, and other controversies. Our position, if we think through the reasons for our conclusions, often arises from our basic worldview rather than objective facts. His interest has focused especially on origins, and arises from accepting the truth of Genesis 1-11. He notes that creationists and evolutionists both look at the same rocks and fossils, but one interprets the facts as indicating millions of years, while the other supports a young earth. When we realize that we are starting from two different foundations, then the differences are easier to understand. We are then in a better position to study the facts objectively to see which worldview is more compatible with the facts.

One of the most helpful observations by Ken Ham is that we often spend our effort attacking the specific areas of disagreement rather than attacking the faulty foundation of man's word. Some Christians even attack the Biblical foundations while trying to defend their position on various topics. This method is futile. Our conclusions arise out of our worldview, and if we abandon our solid worldview based on God's Word, we have abandoned our solid foundation, and are doomed to failure. These differences will become much more apparent as we study various world religions. Remember that truth is unitary.  $2 + 2 = 4$ . There are many wrong answers. Those who conclude that  $2 + 2 = 3, 5, 6, 10$ , or any number other than 4 are wrong. In a similar manner, if God's Word is absolute truth based on the God who knows everything, is all powerful, exists everywhere, and is eternal, then conclusions which differ are wrong.

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# CHAPTER 1: IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

## Worldviews of Individual-Oriented and Group-Oriented Societies

There is a difference in worldview between people who are group-oriented and those who are individual-oriented. We in the West, in particular the United States, are basically individual-oriented. However, the vast majority of the world is group-oriented. The individual-oriented person is born into a nuclear family with the goal to eventually care for himself. In contrast, the group-oriented person is born into an extended family where he lives his entire life. Individual-oriented societies promote one's identity based on individual achievement. In contrast, individuals in group-oriented societies often have their identity established through birth and the person's place in the group.

Individual-oriented people think "me." Group-oriented people think "we." The individual-oriented person believes that honest people speak their own minds. In a group-oriented person, the emphasis is on keeping harmony and avoiding confrontation. For an individual-oriented person, violation of norms brings guilt and loss of self-respect. On the other hand, in a group-oriented society, violation of norms brings shame to the entire group.

In an individual-oriented society the relationship between the boss and the worker are seen as a voluntary agreement for mutual advantage. However, in the group-oriented society the boss and worker are seen in more moral terms. The boss is responsible for the overall welfare of his worker, and the worker is loyal to his boss. In individual-oriented societies, hiring and promotion are based on the individual's skills as well as the company policies. In a group-oriented society, hiring and promotion may have much more to do with kinship. In an individual-oriented society, completion of a specific task is more important than relationships. Therefore you can fire individuals if they don't work properly. In a group-oriented society that is not true. You don't fire individuals without very strong reasons. Relationships are more important than the work itself.



Therefore, we see that in the West, individualism, individual rights, freedom, self-expression, and personal ownership of property are important. There may be counter-themes to correct this imbalance if a theme is taken to the extreme. These values are different from those of many group-oriented societies, particularly those of the third world, where the rights of the group take precedence.

The worldview has a number of functions. It provides a map of reality by which we can make sense of life and guide our actions. It answers a number of questions, such as: What is the nature of the world? Why am I here? What is wrong, and how can I make it right? Our worldview shows us what ought to be, what is not, and how to make things right. It integrates our cultural feelings, ideas, and values. Worldviews are usually unconscious assumptions of reality; they are rarely conscious.

Our worldview validates or deepens our cultural values and assumptions, especially when they are challenged. The worldview provides emotional security in times of stress and change. Thus, worldview assumptions are often shown in key times of life, such as birth, death, and marriage. It gives us assurance that reality is as we perceive it. It also monitors change.

Worldviews are deep. Worldviews underlie not only our patterns of behavior, but also the beliefs that underlie the patterns. They underlie the myths, or meta-narratives that underline the myths themselves. Like a deep river, worldviews tend to change only slowly. However, although worldviews are deep, they may alter due to changes in the more superficial levels of culture just as a river bed may change slowly from outside influences.

## **Patterns of Categorization**

The western world tends to see things in black and white. Things are organized into separate categories, and are pigeon-holed into their places. When things are categorized from the characteristics of the things themselves, without considering their relationship with other things, it is termed intrinsic categorization. Others, however, categorize things by the relationship between one thing and another.