

Participants in dialogue are sometimes reluctant to admit that there are dangers inherent in the enterprise. It is even harder to acknowledge that there may be an element of self-deception, or unconscious dishonesty, in the formulation of goals to be achieved or in the way the dialogue is conducted. Jewish-Christian dialogue presupposes that all religions exist on the same level, and that we inhabit a kind of mega-store of faiths. Though this idea is fashionable today, and makes dialogue seem eminently possible, the existence of unique, different, and incommensurate faiths is more in line with the existential reality of faith communities.

NOTES

- ¹ Yad, *Avodat Kohanim*, 2: 2-3.
- ² Cf. Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn—A Biographical Study*, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia 1973, p. 203.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 218.
- ⁴ *Tosefta Sanhedrin*, ch. 13.
- ⁵ Yad, *Avodat Kohanim*, 9: 4.
- ⁶ Commentary on the *Mishnah*, *Avodah Zarah* 1: 3.
- ⁷ Notes on *Seder Olam Rabbah ve-Zuta*.
- ⁸ Commentary *Lechem Shamayim* on Avot 4: 14.
- ⁹ Yad, *Melachim* 11: 4; 'fathers' here may have a double entendre.
- ¹⁰ Cf. J. Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Gentile-Jewish Relations in Medieval and Modern Times*, Schocken Books, New York, 1962.
- ¹¹ Volume 6, 1964.
- ¹² Reprinted together with 'Confrontation' in *A Treasury of Tradition*, edited by Norman Lamm and Walter S. Wurzbarger, Hebrew Publishing Co., New York, 1967, pp. 52-80.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

9

An activist approach to the future of Jewish-Christian dialogue

Mark L. Winier

More people have died in this century because of their religions than in all of history combined. Once seen as an aberration, the Nazi Holocaust has become an ugly pattern of inter-religious inhumanity. Tragically, such perversion of religion has similarly infected such far-flung places as Cambodia, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka. As bleak as this century's inter-religious history has been, the modern world's epidemic of inter-religious bigotry can be healed. An activist approach to inter-religious dialogue might provide a healing balm to the inter-religious malaise.

An activist approach to inter-religious dialogue seeks to instill mutual respect among the world's religions and their followers to enhance world peace. It recognizes that intergroup conflict is often inter-religious in origin, and therefore, may be the most susceptible to change. This activist approach seeks to dispel inter-religious hostility at grassroots, national, and international leadership levels. It faces the challenges to world peace by initiating personal contact, coupled with joint study, worship, and action—to foster mutual respect among the religions and their followers.

The activist approach distinguishes itself through its emphasis on respect for distinctions among religions rather than relying on identifying their similarities.

On the local level, as well as in the global arena, the inter-religious activist serves as a catalyst in the development of inter-faith dialogue. For example, in Sarajevo, Bosnia—which typifies the breakdown in inter-religious pluralism—activists labour to re-establish dialogue among the religions. Success there will rekindle the hope for peace everywhere.

Sounding a call-to-action, inter-religious activists endeavour to convene a special conference of the world's religions in the year 2000 or possibly in the year 1999, under the sponsorship of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP). The conference will seek to develop an inter-religious approach to strengthen peace among the world's religions on an ongoing basis.

Jewish-Christian Dialogue

The aim of the conference is to use the Christian Millennium as a turning point in the history of inter-faith relations, an opportunity for inter-religious reconciliation. Inter-religious activists create liturgies for inter-religious worship to celebrate and mourn together, without compromise to individual religious sensitivities. They encourage the joy of observing others in their own distinctive religious celebrations, the highest expression of inter-religious mutual respect.

Inter-religious activists initiate innovative programmes to reduce violence and to make peace. They use such models as Interns for Peace, which fosters Arab-Jewish cooperation in the Middle East, and the Society of St Egidio, which has ended civil wars through alternative conflict resolution by its dedicated amateur members. They develop peace-making modules for use in local churches, mosques, and synagogues

Christian, Jewish, and Islamic leadership, as well as local community clergy associations, participate in pilgrimages to Israel and other major religious centres. Inter-faith leadership study tours and journeys from Auschwitz to Rome and Jerusalem—from destruction to hope—provide springboards for inter-religious understanding.

Catholic-Jewish Dialogue

The watershed event in modern Catholic-Jewish Dialogue is the Vatican and Israel agreement to establish full diplomatic relations by exchanging ambassadors. There are, of course, any number of ancient or contemporary reference dates I might invoke. However, it is the formalization of full diplomatic relations that I have chosen, because I believe it is an event of both historical and theological meaning, whether or not its architects intended it as such.

Certainly, both the Holy See and Israel—and Catholics worldwide and the world community of the Jewish people—were aware of the agreement's historical meaning. It established full, regular and normal diplomatic relations between two parties that had been, prior to that time, less than full, and therefore, by definition, other than normal. In its less than full and less than normal status, the relationship of the Vatican to Israel was a constant reminder of the Holy See's discomfort, if not rebuke to Israel, from the time when Theodor Herzl visited Pope Pius XI through to the near disaster of the Wardi affair which nearly erased *Nosstra Aetate* from the agenda of Vatican II.

Following the signing of the historic Oslo agreement some three months earlier, the agreement between the Holy See and Israel was more than just another reward that Israel reaped in the wake of its recognition of the PLO. From the perspective of the Jewish people, it carried a sense of reconciliation and acceptance.

I was privileged to be present at the signing of the agreement in Jerusalem. As I entered that less than majestic quonset hut on the grounds of the Israeli foreign ministry, I was stunned to find the reporters and video-journalists jammed into the other side of the room. After the almost interminable negotiations, no one—not I, certainly—expected such media attention, or the intensity of public reaction. Later, members of the Foreign Ministry staff acknowledged that none of them had anticipated such media attention on the signing. If they had realized the importance that the world press would attach to the agreement, they would never have held the signing ceremony in such a place. Why did the world press focus such attention on the signing of the agreement between Israel and the Holy See?

The answer is really simple, I think, and so fundamental that to pose the question might seem simple-minded. But obvious or simple-minded as it might be, it needs to be said. Israel, although it strives to be 'a nation like any other', is not a nation like any other. And clearly, the Holy See is not a nation like any other. In fact, if either entity has a parallel in the world, it is the other, although, in truth, there is more that is dissimilar than there is which is similar. Furthermore, the person of Pope John Paul II represents the Catholic Church as an enormous moral force in the world. It is precisely within the context of this particular pope's enormous worldwide moral influence that his espousal of his theology of the Jewish People, in recognizing us as we see ourselves, takes on such enormous importance.

Israel, while it conforms more closely to the traditional Western model of the nation-state, is both the historical and spiritual home of a people—the Jewish people. For us, religion and place are inextricably bound through the Covenant between God and the descendants of Jacob, called Israel. So, from a theological perspective, Israel too—the nation and the Jewish people—in our temporal guise, assert our spiritual identity. Israel is not an added or secondary feature, but an integral, essential, ineluctable component of our identity. Indeed, when individual Jews or Jewish

organizations criticize the government of the State of Israel, we do so not because the government does not live up to the standard of the behaviour of modern nation-states, but because the government does not conform to our understanding of God's commanding presence in eternal covenant with our People Israel. For both the State of Israel and the Vatican, the theological significance of both imposes weighty moral burdens on their temporal behaviour.

Those whose narrow definition of history is as a succession of events were surprised by the intuitive popular understanding of the Vatican-Israel agreement as something far more significant than just another link in the chain of history. I would assert that it is more than a simple event. It is an event of profound theological significance—a manifestation of God's gracious and loving presence in the lives of humankind.

What was the theological message of this event? Simply put, the Fundamental Agreement brought resolution to the ancient and persistent animosity between our communities. Our resolution echoes God's commandment to all other communities torn by mutual demonization, to find similar reconciliation. When the bitterest rivals of the last two millennia can become the best of friends, God reveals hope for resolution of whatever divides humanity in bitter hatred and bloodshed. In performing the diplomatic scripts of nation states, Israel and the Holy See became sacred instruments in the hands of the Almighty to proclaim God's command of human reconciliation.

From the perspective of the Jewish people the agreement was a fulfilment of the promises of Vatican II. What do I mean by this? It was fulfilment of the Papal promises of John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II. It acknowledged the eternal nature of the Jewish people's Covenant with God. Recognition falls outside the realm of the Covenant. In its exclusivity the Covenant is not exclusionary, but neither is it

amendable by parties other than the principals. The agreement does not diminish the significance of the work of the Second Vatican Council or the Pope's elaboration nor the numerous statements made by national councils of bishops throughout the world. This spiritual acceptance has obvious and profoundly important political ramifications.

The political recognition of the agreement between the Vatican and Israel affirmed the spiritual essence of Judaism. This spiritual essence is, in very concrete terms, the manifestation of the Covenant through the relationship of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. This act said more than 'we recognize the legitimacy of your Covenant'; its message was: 'We recognize the essential nature of the Covenant as you Jews yourselves understand it. We recognize that the state of Israel is more than just a temporal state for you.'

This is my own interpretation—one that derives as much from the impact of the agreement as from its substance and intention. Even more, it is not my intention to imply that Israel is the whole or even the essence of Catholic-Jewish relations. Rather, it is to say that in this formal act of diplomacy, the key issues that define our relationship to one another have been cleansed—kashered. We can sit together at this table—at any table—in full confidence that we understand and accept our essential commonalities and differences and do not expect what cannot be asked of the other.

On the other hand, there are still issues on the table: questions asked but still unanswered. Symbols carry profound meaning, and are, therefore, subject to profound misinterpretation. However, symbols must not stand in the way of reconciliation and mutual understanding. At the very least, we need to better understand the meaning of each other's symbolic structure.

At the centre of our lack of resolution are two of what Father Thomas Stransky calls 'written but uncashed checks' from the agenda of the past in our

relationship. Both derive from the agony that our communities continue to feel more than fifty years after the Shoah. Both arise from the power of symbols, and the differences in our interpretation of them. When will the cross at Auschwitz be removed? It is a question that needs to be answered for both of us. It is, for one thing, a question that obstructs the ability of the Jewish community to appreciate the meaning of the Holocaust to Catholics. Once Jews recognize the meaning of the Holocaust to Catholics we might better understand the meaning of the Crucifixion to Catholics, and thus, to understand you as you understand yourselves. The cross at Auschwitz stands, not as the symbol of Christian suffering and witness, but as a negation of our own.

We know the cross still stands at Auschwitz, not out of the reticence of those to whom we appeal to understand our compelling pain. It remains out of a reticence to engage a constituency of Catholics whose memories of Auschwitz cannot be minimized. How, then, can we help Catholics in educating them, to persuade them that it is wrong to raise a cross over the grave site of our extermination?

Analysis of the Vatican Statement

The eagerly awaited document released by the Vatican in March 1998 proves disappointing. Entitled *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, the twelve-page teaching statement might be compared to a carefully constructed vessel encumbered by barnacles attached to its hull.

Well-crafted is its call upon the world's one billion Catholics to remember the Shoah, to repent for the Catholic perpetrators and to resolve that 'the Shoah will never again be possible'. The document's explicit use of the Hebrew 'Shoah' underlines the Holy See's acknowledgement of the uniquely Jewish particularity of

the Holocaust. Repentance in seeking the forgiveness of the Jewish people becomes 'Teshuva'. Also welcome is the forthright rejection of Holocaust revisionism.

We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah is the fourth significant statement of Catholic-Jewish reconciliation since *Nostra Aetate* in 1965. The Vatican Guidelines (1975) and *Notes* (1985) stand on the shoulders of *Nostra Aetate*. Of the four, *We Remember* adds the least to the reconciliation. It fails to live up to its antecedents in acknowledging Catholic Church complicity in the teaching of contempt of the Jewish people. These antecedents include the French, German, and Polish Bishops' Conference documents in the last few years and Pope John Paul II's own statements over many years. Too much effort endeavours to exonerate Pope Pius XII. The new article clumsily quotes a handful of Jewish contemporaries who praised Pope Pius XII's actions. Furthermore the document misuses the memory of Catholic rescuers to suggest that they were the 'other hand' equal to the Catholic perpetrators who historically comprised the overwhelming majority of the Church's faithful in Nazi lands. An attempt to distinguish between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism artificially dichotomizes that which proved tragically continuous.

Many Jews might wonder why this long-expected document has proven so disappointing. After all, the aforementioned precedents are so much stronger, and earlier drafts of this document and its precursors were discussed with Jewish leaders. And a whole generation of Catholic clergy have merged from the enlightened soil of Vatican II and *Nostra Aetate*. The explanation is complex yet so simple. Simply put, *We Remember* emanates from an eminently human institution, the Catholic Church. Beneath its superficial appearance of unity lies complex diversity, strident differences of opinion, and even bitter personal rivalries. Our Jewish world evidences its divisions more openly, but ours are no more profound than those of the Catholic Church. *We Remember* is as surely the product of group process and political compromise as the proverbial camel is a horse designed by a committee.

Like friends of the Jewish people such as Cardinals Willebrands, Bernardine, Cassidy, and Keeler, democratic pluralists within the Catholic Church advocate open disclosure, complete apology and steadfast acceptance of others in mutual respect. More conservative prelates fear the undermining of papal authority and the departure from established doctrine, which a more forthright document might have produced. Other divisions within the hierarchy which added barnacles include the conflict over 'liberation theology' and the divisions between the national bishops' conferences in developed countries and advocates of the global church in developing lands.

The weakness in which we Jews feel so disappointed may prove the bedrock strength of *We Remember*. The product of many years of internal discussion and even struggle, the document is a statement of the total Catholic Church. It constructs a new floor under Catholic-Jewish reconciliation. All recognize the exceptional personal commitment of Pope John Paul II to the Jewish people. Some Jews fear that a less friendly pope—none could be more friendly—might reverse the progress of the last thirty years. However the ponderous process which produced *We Remember* makes such a reversal extremely unlikely. Indeed, the most promising aspect of the new statement is Pope John Paul II's personal endorsement letter. Virtually unprecedented, the letter and the document it endorses will no more likely be overturned than the Vatican will condemn Pope Pius XII for his inaction during the Shoah.

Where will Catholic-Jewish encounter go from here? First, the heavily historical basis of *We Remember* will escalate the calls for open access to the World War II archives in the Vatican for responsible Catholic and Jewish scholars to research. Second, Pope John Paul II will visit Israel within the next couple of years. He will then fulfil a personal dream, contribute to the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, and effectively conclude the first stage in the historic reconciliation of the Catholic Church and the Jewish people.

This historic reconciliation has witnessed the transformation of profound enmity into deep friendship. Whatever its limitations, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people remains the most fruitful inter-religious partnership amongst all the possible pairings of the world's religions. This transformation from enmity to friendship projects a beacon of hope for the reconciliation of all of God's children.

None the less, the issue of the Holocaust still begs for a much expanded version of the Vatican statement released in March of 1998—for confession, disclosure, for contrition, for an open and public accounting. Painful as it might be, as difficult for many of the faithful to hear, the absence of this full statement, like the presence of the cross, obstructs the communal catharsis that still eludes us. It should not be withheld for our sake, nor, just as importantly, for the Catholic Church. We will not know—we cannot know—what the Holocaust was for millions of believing, pious, and ethical Catholics, until those who want to sanctify their memory first sanctify the truth.

Catholics and Jews have, as I have argued, dealt with much tougher issues. Human failings can be forgiven, even if we are enjoined never to forget. Forgetting, whether intentional or inadvertent, does not hide a transgression. Instead, it enlarges a wound that would otherwise heal, even as it leaves a permanent scar. Yet, these are not issues of the spirit or theology. They are, at bottom, issues of politics, and as such, issues that are amenable to solution. They should be put to rest now, because we have critical issues of the present with which we must contend. If we can turn to these contemporary issues in a spirit of mutual trust, we can help bring hope and peace.

The Catholic-Jewish relationship is, notwithstanding anything that I have said, the most felicitous inter-religious relationship anywhere. To list the world's religions in almost any pairing is to catalogue the current crises of our generation, or,

at best, the lack of human caring for one another. The optimism we share must be directed outward, for we have experienced religious reconciliation and mutual acceptance. It is, potentially, a powerful force.

Unfortunately, religious extremism is today a more powerful force. It is a component, if not the root cause, of many of the most enduring and pernicious conflicts of our time. Yet few believe that the rationally religious can effectively stand up to the irrationally religious. We have all become believers in the power of madness. Those who invoke God's name in the commission of the highest sins against God and humankind have found a power in religion greater than our own. Few truly believe that the religious force of love and compassion can overcome the religious force of fanatical righteousness. So we have allowed the extremists to represent the concept of religion in the affairs of the temporal world.

When many think of religion today, they associate all religion, Judaism and Catholicism alike, with the Taliban atrocities in Afghanistan and the graves of murdered Muslims in Bosnia. In the popular mind, Sarajevo has come to typify inter-religious relationships. The overwhelming majority of religious Jews both in Israel and in the Diaspora are committed to democratic pluralism. Much to our chagrin, Baruch Goldstein, Yigal Amir, and Noam Friedman have come to represent Judaism in the world's popular culture. We have listened, either to the voice of intimidation or the voice of secularization that says people of religious principles must not invoke those principles in the public square. We have listened and watched, leaving the arena to those who believe only in the punitive rigour of religion. The world has tilted on its axis, lacking any discernible force capable of restoring balance to our political and spiritual lives.

Democracy is hard pressed to counter the forces of extremism. Even in Israel, Jewish religious extremists have breached the rule of law, claiming God's will as

motive and justification for their acts of terror and murder. Israel and the Jewish people are not immune. But neither should we be helpless.

As much as we are people of faith, and therefore, of dogma, most of the world's Jews and most of the world's Catholics have embraced the values of democratic pluralism. In America, democratic pluralism and its attendant civil liberties are at the core of the religious commitment of Jews. Over and again, America's Catholic Bishops have been our staunchest allies in our defence of democratic pluralism. The foremost example in recent years was the United States Catholic Conference support for the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, despite the openly acknowledged differences of opinion between the Catholic hierarchy and the preponderance of American Jews concerning abortion rights. For most religious Jews and for most religious Catholics, human freedom is as central to our religious beliefs as is the acceptance of God's dominion. We have, over two thousand (and more) years of history, learned how to deal with this seeming contradiction. Over time, we have come to understand that the underpinning of law—God's law and the rightful laws of democratic governments—resides in fundamental values. These values derive from God's love as expressed in the Commandments that are the ethical superstructure of virtually all Western religious and temporal law. Because our religious values undergird our temporal as well as our religious laws, we have adapted to and even prospered in a world that separates church and state in order to protect rather than erode our values.

Yet our values in America and in Europe and in Israel and in so much of the modern world have been eroded. Who would argue that the values of family, work, and personal responsibility have not been seriously compromised? Certainly, there can be argument as to the cause of this erosion. That is the argument between religious extremists and democrats, between the right and the left. One side argues

that social dislocation is the result of failing to enforce values. The other side argues that it is the result of failing to enforce values *fairly*.

Those of us whose interpretation of our existence is as the children of one God believe in the equality of all God's children. We believe that the laws of humankind and God are meant to apply to all, and to all fairly. And if belief in and acceptance of those laws has been eroded, surely we believe that the hallmark of their restoration must be their fairness. Implicit in our vision of fairness is compassion. Yet that vision, which is not the exclusive property of the political right or left, is largely absent from the world-wide debate over values. It is absent because, as Stephen Carter has pointed out, we have been complicit in the banishment of religious sensibilities from the public arena; afraid to assert what is universal in the temporal expression of our religious values. That is the essence of democratic pluralism and religious pluralism as well—the ability to discern what is universal and not simply what we believe should be universal in our values. What is universal is what is generally accepted, as 'right and true', as much because it is universally believed as because it is, by dogma and belief, 'right and true'.

Obviously, then, we have differences. But just as obviously, we hold many things in common, indeed, most things, because our values spring from the same roots. That is, I think, where the Catholic-Jewish dialogue has taken us over the past half-century. And it is where we must go in the years ahead. How do we get there?

The time has come, I believe, to assert the importance of our values through their universalism—that is, through the medium of inter-religious dialogue and action. What better test of universalism is there than where there is agreement among different creeds and beliefs? But action on values presupposes shared knowledge of those values, and within the framework of democratic pluralism, it must be an exercise that extends beyond the clerical élite. More simply stated, we must vastly

expand the cadres of those who are engaged in and informed about inter-religious matters. It means that we must generate a sustained frontal attack against the overwhelming ignorance of each other that pertains in our respective religious communities. It means we must teach our rabbis and priests about each other's religious, historical, and social experiences in order that they may teach their laity. And beyond teaching, which is an act in itself, we must act together on the meaning of our values, not separately, as we do today, but together. How else do we teach the lesson of the universalism of our values if not by applying them?

Sustained and intensified inter-religious dialogue and action are the essential ingredients in reversing the twin scourges of religious extremism and social dislocation. We need to build, community by community, an educated and active inter-religious constituency. That means writing the curricular materials to teach about the other; creating the academic programmes in our seminaries and other institutions of higher learning in religion to educate our religious leaders. Building such an interreligious constituency requires sharing experiences through discussions and activities. It means inter-religious pilgrimages to the central sites of the other's religion; to become an active presence wherever there is conflict, incorporating the model of the Catholic society of San Egidio. We must stem the process of turning inward by bringing different racial, religious, and ethnic groups together around the qualities of our particular identities which we seek to sustain in a pluralistic world. Lastly, we must honestly assess the responsibilities of the world's major religions in the genocides of the past and the prevention of the genocides of the future.

In anticipation of the Christian Millennium—the year 2000—many of us are already at work organizing a major convocation of the world's religious leaders to set forth a joint inter-religious statement of principles on the role of religion in fostering peace and mutual respect among religions and nations. Already, Christian denominations are planning major celebrations and conferences. Some will seek to be

ecumenical in character. But each, because its sponsorship is particularistic, will be bound to the underlying concepts and agendas of its denominational sponsor, and each, to a lesser or greater degree, will be a vehicle for 'spreading the gospel' rather than encompassing it, unspoken, within the very core of the programme. Accordingly, an event with sponsors from across the religious spectrum is indicated.

Conferences are, by their nature, transitory events. So, too, is a millennial anniversary, even if it lasts for a full year. Its significance, except for the millennialist thinkers and believers, is essentially symbolic. At issue, then, is what symbols and meaning will be attached to the event, and how effectively the event will be employed in expanding shared values of understanding. Commemoration of the beginning of the third Christian Millennium, which occurs in just a few short years, must give prominence to the role of religion in supporting or failing to stop the Nazi Holocaust, genocidal atrocities in Armenia, Biafra, Cambodia, and the inter-religious conflicts of the Middle East, Northern Ireland, and Bosnia.

Specifically, I would set three goals for this conference. First, the world's great religions should join in a declaration affirming the common human identity of all people. Second, all participating denominations should establish dialogues aimed at their mutual recognition. Third, the world's religions should create mechanisms for intervention in situations of religious conflict.

Overall, the entire programme that I have projected is neither a Catholic nor Jewish nor Protestant nor Muslim nor Hindu nor Buddhist agenda. It is the comprehensive agenda we have all pursued or dreamed about pursuing through particular programmes. It is premised on the belief that those of us who believe in the essential nature of the inter-religious enterprise must not merely talk about the merits of our approach, but actively promote it. It is a programme born out of the achievements of the Catholic-Jewish dialogue we have nurtured for nearly half a

century. We have learned to talk to one another. We are learning how to recognize and accept one another. We are learning how to talk about how we have hurt each other, and how we can heal each other. We are learning how to talk about God together. We have confronted the myths about each other from our past; engaged in critical historical studies and moved toward reconciliation. We have learned how to enjoy each other's company, the richness of our particular experiences and cultures, and their universal qualities that are gifts of the same God.

Will we only progress? Will every issue be resolved? Will we always make things better? Such foolish questions! The sensible question is whether we have the courage to make the investment of time, commitment, and resources to move forward on the paths that we have successfully set out upon. That is no idle question, for we have—and here I will speak only about the Jewish community—been turning inward for many years. We have put fewer resources into our inter-religious work as that work has advanced. That is the challenge of our future, and that is a challenge that we must direct at ourselves, at our co-religionists, congregants, institutions, and philanthropic supporters. It will be a tragedy if, having found our way after all these years, we do not have the courage or will to enter this new realm of inter-religious cooperation so ripe with promise.

I recognize that the vision I have portrayed is idealistic and perhaps expansive beyond reality. Many may dismiss my vision as the idle reverie of a dreamer, and they will therefore not take any of its components seriously. I accept the risk of sharing my possibly unrealistic vision with you as my fellow visionaries, unafraid to dream dreams or see visions, at whatever ages we are. We both come from religions and peoples for whom messianic theology is central to our separate endeavours in human history. Long ago, each along our different paths, we learned that the messianic coming is thousands of years in the making. Within our theological dialectic, we Jews

pray as if all depends upon prayer, and we act as if all depends upon action. Understanding the obstacles, how easy it is to become discouraged along the way.

In a passage attributed to Rabbi Tarfon, *Tractate Pirke Avot* reassures us in our multi-millennial messianic labour to repair the world. 'The day is short, the labour is enormous, the workers are lazy. The pay-off is also enormous and the Master urges us on. It is not incumbent upon us to complete the task, but neither are we free to desist from it.'