

behind his voluminous works and his relationship to the existentialism of the day. This book could also be quite useful in imagining how Buber's dense insights might be reinvigorated for the twenty-first century. For those less acquainted with his work, this book might seem a bit opaque.

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*The Sacredness of the Person: A New Genealogy of Human Rights.* By Hans Joas. Translated by Alex Skinner. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013. ix + 219 pages. \$29.95 (paper).

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Hans Joas' book is a proposed corrective to our understanding of how human rights have been justified as universally applicable values. His corrective seeks to move beyond what he argues is a false choice, held more by the general public than by academics, concerning our understanding of the genealogy of human rights. On one side are those who claim that human rights originated with the French Enlightenment and, through the French Revolution, liberated people from the oppression of the French crown and its natural ally, the church. On the other side are Christians who claim human rights as their innovation, rooted in the Gospels and receiving their first articulation in medieval philosophy. This development culminated in the twentieth century when the church looked past the anticlerical liberalism behind human rights theory and advocacy and began to champion these rights on Christian terms. Joas' corrective hinges on one key idea: that the history of human rights is a history of the sacralization of the human person. "Sacralization" is not to be understood here as an exclusively religious idea developed by Christians, nor was it an exclusive product of anti-Christian Enlightenment thought. It came about through a cultural dialogue over time that had many players, including those same Christian and Enlightenment actors, who appropriated and reinterpreted a received Judeo-Christian tradition and managed to develop human rights out of it.

Joas' book is not an exercise in the chronological history of the development of human rights, but an "affirmative genealogy" of how human rights came about sociologically, embedded in a complex Western social, political, religious, and historical milieu. History is employed using discreet epochs in which important advances in human sacralization developed (e.g., the evolution of punishment in the eighteenth century) along with a broad analysis of social phenomena. In particular, Joas discusses how "cultural traumas," the varieties of ways human violence gets perpetrated by people individually

and collectively against other people, influenced the development of human rights. This history is necessary because an accurate genealogy of human rights must avoid the trap of an ahistorical Kantianism where human rights are understood as a product of practical reasoning divorced from human experience and history. This history must, too, avoid a Nietzschean trap whereby human rights are seen as a wholly subjective, historical phenomenon that cannot be universally binding. Using Troeltsch, Joas' "affirmative genealogy" is one in which human rights are universal values recognized and practiced in history, through the concrete institutions and practices of society.

The closing chapters argue that the process of human sacralization rounds out this genealogy of human rights. The received Judeo-Christian tradition of an ensouled human person made as a child of God was transformed into an understanding of the human as a self who received life as a gift. This sacralization of the human self won priority over, or replaced, the sacralization of race, class, civilization, and nation. This sacralization of self can be had with or without a specific religious commitment.

Professors and graduate students of theology, philosophy, and political science will find Joas' argument a fruitful one to engage. His attempt to tease out the tangled roots of human rights is a superb exercise in analysis. Theologians will quarrel with his contention that traditions generate nothing in themselves, but only through how we receive and reinterpret them. He makes this argument in an attempt to explain that Christianity has a long tradition that contributed to the rise of human rights, but did not develop a consistent history of articulating and defending the human person. However, theologians may well view tradition as a source of revelation from the living God. From this theological perspective, church history teaches that any failure of Christians to heed the myriad signs from God reminding us of the dignity of human persons, from the Jewish prophetic tradition to the social ethics of the church fathers to the Salamanca school, should be identified as sin. Considering how deeply Joas engaged Christian sources, would a more sustained dialogue with theology have improved the final argument?

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*Christ and Reconciliation*. By Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen. A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World, vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. ix + 453 pages. \$40.00 (paper).

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