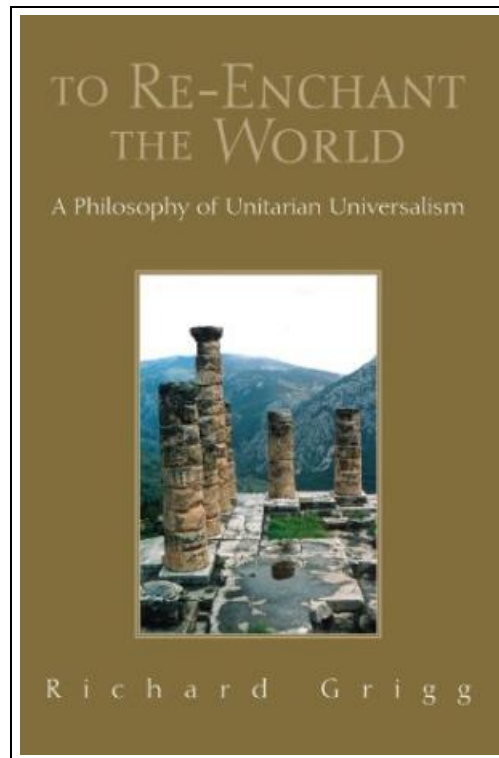


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Xlibris, United States, 2004. Paperback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book \*\*\*\*\* Print on Demand \*\*\*\*\*.Since the seventeenth century, Western culture has been undergoing what historians and sociologists call secularization, the process via which religious institutions lose more and more of their power in society. Whereas Western society was once held together by the Christian Church, it is now held together by the rational procedures dictated by modern capitalism. But the rules of capitalism, whether ultimately helpful or harmful to our society's development, are not values or spiritual principles. Instead, they are simply technical dicta about the most efficient means to an economic end. One visible aspect of the process of secularization is the weakening, and perhaps eventual withering away, of traditional religious institutions. This process is already fully visible in Western Europe, and is evident, on a more subterranean level, in American society as well. Secularization threatens to disenchant the world (Max Weber), to cut us off from the sense of the sacred and of Mystery. But the withering of the old religious institutions does not mean that religion and spirituality themselves will simply disappear. Rather, they can take on new forms, as is evident in the New Age movement in American society. Yet, there is a difficulty with New Age sorts of spiritualities when compared with the old-time religion: these new spiritualities tend to be very individualistic, if not idiosyncratic. Sociologists point out that our spiritual practices will never appear fully real to us unless they have intersubjective validity, unless they are supported by a social plausibility structure (Peter Berger). That is, my view of the world has the aura of reality as long as most of the people around me acknowledge that view and reinforce it. But individualistic New Age pieties seem to have...

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