



# Bridgebuilders

## Workplace Chaplaincy: A History

by Malcolm Torry

Canterbury Press, 2010, Paperback 224pp, £19.99  
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■ reviewed by Chris Savage

**I have been involved with Industrial Mission for most of my forty years of ordained ministry, both part-time and full-time as I am now with *Chaplaincy to People at Work* Cambridgeshire.**

So reading Malcolm Torry's *Bridgebuilders* was for me like revisiting a story in which I have played a small part. In addition, some of the personalities Torry mentions have played a notable part in my own ministry.

Torry's account of the growth, spread and development of Industrial Mission in the UK is very readable because his presentation of history is often in the form of stories. But Torry is not writing a novel and wants us to understand Industrial Mission (often referred to now as workplace chaplaincy) from where society is today. So he begins with a chapter on secularisation which describes several different types of secularisation: of ideas, of culture, desacralisation, practical, state and institutional secularisation. Torry's point is summarised at the end of the chapter: "We might not be able to defeat secularisation, but we can at least build a few bridges: between religion and the secular, and between religious organisations and secular organisations (p.21)".

Despite its 65 year history, there are many in the churches who have not heard of Industrial Mission. Among those who have, I often come across a common perception in churches that Ted Wickham was the founding father of the movement when, at Bishop Leslie Hunter's behest, he began visiting the steelworks in Sheffield. Certainly Wickham

was a pivotal figure particularly as he believed that Christians in industry should be a reconfiguration of what the Church essentially is. Torry counters this misconception by tracing the origins of the movement further back, describing the early evolution of workplace chaplaincy through the ministry of the Navy Mission (the precursor of the ICF, which influenced Wickham) and chaplains in the armed forces. The work of the Industrial Chaplains as bridge builders is described with accounts of the parallel ministries in South London leading to the South London Industrial Mission (SLIM), for which Torry worked in the 1980s, and Sheffield Industrial Mission.

A question often asked today of workplace chaplains is "Why are you here and what are you trying to achieve?" Ian Stubbs, Industrial Chaplain in Slough in the 1970s and 1980s, is quoted as saying "From the annals of the wise fathers of Piggy-in-the-Middle land the secret is at last out! How to straddle the fence without damaging sensitive parts. How to hold aloft the flag of caution while picking our way through the muddy reaches of conflicting ideologies. How to sort out where you stand, sit where others sit, but avoid identifying with the sitting or the standing. How to avoid traps of extremism. In short how to be an Industrial Chaplain!" (pp.129 -130).

With the publication of Bishop David Sheppard's *Bias to the Poor* in 1983 and the Church of England's *Faith in the City* report came a fundamental challenge to the ethos of industrial mission. Mike West, the new Senior Chaplain of Sheffield Industrial Mission in 1982, initiated a reorientation of



▶▶ the work towards a just society and by implication away from pastoral work and evangelism. Torry describes the 1980s as a new era for Industrial Mission moving from workplace visiting to issue and project-based ministry. In the 1990s this shifted to a focus on the local economy.

The 1990's saw the decline in the Industrial Mission movement and led to much reflection on the past, present and future of IM. Mostyn Davies' paper on the four 'generations' of Industrial Mission is quoted and is commonly accepted as the yardstick of current workplace chaplaincy. Torry observes that no categorisation is without its problems. The current emphasis in most workplace chaplaincies today seems to be somewhere between the first model, Navy Mission, and the second, the workplace visiting model of Sheffield Industrial Mission. However, the last model of mission to the economy has become commonplace in many chaplaincies including my own.

Torry concludes his history of the movement with descriptions of Faith in Business and the Spirit at Work movement

which has aroused controversy with an article from its leading practitioner David Welbourn in a recent issue of the IMagenda. Missing from this enjoyable book is inclusion of other Christian organisations that are in some sense descendants of Industrial Mission, albeit operating on different models. There is nothing eg on Transform Work UK, Christian Association of Business Executives and Transforming Business.

The title *Bridgebuilders* is illustrated in the growth of the ministry. While the dilemmas and challenges for chaplains are well described, there is nothing about the excitement and passion of bridge building – the breaking down of the barriers between God and those of humankind in the workplace. For me that has been a true experience of evangelism.

However for a comprehensive and up-to-date account of workplace chaplaincy Malcolm Torry's book is required reading for all Christians, as the challenges he poses for us are there for us to wrestle with in our ministry. ■

*Chris Savage*

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# Priest in Deep Water:

**Charles Plomer Hopkins and the 1911 Seamen's Strike**

**by R.W.H. Miller**

The Lutterworth Press, 2010, paperback, 140 pages, £25.00, ISBN 9780718892326

■ **reviewed by Malcolm Torry**

**This meticulously researched biography of Charles Plomer Hopkins (1861 – 1922) holds up a timely mirror to our Church's relationship both to the Gospel and to the society in which we live.**

At the age of eight, Hopkins was sent from Burma to England with only his sister for company. It was this voyage which taught him the hard lives which sailors lived.

Following education at Falmouth and at Trinity College of Music in London, Hopkins, back in Burma, became organist at Rangoon Cathedral, and was then ordained and appointed port chaplain. He was soon fighting the injustices suffered by seamen and providing for their welfare. During four months spent in London he joined a religious order, the Society of St. Paul, and on his return to the East, to the port chaplaincy at Calcutta, he established a religious community of his own: the Seamen's Friendly Society of St. Paul.

