

**Author's Rejoinder To
INNOVATION AND THE EARLY CHRISTIAN
CHURCH: STRENGTHENING THE THESIS**

BY DR. MICHAEL CAFFERKY

Dr. Gary Oster
Regent University

Dr. Michael Cafferky has written an exceptionally thoughtful and thorough analysis of the article entitled "Innovation and the Early Christian Church." In addition to highlighting important shortcomings of the article, he outlined numerous welcomed directions for future research.

Of most importance, Professor Cafferky ably demonstrated that the article significantly understated the depth and complexity of covenantal Jewish law. He noted that the very identity of the Jews was then and is today inextricably intertwined with the laws:

The purpose of the ceremonial laws such as the requirement for circumcision and the dietary restrictions find their foundation in covenant theology (Cafferky, 2010).

Moreover, the process required to "unpack" the new Christian paradigm was more protracted and complicated than originally stated:

In this way God's promise to Abraham that his descendents would bless the whole earth could actually be fulfilled through the spiritual descendants of Abraham but not his genealogical descendants. Fulfilling that Commission was not an instantaneous event. It was an unfolding process. The events in Acts 10-11 were one step in this process (Cafferky, 2010).

Requiring additional study and debate is the contention that theoretical constructs used to describe and evaluate for-profit businesses do not apply to non-profit organizations. As Dr. Cafferky noted,

The literature on change in nonprofit organizations such as that offered by Salipante and Golden-Biddle (1995) should lead us to be cautious when we are tempted to accept the assumptions of the for-profit sector straight across into the nonprofit sector (See also Goold, 1997).

That caution may be necessary when compar-

The Book of Acts
will forevermore be a
sea of wonder for those
willing to plumb its
remarkable depths.

ing for-profit and non-profit organizations, especially because of possible differences in values, missions, relationships between the organization and its constituents/customers, and organizational reaction to social dysfunctions, as highlighted by Dr. Cafferky. Recent history may have diminished those differences, however. Officials and employees from for-profit organizations now often move to non-profits, and vice-versa. Because the operations of for-profit and non-profit organizations are becoming increasingly transparent, expectations of both constituents and the public have become increasingly homogenized. Business models once thought to be antithetical to non-profits have grown increasingly acceptable:

Literature in support of the dynamics represented by the intent of the Porter framework has been reviewed suggesting that we should not be quick to dismiss the framework's relevance to religious nonprofit organizations (Cafferky, 2005, 12).

This conversation may engender many possible streams of research in the future, including the following:

Sensemaking in Christian organizations - Dr. Cafferky noted,

...The importance of conversation during this bi-directional, iterative process of change... Peter's conversation with fellow believers was an important part of this communal change process. And so was Peter's conversation with God (Cafferky, 2010).

What is the process of leader illumination, how important is interlocution in personal and organizational sensemaking (Weick, 2005), and what roles does the Holy Spirit play in the processes of sensemaking and innovation?

Positive and negative innovation antibodies in Christian organizations – Dr. Cafferky correctly said that,

The idea of testing new ideas against orthodoxy was known in Old Testament times, promoted by Jesus, and became an important part of Christian teaching and practice,

and,

Instead of considering resistance as an innovation antibody as if it is toxic, we might just as well consider the antibody for the good that it does in preserving the organism from an insult to its core mission (Cafferky, 2010).

More research is needed on the necessity and function of innovation antibodies in the ancient Jewish and modern-day Christian churches and their role in differentiating essential doctrine from superfluous dogma (Oster, 2009).

The life cycle of Christian organizations - Again, Professor Cafferky correctly stated that,

We might say that the group of Jewish Christians was in the process of being formed into an organization by the time the events of Acts 10-11 occurred (Cafferky, 2010).

Much more research is necessary to effectively delineate between the introduction of conceptual turbulence, and how it is ultimately translated into a movement and perhaps eventually an organization.

The Book of Acts will forevermore be a sea of enlightenment and wonder for those willing to plumb its remarkable depths.

REFERENCES

- Cafferky, M. (2005). The Porter Five-forces Industry Analysis Framework for religious non profits: a conceptual analysis, Presented to the 25th Annual Christian Business Faculty Association Conference, Point Loma Nazarene University, October 13 – 15, 2005.
- Cafferky, M. (2010). Innovation and the early Christian church: strengthening the thesis. *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, Issue 12.
- Oster, G. (2009). Listening to Luddites: innovation antibodies and corporate success. *Review of International Comparative Management*, 10(4), 647-667.
- Weick, K., Sutcliffe, K., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science*, 16(4), 409-421.