Chapter 2: The Meaning of Christian Innovation

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Ralph Winter was an innovator. In July 1974, Dr. Winter stood in front of perhaps the greatest gathering of missionaries in Christian history. The Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization gathered the leaders of missionary agencies from 150 countries. They saw themselves, quite appropriately, as descendants of a line that traced back to biblical times. The church, they knew, had been practicing foreign missions since Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch in Acts 11 – back when the followers of Jesus were first called "Christians." The mission leaders saw themselves as descended from the medieval monks who crossed borders to bring the faith to Scandinavia. And they especially felt a connection to enterprises like Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission. The mission leaders who came to the conference agreed on the past, but they were divided about the future.

Some of the leaders had come to the conference ready to proclaim that the era of missions had ended. They pointed to the fact that there were now churches in almost every country in the world. And they believed that any further effort for foreign missions would be little more than an imperialist attempt to control the indigenous churches. Others believed that, although the gospel was planted in almost every country, the wise and mature Christians of the West could not abandon the fledgling churches they had planted any more than the Apostle Paul could abandon the churches he founded on his missionary journeys. When Ralph Winter came to the Lausanne Congress, the pressing question for mission leaders was whether the missionary enterprise should cease or continue. He told them it should do neither. Instead, he said that they should re-invent the practice of missions.

Ralph Winter needed to change the mental model that most mission leaders held about the very nature of the missionary enterprise. At the time, the most cherished passages for mission leaders were variations on the parting words of Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew records Jesus saying to "go and make disciples of all nations," while Luke (in Acts 1:8) says that they should be witnesses "even to the ends of the earth." The missionaries at the conference all agreed that the church had finally fulfilled the mandate. But they disagreed on what the next step should be. Winter began by telling them that they were all mistaken, even where they agreed. "A serious misunderstanding has crept into the thinking" about missions, he said, "based on the wonderful fact that the Gospel has now gone to the ends of the earth." Even though there were now disciples in all nations, it was a misunderstanding, he said, to think that "Christians have now fulfilled the Great Commission."[1]

Winter then reinterpreted the most cherished biblical texts on missions and, in so doing, transformed the missionary movement. He said that Christians misunderstand the Great Commission's mandate to preach the gospel to every nation because they misunderstand the word "nation." In the Bible, a nation is not a country with geographic boundaries and government oversight, he said. If that is what the Bible meant by nation, then indeed the gospel had been preached to every nation. Winter said that the word "nations" refers instead to ethnic

groups or cultural groups and that a nation-state might have many of these groups residing within its borders. He gave examples of nations like Pakistan, where there was indeed a national church but where "97% of the population is not culturally near this church." And he described the Church of South India, where "97% of its members come from five of the more than 100 social classes (castes) in South India."[2] Ralph Winter showed that a simple misunderstanding of the word "nation" had led mission leaders to a serious misunderstanding of the Great Commission. And so he set out to change their mental model of the word "nations," and in so doing to recalibrate their understanding of global missions.

Once Dr. Winter had named the problem with how the assembled missionaries understood Matthew 28, he showed that the solution to the problem lay in the other cherished missions passage. He described how Acts 1:8 developed along concentric cultural circles – expanding from a city (Jerusalem) to the surrounding region (Judea and Samaria) and into the world. "And you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and into the uttermost parts of the earth," it says. Winter described how Jesus was "not talking merely about geographic distance but about cultural distance" in showing how the gospel would spread. Winter described in detail the ways that the geographically near Samaritans were culturally distant from the Jews (indeed not just distant but separated by what Winter called "walls of prejudice"). Winter showed as well how contemporary cultures like the Naga people of northern India followed a model similar to the concentric circles of Acts 1:8. The Naga church ministered to their people in their own language (what Winter called E1 evangelism that was analogous to "Jerusalem") and they ministered to neighboring Naga peoples who spoke sister languages (E2 evangelism that was analogous to "Samaria"), but if they wanted to minister to people in faraway parts of India, they would have to do cross-cultural evangelism (what Winter called E3 that was analogous to reaching the "ends of the earth"). Winter eventually coined the term "unreached peoples" to describe groups that have never had a culturally-near experience of the gospel. And that notion of "unreached peoples" animates evangelistic missions to this day.

When the Lausanne Congress convened, many mission leaders were calling for a moratorium on world mission because they claimed that the "missionary mandate was complete." Ralph Winter transformed their mental model of world mission by recasting it as cross-cultural mission – as mission to each of the ethnic groups that comprise what Jesus called the "nations." Winter innovated within the bounds of the Christian tradition. He took a traditional belief (the Great Commission) embodied in a traditional practice (missions) and gave his people a new way to see it -- and thus a new way to see themselves. When the conference began, the leaders wondered if they should abandon their task. By the time the conference ended, they committed themselves with unprecedented vigor to renew the task. And Winter made that happen by re-inventing a Christian practice.

Winter's idea was an innovation in Christian missions. Since that time, mission agencies have stopped thinking of "the nations" as political states and started thinking of them as people groups. Twenty-five years after Lausanne, TIME magazine said, "Ralph Winter revolutionized what remains (even today) the true lifeblood of Evangelicals — missionary work overseas."[3] He offered a new idea that changed the way missionaries saw themselves and their world and he created avenues to action that the missionaries would not have otherwise seen. Ralph Winter was a Christian innovator.

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Ralph Winter proclaimed a new mental model for missions. A mental model is an image that a person carries in her head of how things are and of how things should be. It is not just a belief. It is more basic than that. It has to do with how our brains work. As we shall see, we humans make meaning by arranging the data we receive from our senses according to the mental models that create order out of chaos.

In a moment, we will look at the trajectory of the chapter. But, before we do that, let's take a look at one more example so that we have a clear idea of what is at stake.

Let us picture a conversation between co-workers. In this case, the co-workers happen to be computer programmers. But they could just as easily be the custodians who clean the programmers' building, or retirees ruminating over coffee at Dunkin' Donuts, or even teens chatting between classes.

Let's start with Gina, who is a Christian. In the adjacent cubicle, there is a young man named Duc, who is in his first job after college. His immigrant parents sacrificed much so that he could get his degree. And let us say that Duc confides to Gina that the long hours at work and the distance from friends and family make him feel lonely and unloved. And let's say that at an appropriate point in their conversations Gina compassionately talks to Duc about the death and resurrection of Jesus. She tells him that God, in his great love, sent his Son to live and die as one of us in order that Duc might be connected to God and to other people. And she tells him that instead of feeling unloved and lonely, he can experience the hope of love and community. Up until this point, it sounds just like many evangelistic conversations that we Christians have been having for generations. But what happens if that gospel does not sound to Duc like hope? Perhaps he tells Gina that death seems terribly harsh and then he asks her, "Can't we talk about Jesus without all this stuff about his death?"

This is the moment when we see how Christian innovation has to be different from secular innovation. If Gina were a secular entrepreneur, she would listen to her "customer," find out that Duc finds Jesus' death distasteful, and innovate a new gospel that no longer has to talk about the shame of sin or the ugliness of death. But she cannot do that. We are permanently, inextricably (and fortunately) bound to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Gina cannot innovate a new gospel for Duc. But neither can she simply repeat to him the old ways of stating the good news; the world has changed and she cannot pretend our explanation of the gospel can remain static, like the rigid back of a Puritan pew. Gina can, however, innovate a new way to connect that unchanging gospel to the present experience of this person that God has entrusted to her care.

Thus, Gina shows us how the needs of our current era require Christians to unite innovation and tradition -- that is, to create a sparkling new future that honors the past. Or to put it another way, the heart of this book and this chapter asks one question: how do we maintain a rock-solid commitment to the never-changing Christian faith, while at the same time create innovative ways

to express that faith to an ever-changing culture?   If we are going to recalibrate the church, we will have to engage in **meaning-making innovation.**

This chapter's discussion of meaning making is part of a three-chapter trajectory. The next three chapters will together take up the question: What is the goal of recalibrating the church? This chapter will explain what we mean by Christian innovation and what it has to do with recalibrating the church. By the end of the chapter, we will conclude that **the goal of Christian innovation is make spiritual sense of the longings and losses of the people God has entrusted to our care.** The subsequent two chapters will unpack that statement by describing (a) how we can understand those longings and losses, and (b) how we can make spiritual sense of them by recovering (or reinventing) historic Christian practices. Together these three chapters will give us a goal to pursue as we seek to maintain a rock-solid commitment to the never-changing Christian faith and at the same time to present that gospel to an ever-changing culture.[4]

Now that we have seen the progression of the next three chapters, let us focus on the argument of this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the meaning of Christian innovation – to describe the work Christian leaders will need to do if we are going to recalibrate the church. The chapter will ultimately show that Christian innovation happens when we make spiritual sense of the longings and losses of the people entrusted to our care. To reach that conclusion, the chapter will explain

      a. the concept of mental models -- how they come to us as stories, and how they dictate our behavior,

      b. that the Christian tradition (to which we maintain a rock-solid commitment) comes to us as a series of beliefs wrapped in contemporary expressions -- and how we have to preserve the traditional beliefs and recalibrate the contemporary expressions, and

      c. that Christian innovation is the innovation of meaning – and how that allows us to reinterpret ancient practices (often by changing mental models).

So let's start by looking at mental models.

Mental Models
The best leaders change the way that we see the world. And they change the way we see the world by changing what are called "mental models."[5] Mental models are the categories we use to make sense of the world. We take them for granted. For example, picture an automobile. Go ahead, conjure up the image in your head. Some of you may picture a Volvo and others a Buick. But no matter what make and model you picked, it's likely you each of you pictured it having four wheels, a windshield, and a steering wheel. Why? Because a car *should* have four wheels. If I showed you one of those concept cars with only one front wheel, you would likely say to yourself, "I don't know what that is, but it's not a car." Your mental model of a car includes it having four wheels. A mental model is the image we carry in our head of how something *should be*.

That's a rather innocuous example. So let's consider a different one. What's your mental model of a preacher? Ask a group of seminary students about what a preacher should be and you'll likely get many answers. One might say, "A man standing in the middle of a stage with a black

Bible open in his left hand as he talks through a passage verse by verse." That's one way of being a preacher. It's probably not the way everyone would preach. But think about that student. If all she has ever seen is an open-Bible guy, she is likely to think that all other ways of preaching are as strange as a three-wheeled car.

Later on, I am going to argue that the essence of Christian leadership is to transform people's mental models so that God's People use Christian categories to make sense of their lives. That is what I will mean by "making spiritual sense." But before I do that, I want to give a more concrete example of transforming mental models. Let's look at Jesus, specifically at Mark 8.

The center of Mark's gospel turns on Jesus' recalibrating the disciples' mental models and then showing how that recalibrated understanding changed the way that they acted in the world. The Gospel of Mark is constructed so that the first half builds steadily until a turning point. And, after that turning point, the rest of the story aims at the cross. That turning point is the encounter at the end of Mark 8.

Starting at verse 27, Jesus talks to the disciples about the mental models that the crowds used when they tried to make sense of Jesus. "Jesus asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.'" In other words, Jesus asked, "What mental models do people use to make sense of me?" People were not sure what to make of Jesus. So they reached back into history to look for precedents. They looked for a mental model that would fit their understanding of Jesus. And it turned out that the God's People had a word for someone who spoke for God, made them uncomfortable, and that they would ultimately ignore and kill. And that word was 'prophet.' So that is how the crowds interpreted Jesus; they called him a prophet.

Then Jesus became more personal and asked what mental models the disciples themselves used when they interpreted Jesus. "He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.'" The disciples had decided that Jesus was more than a prophet. They decided that "Messiah" was the best mental model to use in interpreting Jesus' ministry. They had the right mental model for interpreting Jesus. Or so they thought. That's because that the next step of growth for the disciples required Jesus to transform the meaning of this mental model.

Jesus knew that the disciples had the wrong mental model; what they understood by a Messiah was not what he intended to be. They expected him to be a king who would sweep away the Romans and set up a kingdom that would conquer its neighbors. But Jesus did not intend to be the king that the disciples hoped for him to be. So he explained to them what <u>he</u> meant by a Messiah. "Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly."

Jesus offered a new mental model for interpreting this fundamental identity called Messiah. He described the Messiah as one who suffers. And the disciples did not react well to Jesus' attempt to teach them. Peter found this new mental model so offensive that he tried to correct Jesus. "Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he

rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'" Jesus pushed Peter and the disciples to accept this new mental model. He wanted them to see the Messiah as one who suffers in order to redeem rather than one who conquers in order to reign.

But Jesus was not done transforming their mental models. And to see what is at stake, we need to listen to another character in the story: the mother of James and John. In Matthew 20, the disciples' mother comes to Jesus and asks that her sons might sit at Jesus left and right hands, when "you come into your glory." This statement reveals a bit further how integral this idea of reigning king was to the disciples' mental model of a Messiah. They pictured a king like David. And they thought that king would have a palace. And in that palace, they thought there would be a throne room, with a large throne where the ruling Messiah would reign. And next to that throne, there would be little thrones on either side of the Messiah's big one. Their mother was asking if James and John could occupy those little thrones.

The organizational scholar Ronald Heifetz says that "people don't resist change; they resist loss."[6] And the disciples (in the mouth of Peter) were resisting Jesus's attempt to change their mental model of a Messiah because they had something to lose. And now we know what they were afraid to lose. He was not just changing their mental model of what it meant to be a Messiah; he was changing the mental model of what it meant to be the disciple of a Messiah. And that change was going to cost them something. It was going to cost them their little thrones. A reigning ruler could offer them little thrones, but a suffering redeemer could offer them sorrows. And then Jesus drove the point home.

He made it very clear to them what this new mental model of 'disciple' was going to cost them. "He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?'"

Jesus not only asked the disciples to change the most important mental model that they used to interpret Jesus (i.e. the Messiah). But he also asked them to change the mental model that they used to interpret themselves (i.e. the Messiah's disciples). And he expected all of the actions going forward to be different as they lived out this new mental model. The Gospel of Mark pivots on this passage. After this passage, everything in Mark's gospel points to the cross. Once Jesus announces this new mental model, the entire story becomes about living out the new meanings of Messiah and disciple. The disciples do not fully understand the implications of these new mental models until the Spirit comes at Pentecost. But the faithfulness of their actions after Mark 8 depends on their coming to grips with these new mental models. Jesus, then, is our example of what it means to lead by transforming people's mental models.

Transforming mental models is so powerful because the new mental models change the way people act in the world. When the disciples thought that the Messiah was sent to reign, it was appropriate, for example, for the mother of a pair of disciples to ask that her sons might sit on little thrones. And it was appropriate to expect that the last thing a Messiah would do is to

experience the public shame of a humiliating death on a Roman cross. But, if a Messiah has come to suffer in order to redeem, then it makes sense that a disciple of that Messiah would also live a life of service on behalf of others. In other words, changing the mental models the disciples used to make sense of Jesus and the mental models they used to make sense of themselves transformed the actions that the disciples attempted to achieve in society. If a Christian leader transforms people's mental models, then the people's actions will change as well.

Let's look at a more contemporary example. The Rev. Martin Luther King created a pathway for African-Americans that did not exist until he introduced it. And he did it through what we have called "meaning-making innovation."

Before Dr. King, African-Americans had two options while living under the oppression of Jim Crow: they could erupt in violence or they could lay down in pain. King gave them a third option; he planted the seed of non-violence to the South. Beginning with the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, he created a new way to respond.[7]

We Christians often find ourselves stuck and longing for a new way. That requires innovation. And King innovated by making meaning – by giving them a new mental model. In other words, he gave them a new way to see the world and a new way to interpret their circumstances.

His first appearance as a public figure – indeed, the first great speech of the Civil Rights Movement – occurred the first night of the boycott. And as he stood in the pulpit, society was telling his sisters and brothers that what they were doing was wrong. He told them that the prevailing mental model said that they could either be good Americans or good Christians – but not both. Good Christians stand up for justice, he said, but good Americans obey the law. And anyone who wanted to fight the injustice around them had to break the law (and, perhaps even disobey God) because fighting for justice surely meant violent protest. That night King changed the way they saw themselves and what they were doing. He told them that they were acting like Christians and like Americans. And, he assured them, they would do both what Americans had always done and what Christians had always done. American citizens, he said, obey the law, just as Christians stand up for justice. So, he told them that they would obey the law <u>and</u> they would stand up for justice. And then he gave them an idea they had never heard. He told them about non-violent protest.[8]

Before Rev. King, his people could either lay down to obey the law in pain, or they could stand up to seek justice through violence. Dr. King's people did not need the inventions that we normally associate with the word innovation. They needed, instead, a new way to see the world – new meaning that paved a new avenue for action. And he showed them how non-violence allowed them to act both as justice-loving Christians and law-abiding Americans. This meaning-making innovation does not abandon the past. It usually involves reconfiguring an idea that already existed. Martin Luther King married the Old Testament language of justice from the past with Gandhi's twentieth century language of nonviolence to create a third way that his people had not considered. That is Christian innovation.

I want to emphasize three things about mental models because they will be important as we innovate our way forward. Mental models dictate behavior. Mental models often come to us as stories. And, because mental models dictate behavior, changing the story dictates new action.

First, **mental models dictate behavior**. If we are going to recalibrate the church, we will want to recalibrate more than how the church talks. We will want to change people's actions. And the most powerful way to change how they act is to change how they see the world – that is, to change their mental models. When Jesus' disciples believed that a Messiah was a conquering king, then they believed that they should receive the honor and good life that are due to the closest advisors to a king. But when they came to understand (only after Easter and Pentecost) that Jesus came to suffer and die, then they started acting differently in the world. They started expecting that they too would suffer. And they stopped trying to avoid suffering. John (whose mother once asked Jesus for little thrones) could stand before the Sanhedrin with the expectation that he and Peter would land in jail because they knew that their Messiah had done the same thing.

Second, **mental models often come to us as stories**. People look for the story that makes the most sense of a situation. "Cultural frameworks," the sociologist Ann Swidler has said, "tend to be organized around imagined situations."[9] For example, my church is larger enough that I sometimes see a child crying in the social time after worship. Met with a crying child, I have to figure out what the situation means. Usually I observe the parent's face to get a clue. I can often distinguish an angry parent from a concerned parent. And when I see an angry parent, I often read the situation as, "the child has done something wrong and is now crying because she is in trouble." And, when I see a concerned parent I look for further cues like a scraped knee. Then I might conclude that the child fell down and has injured herself. But notice how much the very language I use to explain the sensemaking presumes a story. In the first instance, I did not say simply that the child misbehaved. I drew it out so that it composed a scene. The child got caught and is now crying because she is trouble. It falls naturally into a scene from a larger story. Likewise, when I describe a child scraping a knee, I harken back to all the times when I scraped my knee as a child and all the times I hugged my daughters when they scraped their knees. The story has a background and it has connotations (e.g. scraped knees are not serious injuries). The most natural way for me to make sense of a new situation is to put it into a story.

This story-shaped logic applies even when people are engaged in what would appear to be abstract thinking. Swidler the sociologist interviewed people about the concept of love. And she found that they did not display the deductive process that one usually associates with rational thinking. We tend to think that, at their best, people use abstract ideas like beliefs and values to come to some pristine conclusion and that they then apply that abstract conclusion to the specific situation at hand. Swidler found that such is not the case. "People are little constrained by logic." she found. And that's why "logical deduction rarely influences social action directly."[10] Instead people told stories. There were key narratives that repeated themselves in her interviews. In some cases, people defined themselves over against the paradigmatic stories. For instance, many people claimed not to subscribe to the "Hollywood ideal" of marriage, which seemed to be that a couple falls madly in love, overcomes some obstacle, and then lives happily ever after. The respondents used this image to say that love was hard work. But they did not offer a

principle or a generalization. Instead, they told the story of the Hollywood ideal and then added that love was not like that. There were also paradigmatic examples that served as positive ideals.

But Swidler found something more important. Stories were not just illustrations. People constructed their ideas about love by playing out stereotypic scenes in their heads. People talked, for example, about balancing individual needs against the needs of the other person. Swidler concluded that, "Their cultural understandings of love are organized not around the logical coherence of a single image, metaphor, or theory of love but around a core situation or problem."[11] That is, as people worked out strategies for dealing with similar situations, they came to similar generalizations about love. Mental models often come to us as stories.

Third, **changing the story changes behavior** and it does so because it changes the mental model that dictates action. That is why all this discussion of mental models, and of meaning making, and of stories, is so important to our recalibrating the church. The way to change a person's behavior (or a congregation's behavior) is to change their mental model by changing the story they tell themselves. Let me give two powerful examples of how changing the story a person tells herself changes her mental model and creates new behavior. We have already seen how MLK changed people's mental model and enabled a healthier way to interact with the world. Let us see two more examples.

A story can change a mental model and that can transform behavior. Look at the work of the design firm IDEO.[12] IDEO regularly receives difficult assignments, some of them literally a matter of life and death. One assignment involved children and MRI machines. It seems that children are terrified by the narrow spaces and loud banging that an MRI entails. Children almost always had to be fully sedated in order to have an MRI. IDEO was commissioned, then, to create a new kind of MRI machine for children, one that did not require children to be sedated.

The expectation was that they would design a new device, a new machine (i.e. engage in what we will call, "product innovation"). But they discovered that they did not need to make a new machine; they needed to make new meaning using a new mental model.

They started by listening with empathy to the children they hoped to serve. And from a child's perspective the MRI is scary -- cold and metal, cramped and loud. But they also observed children in other settings. For example, kids regularly enjoy loud movies and often clamor to go on scary rides at Disneyland. And that is when they realized that the children did not need a new machine. They needed a new story – a new way to make sense of the cold metal and cramped spaces.

So IDEO created two scenarios. They tricked out two MRI machines so that one looked like a pirate ship and the other looked like a princess's castle. And they trained the hospital staff to recast the experience as an adventure. Then they told the children that they were going to have an adventure. They could choose to be pirates or princesses. They would get costumes to wear and lines to say. But as part of the game, they would have to be brave. A girl might enter the MRI room wearing a flowing princess gown rather than a sterile hospital gown. Or a boy might come in focused on the lines he was to speak and the part he was to play.

And the new story worked. In the end, 85% of the children were able to complete the MRI without being fully sedated. That is innovation. The children did not need a new device or a

new process. They did not need large social change. They needed new meaning. They needed a new story that shifted their mental model.   The key was that IDEO understood that children will be brave if you give them the right way to make meaning of their experiences. The cold, loud place was not a hospital; it was a pirate ship.[13] This is meaning-making innovation.

Or consider another example that shows how changing the mental model will change the story that people use to interpret their own actions. In the aftermath of the protracted drug war in Colombia, FARC guerillas were living in the jungle because they had nowhere else to go. Many Colombians saw these men as a lost generation because no one could figure out a way to get them to return to society.

The Colombian government turned to Jose Miguel Sokoloff, an advertising executive.[14] Sokoloff decided to use Christmas as an opportunity to invite rebels to see themselves differently. The most poignant plan came in 2013. Sokoloff met with the mothers of many FARC rebels. Each one gave Sokoloff pictures of the rebels as children – pictures the rebels would know had to come from their mothers. They distributed the pictures on flyers throughout the jungle at Christmastime. The message, according to Sokoloff, was: "Before you were a guerilla, you were my child. So come home because I will always be waiting for you at Christmastime." And it worked.

It gave the rebels a new story that changed their mental model of themselves. Instead of seeing themselves as criminals in a society that wanted to arrest them, they saw themselves as sons whose mothers were waiting for them with open arms. (Does that remind you of the Prodigal Son story?) Changing the mental model changed the action. And it all turns on the meaning of the word "wanted." If I am a *wanted* criminal, I must stay in the jungle. If I am a *wanted* child, I must return to my mother. The Colombian government did not need a new social program, they needed a new mental model for their people – captured in a story that transformed wanted criminals into wanted children. They needed meaning-making innovation.

The Christian Tradition: Christianity is *not* Christendom
The Christian tradition comes to us as a box of well-established mental models. Every Christian's faith is dependent on the inherited Christian tradition. We receive the faith; we do not invent it. No Christian, for example, invents practices like prayer or beliefs such as "Jesus is Lord."   We receive them – both from God and from those who came before us. We are dependent on the Christian tradition. But, as the theologian Gregory Jones points out, "Tradition is fundamentally different from traditionalism." He quotes the Yale historian Jaroslav Pelikan, "Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living."[15] And, while we all know at some level that the experience of Christianity has changed over the centuries (e.g., there are few current congregations that chant in Latin), our tendency is to believe that the present is better than the past and that the future should look about like the present. All this makes new ideas look suspect. We are yoked to the Bible as the authoritative witness to Jesus Christ. And we are anchored by the theological reflections of the historic Christian church.[16] But we are not shackled to the ways that gospel has always been presented.

The problem comes when we feel obligated to stay connected to a past that was constructed for a world that no longer exists.[17] Christians in the past could assume a condition called Christendom

– where the secular society reinforced the Christian church. But Christendom fell apart after the 1960s.[18] *We have to innovate because we can no longer rely on Christendom*.

But our contemporary mental models – and the organizations that express them – still assume this world that no longer exists. The Christian tradition is not the same as Christendom. The Christian tradition defines the way things should be. Christendom defines the way things have been. The Christian tradition says we worship, through the witness of the Holy Spirit, the God revealed in Jesus the Christ. Christendom says we express that worship by going to a service on a Sunday morning that has hymns, a sermon, and an offering. We get in trouble when we conflate the practice of worship with our expressions of worship. We foolishly assume that the way things are equals the way things should be. We cannot let our need to protect Christendom prevent us from proclaiming anew the Christian tradition. Or, to use Greg Jones' positive statement, "The people who bear a tradition are called to be relentlessly innovative in ways that preserve the life-giving character of the tradition."[19] And that innovation involves creating new Christian categories built on the existing Christian tradition.

Every person encounters a web of cultural narratives that want to entice that person into its own way of seeing the world. James K. A. Smith calls these competing narratives "cultural liturgies" because they seek to form us in just the way that a Christian worship service molds us. We will say more about Smith in a later chapter, but for now let us look at a simple example. Picture going to a shopping mall. You may be an elderly person looking for cold medicine at a CVS or a teenager looking for trendy fashion at H&M. But you are participating in the cultural liturgy of the marketplace. It is the world of buying and selling – where everything has a price. Its rules dictate your expectations and actions. For example, say I am looking for a shirt at a store. I have a mental model of what a store should be (e.g. the prices should be fixed and easy for me to locate) and what I expect from a clerk (e.g. that part of her job is to answer my questions). But the trip to the store shapes me further. It teaches me to see human encounters as an exchange and to see people for their role (rather than through a relationship). And it teaches me even how to react when someone does not meet my expectations. I am far more likely (I am chagrined to admit) to get angry at a clerk or at a company than I am to become cross with my family or friends. For example, I recently called my cable company because my Internet went out. It took me five calls to get through. And when I finally spoke to a person, I was angry. Now I know that this call-center tech in India was not to blame. But I was impatient and short with her because I saw myself as participating in a business liturgy. My mental model was that I was the "customer" and she was not so much a fellow human made in the image of God (as the Christian liturgy would teach) as she was the representative of a company that had taken my money but provided poor service. "Every liturgy constitutes a pedagogy that teaches us," Smith writes, "to be a certain kind of person."[20] The liturgy of commerce taught me to be a stereotypic annoyed (and annoying) customer, and it competed with the liturgy of Christianity that teaches me to be an ambassador of the God of grace. One reason our churches get stuck is that we are conditioned to use the wrong mental model. We adopt secular liturgies and we replace Christianity with Christendom.

Christian Innovation is the Innovation of Meaning

Christian innovation cannot be exactly like secular innovation, yet Christians can learn from secular innovators. Before we say how Christian innovation is different, it would be helpful to trace the development of innovation as an idea. This will help us clarify our mental model for "innovation."[21]

Innovation has come to mean at least five things for secular scholars.[22] It will be the fifth of these concepts that will be most germane for Christian innovation, but we should look briefly at all of them. First, there is product innovation. This is the mental model most people carry when they hear the word "innovation." Like Thomas Edison inventing a light bulb or Apple inventing the iPhone, innovation sometimes refers to devices. This has little connection to the kind of Christian innovation that will recalibrate the church.[23]

Second, there is process innovation such as Henry Ford's revolutionary assembly line or "the Toyota Way," a process that transformed how manufacturers approach quality. And changing our methods will not likely recalibrate the church.

Then there is Internet innovation, where the result is to create an app or a website such as Uber or GoogleEarth. But, if we don't change the content of our messages, simply delivering sermons over the Internet will not transform us.

And, there is social innovation – a term that has two competing definitions. Gregory Dees defines social entrepreneurs as people who pursue change in the name of a social value, either using the resources at hand or by embedding the change agency in a for-profit company. By contrast, Roger Martin & Sally Osberg argue that social entrepreneurs[24] are people who take "direct action…to transform the existing system."[25] This kind of innovation has attracted some attention from Christians because some leaders see it as a way to do good in the world and possibly a way to bring the gospel message into a new structure.[26] And that is really a wonderful thing. But the goal for this book is to change how we communicate the gospel to the people entrusted to our care, and changing the structures that carry that gospel will solve a different (and important) set of problems, but it will not recalibrate our churches away from a world that no longer exists. None of the four will enable us to recalibrate.

These four ways of constructing innovation do, however, share common themes – particularly in the ways that the secular literature has approached the problem. They are strongly influenced by Joseph Schumpeter's idea of "creative destruction"[27] and they argue that innovation is "disruptive"[28] and "discontinuous."[29] This is why most secular ideas about innovation involve replacing one (presumably obsolete) thing with another thing, whether it is a device, a process, an app, or social system.[30] Indeed, Christians reading about these kinds of innovations might naturally be inclined to abandon the past, which we have agreed we Christians cannot do. So we will need another mental model for innovation.[31]

There is a fifth way to think about innovation, one that is more compatible with Christianity's commitment to embodying tradition. There is the innovation of meaning, or what Paul DiMaggio called "cultural entrepreneurship."[32] A Christian leader's task is to make spiritual sense of the lives of the people entrusted to their care. This is how we enable spiritual growth.

We provide our people with the categories – in the form of both doctrines and stories – they need to narrate their lives. And the most powerful kind of innovation is not a new device or a new website, it is a new interpretation – a new way of seeing the world.

This is what innovation scholar Andrew Hargadon meant when he said, "Innovative [organizations] can succeed not by breaking away from the constraints of the past…but instead by harnessing the past in powerful ways."[33] Very little meaning making involves creating a completely new idea. The innovation we call The Reformation, for example, was not built on a wholly new idea; it came from a new reading of Paul's Letter to the Romans. It created new categories (e.g. justification by grace through faith alone) and it gave people a new way to narrate their lives (e.g. "I am saved by grace."). This is "meaning-making innovation." Ralph Winter's insight, likewise, was an innovation because he gave new meaning to the word "nations." He would, however, have argued that, instead of giving new meaning, he restored the meaning that the word carried all along – just as Luther would have argued that he restored the proper emphasis in Romans on justification by grace through faith. But to their audiences, it was an innovation – an innovation of meaning. We need to learn more about this type of innovation because from this point on when I refer to "innovation," I will mean "meaning-making innovation."

Andrew Hargadon's approach to explaining innovation is quite different from the scholars of innovation who advocate abandoning the past. And as such, his approach can help us create innovation that honors the Christian tradition. Hargadon believes that innovation is usually about creating new meaning – meaning which requires new cultural tools. This is even true when he talks about inventors such as Thomas Edison. Having been influenced by Swidler, he explains why and how that process of creating new cultural tools works, and he shows how to construct organizations that take advantage of that knowledge. He calls the process "recombinant innovation."[34] And he builds this process around the cultivation of new cultural tools,[35] especially tools that connect to the past. Innovative organizations "succeed not by breaking away from the constraints of the past," he says, "but instead by harnessing the past in powerful ways."[36] This is good news for those of us whose credibility depends on fidelity with the past.

Hargadon begins by showing where people get their cultural tools, knowing that people who will innovate new tools need to know how tools are created. Those tools come from the networks that surround every person. All people are embedded in networks of ideas and relationships.[37] Some of these are formal networks that are defined by organizational structure – e.g., the organizational chart at my office defines my relationship to my boss, to my colleagues, and to my direct reports. But these formal networks are not as important to Hargadon as are the networks that shape my ideas, my mental models. He is more interested in interactions, especially interactions that influence how I see the world. For example, if I read the same blog every morning but only talk to my boss once a week, then that blog may be more influential than my boss. Or it may be more influential on a wider range of topics than are interactions with my boss.[38] Either way, I am embedded in a network of relationships, of ideas, and of interactions. And, from these networks I glean the set of choices for interpreting the world that Swidler calls a tool-kit. Christian innovation is about creating new choices for people, choices that allow them to follow Jesus and to address issues in their lives.

We tend to think of innovation as being about the creation of something that did not exist before. And that can certainly be true. But in the world of Christian organizations, we will likely not create something out of nothing. We will create something using the traditional faith as our raw materials to create this new set of choices for interpreting the world. Indeed, innovation will likely come from *mixing and matching* ideas that are already present with new situations in order to make new spiritual meaning for the people entrusted to our care. Ralph Winter did not invent the practice of sending missionaries to other nations, but he did re-invent the meaning of missions. And, in the same way, Martin Luther King did not invent the idea of non-violent protest. He borrowed it from Mahatma Gandhi and introduced it to a people who experienced it as an innovation. Each made meaning by combining or recombining ideas to create something new.

Perhaps another example will help us see what Hargadon means by meaning-making innovation. Think, for example, about the "seeker-sensitive service" that became popular in evangelical churches over the last generation. The seeker-sensitive service was not something new under the sun. It was an adaptation of something that had existed for centuries – the Christian practice of worship. The new thing, however, was that this service of Christian worship was designed so that it would make sense to people who were not already familiar with the contours of Christianity. Not only that, this innovative service was calibrated to address the needs (the longings and losses) of a particular people: those who do not know Jesus but may in fact be interested in him. The service came about because some Christians decided that there was a particular people entrusted to their care, namely those who do not yet know Jesus. The service was not all that new. It included elements that had been present for generations. But it felt new to people who were used to the traditional way of doing things. And, indeed it not only felt new, but it felt to many of them as if it was not quite right. It was new and different; and "new and different" worried some people. That is why the seeker-sensitive service started out as such a controversial way to conduct a worship service. And now it is an acceptable part of the American Christian repertoire. How did it move from controversial to common? How did this Christian innovation take hold?

Sociologists have a term for what happened with the seeker-sensitive service. They say that the service had to be "legitimated." It had to move in the public mind from being de-legitimate (i.e, an inappropriate expression of the Christian practice of worship) to being legitimate (i.e., an appropriate expression of that practice). This idea plays off of Ann Swidler's extremely influential work on culture as a tool-kit.[39] She argues that humans do not have an unlimited set of options when we try to engage in action. Culture provides only enough tools to fit on our tool-belt. We can only carry on those actions that culture deems appropriate (i.e., legitimate) for that moment. It would not, for example, be culturally-appropriate for me to offer a turtle dove as a sacrifice to God as part of my Sunday morning worship – even though it appears that for many years God's People were instructed to do just that. We Christians have agreed that animal sacrifice is no longer necessary because Jesus the High Priest is Himself the once-and-for-all sacrifice (cf. Hebrews 5-10, esp. Hebrews 7). Likewise, it would have until recently been inappropriate (i.e., de-legitimate) for Christians to "speak in tongues" when they prayed, or to gather in mixed company for a Bible study in a college dorm room, or to send teenagers to a foreign land on a week-long mission trip. But each of those forms has recently been legitimated. They are, in Swidler's terms, now part of the cultural tool-kit that is available for Christians who

wish to take action in the world.[40] This pertains to Christian innovation because the cultural tool-kit available to contemporary Christians is constructed to support the tasks of a previous era – the era of Christendom. We are trying to make do with the tools we have, even though we are taking up tasks for which we do not have the proper tools. The process of Christian innovation will involve legitimating new cultural tools.

Legitimation is not a well-reasoned process for people. When I first experienced "seeker-sensitive services" back in the early 1990s, I had my doubts. It seemed de-legitimate to have a service of worship that did not have the "elements" that I had been taught belonged in a worship service – especially some kind of confession of sin – and it seemed overly-commercialized to have a "food court" selling sandwiches in the middle of a church campus (it all smacked of money-changers to me). I also worried because of the congregations that I knew that were engaged in seeker-sensitive services, many of them did not allow women in leadership. But then I had an odd experience. I was going to be traveling to another part of the country for work. And one of my friends said that I should attend her sister's church. So I contacted her sister and arranged to go with her to church. It was one of the nation's most well-known seeker-sensitive churches, where it just so happened that my friend's sister was the first woman to sit on the board (because the congregation was making a conscious effort to include women in leadership). And the day before I was going to go, I discovered that an old friend would be in town that day. We arranged to go to a ballgame together, but I explained that I was going to this church first. My friend said that he would tag along to the church and then we could go to the game. Now, I foolishly had not thought to invite my friend to church because he is not a practicing Christian. But as we drove to the church, he explained that he was open to what he called "the spiritual." He loved the experience; he sang, he prayed, he did what seekers are supposed to do. And then after the service, in the dreaded food court, I saw person after person come to our table and talk to us. It was like taking the whole congregation to brunch. They chatted, they did church business, they talked about concerns for ailing friends, they may even have prayed for one another. And then I realized in that moment, all three of my de-legitimating expectations were doused. I was experiencing hospitality and koinonia in a food court, while sitting between a female leader and satisfied seeker. Yet somehow something in me wanted to complain. It just did not *feel* right. It was not what I knew, what I was taught in seminary. It did not fit my mental model for how worship should look. The experience had answered all my objections but I was uncomfortable. And we need to talk a bit more about why that happens.

Ann Swidler has shown that people's expectations come in story form. We turn experiences and ideas into stories. The stereotype is that people rationally weigh the evidence and come to an abstract conclusion about new things. But Swidler showed that we instead fit new experiences into stories. Think of the experience of, say, ordering at a restaurant. There is a cadence to what you expect, plot points you are supposed to hit in the way that the story is supposed to go. And if a waiter violates any of those expectations, say by taking too long or not checking back to see if you need more water, then it seems wrong and his legitimacy is in danger (measured by many people in the form of a meal-ending tip). But all that is forgivable, if the story ends well. The end of the story shapes everything else. We know that at the end of the restaurant story, the waiter is supposed return with the food you requested. The legitimacy of a waiter is mostly judged by how the story ends. If a waiter is slow or rude, we might complain but we would not say that they were not being a waiter. But if the waiter was polite and filled all your expectations

right up until the end, and then he brought you different food ("I thought you would like this better," he says), then you would say he lost his credibility as a waiter. We know how the story is supposed to end and if it does not end the proper way, then it is automatically de-legitimate.

Christian innovation is the innovation of meaning. And that new meaning will require Christian leaders to engage in processes of legitimation.

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Peter Drucker has said, "Innovation in any one knowledge area tends to originate outside the area itself."[41] We cannot tweak our way to innovation. But we are still tethered to the Bible and to the historic faith. So our goal is not to expand beyond the historic faith, but rather to understand that historic faith in a new way. We need new mental models in order to do meaning-making innovation. Let me conclude with one last example.

The American church has been making the same mistake that the Detroit automakers made in the 1980s. And it has to do with mental models. In the 1980s, "Detroit believed that people bought automobiles on the basis of styling, not for quality or reliability."[42] And they had the survey data to back it up. Americans reported that they cared more about how a car looks than how it runs. And that gave the automakers a mental model of the consumer – and of themselves.

According to a prominent study at the time, Detroit assumed that it "is in the business of making money, not cars" and that "cars are primarily status symbols." They did not care much about the quality of the cars, and they assumed that consumers did not either. These assumptions set them up to be overwhelmed by Japanese companies like Toyota that emphasized the quality of a car rather than its looks.

And here is the part that is crucial for churches. "The problem with mental models lies not in whether they are right or wrong – by definition, all models are oversimplifications," Peter Senge says. **The problem with mental models is that we do not examine them because we take them for granted**. Detroit did not just acknowledge that Americans care about styling. They totalized the idea. "They said, 'All people care about is styling.'" Detroit took people at their word, assuming that a person understood her own mental models. Detroit adopted Americans' mental models about cars, and both were fooled. "Because they remained unaware of their mental models, the models remained unexamined. [And] because they were unexamined, the models remained unchanged." That meant that "as the world changed, a gap widened between Detroit's mental models and reality," leading them to make poorer and poorer decisions. Detroit had a faulty view of itself because it had a faulty view of the American people.

And lest you think that the problem of unexamined mental models applies only to businesses, let us take a look at the church. Robert Wuthnow argues that the American church is suffering because it has an incorrect view of itself and of its people. The clergy who speak for the church, Wuthnow observes, hold a mental model that compartmentalizes life. They proclaim a gospel that speaks only to spiritual issues but never touches on the problems of daily life. Although written in the 1990s, Wuthnow's critique feels eerily current. "In recent years," Wuthnow notes, clergy "take up the issues supplied by the media and become embroiled in culture wars and

preach about political issues rather than speaking to the concerns that face parishioners in their daily lives" – lives filled with the "pressures of working harder to make ends meet, worries about retaining one's job, lack of time for one's self and one's family, marital strains associated with two-career households, and the incessant demands of advertising and the marketplace." The solution is for congregations to recalibrate their mental model of what it means to be church in order "to preserve the sacred teachings of their traditions, [by] making them relevant to the strenuous, pressure-filled lives" that their parishioners lead. [43] Like the Detroit automakers, we in the church have defined ourselves incorrectly. Detroit thought that its job was to make money and not cars. The church too often thinks its job is to build up the church rather than to make spiritual sense of everyday life. We need to recalibrate.

In this chapter, we have seen many examples of how to innovate by changing mental models in order to make new meaning. Jesus transformed the disciples' notion of the Kingdom of God in Mark 8 by changing their mental model of a "messiah." Ralph Winter transformed the practice of world mission by changing the mental model surrounding the word "nations." Martin Luther King enabled Southern Blacks to be, at the same time, law-abiding Americans and justice-seeking Christians by introducing the idea of nonviolence. The design company IDEO enabled children to endure MRI tests by using a story structure to transform a scary procedure into a playful adventure. The Colombian government used messages from home to change wanted criminals into wanted children. Martin Luther sparked the Reformation with a new way to make sense of the Book of Romans. And the seeker-sensitive service recast the practice of worship in order to make room for people who did not have much experience with Christianity. In each case, the innovation was neither a product, a process, a social program, nor an app. The innovation came as a new way to make meaning. Meaning-making innovation is the means for recalibrating the church.

How, specifically, do we recalibrate? How do we create meaning-making innovation that addresses the concerns of daily life? Doing that will require two tasks, because we will need to calibrate ourselves according to two standards. In order to understand daily life, we will need to calibrate ourselves to the ever-changing culture. And, in order to make spiritual sense of that daily life, we will need to calibrate ourselves to the never-changing gospel. We turn now to the specific question of how to recalibrate.

Endnotes

[1] Ralph D. Winter, "The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Proceedings of the International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland* (1974) 213-225, https://www.lausanne.org/docs/lau1docs/0213.pdf

[2] Winter, "Highest Priority," 214

[3] "Influential Evangelicals," TIME (February 7, 2005), available at http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1993235_1993243_1993320,00.html

[4] The definition for Christian innovation that I am proposing is consistent with (and, indeed, a more specific cousin) of the idea that innovation is "a new practice adopted by a community." I emphasize both practices and people in community. Peter Denning and Robert Dunham, *The Innovator's Way* (MIT Press, 2010) xv.

[5] Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline* (Doubleday, 1990) 174-204, esp. 175

[6] Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line* (Harvard Business School Press, 2002) 11

[7] Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* (Simon & Shuster, 1989)

[8] For the text of King's speech on December 5, 1955, see http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/the_addres_to_the_first_montgomery_improvement_association_mia_mass_meeting/

[9] Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (University of Chicago Press, 2001) 34.

[10] She also said, "deductive logic is not central to the organization of cultural systems." Swidler, *Talk of Love*, 188, 189.

[11] Swidler, 29,30.

[12] Tom Kelley with Jonathan Littman, *The Art of Innovation: Lessons in Creativity from IDEO, America's Leading Design Firm* (New York: Currency, 2001)

[13] Tom Kelley & David Kelley, *Creative Confidence* (Crown Business, 2013); cf. David Kelley, "How to Build Your Creative Confidence," TED Talk (2012), starting at the 6:02 mark, https://www.ted.com/talks/david_kelley_how_to_build_your_creative_confidence

[14] Lara Logan, "How Unconventional Thinking Transformed War-Torn Colombia," *Sixty Minutes* (December 11, 2016) https://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-colombia-after-civil-war-lara-logan/

[15] L. Gregory Jones, "Traditioned Leadership," *Faith & Leadership* (January 20, 2009) http://www.faithandleadership.com/content/traditioned-innovation

[16] I recognize that the very meaning of "the historic Christian church" is subject to debate. But even those who want to disclude others from the historic faith want to maintain their particular link with the faith passed on through the generations.

[17] Birkinshaw, Bessant & Delbridge, "Finding," 68.

[18] The best summary of the deep structural changes that dominate American Christianity since World War II is Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton University Press, 1990)

[19] L. Gregory Jones, "Traditioned Leadership," *Faith & Leadership* (January 20, 2009) http://www.faithandleadership.com/content/traditioned-innovation

[20] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* (Baker Academic, 2009) 26

[21] Weiss & Legrand helpfully distinguish innovation as a process from innovation as an outcome. This book will emphasize the process of innovation. There are those as well, such as Anthony, Gilbert, and Johnson, who see innovation as less important than transformation. When an entire organization's purpose and practice undergoes a process of innovation, then that adds up to transformation. David Weiss & Claude Legrand, *Innovative Intelligence*

(Wiley, 2011) 5; Scott Anthony, Clark Gilbert, and Mark Johnson, *Dual Transformation* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2017) 10ff.

[22] For an overview of how scholars wrote about innovation prior to 2005, see Jan Fagerberg, "Innovation: A Guide to the Literature," in *The Oxford Innovation Handbook*, ed. by Jan Fagerberg, David Mowery, and Richard Nelson (Oxford University Press, 2005) 1-26.

[23] There are, however, examples of product innovation among Christians. Creating another translation of Scripture is the creation of a product. The first person to translate the Scriptures into the vernacular was engaging in what we will call meaning-making innovation. But having one more translation does not appreciably change the way that we make meaning.

[24] For examples of how social innovators address large social problems, see Richard Pascale, Jerry Sternin, and Monique Sternin, *The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World's Toughest Problems* (Harvard Business Press, 2010)

[25] On Dees, see "The Meaning of Social Entrepreneurship," originally published in 1998 at Stanford, now re-formatted and housed at Duke, https://entrepreneurship.duke.edu/news-item/the-meaning-of-social-entrepreneurship/ . On Roger Martin & Sally Osberg, see *Getting Beyond Better: How Social Entrepreneurship Works* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2015) and "Social Entrepreneurship: The Case for Definition" *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Spring 2007). Although the definitions of Dees and of Martin & Osberg conflict in important ways, it is not uncommon to find them used interchangeably by Christian authors.

[26] The best examples of Christian social innovation are from Greg Jones and Tim Shapiro. Jones distinguishes "social innovation" from "social entrepreneurship." "Social innovation involves the discovery and development of strategies to build, renew, and transform institutions in order to foster human flourishing," while "social entrepreneurship is an activity that focuses on starting new initiatives, and is a subset of a larger focus on social innovation." (3) See, L. Gregory Jones, *Christian Social Innovation* (Abingdon, 2016)   and the "Traditioned Innovation" collection of blog articles at https://www.faithandleadership.com/category/principles-practice-topics/traditioned-innovation; Tim Shapiro with Kara Faris, *Divergent Church: The Bright Promise of Alternative Faith Communities* (Abingdon, 2017)

[27] On Schumpeter, see Thomas McCraw, *Prophet of Innovation: Joseph Schumpeter and Creative Destruction* (Harvard University Presss, 2007).

[28] On "disruptive innovation," see Clayton Christensen's work starting with *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail* (Harvard Business School Press, 1997). His approach to higher education is particularly helpful for Christians, *The Innovative University* (Jossey-Bass, 2011). His work on leadership for innovation is Jeff Dyer, Hal Gregersen, and Clayton Christiansen, *The Innovator's DNA* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2011)

[29] Julian Birkinshaw of the London School of Economics is the one most associated with the term "discontinuous innovation." Birkinshaw describes "discontinuous innovation" and lists four kinds of research on it: research on "industry structure," "emerging customer needs," "cognitive barriers," and "internal mechanisms." Julian Birkinshaw, John Bessant, and Rick Delbridge, "Finding, Forming, and Performing: Creating Networks for Discontinuous Innovation," *California Management Review* 49:3 (Spring 2007) 69.   A similar construction comes from Govindarajan & Trimble, who describe Strategic innovation, as innovation that "breaks with past practice in at least one of three ways: value-chain design, conceptualization of customer value, and identification of potential customers." Vijay Govindarajan and Chris Trimble, "Strategic Innovation and the Science of Learning," *Sloan Management Review* (Winter 2004) 21 cf. Morten T. Hansen and Julian Birkinshaw, "The Innovation Value Chain," *HBR* (June 2007) 2-10;

[30] Among those who share Schumpter's commitment to creative destruction, there is a diversity of takes on innovation. For instance, Sawhney, Wolcott & Arroniz list twelve different "dimensions" for innovation all held together by the idea that "innovation is about new value not new things." Mohanbir Sawhney, Robert C. Wolcott, and Inigo Arroniz, "12 Different Ways for Companies to Innovate," (NB: This emphasis plays off of Drucker's third question: what does your customer consider value?) *Sloan Management Review* (Spring 2006) esp. pp. 31 and 29; In

addition to these scholars, prominent practitioners have shaped the conversation. Peter Drucker, writing back in 1985, described innovation as "the effort to create purposeful, focused change in an enterprise's economic or societal potential." Peter Drucker, "The Discipline of Innovation," *Harvard Business Review* (August 2002) 6, excerpted from Drucker, *Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Practice and Principles* (NY: Harper & Row, 1985); And, the executives at Google believe that "innovation entails both the production and implementation of novel and useful ideas…For something to be innovative, it needs to be new, surprising, and radically useful." Eric Schmidt and Jonathan Rosenberg, *How Google Works* (NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2014) 206

[31] The diverse viewpoints from the secular literature on innovation do, however, agree that innovation will eventually require a change in organizational culture. See, for example, Frances Horibe, *Creating the Innovation Culture* (John Wiley & Sons, 2001)

[32] Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston," *Media, Culture, and Society* 4 (1982) 33–50

[33] Andrew Hargadon, *How Breakthroughs Happen* (Harvard Business School Press, 2003) xii

[34] This process is similar to the process that Paul DiMaggio calls "cultural entrepreneurship." DiMaggio's ideas have more resonance in sociological circles. We will use Hargadon's term because he specifically addresses the goal of innovation. But it is important to note that the ideas go together. In fact, Hargadon learned about creating cultural tools from a band of scholars that quite consciously built off of DiMaggio's original work. So it makes sense that Hargadon discovered cultural processes similar to the ones that DiMaggio first explained. See, esp., Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston," Media, Culture and Society 4 (1982): 33-50; see, also, DiMaggio's influential article on the larger question of how cultural shapes the way humans process information, DiMaggio, "Culture and Cognition," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (Aug 1997) 263-287.

[35] I recognize that I am mixing metaphors when I talk about cultivating tools. But I choose to do this because the process of creating a tool like a hammer is much like that for creating a device. But the process for creating a cultural tool is much more organic; it is more like cultivating a sapling.

[36] Hargadon, *How Breakthroughs Happen* (Harvard Business School Press, 2003) xii.

[37] Though there is not room in this essay to discuss the topic further, it is important to note that innovation – even innovation that honors tradition – requires both individual innovation and innovative organizations.

[38] From the perspective of what neo-institutional scholars call "institutional isomorphism," the blog shapes my thinking through mimetic isomorphism, while my boss is more likely to influence my thinking through normative isomorphism or even sometimes coercive isomorphism. That distinction is important because there is only a small range of topics that can be influenced by normative and coercive means. Neo-institutional organizational theory is closely tied to our interests in cultural innovation because the seminal author in each area is Paul DiMaggio. DiMaggio's work on "cultural entrepreneurship" precedes and strongly influenced Swidler's work on cultural tools. See, DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston," Media, Culture and Society 4 (1982): 33-50 On institutional isomorphism, see DiMaggio, Paul and Walter Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality," in Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio eds., *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) pp. 63-82; Friedland, Roger and Robert R. Alford, "Bringing Society Back In: Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions," in Powell and DiMaggio eds., *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) pp. 232-263. and Harry Stout and Scott Cormode, "Institutions and the Story of American Religion: A Sketch of a Synthesis" in Demerath et.al., *Sacred Companies*; See also, Scott Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense*, p109n15.

[39] I should warn the reader now that the literature on culture is filled with mixed metaphors and competing metaphors. I will use more than one metaphor and I will even mix them because that is what the literature has done and that seems to make the whole idea easier to understand. Indeed, in the very first sentence of the abstract of the article where Swidler introduces the idea as a "cultural tool-kit," she also refers to them as a "repertoire." She calls them "a repertoire or 'tool kit' of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct 'strategies of action.'" Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (April 1986) 273-286 cf. Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (University of Chicago Press, 2001); Note also, Swidler was a co-author (along with Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, and Steven Tipton) of the extremely influential book *Habits of the Heart* (University of California Press, 1985), which lays the groundwork for talking

about how culture can shape the most basic human experiences. This book is particularly important because it takes social science approach to the questions that animate what the Western Tradition has typically called the human condition.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Drucker, *Managing in a Time of Great Change*, (Harvard Business Review Press, 2009) p. 201; cf. Drucker Institute, "The Virtues of Cross-Polinating," http://www.druckerinstitute.com/2011/08/the-virtues-of-cross-pollination/

[42] This quote and the subsequent quotations in this paragraph come from Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline* (Doubleday, 1990) 175, 176

[43] Robert Wuthnow, *The Crisis in the Churches* (Oxford University Press, 1997) 6, 7