In an interview with Times Higher Education a couple of years ago, Margaret was asked: What is your biggest regret? She replied: "Never having mastered bi-location or how to get 48 hours into 24". Looking at your remarkable CV, Margaret, combining a full and prolific academic career with dedicated campaigning in 'the real world', I find it hard to believe that you have not mastered both of these dark arts -- at least the second one. Where do you find the time? Clearly, you make it.

I only wish I had the same talent, for I have been allotted fifteen minutes to respond to you tonight. But, thinking about the title of your lecture alone, not to mention reading some of your work in advance, I could do with at least a week. For this reason, though Shirley tells me that respondents usually extemporise, I have written out my remarks in advance. I hope in this way to condense my thoughts to the maximum extent and extract the essence of what I want to say. And the first thing I want to say is this: It is an honour to be asked to give the response to your lecture and I am grateful to the Oxford Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) for inviting me to do so.

II

I am an academic philosopher. So, in contrast to the informative lecture we have just heard from a distinguished social scientist, my talk will contain no facts -- just a reflection on the subject!

Furthermore, this being the CCJ, I shall offer a Jewish point of view. Not the Jewish point of view, of course, for there is no such thing. No one speaks for Judaism -- except for every Jew. But the point of view I shall offer is not mine alone. It belongs to a current of thought within Judaism that extends across the centuries from antiquity to the present day. And it can be captured by a phrase that I owe to you, Margaret. When I saw the flyer for your lecture, the subtitle, 'the Church as a social movement' leaped off the page. This is just how I think of Judaism, or at least it is where I want to place the emphasis tonight: Judaism as a social movement, a movement inspired by the words that Moses addresses to the Children of Israel when, lost in the wilderness, they look to him to point a direction: "Justice, justice shall you pursue" (Deut. 16:20). These words resound down the ages and, like the blast of the shofar or ram's horn, remind the Jewish people who they are. Hence the title of my book Being Jewish and Doing Justice. With this title I wanted to make the point (or make the claim) that the pursuit of justice lies at the heart of what it means -- what it should mean -- to be Jewish. Seen this way, Judaism is not so much an identity you own as a demand made
upon you: a demand you can never quite meet. If I have learned anything from the last 17 years or so that I have been at St Benet’s Hall, which is a Benedictine House, it is this: Catholics suffer from the same sense of always falling short -- never being good enough -- as we Jews do. Perhaps this explains why we share some of the same neuroses, plus the pious recognition that the fruit of the vine is a blessing. (Andamen to that.)

III

Let me begin where you began: the cue for the work of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences on human trafficking. You explained that as President of the Academy you asked Pope Francis what topics the Academy should address, and you showed us the slide of his handwritten reply: "human trafficking and modern slavery". Now, we might distinguish between ancient and modern forms of slavery, classifying human trafficking as modern, but it is as ancient as the book of Genesis and the story of Joseph being sold by his brothers to the passing band of Midianite or Ishmaelite traders for twenty pieces of silver (Gen. 37:28). Although it is true that the brothers' motives were not purely commercial, the Midianites were simply plying their trade: they bought Joseph as a commodity and sold him to Potiphar when they got to Egypt. In this respect, the biblical story of the human trafficking of Joseph is a prototype for what is happening today on a scale that, as you informed us, is vast and expanding.

Moreover, although Joseph did rather well for himself, rising to become one of 'the great and the good' -- if not the greatest and the goodest -- in the court of Pharaoh, the episode described in chapter 37 ultimately leads to the enslavement of the Children of Israel, even if that comes about many generations later. So, whether modern or ancient, slavery is slavery and human trafficking is a link in the iron chain.

For Judaism, the enslavement of the people in Egypt and their liberation under Moses is not just one story among others: it is the founding narrative of the people. I used to belong to the New North London Synagogue, and one year at Pesach (Passover) the rabbi, Jonathan Wittenberg, sent the congregation an email message that included the following words (which I used as an epigraph for my book on Judaism and justice):

What is most important is not the story of the ten plagues, or the defeat of Egypt. What is so moving, what so much matters, is that the Torah should have chosen to locate our origins as a people here, in the struggle of the persecuted slave, in the anguish of the stranger and the disenfranchised, in order that we should know and remember for ever after the importance of justice, liberty and equality. Henceforth this memory of slavery and suffering is the moral touchstone of all Jewish values.¹

"Our origins as a people": I take these origins to be not just chronological but ethical. The "memory of slavery", translated into values that translate into action: this is where Judaism perpetually begins: Judaism as a social movement.

This movement begins with Moses, who gives the liberated people a code of ethics that lays peculiar emphasis on ‘the stranger’ (ger). "You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exod. 23.9). But, of course, the Israelites were not mere strangers in Egypt; they were not tourists who had come to the sunny River Nile resort for the holiday of a lifetime. They were not visiting the pyramids; they were building them, under the lash of the taskmaster's whip. When Moses says "you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt" he means they know the feelings of the slave, having yourselves been slaves in the land of Egypt. And this was no throwaway line. According to a source cited in the Talmud, the Torah repeats the commandment 'not to oppress a stranger' (or words to similar effect) between thirty-six and forty-six times, depending on how you count. In other words, Moses does not merely bring the people out from slavery, as though slavery were something they could discard and leave behind; he builds a people on the foundation of their slavery, the "memory of slavery" (as Rabbi Wittenberg put it).

Judaism is the original anti-slavery movement. When we Jews forget where we come from, when we forget that our "origins as a people" lie here, "in the struggle of the persecuted slave, in the anguish of the stranger and the disenfranchised" (to quote rabbi Wittenberg again), then we forget who we are. And when we fail to pursue justice, then we cease to be ourselves. These are the thoughts that sprung to mind when I read the title of Margaret’s lecture.

IV

At this point I want to make a giant leap from the ethics of Moses in the five books of the Torah to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Margaret’s lecture and her work with the Vatican are firmly rooted in the language of rights. When we take a closer look at this language we shall see that the leap I just mentioned -- the leap from the Hebrew bible to the bible of the human rights movement -- is not as ‘giant’ as at first it might seem.

When I speak of the language of rights I do not mean rights that the law giveth and the law taketh away: entitlements that vary from time to time or from one jurisdiction to another. I mean fundamental rights, rights that we regard as universal and inalienable because they belong to us purely by virtue of our being human: human rights. The language of human rights transcends the language of law: laws come and go whereas human rights constitute an enduring standard by which to evaluate the rights that are either granted or withheld in law. So, one way of saying what is wrong about human trafficking -- and with a legal system that fails to tackle it adequately -- is to say that it is a violation of human rights. But when is a right a human right? What makes a right into a universal principle?

The perspective on rights that I am about to present owes a lot to the author of the book A Magna Carta for All Humanity: Homing in on Human Rights, which was published last year by Routledge. The author, Francesca Klug, was one of the architects of the Human Rights Act, which incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law. I follow her

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lead partly because I find her take persuasive, but mainly because she is my younger sister, and younger sisters are always right: that is another universal principle!

Some people get their bearing with human rights by turning the clock back three hundred years or so to the European Enlightenment. It is true that the struggle against oppression in that period was formative for the language of human rights today. But today's struggles for justice are different. It is not the eighteenth century but the twentieth, especially the war-torn first half, that sets the scene for the modern human rights movement. The UDHR was proclaimed by the General Assembly of the UN in 1948, three years after World War Two ended and the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust had registered with a world in a state of shock. The Preamble recalls "barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind", acts that excluded certain groups from the circle of humanity. The language of human rights is the opposite: it is inclusive. Moreover, it implies a collective identity. Both these points are reflected in the phrase "all members of the human family" in the opening sentence of the Preamble. Each right set out in the Declaration should be read in this light: humankind as a family, not as isolated individuals demanding their due. For, although it is true that a human right is a claim that every person is entitled to make, the engine driving the movement is not personal entitlement but inclusiveness. It is closer to fraternity. Article 1 puts it this way: "All human beings ... should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" (or siblinghood, as we might say today). In other words, first and foremost comes mutual care -- or at least mutual respect: respect for one another, for fellow "members of the human family". I am tempted to say that ultimately it is this respect that puts the R in UDHR: it is the universal declaration of human respect.

But what is the basis of this respect? The answer found in the UDHR is contained in the following phrase: the "dignity and worth of the human person" (to quote again from the Preamble). Furthermore, this is not something you can gain or lose; the opening sentence calls this dignity inherent. This idea -- the inherent dignity of every member of the human family -- is what I had in mind when I said that going from the Hebrew bible to the UDHR is not a giant leap. In fact, it could almost be lifted from Genesis chapter 1.

And the rabbis in the Talmud did, in effect, just that. In the Genesis account, grandma Eve and grandpa Adam, ancestors of the entire 'human family', are created b'tselem elohim, in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). From which the rabbis in the Talmud derive the principle of kevod habriyos ('honour of the created') or kevod haodom (honour of humanity); or, in idiomatic English, 'human dignity'. The principle assumes that the same quality imparted to Adam and Eve -- the quality of being made in the image of God -- is passed on to all their descendants. In other words, human dignity is precisely inherent.

"The dignity of every person is sacred", writes Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, who for fifteen years was Rosh (head) of the famous Mirrer Yeshiva in Jerusalem. The importance it has, he says, is "overriding ". That is to say, "Rabbinic enactments and various scriptural prohibitions are set aside when they conflict with human respect and dignity." And then he takes an extra step, a crucial one: "The concept of [human dignity] does not, however, stop at refraining from insulting or degrading one's fellow human being. One is also obligated to enhance and
magnify the prestige and honor of one’s fellow.” The extra step that Rabbi Shmulevitz takes is the step that leads to activism and to the idea of Judaism that I am emphasizing tonight, the idea that echoes the title of Margaret’s talk: Judaism as a social movement.

No violation of inherent human dignity is more flagrant than the traffic in human beings. I wish you, Margaret, and your Academy every success in your fight against this practice. It is a social movement in which all of us, I trust, can link arms.

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