

her body? Bodies occupy space; which space is Mary's body occupying now? Could we travel there? That some theologians would think of the question as somewhat strange only shows their estrangement from a certain kind of philosophy. It is worth noting in this regard that Herbert McCabe's understanding of what our risen bodies will be like, that human bodies are not ultimately about being in place but our mode of presence to and communication with others, is quite clearly formulated with these kinds of concerns in mind.

I particularly enjoyed the section on education, dealing with Chesterton's philosophy of education, as well as giving reflections on Catholic identity and spirituality within schools. The question of whether we should have Catholic schools and what they should be like is a perfect example of what Chesterton is talking about in the quote given above. Everyone has his view on the issue, too often founded on unexamined and even unrecognised assumptions, thinking which has not been thought out. To be led through Haldane's thinking out of the knot of issues which relate to the question is to be presented with a model for our own resolution of it.

This collection, then, is very valuable, not just for the particular insights which Haldane offers, and they are brilliant, but for a wonderful example of a Catholic commitment to hard and clear thinking, an excellent example of the attempt to integrate faith and reason in a way which is respectful of both.

PETER HUNTER OP

**HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE IMAGE OF GOD by Roger Ruston, *SCM*, London, 2004, pp. vii+312, £18.99 pbk.**

This is a carefully researched and judiciously argued contribution to an important area of political theology and theological ethics. By taking an historical approach it grounds the discussion in particular situations and authors, and is therefore more interesting than a generalised treatment of the subject would be.

The two main areas dealt with are the contributions of some Spanish Dominicans – notably Vitoria and Las Casas – to the debate around the colonisation (to use a very mild word) of Central and Southern America; and the contribution of John Locke to the debate on natural rights in North America and late Stuart England a century later.

The Spanish Dominicans argued in an explicitly theological manner that the Indians who had been conquered and expropriated – and excoriated for their barbarism – by the Christian colonists were in God's image and therefore endowed with human rights even if they refused to turn from their gods and accept the Christian Gospel. Ruston plots painstakingly the discussion of issues of possession and self-determination, of just war and slavery, and of what counts as Christian civilization. The relevance of the whole debate to present concerns is made explicit in the brilliant introductory paragraph to the section on Salamanca and Francisco de Vitoria, where he writes of the world's one superpower which aggressively exports its culture to tropical countries which it ransacks for their raw materials, developing a doctrine of pre-emptive strike against the enemies of Christendom etc. etc.; and you suddenly realize that he is describing, not what you thought, but 16<sup>th</sup> century Spain.

The chapters on Locke are usefully revisionist, in the sense that they correct the picture of Locke as simply a founding father of possessive individualism, and indicate that he stood in a genuinely theological tradition which saw the earth as belonging in common to humanity, and government as being for the good of the people, not the wishes of a tyrant. What made him more of a capitalist hero is that he thought that once a person had started making profitable use of what had been common land, that person had a right to possession; this meant that the colonists of North America had the right to dispossess the Indians who roamed over the land hunting and therefore could not be said to put it to any profitable use. That clash of cultures is, again, hugely relevant to the contemporary world.

The book is topped and tailed with an introduction and a conclusion which discuss in particular the Catholic Church's attitude to human rights both in society and within the Church. The most important part of that discussion is, in my view, on pages 282–284 where the concept of “the image of God” is shown to be somewhat double-edged: it can either reduce the image to some attribute which we share with God (rationality, say, understood from our specific cultural viewpoint) or expand it to include all those who are other than us. Although this is not a point Ruston is making in this book, it is vital that we decide how we are going to use the concept of “image of God” in discussing the status of, say, people with dementia.

It is important to note what this book is not: it is not a general textbook on human rights or an image-of-God theology; it is a description of how certain people have confronted actual situations which required a theological response. It does not say much about Rawls, and it says nothing about Marx, but it does confront issues which are of interest to both those writers. It does what it sets out to do, and should be welcomed as a major contribution to several ethical and theological debates.

COLIN CARR OP

**RELATIVISM AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF LIBERALISM** by Graham Long,  
*Imprint Academic, Exeter, 2004, pp. x+276, £30 hbk.*

This is the third volume in the series of St. Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs, and I would think is just the kind of contribution which the founding Editor, Professor John Haldane, welcomes with enthusiasm. Graham Long links a detailed study of issues in contemporary ethics together with recent versions of political liberalism in a way which is at once challenging and plausible. His claim is that a particular understanding of ethical relativism, which he terms ‘coherence relativism’, is proof against the well known charges brought against relativism in any form; and that, so understood, it provides a suitable basis for political liberalism.

Relativism is often rightly accused of self-destruction, or of a total failure to capture the nature of the moral judgements we might on occasion think ourselves justified in passing on cultures which are not our own. Long gives detailed consideration to the universalisms of Nagel, Habermas and Hampshire. Nagel's argument for objective values runs the risk, to put it no more strongly, of admitting as evidence only those moral views which Nagel himself would be willing to accept. Habermas offers a transcendental argument based on the unavoidable rules of rational discussion. Everyone, for instance, has an equal right to be heard, to question any statement, and so on; and the outcome of a discussion carried on in such a manner will be agreed universal principles. Long's reply is partly to claim that much of our moral discussion is far from exhibiting these particular features; and in any case that the implicit suggestion that everyone's views are somehow to be accorded equal weight is surely highly questionable. Hampshire, by contrast, seeks a basis for universalism in facts about human nature, its needs, and its gift of rational inquiry, from which we can see the emergence of the core elements which can form the basis of universal moral principles.

Long's own version of relativism takes its origin from the Rawlsian notion of reflective equilibrium. What one seeks is a set of moral beliefs in which one's pre-reflective deepest moral commitments are respected and which is overall coherent. In reply to some of the more damaging objections usually made against relativism he argues that many of the more abhorrent moral views can properly be criticised ‘from the outside’, as it were, on the grounds that they are inconsistent with some well-established factual beliefs. Racist views, for instance, are incompatible with well-established non-moral facts about human psychology. Moreover, it can generally be shown that abhorrent moral outlooks are internally, even if covertly, inconsistent.