

## **Notes from Christianity in Culture on Worldview**

Charles Kraft

The worldview is the central systematization of conceptions of reality to which the members of the culture assent (largely unconsciously) and from which stems their value system. The worldview lies at the very heart of the culture, touching, interacting with, and strongly influencing every other aspect of the culture (53).

A worldview is imposed upon the young of a society by means of familiar processes of teaching and learning. In this way each youngster reared in a given culture is conditioned to interpret reality in terms of the conceptual system of that culture (53).

For example, if a person's culture conceives of disease as the result of the activities of personal, evil spirits, that person will ordinarily learn to perceive any disease in his or her experience to be so caused (53).

The worldview of a culture is the "central control box" of that culture and govern the application of the culture's conceptualizations of their relationships to reality (53).

Thus, a people's worldview is their basic model of reality and has five major functions:

- the explanation of how and why things got to be as they are and how and why they continue or change (54)
- the worldview embodies for a people the basic assumptions concerning ultimate things on which they base their lives
- these ideas are customarily articulated in the mythology of a people (fable, proverbs, riddles, songs, folklore)
- an evaluating function in which the basic institutions, values and goals of a society are ethnocentrically evaluated as best and sanctioned by the worldview of their culture
- for most of the world's cultures the ultimate ground for these sanctions is supernatural – it is by their God or gods that most people understand their worldview and their culture as a whole to be validated
- all important and valued behavior is judged in terms of a culture's worldview assumptions, beliefs, values, meanings and sanctions
- provides psychological reinforcement for that group

- at points of anxiety or crisis in life it is to one's conceptual system that one turns for the encouragement to continue or the stimulus to take other action
- crisis times such as death, birth, and illness; transition times such as puberty, marriage, planting and harvest; times of uncertainty; times of elation – all tend to heighten anxiety
- through ritual and ceremony a group provides security and support the behavior of the group in a world filled with capricious uncontrolled forces
- serves an integrating function as it systematizes and orders for them their perceptions of reality into an overall design (56)
- in terms of this integrated and integrating perspective, a people conceptualizes what reality should be like and understands and interprets the many events to which they are exposed
- a people's worldview establishes and validates basic premises about the world and man's plan in it
- it also filters out for them most glimpses of reality that do not conform to the beliefs concerning the way that reality should be
- does not completely determine the perception of all the group's members at all times
- people do on occasion shift in their perceptions of reality and they come to see things in ways slightly or drastically different from the ways that their worldview has conditioned them to perceive them
  - they change one or more of their conceptual models and reinterpret their perceptions
  - such shifts in perception, especially if engaged in and reported by socially influential persons, may be accepted by other members of the social group
  - this results in groups altering their conceptual structuring, their models of reality (linguistic, social, religious, and technological structures)

Notes on worldview

-members of different cultures arrive at different conclusions concerning reality because they have started from different assumptions (57)

-Acts 14:8-18 is an example

-Paul and Barnabas had healed a lame man in the town of Lystra  
-a considerable commotion arose over the event because the Lystrans assumed that only the gods could effect such a healing

-when they saw what happened they concluded that Paul and Barnabas were gods and began to worship and offer sacrifices to them

-the assumption of the apostles was that by healing the lame man they would enhance their witness in that place

-typical non-Christian Americans observing such an event would be likely to conclude that Paul was simply a good psychologist since they would assume a naturalistic explanation of such events

-in the West, we assume that the natural universe is predictable, understandable, and scientifically describable

-we therefore attempt to understand and describe the causes, or at least the factors involved in such phenomena as storms, sickness and health, misfortune and success

-if something happens we are determined to at least find out how it happened, whether or not we can explain why

-many cultures, however, teach those immersed in them to show much more concern for the ultimate causes of things and less concern for the details of how they come about

-to these societies the universe seems a good bit less predictable and understandable

-they cannot be content simply to describe how a person contracted a certain disease but they want to know why it was that that person got ill and not another

-their concern leads them to regard the universe as basically capricious and unpredictable; if there is a tragedy, it is due to the whim or displeasure of a personal spirit