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John Paul II and the Legacy of Dignitatis Humanae (Moral Traditions series)

Hermínio Rico

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It was by far the most controversial document to emerge from Vatican II?*Dignitatis Humanae*, or the Declaration on Religious Freedom. Drafted largely by prominent Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray, it represented a departure from previous Catholic teachings in that it acknowledged and accepted as normative the separation between Church and State and declared religious freedom a fundamental human right. In doing this, it set forth guidelines for the role of the Catholic Church in secular liberal and pluralistic societies.

Nearly four decades later, Hermínio Rico examines the continued relevance of this declaration in today's world, compares its most paradigmatic interpretations, and proposes a reconsideration of its import for contemporary church-society relationships. He offers a detailed analysis of how Pope John Paul II has appropriated, interpreted, and developed the main themes of the document, and how he has applied them to such contentious modern issues as the fall of Communism and the rise of secular pluralism. In addition, Rico sets forth his own vision of the future of *Dignitatis Humanae*, and how the profound themes of the declaration can be applied in years to come to help the church find a way to engage effectively with, and within, pluralistic societies.

Of interest to students of Catholic thought, church-society relationships, the legacy of John Courtney Murray, and the teachings of John Paul II, this book offers a fresh perspective on one of the most important documents in the modern history of the Catholic church.

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