

## PASTORAL TRAINING in the TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

### CONTEXT:

Points of view distinguish humans from non-humans. Each person has many points of view on reality which together form that person's WORLDVIEW. Points of view are layered with the grounding layer setting the character for all the successive building block layers. This foundational layering may be robust or fallen and failing, true or false, holistic (spiritual and secular) or reduced to secular alone, fully aware of seen and unseen or limited to one or the other. The thesis of this paper is that the normal default worldview in the Western world is not realistic, holistic, true or adequate. Also, that Bible-based foundational worldview layering is what is missing in most present-day pastoral candidates and in much of present day pastoral training and that it is the key to proper pastoral training in future generations. So just what is worldview?

**Worldview** is a meaning-organizing framework for mapping thinking, making sense of the world and deciding about experienced realities, beliefs, values and behavioral actions.

*Eugene W. Bunkowske*

### INTRODUCTION:

Pastoral training! It began with me during the depression when farmers knew that without God they would never make it. It developed through baptism, daily memorization of scripture, home devotions, singing of Christian hymns and regular attendance at church and Sunday school in the context of a Christian family and neighborhood. A classical Lutheran high school with two years of college added followed by four years at a Lutheran seminary and an internship all in the context of working to pay the bills was God's way of creating my personal identity, a renewed mind (Romans 12:1-2) and a Biblically-based worldview and lifestyle in me

Next came 22 years in Africa (1960-1982) closely walking with 60,000 to 80,000 people for whom spiritual causes were foundational and who spent much of their limited resources on sacrifices including, at times, human sacrifices. During these years I became consciously aware of my personal worldview in contrast to an African worldview.

Language learning frustrations almost led me to quit the mission field. Furlough provided linguistics training. I learned about sign, interpreting signs through worldview and the meaning of signs. For instance, to hear: *N roja ene* could mean I ate four pieces or I ate my mother. If there were four pieces of food on a table at which my mother was sitting the native speaker's worldview interpreting system automatically sorts it out as eating four pieces of food and not as eating mother. Each person's meaning-judging

framework spontaneously discloses understanding. The process is clearly diagrammed as follows: [**sign → worldview meaning interpretation → meaning**].

Now back to Africa. After studying the Yala animistic worldview carefully I committed myself to worldview reformation/reconstruction. A third culture relationship was formed with the early Yala believers based on prayer, Bible study and the work of God's Spirit. We analyzed the unwritten Yala language and partnered in Bible translation/literacy. The powerful Word of God reformed/reconstructed the inaccurate Yala worldview, first for some and then little by little of many Yala speaking people. The key components of the Yala corrected worldview are the following:

1. God's Word is totally accurate, valid and useful.
2. God, the source of all power created the whole world out of nothing.
3. God created humans in His image and likeness, including those of all tribes
4. God created all the non-image bearing animals and matter needed for humans to function as His Godly image reflecting means for the managing of creation.
5. The quality control mechanism for evaluating ultimate allegiance to God was, 'not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'.
6. Satan lied. Eve and Adam fell for Satan's lie, ate the forbidden fruit and experienced a catastrophic worldview corruption. This miserable condition is called sin (original, inherited and manifested) that brings with it God's wrath, judgement and death.
7. The Bible unfolds God as personal, as the God of law, promise and fulfillment.
8. God, the supreme good, rehabilitated humans by restoring the broken relationship through His unconditional love, baptism, the gift of forgiveness for all sins, abundant kingdom of God life in this earth and never-ending life with God in heaven, all received by faithfulness to God through Spirit guided unity with Jesus the Messiah.

It was beautiful to see the kingdom of God graciously break in for the Yala people. Today 80% of the 200,000 Yala people have a Bible-based worldview and a right relationship with God through loyalty/allegiance to Jesus the Christ, the King of this world.

### **THE HEART OF THE CHALLENGE:**

“Animistic Africans that become Christians and then pastors are often very Biblical and Confessional. They are bold in following Jesus and in their eager Gospel witness. On the other hand, many American students that I teach find it hard to be Biblical, Confessional and bold in their witness and practice. Rather they are self-centered and timid about proclaiming the whole council of God. **Why is this?** Are they like the Christians at Martin Luther's time that had a distorted worldview system?

For me the challenge is personal. My own worldview has experienced distortions. It first hit me in 1983 at the end of a mission lecture when a man from Nigeria by the name of Chinadu Imeka stayed behind to talk. He said very quietly, “You are a missionary. I

need to ask you an important question. I need the absolute truth from you.” Without hesitation, I promised to tell him nothing but the truth.

Chinadu began by saying that his background was ‘pagan idolatry.’ His father was the chief priest in his home town until 1980 when Chinadu and his family became Christians. Chinadu’s question for me was, “**What really and truly is Christianity?**” For Chinadu and his family Christianity meant destroying their idols and sacrificing altars, despising Satan, sin and ungodliness and putting idolatry of all kinds out of the center of their thinking and acting. Instead they received the God of the Bible into the center of their lives. They made a full commitment to the Triune God and to Jesus as their living Lord and Savior. They got fully involved in introducing their Good Friend Jesus to others.

Chinadu continued by saying, “I am confused. I think that my family and I do not really understand what Christianity is all about.” I strongly assured Chinadu that putting God front and center and purposefully introducing Jesus as his Good Friend to others is exactly what Christianity is all about. He **forcefully** responded, “I have lived with my Christian university roommates for six months now and they definitely see it **very differently.**”

“What do you mean?” I asked. Chinadu said, “What I mean is that my roommates have something very different from Jesus in the center of their thinking and especially in their acting. They have SPECLS in the center of their lives.” “SPECLS,” I asked, “What is SPECLS?” Chinadu said, “What I mean is that in the center of my roommates’ living (and by the way half of them are studying to be pastors) is SPECLS. That is SUCCESS which depends on PROGRESS, built on EDUCATION and demonstrated by COLLECTING stuff for status, by LEISURE time activities and by SPORTS.

Chinadu was telling the truth. SPECLS is the self-indulgent center of many Americans worldview. SPECLS does reign supreme, even for many pastors and pastoral candidates and students. But I was not ready to be honest. I said, “Chinadu, NO, I believe they do put Jesus front and center.”

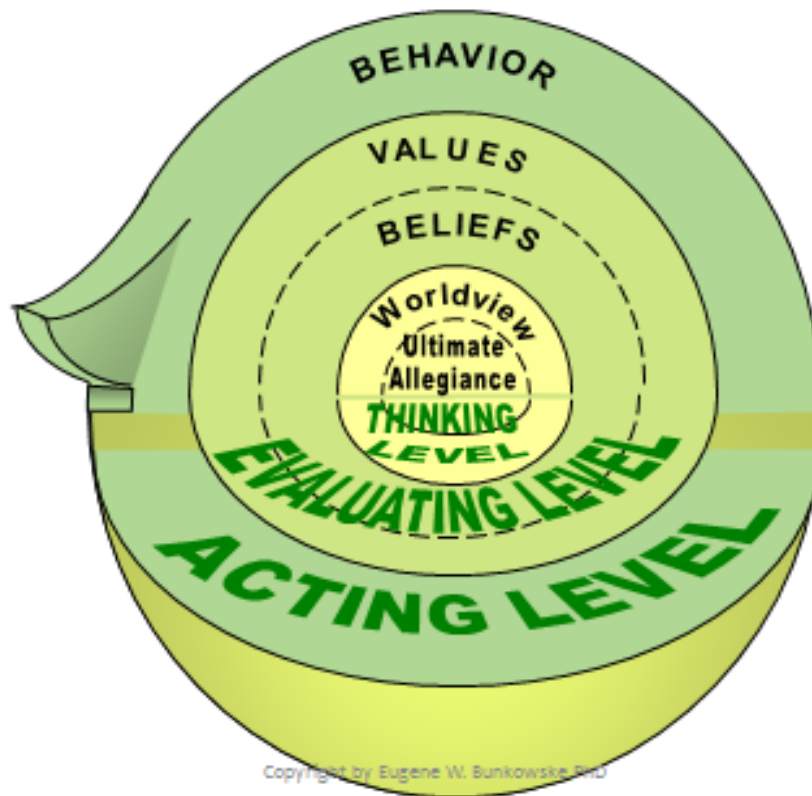
Chinadu **convincingly** said, “I have watched closely. I have asked many questions and it is always the same. They have SPECLS and Satan’s habits in the center of their lives, not Jesus. I have gone to their town-homes and lake-homes and seen the boats and things that fill their houses. I have watched them view violent and pornographic entertainment on TV. I have gone to their sporting events. They and their parents do not hate sin and Satan. They enjoy perversion. They rarely, if ever, study the Bible, pray or introduce others to Jesus. No, Jesus is not the center of what they do. They don’t go to church very often. Dr. Bunkowske, please be honest, tell me the truth. **My family**

**and I got it, wrong, didn't we?** Truly Christianity is about putting SPECLS in the center, not about putting Jesus front and center.”

I confessed to Chinadu that he and his family had it right. I confessed that we in America have corrupted and marginalized Biblical values and a Biblical worldview. We have moved from God-centered, to self-centered, other-centered, stuff-centered and Satan-centered. Traveling back to Ft. Wayne Exodus 20:3, “You shall have no other gods before the Triune God, Father, Son and Spirit.” kept going through my mind. I claimed Jesus as central but in most cases SPECLS was the true confessional center of my life, God was secondary. SPECLS stood right where following Jesus as my Savior, Lord and King and His truth should be located.

Trying to understand it all has led me to picture human culture graphically as an onion. The roundness of the onion helps me think of each human being as follows: In the center is worldview, **the thinking part** which should have ultimate allegiance to Jesus the Christ in the center. Coming up from the center toward the outside is **the evaluating/ judging part** made up of *beliefs* and *values*. Then on the outside edge of the cultural onion is **the behavioral acting part portrayed as follows:**

## LEVELS: Thinking – Evaluating - Acting



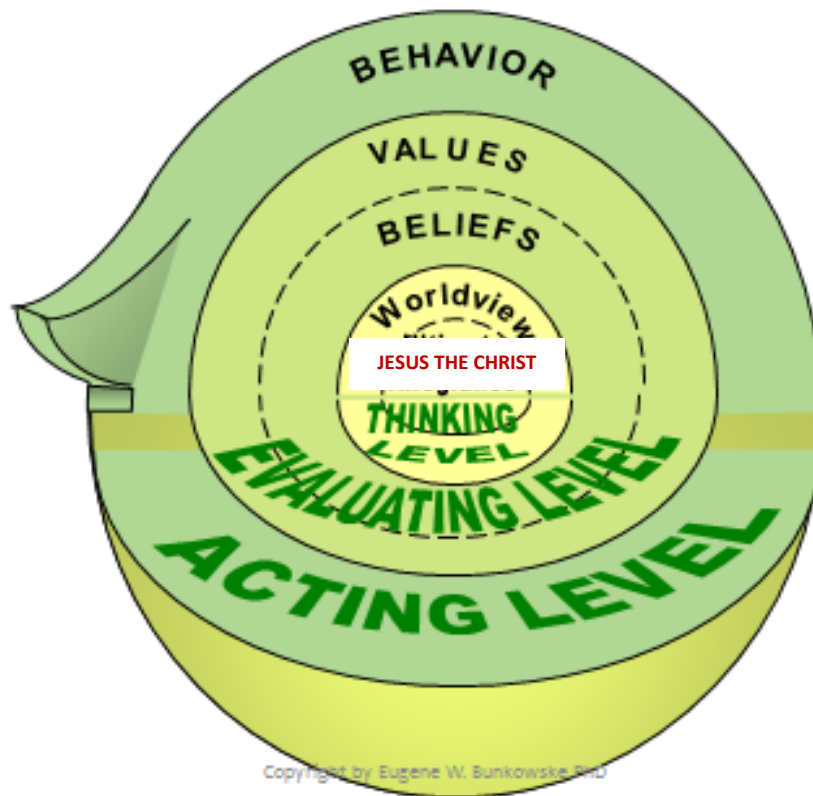
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For the Christian, the ultimate allegiance should always have Jesus the Christ right in the foundational center of the worldview thinking level, graphically portrayed as follows:

# LEVELS: Thinking – Evaluating - Acting

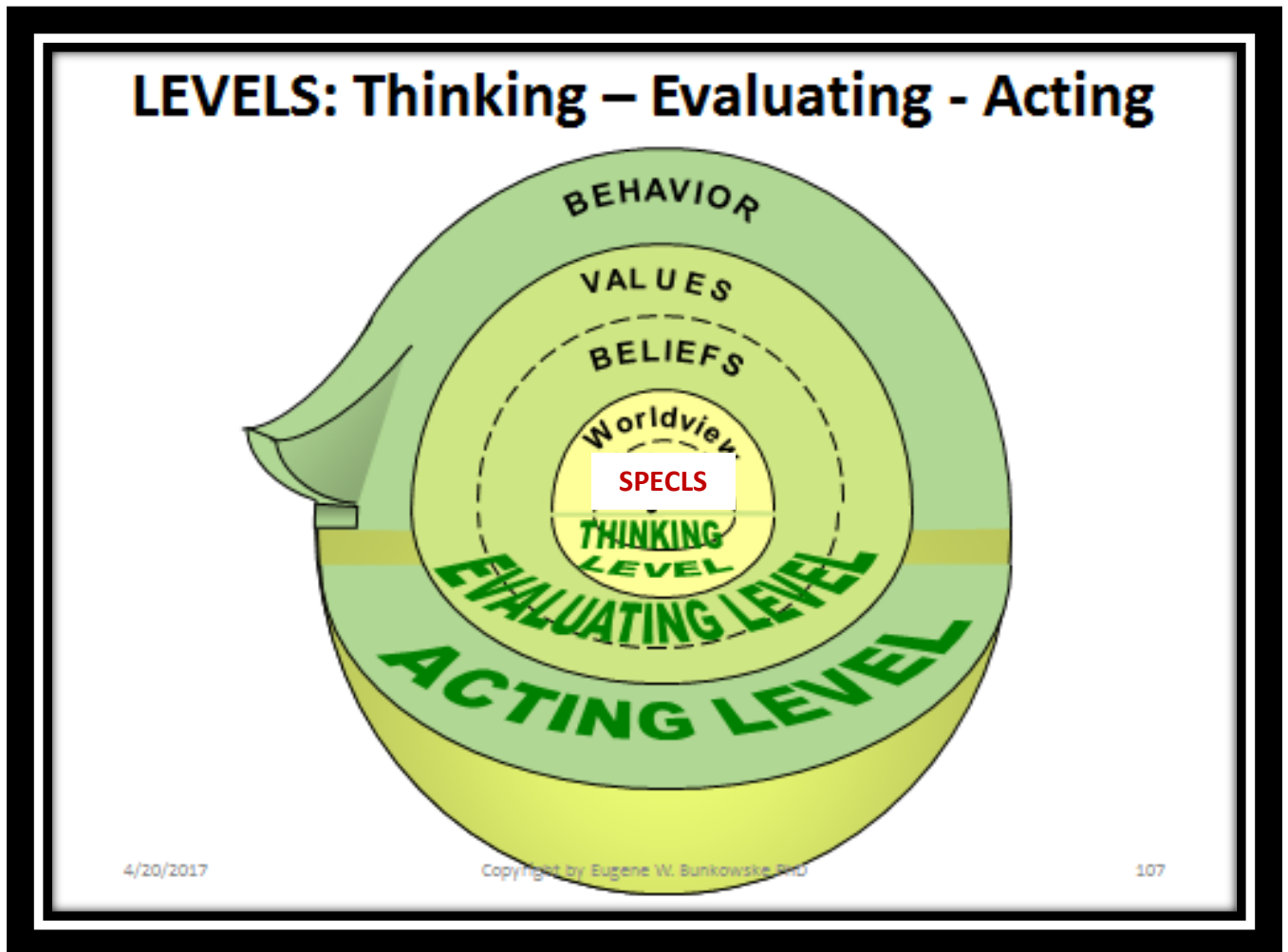


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Unfortunately, the center of the human cultural onion is often filled with a false alternative. Satan is always ready to suggest and initiate such alternatives to replace Jesus the Christ. Satan and our sinful human desires love to take SPECLS out of the non-central place in our life where it can rightly function and put it right in the center of our worldview where only Jesus the Savior, Christ and King belongs. This next cultural onion graphically portrays that SPECLS situation.



Now let us think about the interacting possibilities in the human cultural onion. The interacting possibilities are at least three as follows: 1) Behavior affecting Thinking, 2) Thinking affecting Behavior, and 3) Behavior and Thinking clashing. This interaction can be diagramed as follows:

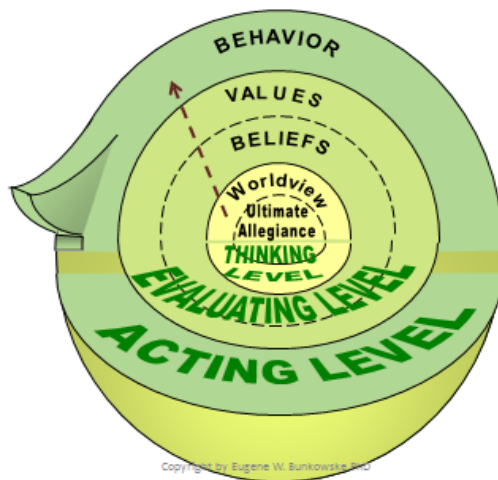


**BEHAVIOR  
AFFECTS  
THINKING**

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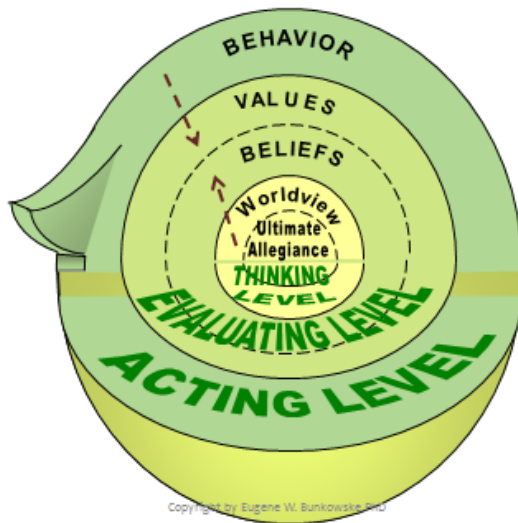
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## BEHAVIOR AND THINKING CLASHING

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Many American Christians experience anxiety and insecurity because their thinking and behavior clash. **Beliefs** tended to stick with our inner, more Biblical **Worldview** while our Americanized **Values** tend to follow our shifting outer **Behavior**. Truly our spirit is willing but our body is weak (Matthew 26:41).

Honestly, I acted much differently in Africa than I do here in America. Here I am an individual **successfully** getting work done to make **progress** based on more and more **education**. The media and my friends push me to be more and more committed to **sports, leisure time activities** and **showy collectables**.

In contrast, my calling (my job description) in Nigeria was to “**evangelize the Yala people**.” Introducing my Good Friend Jesus to the Yala people was central to my life. It was putting the Triune God, Father, Son and Spirit first both in theology/theory and in practical application. For me it meant:

- 1) Thinking and living communally.
- 2) Being out among Yala people in their homes, farms and market places.
- 3) Identifying needs and concerns and doing something about them.
- 4) Helping mothers with their children.
- 6) Praying fervently in private and public.
- 7) Sharing the news of forgiveness of sins, an abundant life in this world and the next.
- 8) Helping others learn how to pray.
- 9) Introducing Jesus, the Christ, as my Friend, King and Savior to everyone over and over again until Jesus was their Good Friend, King and Savior too and until they were introducing Him to others as their Good Friend, King and Savior.
- 10) Getting the Yala language into writing and teaching people to read and write.

- 11) Doing basic Bible Studies with my Yala friends and encouraging them to do Bible Studies with their Yala friends and neighbors.
- 12) Sharing Yala Christian music and helping Yala people sing in their families.
- 13) Devoting myself to building a loving forgiving family as an example to others.
- 14) Encouraging others to pass on what they had learned as soon as they had learned it.

Now let us compare from left to right the distinctive meaning framing components of the **Traditional**, **Modern** and **Postmodern** worldviews:

## **WORLDVIEWS**

<b>C O M P O N E N T S  O F  M E A N I N G</b>	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Modern</b>	<b>Postmodern</b>
	1. Theocentric	Theo-Anthropocentric	Anthropocentric/Atheistic
	2. Integrated	Individuated	Plural/Compartmentalized
	3. Thrift/Asceticism	Self Gratification	Manifest Consumerism
	4. Universal Truth	Positivism/Possibility	Moral Relativism
	5. Divine Revelation	Dualism	Secularism/Evolution
	6. Meta-Narrative	Myth	Many Narratives
	7. Localism	Progressivism	Globalism/Flat Earth-ism
	8. Soul	Psychological	Humanism/Mind
	9. Shame	Blame	No Fault
	10. Oral	Written	Digital
	11. Organic	Mechanic Science	Deconstructionist
	12. Family	Institution	Feminism
	13. Intelligence/Wisdom	Formal Education	Experience
	14. Human Rights	Academic Freedom	Politically Correct
	15. Responsibility/Work	Leisure/Dependency	Welfare State
	16. Hierarchy	Equality/Ability	Non-Hierarchical
	17. Relationship	Materialism	Commodification
	18. Convicted	Uncertain/Doubt	Skeptical

## **Conclusion:**

My ongoing contact with many Africans strengthens my understanding that while traditional Africans are off track in some key worldview components they also have some most basic worldview components very right. Three rudimentary components stand out:

1. The unified framework of the high god, spirits, humans and nature all having their preordained place. In this harmony, everything is sacred and personal.
2. The high god, spirits, humans and non-humans coexist in a coherent system of interdependence, harmony and collective support.
3. Everything is bound together in one moral order. Life is governed by a predetermined system of right and wrong, and is held in check by an arrangement of consequences.

Since 1983, I have often intentionally thought of Chinadu Imeka's comments about SPECLS being in the center of American's worldview. Stuff often is central. Still I believe that God (Father, Son and Spirit) does walk beside us but Satan is not far behind. In fact, at times Satan has first place. I recognize Satan's deadly desire to dethrone Jesus and God's spirit. His ability to tempt, deceive and inflict tension, separation and anxiety on human lives, including the lives of many Christians, pre-seminary students and pastors must be recognized. Christians need to replace Satan's idolatrous lies with spirit of God reality and Biblical truth.

I am convinced that Jesus the Christ who is our Savior and King is the only possible foundational worldview grounding layer for each Christian and especially for every pastor and pastor in training. Then comes layer after layer of successive truth-filled worldview components build directly into the universal underpinning of Jesus the Christ. This is the practical and theological syllabus and curriculum that must once again become central to effective pastoral preparation. At the same time, Pastoral training must destroy America's one-handed stuff oriented, secular SPECLS worldview so that God's revealed practical holistic (spiritual and secular) two-handed Word of Life can entirely permeate Pastoral training from start to finish.

The real battle of our age is between true and corrupt worldview groundings. We cannot take for granted that our seminary students and pastors function with a Biblical, spiritually oriented, God-centered worldview. Rather students must be intentionally and consciously led to reform false, fallen and failing worldview configurations. They must internalize true, renewed, dynamic and healing worldview components based on the Bible-based foundation of God the creator Father sending His Son Jesus to be the promised Messiah, Savior and King along with the Spirit of God who makes God continually operative in this world until Jesus comes back again. On this grounding, pastors and pastors in training can safely stake their lives and ministry actions.

**The fact of the matter is that we need spiritual pastors/leaders who are committed to set aside the default American worldview and replace it with the powerful and true foundational Triune God-centered worldview. Then they will be ready to breath, live and speak the Good News of Jesus the Christ in all their realities and to lead congregations of people in doing the same.**

SOLI DEO GLORIA!

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