When George Huntston Williams published his "The Radical Reformation" in 1962, it was his third publication in this field. It was preceded by a bibliography and an anthology of what he called "Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers". For him, all those different phenomena in the anabaptist, the spiritualistic and the antitrinitarian (or evangelical rationalistic) movements as they are named in his tripartite division, were interrelated as the energetic reaction against the forces of the traditional Corpus Christianum, whether catholic or protestant. This was the new perspective (the title of his last chapter):

Though Spiritualism, Anabaptism, and Evangelical Rationalism were by the end of our epoch clearly distinguishable interpretations of Christianity, the cumulative impression is massive and overwhelming that these same three thrusts were themselves part of a still larger upheaval of the strata of late medieval Christendom.

The academic world accepted Williams's book with abundant praise, but not without serious objections. In Europe and America many historians and church historians were especially troubled about its

overall conception. Can we speak about “Radical Reformation” in this way as a whole? Is Williams right in introducing the term “Radical” as opposed to “Magisterial”? What about the alleged relations between Radical Reformation and Medieval Sectarianism? But it was just those and similar questions which stimulated later research. The book had a deep influence on further study in this field; and its inspiring treatment of the many moving events, by which the story of the anabaptist, the spiritual and all those other sects had been marked, did not fail to raise not only the interest but even deep sympathy for the once excoriated and derided dreamers, martyrs and prophets.

The book demonstrates that the author is not only the impersonal student in his study, but at the same time a man who feels indebted to the heritage of the so-called Restitution movements. It is this strong conviction of indebtedness and commitment that enabled Williams to continue his research in the field of the Radical Reformation with pugnacious tenacity and eventually to revise and to expand his Opus Magnum. After the Spanish edition (1983), which was anything but a straight translation of the first edition, the third came out last year, with nearly twice the amount of pages. The question now is: What is the result of those 30 years of additional research and rethinking?

First impression: despite its enlargement, the structure of the book has remained the same. All thirty-three chapters of the original survive. But the sections and the subsections have been in many cases substantially reworked, rearranged and much altered in the light of the enormous monographic research and source collection edited during the past thirty years.

The book opens with three introductions, the first two having been published in the 1962 and 1983 editions, the third being the proper introduction for this new edition. The reader gets here a short account of the way in which Williams has tried to maintain his original conception of the two Reformations, the Radical and the Magisterial Reformation, over against his critics. But in order to get an impression of the revision of the book itself, I will first of all list here shortly those chapters which have not only been enriched, but more than doubled.

Ch. 2, called “Mysticism and Sacramentism along the Rhine to 1530”, has been enriched by a review of the Theologia Deutsch; and its paragraph on the Netherlandish Sacramentarians has been considerably adapted.\(^5\)

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