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worlds of faith and commerce. Christian Missionaries and relief workers are not the only ones whose daily labour enables significant humanitarian initiatives to function. If businesses were not trading and making a profit, then such programmes would simply not exist.

There is again a clear marketing opportunity here, as one well known manufacturer of disposable nappies is keen to point out; currently every consumer who purchases one of their products, funds a potentially life-saving vaccination for a child in a developing nation. Is this blatant opportunism or an act of moral responsibility that encourages wealthy western consumers to intentionally purchase products that benefit the disadvantaged? Most answers to this question tend to reveal more about the prejudices of the commentator than the realities of the situation. In such a context, one might even

argue that there is a higher moral responsibility to avoid tax so as to offer greater revenues to these vital humanitarian causes. (Though the writer is not naïve enough to imagine that this is the true motivator of most “tax efficiency” measures.)

But it is too easy to dismiss the world of business in the language of “fat-cat” salaries and greedy shareholders. The reality is far more complex – industry and commerce are neither entirely evil nor entirely good. It is for this reason, as people of faith, that we need to engage seriously with the issues and challenges that are faced by the private sector today. Sadly, this agenda remains, in the eyes of too many local Christian communities, an irrelevance at best and an evil at worst. Yet this is an environment in which many people of faith are seeking to live out their calling to love God and love their neighbours. This is a reality that we ignore at our peril. ■

Finding a Voice for Faith: reflections on engagement in the public square

Brief report of Industrial Christian Fellowship Annual lecture 2012

“Being a bit like a walking Question mark” is one of the ways in which Msgr John Devine described over a decade in the role of Churches Officer North West, working at the crucial interface between the statutory sector and faith community. The position was established by church leaders in response to the then Government’s regionalisation agenda; they recognised the significant opportunities that were emerging to play a key in regional life, in which the Church was acknowledged as a key stakeholder.



Having recently stood down, John used ICF’s annual lecture to reflect on the lessons that had been learned for faith communities seeking to engage in the public square. He began the lecture by noting the forthcoming 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, and quoting one of its keynote declarations *“The joys and hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the people of this age . . . are the joys and hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the followers of Christ.”* (December 1965)

He outlined how this key resonance between the priorities of church and society had informed and brought impetus to his work. John has played a key role in a number of high profile initiatives earning him the recognition of an OBE in a recent honours list. Yet he likened his task to the one he had previously fulfilled as a missionary priest in Peru, describing himself as *“living on the margins of a community, with a foot in both camps and preaching the Gospel in a culturally challenging context. . . albeit within a modern office block in the United Kingdom.”*

A full transcript of this illuminating lecture will be available from ICF shortly.