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# Whose Faith? Faith Integration for Postmodern Christian Business Students

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**ABSTRACT:** Teaching students to integrate faith and business has been a long-held goal of Christian business faculty members. Recently, that undertaking has become more complicated, not because of changes in business, but because of changes in faith. Many millennial students have adopted a postmodern worldview and a post-foundational epistemology. These students now think differently about faith (McLaren, 2001; Jones, 2008). While they may hold to traditional creedal propositions, their *process* of believing is different (Miller, 2004). This article distinguishes between modern and postmodern thinking and discusses relevant epistemological and theological differences. Learning needs of postmodern business students that Christian business faculty must meet to teach faith and business integration are identified. Concrete examples of adjustments that may be required of Christian business faculty to meet these new learning needs are given, and the article concludes with a charge to Christian business faculty to accept the challenges involved in faith integration for postmodern students.

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## INTRODUCTION

As Christian business faculty, we believe in the integration of faith and business (“CBFA Purpose,” 2013). We believe that God has a purpose for business people beyond the simple profit motive. We believe, pursuant to Colossians 3, the letters of Brother Lawrence (Brother Lawrence, 1967), and numerous other texts, that there is a relationship between worldly work and spiritual reality. We believe God can, and wants to, use Christians’ daily work in the business community to advance His kingdom (Seibert, 2011). We also believe, as Christian business faculty, that He wants us to teach our students about that integration (Edgell, 2010).

Dr. Richard C. Chewning (2001) reminded us over 10 years ago that God necessarily empowers us to do this work. With His help, we have been laboring at it for years, striving to deliver it in our classes. The Spirit’s role reminds us that teaching is a gift (Romans 12:6-7) that is intended to grow believers in the practice of their faith. We talk about faith integration at our conferences and write about it in our professional journals (Smith & Smith, 2011; Holder & Rollins, 2004). For some of us, it is our *raison d’être*.

Yet, at this moment in history, the whole project may be in jeopardy. A change is occurring in Western culture that impacts not just how people think about integrating faith and business, or even just how they think about

faith. A change is occurring that impacts how people think (Oppel, 2007). Succinctly stated, the epistemology (theory of knowledge) practiced by the millennial generation is different from that practiced by modern thinkers. They may not think like those of us who are moderns think. They may not believe like we believe. Their faith may be different from ours (Miller, 2004).

This presents a potential problem for our calling to teach the integration of faith and business to the next generation of Christian business people. If we are to teach them to effectively integrate faith with business, it can only be authentic when it is their own faith and not some stylized version of our faith that they do not, and will not, embrace. To accomplish our mission, we must understand their faith and how it may differ from our own. We must re-examine their learning needs and be prepared to adapt our teaching focus to meet those needs.

We also need to begin. Collectively, Christian colleges and universities graduate thousands of millennial business students every semester, many of whom have expressed a desire to integrate their faith with their business career. The time has come to experiment with new teaching strategies for integrating faith and business and to share the results of those experiments so that all of us can adapt to the new breed of students we are receiving.

While Chewning (2001) focused on adapting integration styles to the inclinations of the instructor, this article focuses on adapting our methods of integration to the needs of millennial students. This article identifies postmodern students (or post-foundational thinking in students) and distinguishes their epistemology from the foundationalism in which previous generations were trained. It identifies how their differing epistemology produces a faith that, while potentially valid, is different from that of modern Christians. The article then discusses some of the learning needs of postmodern Christian business students, with a focus on some of the issues with which they will require our assistance. In 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, Paul says:

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.

Following Paul's lead, Christian business faculty members must learn to speak in the language of those we teach if we are going to connect the Gospel to their lives. To provide more concrete support to the educational community, the article includes some examples of how to apply the principles discussed to teach faith integration to post-foundational thinking Christian business students, using categories set forth in Roller (2013). The article concludes with a brief summary and a charge to the Christian business academy to accept the challenges involved in faith integration for postmodern students.

### THE GENERATIONAL DIVIDE: FOUNDATIONALISM AND POST-FOUNDATIONALISM

Although classical foundationalism can be traced back to Aristotle, modern Cartesian foundationalism is an epistemological system often described using building metaphors (Posten, 2014). Some truth statements are so basic as to be beyond question. They are foundational (Plantiga, 1981). Common examples of foundational truth statements might include: "God is love," "I think therefore I am," and "All men are created equal [and] endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights."

These truth statements are not derived from other statements. They are accepted as patently true from revelation, from observation, from authority, or from some other source in a way that renders them unassailable.

These foundational truths then become the basis upon which other truth statements rest. If God is love, then God's interactions with humankind must be motivated by that love (John 3:16). If I exist, then my perceptions of the material world are valid at some level. If all men are equal and endowed with rights, then actions taken to defend those rights are morally acceptable even if undertaken in opposition to an established government. An entire epistemological system of truth statements can be built on these foundations, pyramid style, through the exercise of logical argument (Newman, 2010). It all rests on what is "known."

Many look to post-structuralist philosophers like Michel Foucault or Jacques Derrida for the origins of post-foundationalism, but its theological roots can be found in the writings of Nietzsche (Grenz & Franke, 2001; Müller, 2011; Newbigin, 1989). Not surprisingly — with this kind of ancestry — post-foundationalism begins with a process of deconstruction, questioning truth statements that previously had been assumed or accepted. Post-foundationalists, however, would insist that it is more than a nihilistic approach to epistemology (McKnight, 2007). Rather, it is a

clearing away of modern-era errors in order to make room for a more realistic view of truth (Grenz & Franke, 2001).

Post-foundational thinkers may see modern foundationalists as arrogant. They hold that assuming one can know things foundationally oversteps the human capacity for knowledge (Jones, 2008). They point to the fundamental “truths” of previous generations, now discredited, to prove their position. Two hundred years ago, they would argue, Occidental people widely assumed that Africans were sub-human and were worthy of being enslaved. One hundred fifty years ago it was widely held in the United States that women were less clear-thinking than men and should not be permitted suffrage. Those now dispatched “truths,” they would contend, make it arrogant to assume one can know foundationally that homosexuality or abortion is immoral or that the Bible is inerrant. One of the authors, for example, was recently accused by a student of being “judgmental” when he stated that working in the pornography industry was contrary to Christian ethics.

Post-foundationalism is often described, not by a building metaphor, but in terms of a spider web (Grenz & Franke, 2001). Truth statements are held in tension with other statements, not built on one another. In post-foundational epistemology, no truth statement is beyond doubt. All truth statements are subject to being reconsidered and revised. Paradigms — particularly moral paradigms — are not built on the basis of revelation or authority, but on a pragmatic interconnection of truths that allows one to operate within the world (Kinnaman, 2006). Oftentimes in one of the author’s class discussions on moral issues, students share conflicting points of view, ending with phrases like, “That’s just what I think,” without any attempt to reconcile the conflict.

It is important to note that while post-foundationalism had its genesis in theological discourse, it is not, itself, a theological system. It is an epistemological system.<sup>1</sup> From the early days of the Christian church, however, scholars have recognized that “philosophy is the handmaiden of theology” (Turner, n.d.) and the adoption of a post-foundational epistemology has definitely had an impact on the theology of the millennial generation.

While the project of modern theology was largely focused on identifying and proving dogma, postmodern theology operates more like a dialectic conversation with a focus on relationships (Jones, 2008). Modern Christians identify themselves according to what they “know” (or, sometimes, “believe”) and classify people into denominations and traditions on that basis. Postmodern Christians are more accepting of multiple viewpoints but are not undisciplined in that acceptance. The Pew Research Center

reports, for instance, that “while more young Americans than older Americans view their faith as the single path to salvation, young adults are also more open to multiple ways of interpreting their religion” (Pond, Smith, & Clement, 2010, Religious Attitudes and Beliefs section, para. 9). They are less likely to regularly attend church and to officially affiliate with a denomination, but they have a higher rate of daily prayer than past generations did at their age (Pond, Smith, & Clement, 2010).

Postmodern Christians are not necessarily relativists. That pejorative label might be appropriately applied to some in the millennial generation, but no more so than to many in the modern era. Relativism’s source is found in foundational thinking, not post-foundational thinking. The Enlightenment’s focus on believing only what can be rationally proven led to the conclusion that ethical principles are relative. While modern Christians generally saw Scripture as a source for rational truth, non-believers made a clear distinction between reason and revelation. This led foundationalist thinkers to reject truth claims related to ethical or spiritual issues (Hollinger, 2002). Relativists might hold that all moral viewpoints are true in that they are equally valid, and, although one might prefer one’s own convictions, one should only examine alternative views on their own terms (Fish, 2002). Post-foundationalists, however, believe in truth. They just refuse to accept a class of truth claims as being beyond doubt or criticism and rather celebrate doubt as a vital element of faith (DeYoung & Kluck, 2008, p. 49).

A critical gating question for Christian business faculty members who undertake teaching the integration of faith and business is whether the faith espoused by postmodern students is a “saving faith.” Some faculty members might rationally determine that a student who does not accept certain propositions as foundational — such as the inerrancy of scripture — is not “Christian” in the sense that they mean the word. While that question is beyond the scope of this article, it produces certain logical choices. Those who see a contradiction between postmodernism and Christianity may feel a need to evangelize those students who do not possess a foundationalist faith before talking about integration of faith and business. The remainder of this article, with its focus on application, however, will be unnecessary for those business faculty members. Those who are prepared to accept the postmodern Christians at their word that they are, indeed, Christian, will instead face the task taken up hereinafter, to teach the integration of business with *their* faith, rather than a modern Christian faith.

Since some younger Christian business faculty members may be millenials — defined as those born between 1977

and 1992 (Zickuhr, 2010) — some reading this article, particularly in the academy, may see themselves more in the postmodern and post-foundational side of the discussion than in the modern and foundational. However, since the average age of Christian business faculty, as shown in a recent survey, was 55.9 years old (Bovee, Roller, Andrews, & Kennedy, 2013), most are of the boomer generation, defined as those born between 1946 and 1964 (Zickuhr, 2010). This article intentionally collapses the concepts of millennials, postmodernism, and post-foundationalism. Among our respective millennial student bodies and within the mostly older Christian business academy, there may be many individuals who, while modern in their worldview, are post-foundational in their epistemology, or vice-versa.

### THE LEARNING NEEDS OF THE POSTMODERN CHRISTIAN BUSINESS STUDENT

The Barna Group (2011) reports that 84 percent of Christians ages 18-29 do not know how the Bible applies to their career or profession. In the experience of the authors, many Christian business students who evidence a post-foundational epistemology struggle with how to integrate their faith with their incipient business careers. That does not mean they are not looking. The authors have had hours of conversations with students, in the classroom and outside of it, on the topic of how they can be Christian in the secular workplace. In the college of business where two of the authors serve, the faculty produce a weekly devotional targeted at the university's own faculty and staff and at working people outside the university. The devotionals are focused on the daily task of living "Christianly" in the workplace. The faculty members were surprised recently to find that twice as many students had subscribed to the devotionals as faculty and staff.

Postmodern students tend to be experiential, and thereby often value the experience of others. At a university where one of the authors serves, the school of business has created an ethics symposium that brings in speakers — typically alumni — who graduated in the last ten years and thus are not substantially older than the students. These speakers share the realities of living out a Christian ethic in a postmodern world and allow the students to ask questions and interact with them concerning the challenges of doing so. Faculty members then follow up on these discussions in class. Not surprisingly, students report that they learn more from such experiences than from lectures on ethics. Many of the students are enthusiastic about these events, demonstrating a desire to apply Christian ethics to the workplace and to integrate faith and business.

The problem millennial Christian business students face is not necessarily one of motivation but of equipment. Many postmodern Christian business students want to integrate their post-foundational faith with their working lives. They just do not know how.

As Christian business faculty members, our challenge to teach integration of a post-foundational faith must distinguish the dual areas of orthodoxy (what students believe) and orthopraxy (what students do to manifest that belief). The orthodoxy of the postmodern, post-foundational thinking Christian is not that far removed from that of the modern foundationalist. Both believe in the triune God, the centrality of the work of Christ, and the usefulness (if not always the authority) of the Bible; Barna (2013) reports that the millennial generation is "very intrigued by the role of the Bible in providing guidance and wisdom," which "is a surprising expression of openness to Christianity amidst a generational cohort that is increasingly post-religious." Both might recite the Apostle's Creed with confidence but, as Harvey Cox (2009) puts it, "Faith is resurgent, while dogma is dying" (p. 213). It is how they practice their faith that more often sets postmodern Christians apart. It is, however, their underlying worldview, and particularly their post-foundational epistemology, that appears to be the relevant source of their distinctiveness for these purposes.

### *Postmodern Christians and the Church*

Some differences may be found in the doctrine of the church (McKnight, 2007). Modern Christians tend to see their church like a family. They may judge their degree of devotion to the Kingdom of God by their commitment to the local church community to which they belong. Even when they disapprove of what is happening at their local church, they are unlikely to leave it — like a family (McIntosh, 2002). They instead tend to feel a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the church and will contribute to its improvement.

Postmodern Christians see their relationship with the church as more open to individualized interpretation, more like a friend than a family member. Solomon's Porch, a Minneapolis church identified with postmodern Christianity generally, eschews the title of "member" in favor of "covenant participant," but holds that even that role is to be "self-defined" ("Covenant Participants," 2013). Friendship, generally, is a central concept for postmodern Christians as it supplies the unifying force for the church in a way that doctrinal beliefs did for modern Christians. Brian McLaren, (2001) sees the postmodern church as "catholic" in the sense of being inclusive (p. 155) and Tony Jones, (2008) refers to an "envelope of friendship" that

supplies the unifying force among believers with divergent beliefs or traditions (p. 78). Emergent Village, a flagship for many postmodern Christians, includes in its published values statement, “We identify ourselves as members of this growing, global, generative and non-exclusive friendship. We welcome others into this friendship as well” (Jones, 2008, p. 225). Postmodern Christians’ relationships with any particular church can be transitory. Just as a person can have college friends he or she still loves but has not seen in years, postmodern Christians can move on from a local church without fear or guilt when they feel it is time. Alister McGrath (2002) reports this trend is particularly visible in American mainline denominations as Christians experiencing spiritual renewal have little loyalty to denominations, even the one in which they experienced the renewal (p. 100). Tony Jones (2008) relates the view of some postmodern Christians that, structurally, church should be a kind of “open source network,” using the technological metaphor to represent a much more fluid community than the static, modern view of a church (p. 180).

These generational differences in the relationship to the local church tie back to differing epistemologies. Because their concept of truth, itself, is not foundational, postmodern believers feel less dependence on the church as a source for truth. For the local church to be valuable to postmodern Christians, it must be instrumental to their ongoing success or happiness (Smith, 2005). That is to say, it must fit into their mosaic (the personal and institutional relationships that comprise their life; another popular metaphor for post-foundationalism) in a way that makes sense (McIntosh, 2002). As they or the church change, the church may no longer fit into their personal picture or personal truth structure. They may experience leaving their local church as a loss, but it is a loss that needs to occur to keep their world and their truth structure functioning at a pragmatic level. A student of one of the authors reported attending a new church every year while in college because it “felt right.”

Church services for modern-era Christians also tend to differ from those of postmodern Christians. Modern Christian worship tends to be marked by a sense of reverence. Many modern Christians feel an impulse to “dress up” for church, sometimes in robes if one is playing a formal role in the service (Mast, 2011). Iconic church buildings with a steeple are considered desirable, if not always affordable (Miller, 2004). Parishioners sit in rows or stand at attention, facing the speaker. All of these elements reflect the sense that there is something formal about worship, with behavioral norms attached.

Postmodern Christian worship tends to be marked by a sense of comfort and familiarity. Couches in a circle

replace rows of pews (McKnight, 2007). Postmodern Christians may actually prefer to meet in houses or coffee shops rather than in traditional church buildings (Jones, 2008). The professional clergy, if present, are seen in a more egalitarian role, rather than an authoritative role (“Covenant Participants,” 2013). To that end, pastors wear blue jeans rather than a suit and tie. God also is seen as less authoritative. The emphasis is on the therapeutic and relational aspects of God rather than on His holiness and majesty (Smith, 2005). Postmodern Christians are often interested in how faith works rather than simply on connection to truth. Therefore, they want worship to connect them both to God and to how they can be involved in relating to the world. While modern ministers often called their churches to be active in the world, postmodern ministers see that as a given; action is worship.

Epistemological differences are at the heart of this generational distinction as well. A foundational doctrine of God might start with premises such as, “God is good, eternal, holy, and omnipotent” (Psalm 100:5, Lamentations 3:25, Psalm 90:2, Isaiah 40:28, Joshua 24:19, Revelation 1:8). A post-foundational doctrine of God might accept those statements as true but will focus more on whether God is real, whether He wants to relate to individuals in a personal sense, and what that relationship might or should look like (Riley, 2008). If God is seen more relationally and less authoritatively, it should not be surprising that the clergy and the church service, itself, are viewed accordingly.

While moderns tend to read the Bible propositionally, postmoderns tend to read it narratively. The modern looks for truths that can be reached by logical deduction and sees the text as a unified whole, although admittedly a complicated one; while the postmodern looks for the story that is being told by the writers and how to make sense of that story in his or her own life. Postmoderns tend to be more comfortable with competing or even contradictory truths (Aichele, Miscall, & Walsh, 2009).

### *Postmodern Christians and Culture*

Another important difference between modern and postmodern Christians is their sense of the relationship between Christianity and the state or culture. Modern American Christians tend to see themselves as part of the American church. They see the church’s role in American society as sometimes redemptive and sometimes challenging, but always intertwined with the U.S. as a nation. The exact parameters of the relationship between the church and the state have been argued and delineated in great detail in this era because the two were seen as necessarily interconnected. This relationship meant the church should attempt

to change society. The reform movements that grew out of the Second Great Awakening reflected the view that America needed to become Christian (Abzug, 1994). While enthusiasm for developing a Christian society has waxed and waned since the Second Great Awakening, Gallup (1989) found strong support for Christian influence on American politics even into the late 1980s. While certainly not all moderns or Evangelicals wanted to get their hands dirty in politics, the idea of the “city upon a hill” (Winthrop, 1630) remained strong in American Christian thinking. With the acceptance of reason as a foundational epistemology, evangelicals could see themselves working to make the nation more consistent with the principles of the faith (Frank, 1986). However, they failed to recognize the danger that in trying to capture the culture, they might themselves be captured by it (Handy, 1967).

Postmodern Christians are not as tied to United States culture. While they may love their country, they are cultural chameleons (Jones, 2008). Postmodern Christian ethicists generally want to distance the church from the culture and practice a faith centered in the worship of God. Hauerwas (1991) notes the danger of accepting American religious ideals and missing the heart of the Gospel. For instance, the American view of religious freedom can lead to the conclusion that people should “make up their own minds” about what is right, rather than acknowledging the authority of God. In this, Hauerwas offers even a critique of many postmoderns. Citing the call often heard for “social justice,” he argues that justice cannot be rationally grounded any more than reason itself can. Even with anti-foundationalist assumptions, it can be difficult to be consistent in looking for a different standard of knowledge.

In their technologically prolific world, non-U.S. cultural elements are readily available to millennial students and almost as readily accepted. They may be U.S. citizens of Occidental descent, but they prefer Japanese manga to Superman comic books or Spanish soap operas to American television. Not surprisingly, their idea of church is also more culturally broad. Philip Jenkins, in his book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, opines that over the next several decades the practices of churches in the southern hemisphere will be particularly impactful on the development of Christianity (Jenkins, 2011). Thomas Hohstadt (n.d.) suggests that a time traveler would not recognize the church in 50 years, in part because it will be both global and transcultural. One of the authors attended a self-identified postmodern church in Salem, Massachusetts, which, though thoroughly Protestant in its theology, prayed prayers in Hebrew and incorporated prayer rugs and icons into its worship.

Some of this cultural openness is fueled by technology and multi-cultural exposure, but it is the epistemological difference that allows it to occur. Because millennial Christians tend to be more post-foundational in their epistemology, they have somewhat dispensed with the foundational concepts of the “goodness” or “rightness” of American culture. Their culture, and therefore much of their religious orthodoxy, is instead driven by the post-foundational pragmatic mosaic. If a particular combination of cultural elements from across the globe makes their worship experience more meaningful, to them it is good and right.

#### **TEACHING FAITH INTEGRATION TO POSTMODERN CHRISTIAN BUSINESS STUDENTS**

There is a divide, then, between the modern and post-modern generation, and there are differences in learning needs, church, and culture among postmodern students. How, then, should Christian business faculty teach faith integration to postmodern Christian business students? Next, three areas of teaching are examined: business ethics, business as mission, and servant leadership.

##### *Teaching Business Ethics to Postmodern Christian Business Students*

As members of the community of Christian business faculty, some of us have been teaching faith integration for a long time. In the past, we may have found that Christian business students were challenged by the idea of applying Christian ethics in the workplace. They already knew that sometimes Christian ethical positions would be seen as unprofitable and that their managers might expect them to “cut corners” or “look the other way” for the benefit of the business’ performance. We addressed that need by encouraging them to stand up to such pressures. We taught them clear and — we hoped — convincing arguments for following biblical principles in the workplace, even when there was a short-term cost to such dedication. These arguments tend to be based in propositional truths related to passages like Proverbs 11:1-3, 15:27, 16:11 and Matthew 5:33-37. Because modern-era students accepted concepts of fixed rightness and wrongness, foundationalist-thinking faculty members were able to teach them to apply biblical precepts in a consistent, almost mechanistic, manner.

Postmodern students may share their predecessors’ desire to apply biblical ethics to their business dealings, but their world is more nuanced. Without foundational concepts of what might be right or wrong, they apply those biblical principles differently. They may see right and wrong

in a reciprocal fashion, expecting harm to come to those who harm others and vice versa (Miller, 2004). They may have substituted concepts of relative fault or responsibility for modern understandings of good guys and bad guys. Instead of encouraging them to “always do what is right,” faculty may be required to teach them to approach their treatment of others by emulating the treatment they have received from God. More than a “What-would-Jesus-do?” analysis, postmodern Christian business students need to be trained to extrapolate behavioral norms for themselves, as business people, from their understanding and experience of being accepted, forgiven, and corrected by God. They are more likely to resonate with a call to follow Jesus’ greatest commandment (Matthew 22:35-41, Mark 12:-28-29). Rather than being taught fidelity to a strict ethical code, we must teach them to love the stakeholders in their particular business context as God has loved them, with all the subtle nuances that may involve.

In essence, students need to learn how to process ethical information from a biblical perspective. They need to learn how to integrate their faith with their experiences so that they can apply that integrated faith ethically. While we, as professors, can intentionally guide that process, the integration must take place within the student. Roller (2013) suggests several biblical faith integration methods that are both intentional and student-centered, two of which provide good examples.

One example is using cases with a Christian content or focus (Roller, 2013). In his excellent book *Just Business: Christian Ethics for the Marketplace* (2008), Alexander Hill provides several ethics cases that have been used by the authors. Hill proposes that, for Christians in business, an ethical decision is one that is consistent with three attributes of God — his holiness, justice, and love. Postmodern Christian business students will tend to apply this framework differently than modernists, with a focus on their own experience of God’s holiness, justice, and love. In a case write-up or class discussion, this experiential approach to analysis becomes apparent. The professor can gently guide the discussion in appropriate directions by understanding the ways in which postmodern students will process the ethical framework. The stories of Jesus’ interaction with wealth — such as Zaccheus or the rich young ruler — can be effective points of reflection with postmoderns (Luke 19:1-10, Luke 18:18-29). Similarly, Jesus’ own stories like the parable of the stewards or the rich fool can have impact (Matthew 25: 14-30, Luke 12: 12-21). These events and teachings, and the contrasts between them, can be opportunities to have students reflect on the role of wealth in the Christian life, and in doing so, challenge the extremes of

rejecting wealth entirely or being unhealthily obsessed with wealth maximization.

Another example would be the use of spiritual/ethical exercises, which Roller (2013) suggests helps students to “move beyond knowing the right answers to doing the right things” (p. 36). Simulations or in-class ethical exercises provide students the opportunity to apply ethical concepts to a “real” situation with simulated money on the line. One of the authors gave students the opportunity to pay off officials to obtain questionable environmental permits; some of the student teams chose to participate while others did not. A debriefing helped students to think through their choices. Kellaris (2010) found that the use of ethical exercises at a Christian university resulted in many students making ethically controversial choices, suggesting tendencies toward unintentional moral relativism, which could then be processed in class discussion.

### ***Teaching Business as Mission to Postmodern Christian Business Students***

As an academic discipline, business as mission has come of age during the modern era, although there are differences of opinion as to the appropriateness of the discipline for the academy (e.g. Rundle, 2012; Quatro, 2012; Childs, 2012; Chewning, 2012; Seibert, 2012; Cooper, 2012; Beed, 2012). Some Christian business faculty members teach classes on business as mission, and some may make it the focus of all their classes. Modern Christians generally, however, have a tendency to expect people outside their culture to accept U.S.-centric culture when they accept Christ (“The Antimoderns,” 2000). When individuals from an “exotic” culture become saved, they are expected to change the way they dress, speak, and relate to their family and friends — not necessarily to conform to biblical principles, but to satisfy American cultural expectations. One challenge in preparing modern-era Christian business students to conduct business as mission involves teaching them cultural sensitivity. As Christian business faculty members, we have to teach them how to accept cultural norms that are morally or biblically neutral so they can lead people outside the United States to accept their savior without accepting their culture.

Postmodern Christian business students do not face the problem of cultural insensitivity so much as they face the issue of theological integrity. Their own understanding of culture is such a mosaic that they are much more at risk of being “captured by the foreign culture” than of being “ugly Americans.” One challenge facing Christian business faculty in training these students is to teach them how to distinguish amoral cultural elements from those that have important spiritual implications. Postmodern Christians may tend

to accept foreign cultural elements that are opposed to the Gospel for fear of imposing judgments that might mar their relationship with the new believer. For example, a postmodern Christian might avoid engaging a new believer about his failing to pay taxes (in contravention of Christ's teachings in Matthew 22:21) if those actions were normative within the new believer's culture. They need to be trained how to follow the Apostle Paul, who in Corinth did not ask questions about what he was fed, even though it might violate Hebrew dietary laws, but at the same time vilified the local use of idols despite it being a cultural norm (1 Corinthians 10:28; 1 Corinthians 12:2).

Mission trips with business/faith connections and spiritual reflection provide an intentional, student-centered faith integration method (Roller, 2013) that can be used successfully with postmodern students. On a mission trip, as students encounter situations with both cultural and spiritual implications, the faculty member can use debriefings to help students differentiate among amoral cultural elements and those with spiritual implications. Class discussions, case discussions, and service learning activities with spiritual reflection (Roller, 2013) represent other intentional, student-centered faith integration methods that could be used in a similar manner.

### ***Teaching Servant Leadership to Postmodern Christian Business Students***

Both modern and postmodern Christians need training in how to practice servant leadership. Self-centeredness detracts from the ability to serve (Philippians 2:3-8); this truth transcends generational differences. The different learning needs of the postmodern Christian business student, however, may require a different pedagogical strategy. When training modern Christians to exercise servant leadership, Christian business faculty members have to overcome the expectation of authority that attaches to leadership, generally. Modern Christian managers expect to be respected by those they lead. The concept of servant leadership conflicts with their sense of hierarchy in leadership. Faculty members have to teach modern students how serving employees or customers does not place a manager under their authority and will not result in the manager's losing control of the business unit. Postmodern students, by contrast, are not invested in authority the way moderns are. Postmodern students tend to resist specialization and control that might just seem the natural way of things to the modern (Cooper, 1988). Generationally, postmodern students tend to expect empowerment to be the norm in their work (Blain, 2008; Ferri-Reed, 2012). Even Christ, to them, is more suffering servant than King of glory (Isaiah 52:13-14; Psalms 24:10).

The learning need of postmodern Christians is to be convinced that serving one's employees will not always involve accepting them, but rather may sometimes involve discipline. Because of their reliance on relationships, not only in religion but in their very epistemology, they see relationships as the most valuable and most vulnerable part of the enterprise. As Christian business faculty members, we must teach them how relationships can actually be enriched through the exercise of discipline (McIntosh, 2002). Jesus was the model for servant leadership, but there was no doubt that he was in charge in relation to the disciples. The close relationship between the word "disciple" and "discipline" should not be missed here. Certainly, Jesus found it necessary to discipline his followers on numerous occasions: reprimanding Peter (Matthew 16:23), challenging the disciples' faith (Matthew 8:26, Matthew 17:20), rebuking the disciples for their bloodthirsty reactions to those who did not respond positively to Jesus (Luke 9:53-55), even reproofing them after the resurrection for their failure to understand what the crucifixion was about (Luke 24). Jesus led by service, but he also made sure that his followers were staying true to his mission.

With postmodern students, the need is more toward selling servant leadership than proving it. Although they are not heavily invested in authority, they are not necessarily automatically open to the idea of being a boss who serves. As they begin to see how helping others can benefit the organization, the idea of servant leadership begins to make sense. They are less inclined to be impressed by laboratory-driven studies but are more impressed by the stories of how servant leadership works in the real world. They also need to see the clarity with which Jesus taught the principle (Matthew 20:20-28) and the clear example he set in washing the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17). One simple example of a professor polishing the shoes of a student has been effective in making that point in the classroom. Some business students can be skeptical, insisting that Jesus represents a "special case" or "wishful thinking" kind of ideals. They can be challenged with the success of Jesus as a leader, the illogic of seeing Jesus as divine but doubting that he knew what he was talking about, and the success that recent Christians have had in applying his principles. There is a fine line to be walked in this area. On the one hand, motive matters to the follower of Christ and, therefore, it is dangerous to argue that one should obey Christ in order to gain personally. On the other hand, there is great value in seeing that Jesus does offer a clear understanding of what life is supposed to look like when lived under the rule of God.

With increased group interaction and projects in the classroom, students have a golden opportunity to learn



by applying the principles discussed in class. With group projects and efforts that require a good bit of the semester, there are opportunities to give students practice in leadership. One of the authors has recently made student teams responsible for leading the class discussion multiple times during the semester. When setting up such teams, a professor can either assign leadership roles or allow them to develop within the group. Either way, at the end of the semester, there are opportunities to have students evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership. Students can be assigned a reflection paper that requires them to consider how they used servant leadership, why they might not have used it and what they saw of benefits and problems in its practice. This becomes an intentional, student-centered method of faith integration (Roller, 2013).

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article is to assist Christian business faculty members in finding their way forward in the face of changing student epistemologies. It is not intended to champion a particular worldview or even stake out a position on the direction of culture, Christianity, or epistemology in particular. As noted earlier, given the age of some younger business faculty members, some reading this article may see themselves more in the postmodern and post-foundational side of the discussion than in the modern and foundational. Among our respective millennial student bodies and within the mostly older Christian business academy there may be many individuals who, while modern in their worldview, are post-foundational in their epistemology, or vice-versa.

Some may question whether post-foundationalism even exists outside of the rarified ranks of postmodern philosophers. If the epistemological change identified in this paper is occurring as reported, it is in the nature of an epochal shift, and it would not be surprising if it lasted over multiple generations, changing at a barely perceptible speed. It also should not be surprising if it does not advance in a uniform way. Some institutions may see a student body entirely given to post-foundational thinking, while others see it only on the fringe or not at all. Most certainly within individuals, students and otherwise, foundationalism and post-foundationalism may coexist on a continuum, or multiple continua with respect to different areas of truth. People might, for instance, be more foundational in their views of marriage or the Bible, but more post-foundational in their views of the church or of education.

The mission for each of us as Christian business faculty members is to determine the applicability of this article's

argument to our own student population in our own disciplinary context. The purpose of this article, then, is to assist Christian business faculty in identifying when Christian business students are thinking post-foundationally and to help them address the distinct learning needs of those students in terms of teaching them faith and business integration. We are hoping to help faculty teach postmodern students to integrate business with *their* faith so as to advance the Kingdom of God.

An important postscript for this article is to encourage Christian business faculty in terms of the urgency of these issues. As worldviews change, even if at a glacial pace, there are tipping points at which the change becomes marked and only a relatively small group of people can speak understandably to both sides. It is the view of the authors that now may be one of those points. We have a unique ability to understand and speak both about the integration of foundationally based faith and post-foundationally based faith. If history is any guide, this time will not last forever. "The fulfillment of the mission of the church thus requires that the Church itself be changed and learn new things" (Newbigin, 1989, p. 124). Successive generations will find it increasingly difficult to serve as an honest broker to both sides of the divide. It may well be the role of this generation to preserve the concept and practice of faith integration with business for generations to come.

### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> "What deconstructionism actually seeks to dismantle is the entire Western philosophical and scientific system that claims to provide unbiased and purely foundational universal methods of intellectual inquiry. If this is true, it can be argued that deconstructionism, at least in this sense, actually supports theology of the classical evangelical persuasion in its fight against philosophical naturalism and higher biblical criticism" (Vargas, 2011, Deconstruction and the Death-of-God Theologians section, para. 3).

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