

# Global Covenant: A Jewish Perspective on Globalization

JONATHAN SACKS

## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

The events of 11 September 2001—a defining moment in the history of the twenty-first century—were freighted with symbolism. Two icons of global capitalism, the jumbo jet and the twin towers of the World Trade Center, were turned into instruments of destruction. Office workers going about their daily routines found themselves suddenly implicated in a conflict whose epicentre was thousands of miles away, and of whose very existence they may have been unaware. The terror itself was plotted by means of the Internet, encrypted emails, and satellite phones. It was planned, almost certainly, with global television coverage in mind. The terrorists may have been driven by religious ideas centuries old, but their methods were quintessentially of our time. Nothing could have demonstrated more vividly the vulnerability of our hyper-connected world and the tensions, conflicts, and resentments it contains.

The concept of globalization is not new. Almost four hundred years ago, John Donne gave it one of its most memorable expressions:

All mankinde is of one Author, and is one volume . . . No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine owne were; any mans death diminishes me; because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee. (Donne 1930: 537–8)

International commerce, practised extensively by the Phoenicians, goes back almost to the dawn of civilization.<sup>1</sup> The great maritime adventures, beginning in the fifteenth century, of Zheng He, Vasco de Gama, Magellan, and Columbus created new trade routes and a growth of long-distance exchange. Further momentum was added by the development of accurate navigation instruments, the growth of banks and the funding of risk, and the birth of giant international businesses such as the Dutch East India Company. Industrialization, the spread of railways, and the invention of the telegraph added impetus in the course of the nineteenth century. The integration of distant regions into a single international economy has been a continuous process, extending back for many centuries.

A restless spirit has led mankind to travel ever further in search of the new, the remote and the undiscovered. In one sense, then, the world we inhabit is a logical outcome of the world of our ancestors.<sup>2</sup> It is the latest stage in a journey begun millennia ago.

But there are changes in degree which become changes in kind. The sheer speed and extent of advances in modern communications technology have altered conditions of existence for many, perhaps most, of the world's six billion inhabitants. The power of instantaneous global communication, the sheer volume of international monetary movements, the internationalization of processes and products, and the ease with which jobs can be switched from country to country have meant that our interconnectedness has become more immediate, vivid, and consequential than ever before.

Global capitalism, as described by John Dunning in Chapter 1, is a system of immense power, from which it has become increasingly difficult for nations to dissociate themselves. It heralds potential blessings, most significantly economic growth. Countries that have embraced the new economy—among them Singapore, South Korea, and Thailand—have seen spectacular rises in living standards (Hertz 2001: 36–7). Improvements in agriculture have meant that while, prior to industrialization, it took the majority of a country's workforce to produce the food it needed, today in advanced economies the figure is around 2 per cent (Barber 2001: 27). Throughout the developed world, advances in medicine and healthcare have reduced infant mortality and raised life expectancy. The average supermarket in the West sets before consumers a range of choices that, a century ago, would have been beyond the reach of kings.

But globalization also carries effects that are perceived as deeply threatening, especially to traditional cultures. Jobs become vulnerable. Whole economies are destabilized. Inequalities within and between nations grow larger, not smaller. One-fifth of the world's population subsists on less than a dollar a day. Throughout Africa and parts of Asia, poverty, disease, and hunger are rife. Developing countries find themselves vulnerable as never before to sudden economic downturns, currency fluctuations, and shifts in production, leaving behind them vast swathes of unemployment. Local cultures are often overwhelmed by predominantly American forms of music, food, and dress conveyed by cable and satellite television, the Internet, and multinational corporations. The power of corporations has grown while that of nation states ('too big for the small problems, too small for the big problems') has declined. Questions multiply as to the accountability of megabusinesses and whether control mechanisms exist for balancing the pursuit of profit with the common good.

One of the most significant changes is the acceleration of the rate of change itself. Scientific knowledge doubles in every generation. Computing power grows faster still, doubling every two years. I have on my shelves a book of futurology, published in 1990, entitled *Megatrends 2000*. One word is conspicuous by its absence—the word 'Internet'. In a post-presidential address, Bill Clinton noted that when he took up office in 1993, there were fifty registered websites. By the

time he left office in 2000 there were upwards of 350 million. Already in the early twentieth century Alfred North Whitehead observed that 'in the past the time-span of important change was considerably longer than that of a single human life'. The result was that most people inhabited a world whose character was recognizably the same when they were old as it had been when they were young. 'Today,' he noted, 'the time-span is considerably shorter than that of a human life' (Whitehead 1942). Change has become part of texture of life itself, and there are few things more disorienting than constant flux and uncertainty.

## 9.2 CONTROL: THE HUMAN PROTEST AGAINST FATE

Globalization raises vast, even protean issues: too complex, perhaps, for any single mind or group to conceptualize, let alone confront in practice. What, then, can a religious perspective contribute? It cannot lie at the level of detail. The world's great faiths arose at the so-called 'axial age' of civilization, long before the rise of modernity. Yet there is much that a religious voice—more precisely, a range of religious voices—can add to the collective conversation on where we are, or should be, going. Faced with fateful choices, humanity needs wisdom, and religious traditions, alongside the great philosophies, are our richest resource of wisdom. They are sustained reflections on humanity's place in nature and what constitute the proper goals of society and an individual life. They build communities, shape lives, and tell the stories that explain ourselves to ourselves. They frame the rituals that express our aspirations and identities. In uncharted territory one needs a compass, and the great faiths have been the compasses of mankind. In an age of uncertainty, they remind us that we are not alone, nor are we bereft of guidance from the past. The sheer tenacity of the great faiths—so much longer-lived than political systems and ideologies—suggests that they speak to something enduring in human character. Above all, as Francis Fukuyama (1999: 231–45) points out, it was religion that first taught human beings to look beyond the city-state, the tribe, and the nation to humanity as a whole. The world faiths are global phenomena whose reach is broader and in some respects deeper than that of the nation state.

Judaism is one of those voices. The prophets of ancient Israel were the first to think globally, to conceive of a God transcending place and national boundaries and of humanity as a single moral community linked by a covenant of mutual responsibility (the covenant with Noah after the Flood). Equally, they were the first to conceive of society as a place where 'justice rolls down like water and righteousness like a never ending stream' and of a future in which war had been abolished and peoples lived together in peace. Those insights remain valid today.

No less significantly, Judaism was the first religion to wrestle with the reality of global dispersion. During the destruction of the First Temple in the sixth century BCE, Jews were transported to Babylon in the East or had escaped to Egypt in the West. By the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, in 70 CE, they had spread throughout much of Europe and Asia. For almost two thousand years, scattered throughout the world, they continued to see themselves and be seen by

others as a single people—the world's first global people. That experience forced Jews to reflect on many problems that are now the shared experience of mankind: how to maintain identity as a minority, how to cope with insecurity, and how to sustain human dignity in a world that seems often to deny it.<sup>3</sup> Judaism eventually gave rise to two other monotheisms, Christianity and Islam, that represent the faith of more than half of the 6 billion people alive today. There is much in common in the ethics of these three faiths, though each speaks in its own distinctive accent. What can we learn from Judaic teaching and the Jewish experience about the complex issues raised by a global age?

Perhaps the most important is the simple idea of *responsibility*. There has been a perennial temptation in human history to see the forces that surround us as inexorable and fundamentally indifferent to mankind. In ancient times they were the forces of nature: the sun, the wind, the rain, the flood, and the sea. Today we would probably speak of global ecology, evolution, the march of science, the ebb and flow of the economy, and the shifting balance of international power. Every era has produced its own myths, philosophies, or quasi-scientific systems to show that what is could not have been otherwise; that the march of history is inevitable; that it is hubris to believe we can fight against fate. All we can do is to align ourselves to its flow, exploit it when we can, and render ourselves stoically indifferent to our fate when we cannot. Mankind is alone in a world fundamentally blind to our presence, deaf to our prayers and hopes.

The great leap of the biblical imagination was to argue otherwise. Nature is not all there is. There is a personal dimension to existence. Our hopes are not mere dreams, nor are our ideals illusions. Something at the core of being responds to us as persons, inviting us to exercise our freedom by shaping families, communities and societies in such a way as to honour the image of God that is mankind, investing each human life with ultimate dignity. This view, shared by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, sees choice, agency, and moral responsibility at the heart of the human project. We are not powerless in the face of fate. Every technological advance can be used for good or evil. There is nothing inevitably benign or malign in our increasing powers. It depends on the use we make of them. What we can create, we can control. What we initiate, we can direct. With every new power come choice, responsibility, and exercise of the moral imagination. This view has always been opposed by determinisms of different kinds, among them the Hegelian, Marxist, and neo-Darwinian versions. The assumption of this chapter will be that the biblical insight remains true. Global capitalism is not a juggernaut that no one can steer. It can be turned this way or that by collective consent. Our aim must be to maximize human dignity and hand on to future generations a more gracious, less capricious world.

In what follows, we begin by telling the story of an ancient revolution in information technology to show how simple changes can have immense social, moral, and political implications. History is helpful here because, though great inventions change our world, it is only after they have done so that we can see how. One obvious example is the development of printing in mid-fifteenth-century

Europe (China had invented it several centuries earlier, but the technique had not spread). This led, in the course of time, to the Reformation, the spread of literacy, the rise of science, the secular nation state, and the Industrial Revolution (Landes 1998). None of these could have been foreseen in advance, nor did they happen because of printing alone, but they would not have been possible without it. We are living through a comparable revolution, and the past is our only available guide to the future. We then turn to biblical tradition to see how some of its values might guide us as we navigate through an age of uncertainty. To John Dunning's helpful idea of three Cs (creativity, co-operation, compassion) set out in Chapter 1, we have already added one (control) and will suggest three others: conservation, coexistence, and covenant. First, though: how does technology change society?

### 9.3 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The great leaps in civilization occur when there is a fundamental change in the way we record and transmit information. There have been four such changes. Printing was the third. Our current era of instantaneous global communication via computer, email, and Internet is the fourth. The first was the invention of writing in Mesopotamia some 6,000 years ago (Diringer 1962). Its origin is lost in the mists of time, but it came as a result of new building materials, specifically the making of bricks from clay tablets dried in the sun. Marks made by a wedge-shaped stick while the clay was still wet would become indelible once the tablet had become hard and could thus serve as permanent records. The first signs to be inscribed were schematic representations of objects. Art, specifically the making of pictures, preceded writing by tens of thousands of years. As time went by, however, the pictures became simpler to the point where they had become symbols whose meaning was determined by convention. The wedge-shaped sticks used to make impressions in the clay gave this first of written languages its name: cuneiform.

The settlement of populations, the development of agriculture, and the birth of complex economies with their division of labour and growth of exchange, gave writing its earliest and most immediately practical use, namely to record transactions. But the power of the system was soon apparent. It could do more than keep a note of who owed what to whom. It could capture for posterity the great narratives—myths, cosmologies, and epic histories—that explained the present in terms of the past, and whose telling in oral form had been a central feature of ancient religious rituals. While cuneiform was being developed, a parallel process was taking place in ancient Egypt, giving rise to the family of scripts known as hieroglyphics. In all, writing was invented independently seven times—in India, China, and Greece (Minoan or Mycenaean 'Linear B') and later by the Mayans and Aztecs as well in the ancient Mesopotamian city-states and the Egypt of the Pharaohs (Ong 1988: 85).

The birth of writing was the genesis of civilization. For the first time knowledge could be accumulated and handed on to future generations in a way that

exceeded, in quantity and quality, the scope of unaided memory. Few things have been more significant for the development of *homo sapiens*, the being whose period of dependency is longer, and whose genetically encoded instincts are fewer, than any other. Humanity's great evolutionary advantage is that we are, *par excellence*, the learning animal. Writing was the breakthrough by which the present could hand on the lessons of the past to the generations of the future. It led to a quantum leap in the growth of knowledge and skills and to a huge acceleration in the pace of change in human affairs.

The early forms of writing, however, suffered from one significant disadvantage. Because each character represented a word or at least a syllable, their symbol-sets were huge. The time it took to master them—to learn to read and write—was such that literacy was bound to remain the preserve of a cognitive elite, a knowledge class. Bacon's famous observation that knowledge is power applies with especial force to the ancient world. A civilization in which literacy is available only to the few—an administrative class, usually the priesthood—inevitably gives rise to a stratified society in which the many are denied access to education and information.

The second revolution—the invention of the alphabet—was therefore more than a mere technical advance. It heralded far-reaching social and political possibilities. For the first time the entire universe of communicable knowledge was reduced to a symbol-set of between twenty and thirty letters, small enough to be mastered, at least in principle, by everyone. Again origins are shrouded in mystery, but we know that the first alphabets were semitic and that they emerged in the territory known today as Israel or to the south of it, in the Sinai desert. The most likely scenario is that they were developed as a simplification of the hieroglyphic script or its abbreviated cursive form, known as hieratic. The inventors may have been Canaanites or Phoenicians or the wandering folk known as Apiru, from which the word 'Hebrew' may be derived.

The alphabet appeared early in the second pre-Christian millennium, in the age of the biblical patriarchs.<sup>4</sup> There is evidence from the turquoise mines of Serabit in the Sinai desert that it was there, among the slave workers or their supervisors, that the breakthrough came. William Flinders Petrie, the British archaeologist of the early twentieth century, speculated that the first alphabetical scripts were used by the Israelites while they were slaves in Egypt and later on their way to the promised land. This much we know: that the alphabet was one of those inventions whose origin can be traced to a single source. All alphabetical systems derive directly or indirectly from these first 'proto-Sinaitic' scripts. To be sure, it was not until they were transferred, probably by trading Phoenicians, to Greece, that for the first time symbols were added to represent vowels (Hebrew to this day is a consonantal script). But the semitic origin of the alphabet is still evident in the word itself: a combination of the first two Hebrew letters, *aleph* and *bet* (*alpha-beta* in Greek).

The pre-alphabetical world was, and could not be other than, hierarchical. At its top was a ruler, king or pharaoh, seen as a god, or a child of the gods, or as

prime intermediary between the people and the gods. Below him and holding much of the day-to-day power was the cognitive elite, the priesthood. Below them was the mass of the people, conceived as a vast work- or military force. The cultures of the ancient world were mythological, or what Eric Voegelin called 'cosmological'.<sup>5</sup> Central to this way of thinking is the idea that the divisions in society mirror the hierarchy of the gods or planets or elemental forces. They are written into the structure of the universe itself. Nor was this an abstract idea. It was manifest in the monumental architecture of the age—the ziggurats of Babylon, the pyramids and temples of pharaonic Egypt, each a statement in stone of the power structure of the ancient world. William Shakespeare has left us a memorable statement of this world-view:

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre,  
Observe degree, priority, and place,  
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,  
Office, and custom, in all line of order . . .  
Take but degree away, untune that string,  
And, hark, what discord follows!<sup>6</sup>

This is, needless to say, a deeply conservative vision, an 'organic' view of society in which the individual's status is a given of birth and cannot be changed without disturbing the fundamental order on which the world depends.

By contrast, the invention of the alphabet heralded an entirely new possibility, namely of a society in which each individual has access to knowledge, and thus power, and hence ultimate dignity in the presence of God. A world of potential universal literacy is one in which everyone has equal citizenship under the sovereignty of God. That is the significance of the most revolutionary of all religious utterances, the declaration in the first chapter of Genesis that not only kings and pharaohs but every human being is God's 'image and likeness'. Though it would take thousands of years for it to work its way into the culture of the West, it is here that the idea is first given expression that would become, in the American Declaration of Independence, the famous statement: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness . . .' The irony is that these truths are anything but self-evident. They are the negation of a view, held universally by the ancient world, given philosophical expression by Plato and Aristotle, and maintained throughout the Middle Ages, that people are *not* born equal. Some are born to be rulers, others to be ruled.

The politics of ancient Israel begins with an act inconceivable to the cosmological mind, namely that God, creator of the universe, intervenes in history to liberate slaves. It reaches its climax in the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Exodus with an event unique in the religious history of mankind, in which God reveals Himself to an entire people at Mount Sinai and enters into a covenant with them. One detail in the narrative deserves reinterpretation in the light of the

story we have told. In proposing the covenant, God invites the Israelites to become *mamlechet cohanim vegoi kadosh*, 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exodus 19: 5). In fact Israel did not become, literally, a kingdom of priests. That role was reserved, initially for the first-born, later to the descendants of Aaron. Once we remember, however, that the functional uniqueness of the priesthood in pre-modern times was its ability to read and write—an association still present in the English word 'clerical'—it becomes possible to translate *mamlechet cohanim* not as 'a kingdom of priests' but as 'a society of universal literacy.'

Ancient Israel was the not always successful, but nonetheless historically unprecedented, attempt to envisage and create a society as a covenant of equal citizens freely bound to one another and to God. As Norman Gottwald puts it, the God of Israel was:

the historically concretized, primordial power to establish and sustain social equality in the face of counter-oppression from without and against provincial and nonegalitarian tendencies from within the society... Israel thought it was different because it was different: it constituted an egalitarian social system in the midst of stratified societies. (Gottwald 1980: 692–3)

This, we have argued, would have been impossible without the existence of the alphabet, which, for the first time, made universal literacy a conceivable idea. Whether or not the first alphabetical script, proto-Sinaitic, was invented by the Israelites, they were certainly the first to meditate on and explore the new social and political possibilities it heralded. The alphabet gave rise to the book and thus to the people of the book.

We have told this story at length in order to convey the drama of what may seem on the surface a simple and minor change. Other technological advances make localized differences. Changes in the way we record and transmit information, by contrast, have systemic effects. They transform human possibilities and the way we structure our common life. There were three such revolutions in the past: writing, the alphabet, and the invention of printing. We are living through the fourth, the birth of instantaneous global communication. We do not yet know, and will not for centuries, what its cumulative effects will be. Will it spell the end, or at least the decline, of the nation state? Will it lead to new forms of community and collaborative action? Will it hasten the demise of local languages in favour of the dominant tongue of the Internet, American-English? Will it bring about a fundamental reorientation of human consciousness, from a space-bound to a more time-centred modality? One thing is certain: the changes will go deep and they will be, among other things, 'spiritual'. Writing gave birth to civilization. The alphabet gave rise to monotheism. Printing made the Reformation possible. Precisely because religion tracks the deepest connections between self, other, and the universe, it is sensitive to transformations of this kind. New communication technologies make possible new modes of relationship, new social, economic, and political structures, and thus new ways of understanding the human situation under God.

## 9.4 CREATIVITY: THE IMPERATIVE OF EDUCATION

The most obvious application of the Jewish experience relates, therefore, to *creativity*. In ancient times, wealth and power lay in the ownership of persons, in the form of slaves, armies, and a workforce. In the feudal era they lay in the ownership of land. In the industrial age they were ownership of capital and the means of production. In the information age they lie in access to and deployment of intellectual capital, the ability to master information and turn it to innovative ends—what Joseph Nye calls ‘soft’ power (Nye 2002). The labour content of manufactured goods continues to fall. Huge profits go to those who have ideas. To an ever-increasing degree, multinational enterprises (MNEs) are outsourcing production and peripheral services and becoming, instead, owners of concepts: brands, logos, images, and designs (Klein 2001). In such an age, immense advantage accrues to those with intellectual and creative skills. Education, not merely basic but extended, becomes a necessity, even a fundamental human right. Investment in education is the most important way in which a society offers its children a future.

This is a biblical insight. By making mankind in His image, the creative God endowed humanity with creativity, giving us the mandate to ‘fill the earth and subdue it’ and inviting us to become, in the rabbinic phrase, ‘God’s partners in the work of creation’. Specifically—following through the possibilities raised by the invention of the alphabet—Judaism made education a primary religious duty. Time and again throughout the Pentateuch, Moses emphasizes the importance of education: ‘And when your children ask you... then tell them...’ ‘On that day you shall tell your child...’ (Exodus 12: 26; 13: 8). And most famously, ‘Teach [these commandments] diligently to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise up’ (Deuteronomy 6: 7). In one of the formative acts of Judaism Ezra, returning to Israel from Babylon, assembled the people at one of the gates of Jerusalem and reinstated the teaching of the Law in a vast ceremony of adult education: ‘They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read’ (Nehemiah 8: 8). Ezra became a new archetype: the teacher as hero. From then on, Judaism steadily evolved the institutions—schools, houses of study, and the synagogue as a house not only of prayer but also of public reading and explanation of the Torah—that were to sustain it after the fall of the Second Temple and the global dispersion of Jewry. As H. G. Wells points out, ‘the Jewish religion, because it was a literature-sustained religion, led to the first efforts to provide elementary education for *all* the children in the community’ (Wells n.d.: vol. 1, 176).

From a Jewish perspective, therefore, the first imperative of the new information technology is to make available to every child the universe of knowledge opened up by access to the Internet and CD-ROMs. As with the invention of the alphabet and printing, so with the personal computer and the Internet: what makes them so significant an enhancement of human possibilities is their contribution to the *democratization of knowledge*, and thus ultimately of dignity

and power (Friedman 2000). Much talk about globalization focuses on politics and economics: global governance and the international economy. Important though these are, much depends on the degree to which populations are positioned to take advantage of new opportunities which, in turn, depends on the extent and depth of investment in education. Indeed, so rapidly are techniques and technologies changing that the concept of a period of education—childhood to young adult—may have to be revised in favour of lifelong learning, itself a classic value of the Judaic tradition.

Education is still far too unevenly distributed. A hundred million children worldwide do not go to school. There are twenty-three countries—mostly in Africa, but they include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Haiti—in which half or more of the adult population are illiterate. In thirty-five countries—including Algeria, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Laos, Morocco, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia—half or more women cannot read or write. Compared to North America, Latin America suffers a 50 per cent higher poverty rate and a 70 per cent higher high school dropout rate. Within the United States itself, Hispanics are significantly poorer and less well educated than other groups (Harrison and Huntington 2000: xviii–xix). There is a high correlation between education and economic achievement: it has been estimated that every additional year of schooling in a poor country adds between 10 and 20 per cent to a child's eventual income.

The first and most potent global intervention, therefore, is to ensure that every child has access to information, knowledge, and skills. The model here is the Bolsa-Escola scheme in Brazil that provides subsidies to poor families provided that their children attend school regularly. School participation in Brazil has risen, as a result, to 97 per cent of the child population (Soros 2002: 37, 84; Clinton 2001). Few things could do more to enhance human dignity and few are less contentious. That is because, even in the short term, knowledge is not a zero-sum good. The more of my power I share, the less I have; the more of my wealth I share, the less I have; but my knowledge is not reduced when I give it to others. To the contrary, it was precisely the pooling of knowledge, made possible by the invention of printing, the birth of learned societies, and the spread of scholarly periodicals, that led to the exponential growth of science in the modern West. Knowledge grows by being shared.

## 9.5 CO-OPERATION: CIVIL SOCIETY AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

One of the dominant metaphors of modernity has been the idea of competition as the driving force of progress. In *The Leviathan* Hobbes spoke of the 'generall inclination of all mankind', namely 'a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death' (Hobbes 1991: 70). Adam Smith showed how economic competition and the pursuit of self-interest could lead, through trade and the division of labour, to the economic advance of all. Charles Darwin, in *The Origin of Species*, argued that it was the struggle for survival in the face of

finite resources—natural selection—that explained evolution. Social Darwinians, among them Herbert Spencer, argued that the same law of survival applied to societies and cultures. The significance of governments and markets in the modern world is that they are mediated arenas of competition.

More recently, however, a whole series of disciplines has converged from different starting points on another insight. Economists and sociologists like James Coleman, Robert Putnam and Francis Fukuyama speak of *social capital*.<sup>7</sup> Sociobiologists such as Robert Axelrod, Anatol Rapoport, and Martin Nowack, tracking the growth and decline of species through computer simulations of the ‘iterated prisoners’ dilemma, talk of *reciprocal altruism*. Political theorists, under the banner of ‘communitarianism’ or ‘civil society,’ have begun to pay renewed attention to Edmund Burke’s ‘little platoons,’ Alexis de Tocqueville’s ‘habits of association’ or Peter Berger’s ‘mediating structures.’ What all these developments have in common is a new awareness of the significance, not of competition but of co-operation.<sup>8</sup> In any long-term competitive situation, victory (or survival) goes not to the strongest (best-adapted, most adroit) individual but to the group that has the most developed and extensive structures of collaboration. A football team (or primate species, or political party, or society) may be full of individual virtuosi but it will fail unless its members can act effectively together as a team.

This has been one of the transformative insights of the past twenty years. For several centuries, Western political thought has been dominated by two entities: the state and the market. The state is us in our collective capacity as a nation. The market is us in our individual capacity as choosers and consumers. Between them, they were thought to exhaust the political domain. Thinkers of the right preferred the market; those of the left favoured the state. What we and others have argued is that this is an impoverished view of our social ecology. It omits ‘third sector’<sup>9</sup> institutions like the family, the community, voluntary organizations, neighbourhood groups, and religious congregations which have in common that they are larger than the individual but smaller than the state. Their significance, and it is immense, is that they are where we learn the habits of co-operation, whether we describe it as reciprocal altruism or social capital or trust. Families and communities are not arenas of competition. To use the vocabulary I developed in *The Politics of Hope*, they are places where relationships are *covenantal*, not contractual. They are based not on transactions of power or exchange, but on love, loyalty, faithfulness, mutuality, and a sense of shared belonging. They are less about the ‘I’ than about the ‘We’ in which my ‘I’ becomes articulate, as a child of this family, that history, this place, that set of ideals.

It was Joseph Schumpeter, in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, who pointed out that market based-capitalism contains the seeds of its own destruction. It ‘creates a critical frame of mind which, after having destroyed the moral authority of so many other institutions, in the end turns against its own’ (Schumpeter 1947: 143). The combined power of the state and the market causes third sector institutions to atrophy. Marriage and the family become fragile. Communities disintegrate. Attendance at places of worship declines. Voluntary

groups become more fragmented and ephemeral. We prefer, in Robert Putnam's phrase, to go 'bowling alone'. The result is that it becomes 'very difficult for any individual to find any stable communal support, very difficult for any community to count on the responsible participation of its individual members'. This, argues Michael Walzer, 'works against commitment to the larger democratic union and also against the solidarity of all cultural groups that constitute our multi-culturalism' (Walzer 1992: 11–12).

The Judaic emphasis on third sector institutions hardly needs spelling out. For two millennia, without a home, sovereignty, or power, Jews and Judaism survived and flourished on the basis of three foundations: the family, the synagogue, and the school. The synagogue itself was not merely a house of prayer. Its name in Hebrew was the *bet kneset*, 'the home of the community'. It became, in post-biblical times, a kind of mini-welfare state where funds were collected and distributed to the poor. It housed societies for visiting the sick, caring for the needy, and burying the dead. It functioned as a courtroom to which all had access and could air their claims (Sacks 1995). The history of diaspora Jewish life is an extended case study in the existence of a civil society without the instrumentalities of a state.

To be sure, the problem does not arise in the same way throughout the world. In some societies, most notably the liberal democracies of the West, individualism may have gone too far. In others—those that have not yet, or only recently, become democratized—it may not have gone far enough. Excessive centralization inhibits the growth of civil associations, just as excessive commercialization erodes them (Soros 2000). The proper balance is precarious and hard to maintain. Yet the encouragement of civil society is an essential feature of the successful transition from totalitarian societies and centralized economies to democratic capitalism. Without stable association with others over extended periods of time, we fail to acquire the habits of co-operation which form the basis of trust on which the economics and politics of a free society depend. Self-interest alone does not generate it; indeed self-interest without trust yields outcomes that are individually and collectively destructive. The market, in other words, depends on virtues not produced by the market, just as the state depends on virtues not produced by the state.<sup>10</sup> No economic incentive can make families stay together, or neighbours help one another, or parents spend more time with their children. No government can make us solicitous, law-abiding, honest, public-spirited, or reliable. These things depend on third sector institutions, which (as Alexis de Tocqueville saw so clearly in his *Democracy in America*) has been one of the classic tasks of religious groups in liberal democracies.

## 9.6 COMPASSION: THE CONCEPT OF TZEDAKAH

One of the defining texts of Judaism is the biblical statement in which God articulates the mission with which Abraham and his descendants are to be charged:

Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations of the earth will be blessed through him. For I have

chosen him so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right [*tzedakah*] and just [*mishpat*], so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him. (Genesis 18:17–19)

The key words, *tzedakah* and *mishpat*, signify two kinds of justice. *Mishpat* means retributive justice or the rule of law. A free society must be governed by law, impartially administered, through which the guilty are punished, the innocent acquitted, and human rights secured. *Tzedakah*, by contrast, refers to distributive justice, a less procedural and more substantive idea.

It is difficult to translate *tzedakah* because it combines in a single concept two notions normally opposed to one another, namely charity and justice. Suppose, for example, that I give someone £100. Either he is entitled to it, or he is not. If he is, then my act is a form of justice. If he is not, it is an act of charity. In English (as with the Latin terms *caritas* and *iustitia*) a gesture of charity cannot be an act of justice, nor can an act of justice be described as charity. *Tzedakah* is therefore an unusual term, and one particularly deserving of attention.

It flows from the theology of Judaism, in which there is a difference between possession and ownership. Ultimately, all things are owned by God, creator of the world. What we possess, we do not own—we merely hold it in trust for God. The clearest example is the provision in Leviticus: ‘The land must not be sold permanently because the land is Mine; you are merely strangers and temporary residents in relation to Me’ (Leviticus 25: 23). One of the conditions of trusteeship is that we share part of what we have with others in need. What is regarded as charity in other legal systems is, in Judaism, a strict requirement of the law and can, if necessary, be enforced by the courts.

What *tzedakah* signifies, therefore, is what is often called ‘social justice’, meaning that no one should be without the basic requirements of existence, and that those who have more than they need must share some of that surplus with those who have less. The view articulated in the Hebrew Bible has close affinities with Amartya Sen’s concept of ‘development as freedom’ meaning that freedom is not simply the absence of coercion but also the removal of barriers to the exercise of human dignity: ‘poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states’ (Sen 1999: 3).

The society with which the Israelites were charged with creating was one that would stand at the opposite extreme to what they experienced in Egypt: poverty, persecution, and enslavement. Their release from bondage was only the first stage on the journey to freedom. The second—their covenant with God—involved collective responsibility to ensure that no one would lack the means to live a dignified existence. Thus portions of the harvest, vineyards, and fields were to be set aside for the poor. So too were tithes in certain years, and the produce of the seventh, ‘sabbatical’ year. No one could be made to work on the seventh day, so that for one day each week all economic and political hierarchies were suspended. A free society cannot be built on *mishpat*, the rule of law, alone. It requires also *tzedakah*, a just distribution of resources. What is clear—indeed taken for

granted by the Bible—is that an equitable distribution will not emerge naturally from the free working of the market alone.

*Tzedakah* is a concept for our time. The retreat from a welfare state and the financial deregulation and monetarist policies set in motion by Reaganomics and Thatcherism have led to increased inequalities in both the United States and Britain. In America in the past twenty years 97 per cent of the increase in income has gone to the top 20 per cent of families, while the bottom fifth have seen a 44 per cent reduction in earnings. By 1996 Britain had the highest proportion in Europe of children living in poverty, with 300,000 of them worse off in absolute terms than they were twenty years before (Hertz 2001: 38–61).

The ‘digital divide’ has heightened inequalities between countries also. The average North American consumes five times more than a Mexican, ten times more than a Chinese, thirty times more than an Indian. One quarter of those who die each year do so from AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria or diseases related to diarrhoea, most of them children without access to clean water. In eighteen countries, all African, life expectancy is less than fifty years; in Sierra Leone it is a mere 37 years. Infant mortality rates are higher than one in ten in 35 countries, mostly in Africa but including Bangladesh, Bolivia, Haiti, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan, and Yemen (Harrison and Huntington 2000: xviii). Huge power and wealth now accrues to multinational enterprises. Of the hundred largest economies in the world, only 49 are nation states; 51 are corporations. Meanwhile, third world workers producing the goods the multinationals sell do so often under Dickensian conditions involving child labour, unsanitary factories, and less-than-subsistence wages. As George Soros notes, ‘Markets are good at creating wealth but are not designed to take care of other social needs’ (Soros 2002: 5).

One of the most profound insights of *tzedakah* legislation is its emphasis on human dignity and independence. Millennia ago, Jewish law wrestled with the fact that domestic welfare, like foreign aid, can aggravate the very problem it is intended to solve. Welfare creates dependency and thus reinforces, rather than breaks, the cycle of deprivation. *Tzedakah* therefore, though it includes direct material assistance (food, clothing, shelter, and medical aid), emphasizes the kind of aid that creates independence, as in Moses Maimonides’ famous ruling:

The highest degree, exceeded by none, is that of the person who assists a poor person by providing him with a gift or a loan or by accepting him into a business partnership or by helping him find employment—in a word by putting him where he can dispense with other people’s aid. With reference to such aid it is said, ‘You shall strengthen him, be he a stranger or a settler, he shall live with you’ (Leviticus 25: 35), which means strengthen him in such a manner that his falling into want is prevented. (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Gifts to the Poor 10: 7)

The supreme form of *tzedakah* is therefore one that allows the individual to become independent of other people’s aid.

The Bible is acutely aware that the workings of the free market can create, over time, inequalities so great as to amount to dependency and which can only be removed by periodic redistribution. Hence the sabbatical year in which those

who had sold themselves into slavery through poverty were released, and all debts cancelled. In the jubilee year, ancestral land returned to its original owners. The idea was from time to time to restore a level playing field and give those who had been forced to sell either their labour or their holdings of land the chance to begin again. It was this biblical legislation that lay behind the successful campaign, Jubilee 2000, to provide international debt relief to developing countries and underlies Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown's proposal for a 'modern Marshall Plan' for the developing world (Brown 2002).<sup>11</sup>

Globalization, writes Zygmunt Bauman, 'divides as much as it unites... What appears as globalization for some means localization for others; signalling a new freedom for some, upon many others it descends as an uninvited and cruel fate' (Bauman 1998: 2). There can be no doubt that some of the economic surplus of the advanced economies of the world should be invested in developing countries to help eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, ensure universal education, combat treatable disease, reduce infant mortality, improve work conditions, and reconstruct failing economies. As with *tzedakah*, the aim should be to restore dignity and independence to nations as well as individuals. Whether this is done in the name of compassion, social justice, or human solidarity it has now become a compelling imperative. The globalization of communications, trade, and culture globalizes human responsibility likewise. The freedom of the few must not be purchased at the price of the enslavement of the many to poverty, ignorance, and disease.

## 9.7 CONSERVATION: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The record of human intervention in the natural order is marked by devastation on a massive scale. Within a few thousand years of the first human inhabitants of America, most of the large mammal species, among them mammoths, mastodons, tapirs, camels, horses, and bears, had become extinct. The same pattern can be traced almost everywhere human beings have set foot, but the process has become hugely accelerated by industrialization, pollution, and the destruction of rain forests. Today, 1,666 of the 9,000 bird species are endangered or at imminent risk of extinction. It has been estimated that, if present trends continue, half of the world's total of thirty million animal and plant species will become extinct in the course of the next century. If we do not change our patterns of production and consumption, we face the real possibility of environmental catastrophe (Diamond 1992).

Yet again, the Bible offers a compelling insight. Behind the sabbatical and jubilee years and the Sabbath day itself is a principle today called 'sustainability'. What these laws represent is the idea that there are limits to human exploitation of the environment which, if not observed, lead to the exhaustion of the land, or of other natural resources, or of people themselves. The Sabbath set a boundary to human striving. One day in seven, there could be no exploitation of nature, no work, no buying or spending. Slaves could rest as free human beings. Even domestic animals were relieved of labour. During the sabbatical and jubilee years

the land itself could not be worked. It too was entitled to rest. Other biblical laws, such as the prohibition against sowing a field with mixed seeds, or mixing meat and milk, or wearing clothes of mingled linen and flax, were designed to inculcate a sense of the integrity of nature. Legislation governing the conduct of war forbade needless destruction of fruit-bearing trees, a principle expanded in rabbinic law to cover the entire range of wasteful consumption and environmental pollution.

At the heart of the biblical vision is a tension between the mandate of Genesis 1, to 'fill the earth and subdue it', and that of Genesis 2 in which man is placed in the Garden 'to serve and protect' it. The Hebrew verb 'to protect' has a specific legal connotation, meaning the responsibility of a guardian into whose hands something has been placed for safekeeping. He must preserve it intact and, if possible, enhanced. The human covenant therefore signifies that we are, collectively, the guardians of the natural universe for the sake of future generations. As an ancient rabbinic comment puts it, when God finished creating the universe he said to the first humans: 'See the world I have made—and I have given it into your hands. Be careful, therefore, that you do not ruin my world, for if you do, there will be no one to restore what you have destroyed' (Midrash *Kohelet Rabbah* 7: 20).

The sense of limits is one of the hardest for a civilization to sustain. Each in turn has been captivated by the idea that it alone was immune to the laws of growth and decline, that it could consume resources indefinitely, pursuing present advantage without thought of future depletion. Few have committed this error more consciously than the age we call 'modernity', with its belief that rationality, science, and technology would create open-ended progress toward unlimited abundance. In the words of Christopher Lasch, 'Progressive optimism rests, at bottom, on a denial of the natural limits on human power and freedom, and it cannot survive for very long in a world in which an awareness of those limits has become inescapable' (Lasch 1991: 530). Many of the world's great faiths contain teachings of great wisdom on environmental ethics.<sup>12</sup> We need to recover their sense of limits if we are to preserve the sustainability and diversity of life itself.

## 9.8 CO-EXISTENCE: THE DIGNITY OF DIFFERENCE

Since 11 September 2001, it has become clear that one of the greatest dangers of the twenty-first century is the existence of tensions and resentments—religious and cultural as well as economic and political—that can lead to devastating acts of terror. This is not war in the conventional sense, between nation states. It has to do with what Thomas Friedman calls 'Super-empowered individuals' (Friedman 2000: 14) or groups with access to weapons of mass destruction (chemical, biological, and eventually nuclear), able to organize themselves non-territorially through the new communications technologies and to cause huge destruction and disruption. These groups understand the capacity of the Internet to abolish spatial boundaries, and the power of television to maximize visual impact. They also know that the hyper-connectivity of the contemporary world is its vulnerability.

This raises large issues, some practical, others deeper and more long-term. The practical questions of security and surveillance have to do with the time lag between new technologies and the development of defensive strategies against their misuse. The deeper question is about the shape of the 'new global order' or disorder. In the early 1990s this was the subject of an important debate between what Francis Fukuyama foresaw as the 'end of history' and Samuel Huntington's quite different scenario of a 'clash of civilizations' (Fukuyama 1992; Huntington 1996). Fukuyama's argument was that economics was superseding politics. The Cold War had ended and the Soviet Union collapsed without a shot being fired, because the command economy of communism could not compete with the market economies of the West. Pressure of rising material expectations would eventually force nations into the disciplines of the global market, which would in turn lead to open societies. Democratic capitalism was the destination at which all states would eventually arrive. Huntington thought otherwise. Modernization did not entail Westernization. The politics of ideology might be over, but the politics of identity was taking its place. The rifts between the great civilizations were as deep as ever. The culture of the West was not about to conquer the world. The tower of Babel would yet again run up against the confusion of languages.

In retrospect, the most prophetic analysis was given by Benjamin Barber in his 1992 article and subsequent book, *Jihad versus McWorld* (Barber 1992, 2001). Globalization, he argued, had both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies. On the one hand, economic, cultural, and ecological forces were binding us ever more closely together (McWorld). On the other, the end of the Cold War was giving rise to 'a retribalization of large swathes of humankind by war and bloodshed' (Jihad). His sombre conclusion was that 'The planet is falling precipitately apart and coming reluctantly together at the very same moment.'

There are no easy answers to this dilemma but there is an instructive precedent. Judaism is that rarest of phenomena: a particularist monotheism. The God of Abraham, according to the Hebrew Bible, is the God of all humanity, but the faith of Abraham is not the faith of all humanity. So strange is this idea that it was not taken on by the two daughter monotheisms to which Judaism gave rise, Christianity and Islam. These faiths are both universalist monotheisms, holding that since there is only one God, there is only one true religion, one path to salvation, to which ideally all mankind will be converted. Judaism believes otherwise: that there are many ways to serve God and that one does not have to be Jewish to do so. 'The righteous of the nations of the world [i.e. non-Jews] have a share in the world to come' (*Tosefta, Sanhedrin* 13).

Mankind has spoken to God in many languages, through many faiths. No language need threaten the others; none should supersede the other. Religious truth is not solely ontological (a matter of what is) but covenantal (a relationship between a specific group and God). Ontologies conflict, covenants do not. To use a biblical metaphor: God is a parent who loves His many children, each for what they uniquely are. The miracle of creation is that unity in heaven is worshipped through diversity on earth. To attempt to eliminate diversity (by conversion,

missionary activity, or holy war) is to fail to understand the integrity—the *dignity*—of difference. Hence the great command in the Bible is ‘Love the stranger’, the person who is not like yourself. Fundamentalism—the attempt to impose a single truth on a plural world—is religiously misconceived. The spiritual challenge is to recognize God’s image in one who is not in my image.

This is an extremely difficult set of ideas, yet it may now be the only way to do justice to the human condition. According to the Hebrew Bible, God makes two covenants, one (in the days of Noah after the Flood) with all humanity, the other with Abraham, and later his descendents at Mount Sinai. Judaism therefore embodies a dual ethic, one a universal code applying to everyone, the other a particular way of life demanded of the heirs of those who followed Moses into the wilderness. There was a time when most people were surrounded by others who shared their history and faith. It was plausible in those days to believe that one’s own path to God was the only path there was. Today that belief is unsustainable, practically if not intellectually. Our lives and fate are interwoven with others who believe, act, think, and feel in ways different from ours. We therefore have to make space for difference (the Abrahamic covenant) while affirming our shared humanity (the Noahide covenant).

There have been five universalist cultures in the history of the West—cultures that imposed their way of life on others through conquest, conversion, or the ‘soft’ power of ideas. They were the empires of ancient Greece and Rome, medieval Christianity and Islam, and the European Enlightenment. Globalization is the sixth, the first to be driven not by power or ideology but by the neutral, impersonal forces of the market. Each in its time was perceived as deeply threatening to those whose local cultures and traditional identities were at risk, and they fought back with whatever weapons were at hand. That, post-11 September 2001, is what we must avoid in the future.

There are three options facing the West: to impose its values on others, to let market forces do likewise, or actively to respect the dignity of difference, and grant cultural diversity the same protection as biodiversity. The third is the only choice likely to succeed, indeed the only one, in our opinion, that *ought* to succeed. The logical consequence of fundamentalism—that the world would be richer (more perfect, more complete) if all faiths (cultures, traditions) disappeared except ours—is offensive and absurd. It has however been believed by most people at most times. We therefore face a major intellectual, ethical, and religious challenge, to move from conversion to coexistence, from truth to truths, and to an active respect for difference.

## 9.9 TOWARDS A GLOBAL COVENANT

The wisdom of the world’s religions may seem at best irrelevant, at worst dangerous, to a world driven by economic forces. In the West, especially Western Europe, society has become secularized. In the Middle East and parts of Asia it has witnessed a growth of fundamentalism that threatens economic development and political freedom alike. Whatever therefore the prospects for the future, religion seems part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

This view, in our opinion, is a mistaken one, though it is a mistake with a distinguished pedigree. The two most influential works of Western modernity—Hobbes' *Leviathan* and Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*—were predicated on the idea of man the maximizing animal. Politically this led to the social contract; economically to the division of labour and the free market. Mankind, however, is not merely a maximizing animal. We are also, uniquely, the meaning-seeking animal. We seek to understand our place in the universe. We want to know where we have come from, where we are going to, and of what narrative we are a part. We form families, communities, and societies. We tell stories, some of which have the status of sacred texts. We perform rituals that dramatize the structure of reality. We have languages, cultures, moralities, and faiths. These things are essential to our sense of continuity with the past and responsibility to the future. Without them it is doubtful whether we would have reasons for action at all beyond the most minimal drives for survival.

Part of the process we call modernity—most obviously associated with the European Enlightenment—was to call into question the salience of almost everything associated with the word 'religion.' *Écrasez l'infâme*, said Voltaire, and others, less provocatively, agreed. The new paradigm was science which rested its conclusions not on weightless clouds of revelation and prophetic insight but on testable hypotheses, experiments and refutations. Technology would help us master nature. Constitutional monarchy, followed by representative democracy, would control power. Economics would maximize wealth. Together they would generate the linear advance that went by the new name of 'progress.'

That was a noble aspiration and much of it remains valid today. But mankind is now older, sadder, and wiser. Reason did not dispel prejudice. Technology, whether in the form of weapons of mass destruction, over-exploitation of natural resources, pollution of the atmosphere, or genetic manipulation, threatens the sustainability of nature itself. Representative democracy remains the best form of government yet discovered, but nation states seem increasingly unable to control global phenomena from the less acceptable activities of multinational enterprises to ecological devastation; and we have not yet evolved adequate forms of global governance. Market capitalism has increased wealth beyond the imagination of previous generations, but cannot, in and of itself, distribute it equally or even equitably. These are problems that cannot be solved within the terms set by modernity, for the simple reason that they are not procedural, but rather valuational or, to use the simple word, moral. There is no way of bypassing difficult moral choices by way of a scientific decision-procedure that states: 'Maximize X.' We first have to decide which X we wish to maximize, and how to weigh X against Y when the pursuit of one damages the fulfilment of the other. The human project is inescapably a moral project.

Economic superpowers, seemingly invincible in their time, have a relatively short life span: Venice in the sixteenth century, The Netherlands in the seventeenth, France in the eighteenth, Britain in the nineteenth, and the United States in the twentieth. The great religions, by contrast, survive. Islam is 1,500 years old,

Christianity 2,000, and Judaism 4,000. Why this should be so is open to debate. Our own view is that civilizations survive not by strength but by how they respond to the weak; not by wealth but by the care they show for the poor; not by power but by their concern for the powerless. The ironic yet utterly humane lesson of history is that what renders a culture invulnerable is the compassion it shows to the vulnerable. The ultimate value we should be concerned to maximize is human dignity—the dignity of all human beings, equally, as children of the creative, redeeming God.

Is this a ‘religious’ insight? Yes and no. There have been secular humanists who have affirmed it; there have been religious zealots who have denied it. What matters most is not why we hold it, but that we hold it. Global capitalism heralds the prospect of a vast amelioration of the human condition. Equally it threatens inequalities that will eventually become unsustainable and cultural vandalism that will become unbearable. Man was not made for the service of economies; economies were made to serve mankind; and men and women were made—so we believe—to serve one another, not just themselves. We may not survive while others drown; we may not feast while others starve; we are not free when others are in servitude; we are not well when billions languish in disease and premature death.

Our global situation today is like the condition of European nations during the great wars of religion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the wake of the Reformation. Then, as now, there were many societies riven by conflict. The question arose: how can people of violently conflicting beliefs live peaceably together? Out of that crisis came the idea—variously framed by Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau—of a social contract by which individuals agreed to cede certain private powers to a central authority charged with the maintenance of order and pursuit of the common good.

We are not yet in sight of a global contract whereby nation states agree to sacrifice part of their sovereignty to create a form of world governance. That is a distant prospect. Biblical theology, however, suggests an alternative, namely a *global covenant*. Covenants are more general, moral, and foundational than contracts. Ancient Israel initiated its social contract when, at the request of the people, Samuel anointed Saul as king, creating Israel’s first national government. It received its social covenant several centuries earlier in the revelation at Mount Sinai. The relation between covenant and contract is akin to that between the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and its Constitution (1789). The latter specifies the constitutional structure of the state, the former the moral principles of the society on which it is founded. *What we need now is not a contract bringing into being a global political structure, but rather a covenant framing our shared vision for the future of humanity.*

One idea links the first chapter of Genesis to the Declaration of Independence, namely that ‘all men are created equal’. Philip Selznick’s articulation of this idea seems to me compelling: ‘Moral equality’, he writes, ‘is the postulate that all persons have the same intrinsic worth. They are unequal in talents, in contributions to social life, and in valid claims to rewards and resources. But everyone who is a

person is presumptively entitled to recognition of that personhood.’ Accordingly, each is entitled to ‘the basic conditions that make life possible, tolerable and hopeful’—to what they need to sustain ‘their dignity and integrity as persons’ (Selznick 1994: 483–5). That is at least a starting point for a global covenant in which the nations of the world collectively express their commitment not only to human rights but also to human responsibilities, and not merely a political, but also an economic, environmental, moral, and cultural conception of the common good, constructed on the twin foundations of shared humanity and respect for diversity. Our last best hope is to recall the classic statement of John Donne and the more ancient narrative of Noah after the Flood and hear, in the midst of our hyper-modernity, an old-new call to a global covenant of collective human dignity and responsibility.

## NOTES

1. For a detailed examination of the role of international commerce, and particularly that of the early trading companies, see Moore and Lewis (1999).
2. On this, see e.g. David Landes (1998) and Peter Jay (2001). See also Chapter 2 of this volume.
3. For an account of biblical and post-biblical Judaism, see Sacks (2001).
4. The story of the origin and early development of the alphabet has most recently been told in Man (2001).
5. See Voegelin (1956); and also Deepak Lal’s interpretation of ‘cosmological’ in Chapter 2 of the present volume.
6. *Troilus and Cressida*, Act 1, scene 3.
7. John Dunning, in a recent paper, considers the importance of *relational capital* as a competitive advantage (Dunning 2002). More broadly, in another contribution, he explores the notion of alliance capitalism (Dunning 1997).
8. I have told this story in Sacks (2000: 233–44).
9. Sometimes referred to as ‘civil society’ institutions.
10. I have explored this view, and debated it with Norman Barry, in Sacks (1999).
11. See also his contribution to this volume (Chapter 14).
12. See e.g. the series of books on World Religions and Ecology: M. Batchelor and K. Brown (eds.), *Buddhism and Ecology*; E. Breuilly and M. Palmer (eds.), *Christianity and Ecology*; R Prime (ed.), *Hinduism and Ecology*; F. Khalid and J. O’Brien (eds.), *Buddhism and Ecology*; A. Rose (ed.), *Judaism and Ecology* (London: Cassell, 1992).

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