The Radical Reformation---A Review Article

J. ALTON TEMPLIN

Williams, George Huntston. *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962).

IN the field of scholarship it is exciting when a new aspect of study yields great new fruits only cursorily and inadequately appropriated by predecessors. Indeed, such a development within a field so thoroughly plowed as the Reformation brings forth interest and enthusiasm no less moving than the development of a completely new field because of new discoveries (e.g. the Dead Sea Scrolls). The recently published book of Dr. George Williams is a product of just such a burgeoning aspect of new research, and the work of this Harvard church historian is especially significant for he not only surveys the plethora of periodical monographs which have appeared during the last quarter of a century, but he proposes some new nomenclature, a workable typological scheme, and deals seriously with the theological implications of these little-known leaders of our Reformation heritage.

Since Dr. John T. McNeill, then of Union Theological Seminary, suggested a decade ago that certain "left-wing" religious writings of the 16th century be made a part of the proposed 26-volume **Library of Christian Classics (LCC)**, the name of George H. Williams, a former student of McNeill, has been prominent in studies concerning this particular group of religious leaders and martyrs. After considerable research into what was at the time a new field for him, Dr. Williams compiled, edited, and in many cases, translated, the first thirteen documents appearing in the 25th volume of the **LCC** as **Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers** (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957) (hereafter, **SAW**). Realizing the importance of his newly-found academic interest, this editor continued his work, and one year later published his more extensive biliographical survey of what he now called the "Radical Reformation" (**Church History**, XXVII, 1958, pp. 46-69, 124-160).

One major need still existed. After several graduate seminars in Harvard Divinity School, extensive research into the monographic literature, and one-year's stay in Strasbourg as a Fulbright visiting professor, Dr. Williams published in June of this year (1962) what is at the present time the most complete study of this little-known group of reformers. It is to this weighty book which we shall turn shortly.

Revival of interest in studies of these Spiritual and Anabaptist writers was not begun by Dr. Williams, however, and several earlier works should be mentioned. Recent scholarship stemming from Mennonite historians has kept the ideas of their European forerunners ever before us, especially works from Goshen College (Indiana) led by their historian, the late Dr. Harold Bender, and Bethany College, North Newton, Kansas, following Prof. Cornelius Krahn. A glance at the contributions of eight or ten such Mennonite scholars in America, plus a survey of the last fifteen years of the **Mennonite Quarterly Review (MQR)** will indicate the scope of the continuing interest in the Anabaptist section of the Reformation. The culmination of this work is now available in the indispensable **Mennonite Encyclopedia (ME)** in four volumes (Scottsdale, Pa.: The Herald Press, 1955-1959).

From another stream flowing indirectly from the sixteenth century we

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must note the work of the Quaker Rufus Jones, **Spiritual Reformers of the 16th and 17th Centuries** (1914) now available in paper cover. Representing previous study in the third aspect of the Radicals in English is Dr. Earl M. Wilbur's **Socinianism and Its Antecedents** (1945).

Recent American scholars who have been forerunners of Williams, who are not from the traditions which they analyze are Congregationalist Roland Bainton, **Bernardino Ochino** (in Italian, 1945), **The Travail of Religious Liberty** (1951), and concerning Servetus **Hunted Heretic** (1953), and most recently, Methodist Franklin Littell, **The Anabaptist View of the Church** (revised 1958). Many scholars in Europe, especially in The Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland, have been studying extensively in this field and an increasing number of excellent monographs and doctoral theses is appearing from Universities in Europe. In addition, there are editions and collections of documents of the Radicals of the period too numerous to mention (Williams quotes from 149 printed documents, which number does not include many available but not quoted in this book).

With this extended prolegomena to the context, we may turn to the book under consideration. The work of Dr. Williams is so complex and comprehensive that no cursory statement would do justice to the book, nor the breadth of the field here represented. Consequently, we may analyze the work in three phases: 1. the 3-fold typology used to differentiate various trends within the larger whole, first presented in the introduction to **SAW** but now extensively elaborated; 2. certain theological emphases of this seemingly amorphous group; and 3. an evaluation of the work as a whole, and its contribution to Reformation scholarship.

I. THE THREE-FOLD TYPOLOGY AND OTHER NOMENCLATURE.

Much previous work has tended to lump all minor reformers into one category: Schwarmer (Luther) or Weidertaufer (Bullinger), for the sixteenth century leaders considered that only anti-Christian and devilish influences could result from these various groups. More recently the term "left wing" has been used as contrast to the "right wing" movements following Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Cranmer. The term "left wing," however, has political connotations, so Williams has chosen a more comprehensive term while at the same time sifting out the major differences between these many groups. Consequently, the term he uses is "Radical" Reformers as contrast to the "Magisterial" Reformers. Within the Radical movement he finds three main groupings: The Anabaptists proper, the Spirituals, and the Evangelical Rationalists. We must spell out the implications of each of these terms briefly.

"Radical" itself would seem to indicate that these men went further from the medieval church than the "Magisterial" Protestant leaders, but this was not always the case. As will be noted below, some Radicals were closer to medieval Roman Catholic theology than to either Luther or Zwingli. However, within each group there was some distinguishing mark which was certainly more radical than other 16th century religious leaders either Protestant or Roman Catholic. Many groups were certainly radical in their insistence on the separation of Church and State. A person became a Christian not by birth, but by accepting the faith as an adult. Others were socially radical, i.e. communitarians, or advocates of polygamy (as they took the Old Testament literally). Still others were radical as to their theology of the Trinity, of Christology, or with respect to faith which deifies man. Most of the groups

were radical in that they thought the church could not be "reformed" but had to be "reconstituted" anew. At other times they were radical in the place they gave to the laity, and many leaders were not ordained. Above all, they were radically loyal to their Lord as they understood this duty, and were ready to defy the world for His sake, be their opponent Roman Catholic, Protestant or Turk.

By contrast, the "Magisterial" Reformers were not necessarily "right wing" (i.e. conservative), but acquire this designation because in some way their part in the Reformation was closely related to the State and other governmental Magistrates. Little of the theological content of the Magisterial Reformers could be called "radical" (although Luther thought that Zwingli was indeed radical with respect to the Lord's Supper) except their radical insistence on the sovereignty of God and the worthlessness of the works of man for salvation. This was a radical contrast to the semi-Pelagian tradition of medieval Roman Catholicism.

With this understanding of the use of "Radical" and "Magisterial" we may proceed immediately to the three-fold division withn the Radicals: The Anabaptists (sectarians), Spirituals, and Evangelical Rationalists. The first two terms Williams borrows from the work of Ernst Troeltsch, while the third is an attempt to put many diverse rationalists somehow into now broad grouping. If any one distinguishing mark can be pointed out for each of these groupings, we may note the literal emphasis on Biblical interpretation (especially the New Testament) for the first, the supremacy of the Holy Spirit for the second, and the use of reason in the third group.

a. **The Anabaptists:** — The Anabaptists emphasized a restoration of the Church along New Testament lines, baptism of believers only, and often with the right to "ban" backsliders from the true spotless group of true Christians. Williams points out that this very use of the "ban" was functionally equivalent to the sacrament of penance in the medieval church.

Within the Anabaptists Williams points out three major tendencies. (1) First, those who were "evangelical" — who followed the "simple" Gospel, as for example Conrad Grebel in Switzerland (the opponent of Zwingli), Menno Simons in the Netherlands and North Germany who gave his name to the contemporary denomination of Mennonites, the Schleitheim Confession (1527) of Michael Sattler, and the communitarian Hutterites of Moravia and later of Paraguay, Canada and North Dakota. An outstanding spokesman for this group of radicals was Pilgrim Marpeck who worked in South Germany, and whose works have only recently become available. For all "evangelical" Anabaptists, the emphasis was on New Testament organization, baptism of believers only, and a pacifistic, upright and moral life as an example for all outsiders to observe.

But to either side of the "Evangelical" Anabaptists, with whom the contemporary Mennonites are anxious to be identified, was another tendency. (2) On the more aggressive and revolutionary side were those typed "Revolutionary" Anabaptists, who held to the importance of adult baptism, but who had a strong eschatological aspect to their faith. The Revolutionaries did not look to the New Testament as their only scriptual authority, but emphasized above all the book of Revelation along with certain militaristic sections from the Old Testament. For the revolutionaries there was no place for pacifism, for the Gospel of Christ was a call to battle as in the eschatological expectation of the end of the world for Melchoir Hofmann (expected 1533); the revolutionary regime in the city of Munster (1534) led by twelve Anabaptist elders, and King John (John of

Leyden); or for the Batenburgers who insisted that all who did not support their revolutionary cause should be killed. This excess caused a shudder to pass through Europe in the middle of the decade, and even leaders such as Martin Bucer and Philip of Hesse, both of whom were inclined to leniency, became overly suspicious of any who deviated from the norms of the Magisterial reformers.

(3) On the other side of the Evangelical Anabaptists was the third group, closey related to the Spirituals and named by Williams the "Contemplative" Anabaptists. The main example of this group was John Denck who worked in Nuremberg, Augsburg, and Strasbourg. Denck was an Anabaptist by the above standards, but was also deeply influenced by medieval mysticism and humanistic piety. In addition to the forms of a reconstituted church, Denck emphasized love and obedience and a felt presence of God. His baptism was meant to be inner as well as outer. God becomes "humanized" as those faithful to him live in this world, and men in turn become "divinized" through faith in and love for God.

b. **The Spirituals:** — The distinguishing mark of the Spirituals was a connern for the direct leading of the Spirit within the heart and mind of the individual. They did not insist on baptism, nor were they closely bound to the New Testament forms. They tended rather, to dispense with the outer forms of the faith, with baptism, the Lord's Supper, and even church organization, because these were considered only outer rags or crutches for children. Our author sees the Spirituals as divided into three groups roughly analogous to the three groupings within the Anabaptists.

(1) The "Evangelical" Spirituals were a "middle way", mid-way between Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism with respect to salvation by works, and mid-way between Luther and Zwingli concerning the Lord's Supper. Indeed, Schwenckfeld felt that the Sacraments must have both an outer aspect and an inner, spiritual meaning. He sought to further both the Johannine concept of the Holy Spirit at work among men, and the necessity of some external organization of the Church. But this latter aspect was never strong. Schwenckfeld was a layman, originally a follower of Luther, who broke from the Wittenberg reformer because he thought Luther placed too little emphasis on moral and ethical questions, and that there was left too little room for man to assist God in the work of the world. Schwenckfeld felt that the Holy Spirit spoke to Old Testament leaders to bring them salvation before Christ, and that the Holy Spirit would lead Magistrates of his own day to be leaders in education and in care for the poor. Some few Schwenckfelder churches are now active in Pennsylvania, although their leader specifically insisted that his followers should follow not himself, but Christ.

(2) On the aggressive and militant side were the "Revolutionary" Spirituals who felt that the Spirit of God called them to a battle. This category included Thomas Muntzer who was a charismatic leader of a portion of the peasant revolt (1525), the Zwickau prophets who caused unrest during Luther's eleven-month stay in the Wartburg castle, and the iconoclastic Carlstadt. These revolutionaries took the books of Daniel and Revelation as their model, and felt that the Holy Spirit was their guide to begin the exchatological renovation of the world. To wait was to deny one's Christ.

(3) To the other side of the Evangelical Spirituals was the group termed "Rational" Spirituals, because of an emphasis not on the Holy Spirit of the Scriptures, but the universal Spirit of truth in all men, very closely related to individual reason. Sebastian Franck,

whose name pops up again and again over central Europe, is a representative figure of this group. He spoke of the spirit within each individual, which led him to de-emphasize any organization of the church or society. It led him also to be tolerant of every difference of thought, for if one were acting only as the Spirit directed, no cause could be helped by coercion. Each difference of opinion must be seen as the work of the universal Spirit. The Spiritual church of Franck was composed of all devout souls including Muslims, pagans as well as Jews living before Christ.

c. **The Evangelical Rationalists:**—The Evangelical Rationalists had as their central doctrine the use of reason, which led them to be critical of the church and tradition as they knew it, and also to challenge certain age-old theological doctrines, especially original sin, the Trinity, and the Chalcedonian Christology. Whereas a major portion of the radicals mentioned previously were Magisterial Protestants before they disagreed with their mentors and became radical, the Evangelical Rationalists tended rather to be critics or even open opponents of the Roman Catholic Church and the hierarchy. And whereas the Radicals of the first two groupings were mainly from Germanic lands, the Evangelical Rationalists were found in the lands of the old Roman Empire: Spain, France, Italy, and later in the Slavic lands to the East as far as Poland. There are several tendencies noted within this group, but no precise threefold outline which does justice to the wide diversity within the last one-third of the Radical Reformation. We may make some preliminary designations however.

(1) Evangelical Catholics were a group of semi-Protestants who were critical of certain phases of the Roman Catholic Church, and who hoped for a middle-way reform. As a rule these people were Evangelical in sympathy, but retained their relation to the Roman Catholic organization. Examples are the great Erasmus, Lefevre in France and Juan de Valdes in Spain. Each of these men had an influence in the later Reformation, even though indirect.

(2) Critics of the theological tradition of the orthodox churches often appeared to be proto-Unitarians. The thorough education of Spanish Servetus caused him to be a deep thinker who was to make contributions in several areas. It is to be noted however, that he was influenced by Erasmus, and his theological background was Nominalistic, so he did not understand the Augustinian interpretations of Calvin. Neither Servetus nor his major opponent is to be considered a forerunner of tolerance in the field of religion.

Italian Roman Catholics produced several dissenters who became Evangelical Rationalists such as Bernard Ochino, Sebastian Castellio, Laelio Sochinus, and his nephew Faustus Socinus. In Transylvania we mention Francis David among others. Interestingly, not only was this movement in what is now Rumania and Hungary a Unitarian movement, but also Anabaptist with respect to the outer forms of the faith.

(3) Polish radicals organized a Protestant church which existed a century before it was crushed by new Roman Catholic power. Leaders here were actually hoping that they could organize a Unitarian Reformed church comprising the radicals in Poland (virtually the only Protestants there until immigrants came in to escape the Spanish Inquisition in the Netherlands) and the Lithuanian, Hungarian, and Rumanian Unitarians. Leaders in the Polish organization were Simon Budny, Jacob Palaeologus, and the Italian refugees Bernard Ochino, George Blandrata, and Faustus Socinus. In their emphasis on reason these Polish lead-

ers were both Unitarian in theology and sectarian in organization, as evidenced in their own Racovian Catechism (1605).

(4) In addition to the above Rationalists, two other groups appear which fit perhaps as well here as anywhere, the Libertines and the Nicodemites. The former appeared in the Netherlands, in Moravia, in Italy, and especially in Geneva where they caused Calvin much concern. They were motivated not by religious concerns, but more by antinomian aversions to discipline, church organization, and the ethical life. The Nicodemites were so named by Calvin from John 3:1f., where the story of the indecisive Nicodemus is told. These were Roman Catholics who were drawn toward the evangelical life but did not think it necessary to risk life or property by openly opposing their Roman Catholic culture, and remained truly loyal to neither the Roman Catholic nor the Protestant cause.

II. THEOLOGICAL EMPHASES WITHIN THE RADICAL REFORMATION

The preceding section has included references to many theological tendencies within the Radical Reformation, but we should take one moment to be more systematic as to some of the main theological aspects — in many of which these reformers were truly "radical" not only from the standpoint of the 16th century but from our standpoint as well. Williams gives a large place in each section to the specific theological background and contributions of the various reformers. One or more of the following ten doctrines appeared in each group referred to as "radical".

a. **Restitution of the Church:** — The Radicals felt that Reformation of an old Church was not sufficient; removing the debris of the years from its framework was only a partial move, for the foulness of the ages remained upon the church. What was needed was a restitution, a completely new start. One must be called out of society and out of the established pseudo-Church (be it Roman Catholic or Protestant) into a new creation, a new society, a "gathered" church. Thus the radicals emphasized a **corpus Christi** — the pure body of Christ, as contrast to the medieval **Corpus Christianum** — the body of all Christians, the State Church into which one came as a member automatically. This new society, the body of Christ, was distinguished by certain marks noted above.

b. **Baptism:** — Baptism for the Magisterial Reformers was usually a sign of a covenant with God, similar to circumcision in the Old Testament. It had no real function in the development of one's faith, as all citizens were automatically members of the state church. The Anabaptists read their New Testament and began to deny the connection between circumcision and baptism. The former was a part of Jewish legalism they thought and hence had been superseded, while baptism was a mark of the new age, the Church of Christ. It was not to be entered into casually, certainly not by infants, for baptism was a sign that one had faith and was thus washed to become a new creature in Christ. The various Anabaptists who were persecuted (often drowned) for their faith were persecuted not for religious reasons, but because they insisted in breaking the law by refusing to have children baptized, and were guilty not of heresy, but treason and disrespect for civil authority. Because of the central significance of baptism in the whole Anabaptist movement, Williams analyzes in detail several "baptismal theologies" showing both their Biblical basis and their theological development (Chapt. 11).

c. **The Lord's Supper:** — Whereas

Luther's reformation took its direction from the doctrine of justification by faith, another phase of the 16th century religious upheaval took the form of an intense criticsm of the doctrine of transubstantiation, as humanistic study raised many philosophical problems concerning this medieval concept. In the Netherlands this doctrine was criticized late in the 15th century by Wessel Gansfort (d. 1489) among others. Two decades later Gansfort's writing on the Eucharist was discovered by Cornelius Hoen and another friend. They analyzed the writing, and Hoen wrote his own more radical interpretation and sent the two documents to Luther and Zwingli. Luther rejected the interpretation immediately, but Zwingli found Hoen's work useful. Zwingli had been critical of the Roman Catholic Mass for some time, but did not have a clear-cut alternative worked out. The suggestion by Cornelius Hoen that the phrase **"hoc est corpus meum"** should be read to mean **"hoc significat corpus meum"** gave Zwingli his needed insight and he was then able to combine John 6:53 ("eating equals eternal life") and John 3:36 ("believing equals eternal life") and to interpret it to mean "to eat equals to believe" (**edere** equals **credere**).

Although there were varying interpretations of the Lord's Supper, the Radicals owed much to Cornelius Hoen and Zwingli, for virtually all Radicals who wrote about the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper interpreted it as a sign — to be continued in **remembrance** of something Christ had done for them before. Such a remembrance was a very real experience for all the radicals, but they all denied a "real presence" in either the Lutheran "consubstantiation" or the Roman "transubstantiation" sense. Hence most radicals were "Zwinglian" or "Sacramentarian" in their interpretation of the Lord's Supper.

d. **The Ban:** — The ban was first advocated in the Schleitheim Confession and was based on Matt. 18:15-17, as a means of purifying Christ's church. The emphasis was on certain visible signs of the true church which are related to moral and ethical phases of the community life. Later in the century the ban became more severe until one could be banned for little or no reason. Finally a division came between the rigorist group and the more lenient Waterlanders (in the Netherlands).

e. **Sleep of the Soul (Psychopannychism):** — The medieval tradition of the consciousness of the soul between death and final resurrection allowed for punishment in the intervening period — hence a possibility of purgatory. Stemming from philosophical speculation preceding the Reformation, a challenge arose which became a major theological assumption of many Radicals. The term "Psychopannychism" was used by Calvin to mean the "sleep of the soul" after bodily death, as he wrote to oppose evidences of this doctrine in the environs of Geneva. Calvin might have been more precise by using the word "psychosomnolence" instead. Dr. Williams finds this doctrine being advocated by such diverse writers as Servetus; Austrian Anabaptists; the Schleitheim Confession of South Germany; Swiss radicals refuted by Bullinger; Anabaptists in the Netherlands who convinced William Tyndale of the truth of the same doctrine; North Italian Rationalists; Hungarian and Polish Rationalists. But more than this, Williams located two references to the same doctrine in the sermons of Luther himself (see footnote 44, pg. 104).

The scriptural reference used by many of these radicals to substantiate sleep of the soul was IV Esdras 7:32 where at the final resurrection we read: "and the earth shall restore those that sleep in her, and the dust those that are at rest therein." The emphasis of this sleep of the soul was thus prevalent

in both Anabaptist and Evangelical Rationalist thought. They had one of two motivations for the concept: first, to counteract the doctrine of a conscious soul in purgatory; and secondly, a reflection of the imminent eschatological end of this world and the coming of the judgment and resurrection.

f. **Celestial Flesh:** — Among the aberrations in traditional theology is the doctrine of celestial flesh — the idea that Christ did not have an earthly, corruptible and sinful body, but brought heavenly flesh with him. This was emphasized by Melchoir Hofmann, Servetus, Schwenckfeld, Sebastian Franck, Menno Simons and his co-worker Dietrich Phillips.

This doctrine was constructed from the statement in the Gospel of John that "The Word was made flesh" — but not sinful flesh, and had two motivations behind it. First, the attempt to keep the body of Christ unspotted from the flesh of this world, otherwise He would not be able to be Savior. Secondly, the increasing emphasis by Dietrich Phillips that the heavenly flesh of Christ was synonymous with the manna of the Old Testament and was even in the 16th century available as spiritual food through partaking of the Holy Communion.

g. **The Trinity:** — Among the various doctrines which were questioned by the radicals, none was sacrosanct, not even the Trinity. Many radicals have been noted above who were radical in their denial of this age-old formula. Williams is careful to point out that it was all radicals who had questions about this doctrine (even some Evangelical Anabaptists and Mennonites) and not only the Rationalists. Indeed, it seems to have been Servetus who first used the term "Trinitarian" against Calvin by which he meant "believers in three Gods." Criticism of the doctrine of the Trinity was brought about in one of two ways. Some radicals were impatient with any theological speculation and, not highly educated themselves, were anxious to get back to the "simple Gospel" of the Bible. Another challenge came from the Rationalists who were often Nominalists in philosophical background and felt that the "universal" (God) was dissolved into "3 species" (3 persons) — hence three Gods.

h. **Communal Living: Pacifism:** — These two theological concepts were not necessarily prevalent in the same groups but often were found together. In Munster the Anabaptists went beyond communal living to polygamy, and were anything but pacifist. In Moravian Hutterite circles they were communitarian and pacifistic, while denying polygamy.

i. **Usage of the Bible:** — Not only were the radicals extremely literal in their interpretation of the Bible, but they were often radical in using certain books such as Revelation almost exclusively, or finding their authority for action in Apocryphal or Pseudepigraphical works.

Summary of Theological Trends: — These ten theological aspects of the radicals are not exhaustive, nor are all ten ever found in one group. However, they are the basic theological interpretations by which we are justified in calling these protestants "radical" reformers. At the same time they were more medieval in their concept of freedom of the will and original sin. They mentioned justification by faith only seldom.

III. EVALUATION OF THE BOOK

Any critique of such a thorough and comprehensive book would indeed be presumptuous. It is based on thorough research, careful translation, and precise theological analysis. Because of this alone, it is a milestone in the study of the whole Reformation period.

There has been a need for a more comprehensive scheme of analysis for this large and diverse group of individualists, and the three-fold break-

down here presented gives us some framework in which to work. These three categories are more "ideal types" than actual categories distinguishable in the Reformation period, but the various aspects here singled out appeared time and time again in different areas of the continent. Undoubtedly this framework will be modified or made more elaborate by further study, but its contribution at this time should not be underestimated.

The organization of the book is basically chronological, but within this general plan appears a rather carefully constructed plan of cross-reference, and a grouping of men and ideas according to geography and basic motifs. In addition to purely chronological and geographical organization, the author introduces many factors in the background of the various localities which help to explain the success of a particular type of theological or social aberration. For example, the story of Spanish Rationalism begins a quarter of a century before the birth of the Emperor Charles V with the Inquisition, the Marranos, and the career of the great king Ferdinand; Wessel Gansfort (d. 1489) is introduced as a major force in Dutch Sacramentarian thought, followed closely by Erasmus; the Medieval peasants' unrest is sketched as a background to the Peasants' War (1525); religious agitation in Bohemia is carried back to Huss and the two branches of his followers throughout the 15th century; Waldensians in Northern Italy, among whom Williams has visited, are taken to be basic for the major evangelical developments in this land. Thus the contemporary idea that the Reformation did not begin in 1517, and that it was a logical outgrowth of late medieval thought and institutions, is substantiated in the case of the radicals.

Although there is no bibliography provided at the back of the book, the footnotes carry hundreds of bibliographical notes. The first time a man or movement is mentioned in the text, a complete bibliographical note appears, including standard works as well as recent interpretations and the most recent periodical articles. In many cases the author summarizes the argument of an interpreter in a sentence, and often makes reference to differing contemporary evaluations of the same man or movement. To read the footnotes of the book is itself a liberal education for the author quotes from at least eight different languages not counting the few references to Greek. Such a comprehensive study covering such a large section of Europe would not be possible without the ability to use many languages which Williams possesses. Although Polish is not usually thought necessary for Reformation study, he learned this language to be able to read much of the material pertaining to the Rationalists who lived and worked in this Slavic nation.

Williams approaches history from many sides at once, and all along the way his narrative reflects a careful integration of history, political developments, social factors, and theological implications arising from the material at hand. In fact, so condensed is this background material, that many readers will find it necessary to have other reference material at hand to get the full meaning from certain sections involving close theological reasoning, and complex political and social development. Perhaps the beginning student in the field will be overwhelmed by the hundreds of names and writings mentioned, and he may prefer to concentrate on one geographical area at first. It may in fact appear, as was stated by Williams, to be like "crowded mounds of a prairie-dog town" (preface, p. xix). However, many general and interpretive works are now available, and Williams does not choose to duplicate this type of work. He has

attempted rather, to study deeply in many and varied sections of the Radicals, that in the future a more complete history of the whole Reformation period in all its aspects may be written.

Despite the length of the book (865 pg. plus 57 pg. of indices) and the beautiful job of printing and careful proofreading where typographical errors are almost non-existent, the price of $15.00 has placed the book almost out of reach of any but the dedicated scholar interested in this limited, though indispensable, aspect of Reformation study. Nevertheless, this book will remain the standard reference work in Reformation bibliographies for years to come. It may be expanded and modified, but it will not be superseded soon. It is hoped that with this book and other tools of the Radical Reformation mentioned previously, this "no man's land" in Reformation study will come ever more alive, and that much fruitful work will yet appear in the future.

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