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The First Grace: Rediscovering the Natural Law in a Post-Christian World

By RUSSELL HITTINGER

Intercollegiate Studies Institute November 2007, 2007. Paper Back. Book Condition: New. The concept of a 'natural' law that predates and justifies civil authority (expressed famously in Jefferson's invocation of 'the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God') is deeply rooted in Greek and Judaeo-Christian tradition. Since the Enlightenment, however, natural law has been increasingly detached from its original context and from a higher, divine law in order to justify the free rein of individualism and self-interest. Hittinger, a Roman Catholic legal scholar, offers a balanced, well-reasoned account of the decline of natural law and argues for its restoration and relevance in a post-Christian world. The first four essays are theoretical, tracing natural law as a theme from the patristic period onward, and exploring its contemporary legal character and relationship to political authority. In the second half of the book, he sets forth several case studies (assisted suicide, the Supreme Court and religion, technology and liberty) that illustrate what happens when the social and legal order functions independently of its metaphysical and theological underpinnings. Hittinger's elegant argument relies heavily on the thought of Thomas Aquinas and John Paul II, but it will nevertheless interest non-Catholics and even non-Christians who are deeply...



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