

THE
STORY
That Makes Sense of Our
STORIES

VI. human rights

February 20, 2022

Genesis 1:26-27 (ESV)

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Micah 6:8

He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Matthew 22:35-40

³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

INTRODUCTION:

“Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. . .”

—*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

“Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

—*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

1. The Christian Story of Human Rights

“I ask and beg you to take good care of our baby son, and as soon as I receive payment I shall send it to you. If you are delivered of a child [before I come home], if it is boy keep it, if a girl discard it.”

—*excerpt from letter by Hilarion*

“Infanticide was one of the deepest stains on the ancient civilizations.” —*W.E.H. Lecky*

“This [idea of equality] may seem self-evident, but it was literally unheard-of at the time, and it turned an entire world-order upside down.” —*Luc Ferry*

Genesis 1:26–27

“Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.” Genesis 9:6

2. The Secular Story of Human Rights

“Any adequate defense of human dignity would require some conception of human beings as radically different from other animals. But that is precisely what evolutionary theory calls into question. It makes us suspicious of any doctrine that sees large gaps of any sort between humans and all other creatures. This being so, a Darwinian may conclude that a successful defense of human dignity is most unlikely.” —*James Rachels*

“Sometimes we also had interesting discussions about the church and the development of the human race. Perhaps it's going too far to call them discussions, because he would begin explaining his ideas when some question or remark from one of us had set them off, and we just listened. He was not a member of any church, and thought the Christian religions were outdated, hypocritical institutions that lured people into them. The laws of nature were his religion. He could reconcile his dogma of violence better with nature than with the Christian doctrine of loving your neighbour and your enemy. ‘Science isn't yet clear about the origins of humanity,’ he once said. ‘We are probably the highest stage of development of some mammal which developed from reptiles and moved on to human beings, perhaps by way of the apes. We are a part of creation and children of nature, and the same laws apply to us as to all living creatures. And in nature the law of the struggle for survival has reigned from the first. Everything incapable of life, everything weak is eliminated. Only mankind and above all the church have made it their aim to keep alive the weak, those unfit to live, and people of an inferior kind.’” —*Traudl Jung, Until the Final Hour: Hitler's Last Secretary*

“Secular liberals like myself are effectively freeloading atheists. We continue to rely on the Judeo-Christian legacy of human dignity despite the fact that we reject the revealed truth that could support that concern.”

—*Richard Rorty*