

Book Review – Anthony Harrop

Love @ Work: 100 years of the Industrial Christian Fellowship

By Ian Randall, Phil Jump and John Weaver

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A review of *Love @ Work, 100 years of the Industrial Christian Fellowship* cannot do better than encourage potential buyers to read the two-page Foreword by Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury. This concise and accurate description of what motivated and continues to animate ICF is followed by Ian Randall, Phil Jump and John Weaver's Introduction, which links past to present, highlighting issues and themes which echo in every business, political and spiritual context in every generation.

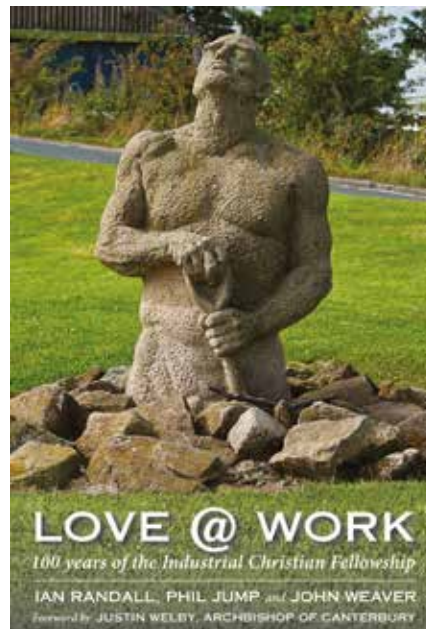
This reviewer – on the ICF executive and an editor of FiBQ – takes a step back from 'the story' to highlight the people who made and make ICF. What vision is required to keep an organisation going for 100+ years? What mix of administrative skill – even *realpolitik* – is needed to cohere different interests and ideas? And what spiritual foundation keeps the organisation alive?

The cover photo of a sculpture, at first glance, belongs to a bygone age. Who is this 'Halsall Navy' springing from the rubble, spade gripped in both hands, looking upwards as if from a pit? Standing on the banks of the Leeds and Liverpool canal (a Northern Powerhouse?) it is now visited for leisure not transportation, by walkers, anglers and diners at the nearby gastropub.

Elizabeth Garnett, 1839–1921, daughter of a vicar of Otley, widowed in 1863 after only a year of marriage, devoted her life to reaching out to the navigators who built Britain's canals, train tracks and reservoirs. Estimated at 40,000 men, with 20,000 women and children, navvies were ostracised in town and country, moving location as work began and ended. Garnett and her co-workers – many of them women of financial means – practised Love @

Work to include, provide for, support and yes, love, this outcast group which built 19th century Britain. Has Covid-19 brought similar invisible workers to our attention in 21st Century Britain?

The Christian Social Union, founded in 1889, started life on the other side of



the tracks, with heavyweight Anglican theologians embedded in St Paul's and Oxford University. From one Oxford College – Balliol – students in one three-year period – 1898–1902 – came three men who were prime movers in the theoretical, administrative and moral foundation of the Welfare State we inherit today: the historian and economist R H Tawney, the administrator William Beveridge and the Archbishop William Temple. They were close – Tawney married Beveridge's sister Jeannette. Alongside the CSU's influence, all were greatly influenced by the Webbs and the Fabian Society. A common nurture, lifelong friendships, complementary and connected careers:

ICF has achieved most where there has been team leadership of long duration.

Every organisation needs a hero, and when the Navy Mission became ICF in 1919 and then fused with the CSU in 1921 it acquired one. Chapter 3 of *Love @ Work* profiles Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, the 'Woodbine Willie' of the Western Front, gassed and appalled by the sacrifice of so many lives. As charismatic speaker, pastor, evangelist and writer, Kennedy combined a deep spiritual life with advocacy for a church for the un-genteel and a non-capitalist social order. He died in 1929.

Behind the hero, essential to any organisation, lay the networker executive P T R Kirk, ICF's General Director from 1919 to 1954. Like Kennedy a clergyman in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, he was able to reconcile the input from Kennedy as advocate for the unchurched poor, with that from William Lionel Hitchens, diplomat and chairman of Cammell Laird from 1912 to 1940, who joined ICF to create a society defined by the values of the kingdom of God. Kennedy had a Military Cross from the trenches; Hitchens was one of those entrusted by Lloyd George in setting up the Imperial Munitions Board in Canada. The 1920s heyday of ICF resulted from Kirk's ability to bring in heavyweights from church and state, advocates from both sides of the workplace, worker and management.

It's hard not to see the successful and future-visioning ICF's Malvern Conference of January 1941 as the end of ICF's heavyweight era. Another world war, succeeded by a growing weariness with organised Christianity, and now provided with a valued and valuable Welfare State, secular by origin and



Do we have an overarching view of God for the workplace?

Photo: centrefor cities

intent. When P T R Kirk ended his long tenure in 1954 he was followed by no fewer than six General Directors in the following 50 years, almost all Anglican clergy, each with their own perspective on how ICF could remain relevant, forward-looking, and financially solvent.

By the 1970s, a decade of industrial unrest, the ICF *Quarterly* still had a readership of 18,000, and speakers at ICF events included senior industry and Trades Union figures. There was support from successive Archbishops of Canterbury. But penetrating local churches with the ICF message of connecting with the world of work proved a continuing challenge. And through succeeding decades ICF faced two difficulties: the health and long-term commitment of the General Directors, and the steady erosion of funding, whether from subscribers or specific gifts.

These issues came to a head in the mid-1990s. ICF was unsustainable on its own, and proposed a merger with the Ridley Hall Foundation. Although this did not happen, it led to the transition from ICF's *Quarterly* to the *Faith in Business Quarterly*, (FiBQ), a journal edited by Richard Higginson from Ridley Hall Cambridge

with co-editors seconded from ICF, first published in March 1997 and continuing to the present.

So how does ICF confront its second century? *Love @ Work*'s comment on the outset of the 21st Century speaks of the transition from earlier days:


'What was markedly different in its emerging mindset was that the Fellowship no longer sought to express the reign of Christ through some defined authority structure, around which economic and political affairs should coalesce, but rather through the prayerful enabling of the Spirit, guiding those in all walks of life to seek above all things the Kingdom of God' (p.131).

The complementary ICF initiative *Love:Work* focusses on 10 Be-attitudes: the Christian in the workplace to be diligent, alert, forgiving, caring, honest, healthy, prayerful, generous, positive and reliable (pp 160-162). These are personal and individual attitudes, not societal or corporate ones.

As the final chapter closes, it asks, 'Where ICF goes remains to be seen ...we offer this account of its story ... in the hope it will inform and inspire others to take similar visions forward' (p153). And that is the dilemma not just of ICF but of Christians and the

Christian Church in our century. Do we have an overarching view of God for the workplace? Is there an ethic of workplace behaviour that is common to us and others in multi-cultural Britain? Does 'love' hold meaning, a banner around which Christians and those of other faiths or none can collaborate to build a better Britain, amidst Covid, the gig economy, Brexit, Black Lives Matter and globalisation?

Ian Randall deserves much credit for trawling the extensive ICF archives and digesting that into a manageable history. Phil Jump, ICF's current chair, and John Weaver, a long-time ICF Trustee and former co-editor of FiBQ, have added perspective. So *Love @ Work* must be regarded as the authorised history of a 100-year-old movement.

For future researchers and present readers, I would have welcomed some Appendices. These could have included the names and periods of ICF General Directors; the ebb and flow of subscribers and employees; the finances; and the locations from which ICF was administered. Oftentimes history is as clearly summarised in dates and numbers as in the text itself – a request to historians and biographers of all subjects and events. 



Anthony Harrop was for four decades a publishing consultant in Asia and Africa with the United Bible Societies, assisting national Bible Societies to see their ministry as 'Business as Mission'. Now retired, he enjoys a continuing connection with the world of work through ICF and FiBQ.