



Engaging Mission:

The lasting value of Industrial Mission for today

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by Peter Cope and Mike West

reviewed by Malcolm Torry

It will be helpful early in this review for the reviewer both to declare an interest and to agree with the authors about the difference between their book and mine.

In 2010 I published *Bridgebuilders* (reviewed in FiBQ 13:4), a history of workplace chaplaincy. As Cope and West correctly suggest, Industrial Mission is broader than workplace chaplaincy, and their book contains more of that breadth. I would put a further difference like this: in both books practice and theology inform each other, but in *Engaging Mission* the focus is on the influence of theology on practice, whereas in *Bridgebuilders* the focus is more on the influence of practice on theology. The books nicely complement each other.

The first chapter of *Engaging Mission* offers a concise history of the modern Industrial Mission movement, from its origins during the Second World War to its present state. The authors view this history from the 'Sheffield' perspective, which sees Ted Wickham as 'the key pioneer of IM' (p.3), and teams of full-time chaplains as the norm. Such teams did become the norm until ecclesiastical expenditure cuts during the 1990s decimated them. We have now seen the return of the earlier 'South London' model: volunteer chaplains visiting their local industries.

From the second chapter we are in more specifically theological mode as the authors relate early industrial mission practice to a theology of God's action in the industrial world, and to the theologies of Tillich, Bultmann, Bonhoeffer and Reinhold Niebuhr. Chapter 3 explores Industrial Mission's theological methods – mainly variations on the theme of the hermeneutical circle: participation, multi-faceted reflection,

theological evaluation, and thence to agenda-setting for further participation. Chapter 4 explores the different theological presuppositions underlying the different approaches of industrial chaplains in Sheffield and South London: the one more structural, the other more pastoral, though both theological; and, somewhat disconnectedly, the chapter concludes in 'handbook' style with guidance on how to establish workplace chaplaincies.

Workplace chaplaincy has frequently been a springboard into a wide diversity of activity, and the following chapters explore some of that diversity: networking, nationally, regionally, and globally; work on corporate social responsibility; and training for the Church's laity and clergy. The final chapter concludes that the dominant theological basis remains a Kingdom theology of God at work in the world, and that a major challenge today is to find the right language for that theology. Also in this final chapter the authors recommend Industrial Mission as a model for appropriate mission in today's Britain, and hope that 'the British churches can maintain a persistent and informed Christian presence within all the diverse communities and groups of contemporary British society' (p.150). Resources are now fewer, but experienced Industrial Mission practitioners are still available to assist. What the authors might have added is that we're living on past capital, and not doing enough to rebuild it.

Engaging Mission is as much personal testimony as it is objective account. Peter Cope and Mike West have given their adult years to the theology and practice related in their book. The outcome is a book which is an invitation to the reader to a similar commitment to seeking God's Kingdom in the world in which we find ourselves. ■

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