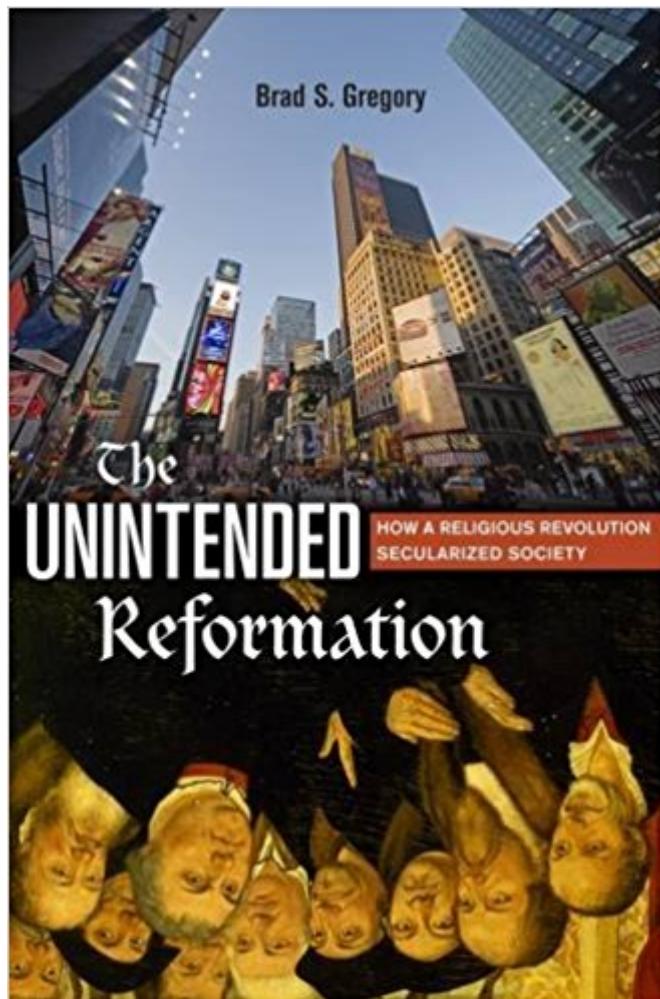


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The Unintended Reformation: How A Religious Revolution Secularized Society



Synopsis

In a work as much about the present as the past, Gregory identifies the unintended consequences of the Reformation for the modern condition: a hyperpluralism of beliefs, intellectual disagreements that splinter into fractals of specialized discourse, the absence of a substantive common good, and the triumph of capitalism's driver, consumerism.

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Customer Reviews

My comments here build on earlier reviews, especially Christian Smith's and Thomas Smith's. This book is a great achievement. Here I'd like to focus on what it brings to professional historians. I am in graduate school and my experience of this book is close to what Thomas Smith said he hoped would happen to readers who are entering the academy. It's premature but this book may end up being as important as MacIntyre's *After Virtue*. However, it is a work of a historian rather than a philosopher and it has the particular strengths of a historian that a philosopher lacks: a great sensitivity to the details of ritual, everyday life, economic changes, political decisions, etc. Gregory's great contribution is his keen sense of how practices and thought impact each other (and some philosophical training seems evident here). Though obviously a longish book, it seems a short book to me for how much it accomplishes. Many of the theorists of the past century and a half (Nietzsche, Heidegger, and other philosophers but especially the profoundly influential Weber and Foucault) are engaged well. My profession is dominated by these thinkers and their intellectual offspring. Gregory, engaged in a critique, briefly acknowledges the good that they have contributed (naive objectivity or positivism of some 19th century historians is no longer possible) but is more concerned to describe

the negative effects of their thought and to argue against them- usually it is a question of the premises of their thought rather than mistakes in reasoning. Gregory has argued for a new space in the academy. I hope that he treats these questions in greater detail, or that some other author will develop Gregory's insights here.

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