

A Case for Innovation Theology

Does God have anything to do with innovation?
Does innovation have anything to do with God?

How we answer these questions reveals our innovation theology. Whether we seek answers to such questions in the first place reveals much about our orientation to change and readiness to respond.

But do questions and answers really matter? Is innovation theology so esoteric that its value pales in comparison with more pressing and pragmatic issues?

The concept of innovation conjures up diverse connotations. Amidst the variety, however, a working definition of innovation will involve change and how we respond to change, especially when we respond in ways that create new value for others.

Similarly the term theology leads us to various associations, both positive and negative. Amidst this variety, however, a working definition of theology will include what we believe interests God, where God shows up and why.

Whatever else the intersection of innovation and theology stirs in the imagination, it warrants our attention, if only to discern where God's intentions are in change, whether God is present (or absent) in our responses, and how God is breathing in the new value we aim to create for others. If theological explorations of this intersection unfold favorably, they may become potent catalysts in the process of making sense of change. Done poorly and without requisite humility, such theology may lead us into conceptual *cul-de-sacs* where we are caught counting angels on pinheads.

Innovation theology can serve as a potent source of practical wisdom for innovators and "theologues" alike. Innovation theology, done well, may enable innovating efforts to

- make meaning before money;
- counter the tyranny of bottom lines with guidance of plumb lines;
- make sense of change that doesn't otherwise make any; and
- re-attach extrinsic to intrinsic value.

Not to be confused with adjacencies like workplace spirituality or business ethics, innovation theology should be able to produce better answers to where innovations are needed and why. Innovation theology can sharpen our focus on what God is doing in the present and for the future. Innovation theology may even bring perspectives that clarify the call for our time, attention and devotion to deeper more lasting purpose, meaning and value.

Innovations make a difference, both for good and for ill. Innovations bring value and disruption to individuals, societies, economies and the care for creation. Innovations foreshadow fresh meaning and jobs. What prevents theological inquiry from a closer look at what God may be doing in change, our responses to it, and the new value God is inviting us to create for others?

Perhaps it's time to begin the inquiry.