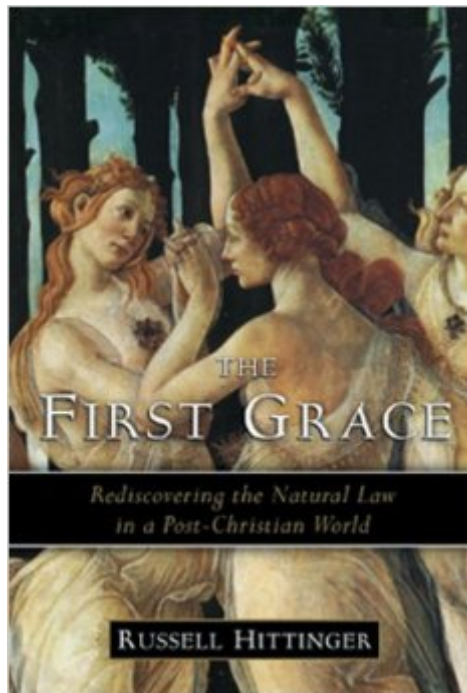


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The First Grace: Rediscovering The Natural Law In A Post-Christian World



Synopsis

Whether discussing the nature of liberalism, the constitutional and moral problems posed by judicial usurpation, or the dangers of technology, Russell Hittinger convincingly argues in *The First Grace* that in our post-Christian world it is more crucial than ever that we recover older, wiser notions of the concepts of freedom and law.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The First Grace" is, according to the Fathers of the Church, the natural law implanted in the hearts of all men and women, made in the image of God. Russell Hittinger traces the history of this doctrine through the Ancients, the Middle Ages, and its apogee in the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. What is "new" in Hittinger's account is the Thomistic emphasis on Providence in the Natural Law, defined as the participation of the creature in the Eternal Law of God. Hittinger is convinced that this essential aspect of the natural law was lost in the Enlightenment with its deistic notion of God. After this grand survey in Section One, the author applies his refined analysis of natural law to the American Constitutional order. He maintains that the Founding Fathers had a certain grasp of the natural law, but that they made the decision not to treat fundamental law in the Constitution itself. Rather, they purposely intended to leave the bulk of natural law type decisions to the several states since they were proposing a precisely limited federal government. Hittinger then shows how this original constitutional order has been progressively undermined by the Federal government and especially by the Courts as they began to develop a distorted version of the natural law, based on the so-called right to privacy. To watch the historical unfolding of this so-called "right to privacy"

through *Roe v. Wade*, *Griswold v. Connecticut*, and unto its final crystallization in the "mystery of life" definition found in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* is horrifying. Indeed, Hittinger has even proclaimed that such a decision has already created a "A Crisis of Legitimacy" in the American Constitutional order on a par with the *Dred Scott* decision. (recall the famous debate in *First Things*, Nov.

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