

# **Modeling Globalism in Leadership**

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We live in a day of rapid globalization. Travel, immigration, telephones, fax, e-mail, the superhighway, and global trade all contribute to it. Today Swiss Air books its plane reservations through a computer in New Delhi. Tomorrow it will be Luftansa. International students are a major part of this networking of the world into a single system, and you gathered here are at the center of their experiences. You struggle day to day with the problems inherent in cross-cultural living. How do we deal with cultural differences that are far deeper than simply differences in food, dress, language or even beliefs? Our international students bring with them their worldviews, their fundamental assumptions about reality and life that shape everything they do? It should not surprise us that in the confusion of our multicultural campuses there is a great deal of misunderstanding, of ethnocentric feelings, and of misjudgments.

How do we as people seeking to build bridges between cultures on our campuses mediate between them? What we teach the international students is vital to our task, but let me suggest that even more important is our lives as models of what we teach--as models of what it means to be a global person. Let me offer a few suggestions regarding this modeling in our ministries.

## Who Is Our Other?

We must begin our discussion not with the details of how we relate to international students, but with the ways in which we perceive them. Who are these **others**? For our views of these others are the foundations on which our relationships with them are built. We cannot for long mask our views of the other by civility and cordiality. Our true views and attitudes will soon surface in our paramessages.

People have always had stereotypes of their others. In the sixteenth century Sebastian Münster described the Scotch as faithful and vengeful; the Jews prudent but envious; the Persians steadfast but disloyal; the Egyptians stable and crafty; the Greeks wise but deceitful; and the Spaniards drunken, violent and sophisticated. In 1527 Henry Agrippa declared, "In singing also the Italians bleat, the Spaniards Whine, the Germans Howl, and the French Quaver (Harris 1968, 399-400)." What have been our western perceptions of Others, and how have these changed through history?

### The Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages Europe saw foreigners in two ways. One was 'monsters.' North Europeans had stories of gargantuan humanoids who were embodiments of evil forces (Jeffrey 1980). They spoke of *satyr* (half human-half goat), *pyrs* (hairy woodman), water-sprites, the Old Norse *êviðr*, the Scandinavian *bergrisar*, and Grendel of Beowulf. After the coming of Christianity, these monsters were seen as the "descendants of Cain." Following considerable theological debate, the church's response to this belief in monsters was given by Augustine in The City of God. These others are humans. Despite

this affirmation, belief in monstrous races continued until the sixteenth century. The second image of aliens during the Middle Ages was that of 'infidel.' The Muslim armies were driving the Christians back, and they were seen as Infidels--humans who had heard and rejected God and, therefore, had to be killed.

### The Age of Exploration

The picture changed radically at the end of the fifteenth century. European explorers, seeking new routes to the spices of India, discovered unknown lands and strange peoples not found on their maps. The age was one of exploration, and of redrawing mental and physical maps to include these hitherto unknown peoples. Were these creatures of the new worlds humans? Did they have souls that need to be saved? Could they be enslaved or killed? These raised profound questions not only of geography but also of sociology, economics, politics and theology.

Others as Pagans The response of Christians was that these were truly humans, but, if so, how should the Christians relate to them? The answer was they were 'pagans' and 'heathens.' They were not Christian heretics, nor Muslim infidels who rejected Christian truth. They were fully people, but ones who had never had the opportunity to hear the Gospel. But then they were also 'potential Christians.' The result was the birth of the modern mission movement, first by the Catholics, and later by the Protestants.

Other as Slave The western commercial world saw the newly discovered Others as a source of goods and labor--of gold and slaves. Exploration was not random. The explorers were looking *for* something: namely gold, spices and labor. But what right did the Europeans have to enslave other peoples? Many

argued that these Others were like children. If so, the Europeans were justified in their colonial expansion in which they acted as parents, educating and managing the natives' wealth for the natives' own good.

Other as Savage Scientists took a different view of these others. Science was becoming increasingly secular. The earth in the fifteenth century was seen as an island (Orbis Terrarum), made up of Europe, Asia and Africa, with the Holy City of Jerusalem in the center and God in control. This sacred space was surrounded by the dark, inhuman, evil void of the deep waters. Crossing the seas and discovering new lands radically changed how Europeans viewed the earth. Now, for the first time, the world was seen as a uniform, continuous, secular space covered by continents and oceans. In this new world, Others were no longer 'fallen' and in need of redemption, they were secular humans and could be compared with other humans. But they are : "barbarians" and "savages". It is we who explore the world, and name and study its people.

### Age of Enlightenment

The definition of the Other changed with the coming of the Enlightenment. The shift is epitomized in the experiences of Robinson Crusoe, the quintessential Enlightenment man--solitary individual, Cartesian rationalist, and technological inventor. After almost eighteen years alone on an island Crusoe comes across the charred human bones on the beach. Cannibals! From the depth of his European body and soul he vomits (McGrane 1989, 44). His initial reaction was that these others were "savages," "beasts," "evil,"--a response that fit the Age of Exploration. By contrast, he is "civilized," "refined," and "good."

Crusoe decides to slaughter all the savages he can, but, on further reflection, he undergoes a worldview shift. He writes,

What authority or call had I to pretend to be judge and executioner upon these men as criminals, whom Heaven had thought fit for so many ages to suffer unpunished to go on . . . . It is certain these people do not commit this as a crime; it is not against their own consciences' reproving or their light reproaching them (Defoe 1961, 168).

He decides that it is wrong for him to judge other people by *his* standards. They must be judged in the light of *their own* morality and culture.

When Crusoe rescues one of the cannibals, he exercises the sovereign right of the Explorer and names him--he is "Friday" and he will address Crusoe as "master." Thereby Crusoe transforms the stranger from a nameless *savage* who exists beyond the boundaries of humanity and civilization, into Friday, a *primitive human being* who is a member *in* Crusoe's world. Crusoe teaches Friday English and gives him a place to live half way between Crusoe's house and the forest inhabited by beasts and cannibals. Friday is awestruck by Crusoe's gun and wants to worship it. Crusoe teaches him that it is not miraculous, but can be explained in natural terms.

In their daily encounters, Crusoe is increasingly forced to recognize Friday's full humanity. How, then, can Crusoe account for the differences between them. His answer is that Friday is unenlightened, therefore naked, primitive and nonChristian, while he is Enlightened, clothed and Christian. But Friday can be taught, and saved through Crusoe's efforts.

Other as Primitive- Aboriginal-Ancestor Crusoe marks the transition into the world of the Enlightenment. Three fundamental shifts mark this change in the

scientific and popular world. First, Others were no longer 'pagans' and potential 'Christian,' but "unenlightened." Evil was no longer sin, it was ignorance. The earlier distinction between refined-Christian vs. idolatrous-savage was replaced by the *civilized*-European vs. the superstitious-ignorant-*primitive*.

Second, the other became 'aboriginals'. They represented humans who had not evolved as we in the west had. They still lived in the 'stone age'. They were living fossils.

Third, the other became our 'ancestors'. Joseph Conrad captures this view in his description of his trip in Africa,

We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. . . . But suddenly as we struggled around a bend, there would be a glimpse of peaked grass roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands, clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying. . . . It was unearthly, and the men were--No, they were not inhuman. . . . They howled and leaped . . . but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity--like yours--the thought of your remote kinship (1950, 105)

Anthropologists of the time saw the world as a museum. In the Amazon we see our remotest ancestors, in New Guinea, we can see stage two, and so on. The people of the world reveal *our* history, and the only audience who can understand the play is, of course, "us." We have the benefit of hindsight: we know how the story ends, we *are* how the story ends. It was clear to the scientists that western civilization is the most evolved of all cultures. In this light, the colonial venture is not oppressive, it is our benevolent endeavor to help the Others join us in our full humanity.

But there remained in the minds of some a gnawing doubt. Is it possible that savages are Nobel Savages who are happier than we? Herman Melville

captures this in his description of the encounter of a French admiral and a native king.

The admiral came forward with uncovered head and extended one hand, while the old king saluted him by a stately flourish of his weapon. The next moment they stood side by side, these two extremes of the social scale--the polished splendid Frenchman, and the poor tattooed savage. . . At what an immeasurable distance, thought I, are these two beings removed from each other! In the one is shown the result of long centuries of progressive refinement, which have gradually converted the mere creature into the semblance of all that is elevated and grand; while the other, after the lapse of the same period, has not advanced one step in the career of improvement. "Yet after all" quoth I to myself, "insensible as he is to a thousand wants, and removed from harassing cares, may not the savage be the happier man of the two? (1974, 33).

The Enlightenment had a deep effect on Christian missions. Most missionaries rejected the theory of evolution, but the general ideas which were part of the evolutionary Zeitgeist were absorbed with the air they breathed.

Charles Taber notes,

The superiority of Western civilization as the culmination of human development, the attribution of that superiority to the prolonged dominance of Christianity, the duty of Christians to share civilization and the gospel with the "benighted heathen"--these were the chief intellectual currency of their lives (1991, 71).

### The Age of Post-Enlightenment

Just as Crusoe, in his encounter with 'Friday', came to see him as increasingly as a man, so western encounters with Others forced westerners to see others as fully and equally human. This raised new questions. How could the Others be equal to us, and yet Other? New paradigms emerged in anthropology to answer this.



Other as Native In anthropology the other was redefined as 'native'. Others are not primitive, but fully rational beings having their own autonomous cultures. The key transition here is from the word "civilization" to "cultures." The word "culture" asserts that the Other is fully human and contemporary, not a fossil ancestor. Cultures are unique and *sui generis*. Each is discrete, bounded and self-contained, and 'functions' to maintain a harmonious society. Cultures are also morally neutral. People in one culture should not judge other cultures. To do so is ethnocentric and imperialist. There are no universals against which cultures can be evaluated.

At first anthropologists studied people from their scientific points of view. Then they sought to see the world through the eyes of the people they were studying. The others now became *natives* who had their own cultures with their own internal logic and coherence.

This view of others as natives and culture as morally neutral has deeply influenced our western Christian view of the world. We see cultures as integrated wholes which we should not change. The preservation of cultures is of supreme value. Some are now our right to study and speak for Others. Let them speak for themselves. To describe them is to define them, and to exercise a new colonialism over them. The result is an insurmountable barrier between Us and Them--between We and Others.

### A Christian Response

Where do we go from here? It is clear that as Christians we have been influenced more by our world than by the Word in how we view others. We need to return to a biblical view of 'others' in order to map a new way for missions and

anthropology. We cannot view the other as Savage, or embrace the Enlightenment views of the other as Primitive and Ancestor. Nor can we accept the post-modern view of other as Totally Other. How then should we view our Others?

Others as Us First, as Christians we must affirm our common humanity with all people. The Scriptures leads us to a startling conclusion: *at the deepest level of our identity as humans, there are no others, there is only us.* On the surface we are males and females, blacks and whites, rich and poor, but beneath this we are one humanity. Our oneness of humanity is declared in the creation account (Gen. 1:26), and affirmed by the universalism implicit in the Old Testament (Ps 148:11-13, Is 45:22, Micah 4:1-2). In Christ and the New Testament the implications of our common humanity are fully worked out. When a Pharisee asked, "Who is my neighbor?"--in other words, who is one of us?, Jesus turns the question on its head and asks, "If you Other, a Samaritan, is a neighbor to your brother, a suffering Jew, who are you?" The Pharisee was forced to admit either that he was indeed a neighbor to the Samaritan, or that he had cut himself off from his fellow Jew. Jesus taught, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matt. 5:43-44 NRSV)." War demands that we hate our enemies and brand them as Other. Jesus says, our enemies are Us, therefore we must love them.

If we at the deepest level we view some people as Other, our attempts to build bridges of reconciliation between "us" and "them" will fail. Beneath all the bridges we build, we know that there is still the chasm of Otherness which will

separate us when things go bad. If we begin with the fact of our one humanity, we can celebrate our differences because they are secondary.

In affirming the oneness of humanity, we do not deny the great difficulty in understanding people in other cultures. Far too often we claim to know what others are thinking and feeling, when, in fact, we are totally wrong. The more we study cultural differences the more we realize how difficult true cross-cultural communication really is. Learning to understand people in other cultures in a fallen world is a long and difficult process, but by listening and learning we can learn to know them not just as objects of our analysis, but as humans like ourselves.

Others as Brothers and Sisters The Scriptures leads us to a second startling conclusion: *in the church there are no others, there are only us--members of the one body of Christ*. Peter's amazement at what was taking place can be detected in his words in the house of Cornelius, "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality(Acts 10:34)!" The unity of the church is not a product of the Good News, it is an essential part of that Gospel. The Apostle Paul writes, "[Christ] tore down the wall we used to keep each other at a distance. . . Then he started over. Instead of continuing with two groups of people separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, he created a new kind of human being, a fresh start for everyone. ( Eph. 2:14-15 Peterson 1993, 404). It should come as no surprise that in the churches Paul planted Jews, Greeks, barbarians, Thracians, Egyptians, and Romans were able to feel at home. This mutual acceptance of Jews and Gentiles in the church was itself a testimony to the world of the transforming power of the Gospel. In Christ we *are* one body (Eph 4:4). This unity of a shared new life in

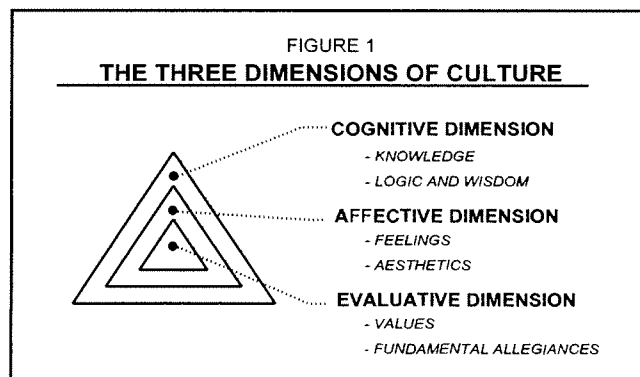
Christ bridges the human distinctions of ethnicity (Gal 2:11-21), class (1 Cor 10: - 11:) and gender (Gal 3:28, Acts 2:44f, 4:32).

How do you and I view others, particularly our International students. The way we see them determines in large measure how we relate to them. We need to model in our relationship to them the awareness of our oneness as humans, and our oneness as Christians.

### **How Do We Model Relationships to Our International Students?**

Seeing others as humans created in the image of God and like us does not mean that building relationships with them is easy. All of you know from personal experience that while all people are fully and equally humans, they come from different cultures, and these cultural differences create a great many problems on our campuses. How can we understand and respond to these differences?

Let us begin with a simple definition of 'culture': namely, "the more or less integrated patterns of behavior and products shared by a community of people which regulate what they think, feel and do. Let us unpack some of its meanings. Note, first that culture relates to "ideas, feelings and values." There are three basic dimension to culture, and each of these presents us with unique problems in inter-cultural relationships (figure 1).



#### The Cognitive Dimension

Knowledge ideas, beliefs, and worldviews provide the conceptual content of a culture. It provides the people with linguistic categories with which to think, the logic they should use, and information about what exists and what does not. Without this shared knowledge life, communication and community life are impossible. On the other hand, because it provides us with the fundamental ingredients of our thoughts, we find it almost impossible to break away from its grasp.

The first barrier to relating to people in another culture is **misunderstanding**. This has to do with a lack of knowledge and understanding of the culture of another culture--and that leads to confusion.

Misunderstandings are often humorous and may have little serious consequence. We may extend our hand to someone from Japan, only to find that he or she is bowing graciously. We may set a time for an appointment, but the student appears a half hour later and does not offer an apology. At Fuller Theological Seminary we had an African student arrive for study. In the first weeks he formed a friendship with an American student, and when the American invited him to attend the funeral of his father, the African agreed to go. The day came and the African had to decide what clothes to wear. He decided he wanted to show appreciation and deep friendship to his new acquaintance, so he dressed in his work clothes so that--in African style-- he could help in digging the grave, hoping that he could borrow a shovel when they got there. When his American friend drove up dressed in a dark suit, the African realized something had gone wrong.

Sometimes, however, misunderstandings are more serious. Western missionaries to another country took along canned food. At first the people were

friendly, but later began to avoid the missionaries. The missionaries tried to find out why. Finally, one old man told them, "When you came, we watched your strange ways. You brought round tins and on the outside of some was a picture of beans. You opened them and inside were beans, and you ate them. On the outside of some were pictures of corn, and inside was corn and you ate it. On the outside of some were pictures of meat, and inside was meat, and you ate it. When you had your baby you brought tins on the outside were pictures of babies. You opened them and fed the meat inside to your baby!" The people's conclusion was perfectly logical--but it was a misunderstanding.

Misunderstandings go deeper than misinterpreting ideas. Underlying our beliefs are worldviews of which we are hardly aware. These are the fundamental cognitive assumptions about the nature of things that we take for granted. They are what we think **with**, not what we think **about**. For example, in many societies all rules and regulations are negotiable. Nothing is finally fixed. When students come to the U.S. to study, they automatically try to bend the rules through negotiation to get what they want. We, on the other hand, feel that to make exceptions is unfair to the other students, and that these students are trying to manipulate us. And that makes us angry.

There are two types of misunderstandings that we need to overcome: our misunderstandings of international students and their misunderstandings of us and our schools. To overcome the first of these we must come as learners, and study the students' cultures. Here we must be careful not to jump to the conclusion that after a little effort we really do understand where they are coming from. For the most part, their culture makes sense to people, and when we think something they say or do is foolish, we need to examine it more carefully.

To overcome the international students' misunderstandings of us and our customs, we need to be open and explicit in explaining our ways to them. At times it is helpful to discuss how cultures differ in their way of handling things. This helps the students see themselves, and the unexamined assumptions they make.

### The Affective Dimension

Culture also has to do with feelings people have--with their attitudes, notions of beauty, tastes in food and dress, likes and dislikes, and ways of enjoying themselves. People on one culture like the food spicy, in another sweet and bland. Members of some societies express their emotions and may be aggressive and bellicose; in others they learn to be self-controlled and calm. Emotions also play an important part in all human relationships, in our notions of etiquette and propriety, and in fellowship.

Cross-cultural confusion on the affective level leads to **ethnocentrism**--the attitude that their culture is better and more civilized than other cultures. This response has to do with feelings about other cultures, not with understanding them.

The root of ethnocentrism is our human tendency to respond to other people's ways by using our own affective assumptions, and to reinforce these responses with deep feelings of approval or disapproval. When we are confronted by another culture, our own is called into question. Our defense is to avoid the issue by concluding that our culture is better and other people are less civilized.

But ethnocentrism is a two-way street. We feel that people in other cultures are primitive, and they judge us to be uncivilized. For example, some North

Americans were hosting a visiting Indian scholar at a restaurant. One of them who had never been abroad asked, "Do you really eat with your fingers in India?" Implicit in his question, of course, was his cultural attitude that eating with one's fingers is crude and dirty. North Americans use fingers for carrots sticks and potato chips, but never for mashed potatoes and gravy or T-bone steaks. The Indian scholar replied, "You know, in India we look at it differently than you do. I always wash my hands carefully before I eat, and I only use my right hand. And besides, my fingers have never been in anyone else's mouth. When I look at a fork or spoon, I often wonder how many other strangers have already had them in their mouths!"

Ethnocentrism occurs wherever cultural differences are found. North Americans are shocked when they see the poor of other cultures living in the streets. People in those societies are appalled when we surrender our aged and sick and the bodies of our departed to strangers for care.

The solution to ethnocentrism is empathy. We need to appreciate other cultures and their ways. But our feelings of superiority and our negative attitudes towards strange customs run deep and are not easily rooted out. One way to overcome ethnocentrism is to be learners of other cultures, for our self-centeredness is often rooted in our ignorance of others. Another is to deal with the philosophical questions raised by cultural pluralism. If we do not examine them, we will be unconsciously threatened by accepting another culture, for to do so calls into question our implicit belief that our own culture is right or better, and others are wrong. A third way to overcome ethnocentrism is to avoid stereotyping people in other cultures, but rather to see them as individuals and fully human beings like ourselves. The recognition of our common humanity bridges the



differences that divide us. Finally, we need to remember that people love their own cultures, and if we wish to reach them, we must do so within the context of those cultures.

### Evaluative Dimension

Each culture also has values by which it judges human relationships to be moral or immoral, proper or improper. Each also has its primary allegiances, its culturally defined goals, and its ways to measure success.

What can go wrong on the evaluative level? The answer is premature judgments (figure 2). When we relate to other cultures we tend to judge them before we have learned to understand or appreciate them. In so doing we use the values of our own culture, not of some metacultural or external criteria.

Consequently, other cultures look less civilized.

Premature judgments are based on misunderstandings and ethnocentrism, so they are usually wrong. They also close the door to further understanding and communication. What is the solution? As we learn to understand and appreciate other cultures, we come to respect their integrity as viable ways of organized human life. Some are stronger in one area such as technology, and others in another area such as family ties. But all "do the job," that is, they all make life possible and more or less meaningful.

To say this invites to take a position of cultural relativism. Cultures may be relative to one another, but all stand under the judgment of God's standards of righteousness and love which affirm the good in human creativity and condemn the evil. We must judge the evil in all cultures. Not to do so would make us moral cretins. As Peter Berger notes, some acts, such as the Nazi gas chambers, are so

evil that to refuse to condemn them in absolute terms would offer *prima facie* evidence "not only of a profound failure in the understanding of judgment, but more profoundly of a fatal impairment of *humanitas* (1970, 66). In the end, cultural relativism leads to a total disbelief in science, religion and all systems of human knowledge. Ernest Gelner points out,

Relativism **does** entail nihilism: if standards are inherently and inescapably expressions of something called culture, and can be nothing else, then no culture can be subjected to a standards, because (*ex hypothesi*) there cannot be a trans-cultural standards which would stand in judgement over it (Gelner 1992, 50).

The problem is, how do we avoid judging other cultures by the standards of our own. How do we free ourselves from our monocultural biases. Interestingly enough, we cannot develop a transcultural perspective without first experiencing the shattering of our monocultural perspectives of truth and righteousness. Our temptation, when we first realize that other cultures have different norms, is to reject them without examination, and to justify our own as biblical. This only closes the door for us to examine our own moral standards to determine which of them are based on biblical foundations and which on our cultural values.

Having experienced the shattering of our own cultural absolutes and faced the abyss of relativism, we can move beyond monoculturalism and relativism to an affirmation of the transcultural norms of Scripture and the affirmation and critique of cultures. We will find that a great many norms in other cultures are "good." A high value is often placed on taking time to relate, to care for the aged, and to share with the needy. On the other hand, we will find norms that conflict with biblical morality, such as self-centeredness, arrogance, manipulation, wife-beating and blatantly breaking the laws of society.

### Living in Two Words

As bicultural brokers that live between two worlds--the American world and the worlds of our International Students, we are in a difficult position. We are essential mediators between these worlds, like moneychangers at the airport, but we are also distrusted by both sides who feel we have not taken them seriously. Our temptation is to become more rigidly American and defend it with the fact that these students are in an American institution and must abide by its rules. Or we adopt a sentimental affirmation of the students' cultures and apologize for the way American works. Neither of these solves the problems we face. Rather we need to affirm both our American ways and recognize the validity of the students' ways and seek to help them move into our culture with a minimum of shock and pain. As Christian institutions we have a particular advantage, for despite the differences and our fallen lives, there is a transcultural oneness we all share that makes one body. That oneness is often best seen and affirmed in our worship services as we gather from many nations to worship our Lord together, and to join in Christian love and fellowship.

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