

Reflections of a Copy Editor

Anthony Harrop reflects on his time as an editor of Faith In Business Quarterly

Richard Higginson is FiBQ's Acquisitions Editor, John Lovatt is the Production and Artistic Editor, and I'm Dr Johnson's "harmless drudge" – the Copy Editor whose niggly mind uncovers typos, misplaced punctuation, and the occasional whole sentence – yes! – that requires remedial action. I'm reminded of Gustav Wolff's statement: "Sir Edward [Harland] builds the ships, Mr Pirrie makes the speeches, and, as for me, I smoke the cigars." FiBQ, so far, offers no cigars.

I was seconded to FiBQ from the Industrial Christian Fellowship in 2016. ICF is Faith in Business's partner, and recommends an editor to join the FiBQ team. John Lovatt was similarly recommended by ICF to FiBQ many years ago. The two ministries have much in common. ICF published *Love@Work*, its centennial history, in 2019. This narrates the merger between the Navy Mission and the Christian Social Union. The former ministered to the 'navigators' who built Britain's canals, railways and reservoirs, in appalling conditions and with an appalling death toll. The latter contained three Balliol College Oxford graduates, the economist R H Tawney, civil servant William Beveridge and the future Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple. The post-first world war merger of these two ministries combined top-down with bottom-up.

FiBQ serves and mirrors the needs of those who have agency in their working lives. This group is increasing. Covid brought a sea-change in working patterns, so that anyone whose employment involves looking at a computer monitor has options. Rail companies bemoan the fall in season-ticket sales and corporates try to rein in their home-loving employees. But so long as the work is done, and there is at least one day a week in the office, working from home becomes feasible, with all the child- and parent-care possibilities that enables.


Along with this continuing trend is, in parallel, a growing tendency for a one- or two-person workforce. I needed a fence built and a shed installed. This involved three one-person operations: a fencer, a stump-grinder and a foundation layer. The shed itself was installed, IKEA-style, by a two-man team in 45 minutes. My plumber works for himself. The hairdresser visits clients in their home. More and more these individuals work, mens et manus, for themselves alone. They are the new condottieri, the samurai of 21st century employment, loyal to themselves, but questionably loyal to their enterprise – unless they own it.

This presents growing opportunities for FiBQ. But how to reach the agency segment of the workforce is problematic. Is print the most desirable medium? Is the print format ideal?

Does the intended audience know there is a digital option? Should FiBQ have a social media content? The content – articles, reviews, personal stories – is excellent. But how to reach a younger, wired, audience?

FiB and ICF are at crossroads. We exist to enable the connection between faith and work. In the AI world of the present and the future, when 'Truth' and 'Alternative Truth' struggle for supremacy, Christians in the workplace need biblical, abundant life truths: the Wisdom literature from Job to Ecclesiastes; the money and work parables of Jesus; the hard-won lessons from Israel's Kings; and the New Testament letters.

Years ago John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene coined the phrase 'High Tech and High Touch'. Faith In Business does exactly that in their annual Retreat, and in monthly Zoom sessions and weekly prayer encounters.

What might my successor look like? Younger, familiar with the media world of digital, print, audio and film, and with a marketing mind. It requires a profound Christian commitment and a deeply held belief that God in the workplace is not an irrelevance but a necessity. No cigars, but 15 free copies to distribute to workplace colleagues, friends and family. Come and join: you'll be enriched working with Richard and John. 



Anthony is a former editor of FiBQ, and has been closely linked with missions in Thailand and East Africa for the last ten years. Those involvements follow a four-decade publishing career with Bible Societies in Asia, Africa and Europe. He now focusses on gardening and mentoring. Watching plants and people flourish brings him much joy and encouragement.