

This is an immensely useful and serviceable collection of sources, for which, together with his scholarly introductions, the editor is to be both congratulated and warmly praised. Its shelf life will extend far beyond the forty years devoted to its production.

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*HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE IMAGE OF GOD* by ROGER RUSTON, SCM Press, 2004, 310 pp (Paperback, £18.99) ISBN 0-3340-2959-7.

Christians who support human rights and who use the language associated with that tradition have often suffered the criticism that, in doing so, they have given in to secular and enlightenment assumptions about human life and society. This weighty and important book is a powerful rebuttal of that charge.

In the context of an exploration of Catholic moral theology Roger Ruston has recovered a substantial and positive Christian language for human rights. He has done so in a manner encouraging a critical Christian engagement with the Human Rights tradition.

Underpinning the theme of the book is the mind of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas represents the full flowering of a tradition of thought that Ruston traces back to the early centuries of the church – to Basil and to Ambrose as well as Augustine. At the heart of this language is the doctrine of the '*imago Dei*'. The Thomist development of the themes of creation, of nature and grace have, according to Ruston, laid a foundation for a long Catholic tradition of the exposition of human rights. That argument is enriched by a further exploration of John Locke's thinking rooted in the Protestant world of the seventeenth century. Ruston seeks to rescue Locke from the perception that he is the father of secular thinking on human rights and on individualism.

The heart of the book is taken up in encounter with the struggle of both Francisco de Vittoria and Bartolome de Las Casa who developed their thinking in the face of the abuses of the Spanish conquests in South and Central America in the sixteenth century. They were especially concerned at the abuse of the Indian peoples of these lands.

Both, making full use of the Thomist tradition, challenged the King of Spain and the Pope to act to fulfil their moral duty as Christians to bring an end to the abuses. They argued for the '*imago Dei*' in Indian human life and so for their freedom and their rights over their land and property. Casas is especially radical in his approach. Ruston maintains that some of the essential features of the development of the human rights tradition are here. They are rooted in eternal principles to do with justice and human dignity.

From there Ruston moves to Locke and to hold that Locke's view has roots in this tradition as well and that Locke took the theological foundation of his thought with great seriousness. Thus he finds a golden thread upholding and developing human rights theory from the theologians of the sixteenth century through philosophy in the seventeenth century and on to our own time.

The importance of this work is illustrated in the book by a fascinating chapter on Fair Trade Coffee – an example in our day of the issues that lead to the need for the Human Rights Tradition. This is a timely and outstanding book which deserves to be studied by all who want to understand the links between faith and Human Rights.

John Gladwin, Bishop of Chelmsford.

*FOR ALL PEOPLE AND ALL NATIONS: CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AND HUMAN RIGHTS* by JOHN NURSER, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2005, xix + 220 pp incl bibliography and index (Paperback, £13.50) ISBN 2-8254-1415-8.

'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.' John Nurser shows how a group of American liberal Protestants worked for an article on religious freedom, expressed in words such as these, to be included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, since they saw the right to religious liberty as the bedrock for all the other human rights in the Declaration. Their concern for freedom to preach the Gospel developed into a concern for a wider freedom which transcended religious difference and provided a solid basis for a plural society.

Nurser's book challenges current understandings of the creation of the UDHR. The part played by liberal Protestants like Friedrich Nolde, in effect the hero of this book, has been, to quote his assessment, 'airbrushed out'. Nurser has done brilliantly to throw light on this, as the dominant current narrative is one in which since the Second World War (secular) 'human rights' have triumphed over religious claims to prescribe what is 'right' for people: 'human rights' are crudely seen as a universal bulwark against the illegitimate and particularist claims of the religiously benighted. This, for example, is the line taken by Francesca Klug in her popular introduction to the Human Rights Act 1998, *Values for a Godless Age, The Story of the United Kingdom's New Bill of Rights* (London: Penguin, 2000). Klug writes, 'The concept of human dignity is widely recognized to have replaced god or nature as the main justification for claiming human rights since the Second World War' (p 214). Nurser shows why this is completely mistaken.