

developed expression of an otherwise widely employed principle among Anabaptists based upon the communalistic principles of Acts 2 and 4. He sees the community of goods as “an expression of the economic and religious ethos . . . of sixteenth-century commoners generally,” and claims that “the rural and semi-rural groups that supported the uprising of 1525 . . . provided the social inspiration for Anabaptist community of goods” (9).

Stayer meticulously presents evidence for the widespread practice of community of goods in single-family households among the Swiss Anabaptists (Chapter Four) and the followers of Thomas Müntzer in southern Germany (Chapter Five)—both of which were directly affected by the events of the Peasants’ War. The final essay (Chapter Seven) examines the particular application of this principle in the communal multi-family households of the Anabaptist settlements in Moravia, which experienced the influx of many refugees who were personally affected by the Peasants’ War. Stayer also examines the practice of community of goods in the “war economy” of Anabaptist Münster (Chapter Six), which was *not* involved in the Peasants’ War, and the much different ideology operating there. The book concludes with a brief “Epilogue” showing how the practice of community of goods gradually became transformed into an ethic of Christian mutual aid, which remains a continuing part of the Anabaptist legacy (160-162).

The one regrettable feature of the book is that Stayer’s “Epilogue” does little to pull together the various significant findings of his study as they relate to his overall theme. Nevertheless, his breadth of research and mastery of detail provide a valuable contribution to understanding the German Peasants’ War and its impact on subsequent religious thought among the Anabaptists. His detailed notes also supply a treasure trove of references to primary and secondary sources. Throughout this work, Stayer challenges the conclusions of earlier studies and adds important detail and perspective which significantly modify our understanding of these events.

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***The Radical Reformation.* 3rd ed. By George Huntston Williams. Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 1992. ISBN 0-940474-15-8. Pp. xlvi+1516.**

Every discipline needs a “Synoptiker”—a person who sees and comprehends the chosen field of study in its broadest dimensions and who can identify

relationships and establish connections which may escape the rest of us. While the specialists among us come to know more and more about less and less, the "Synoptiker" keeps the larger picture before us. George H. Williams has provided that magisterial overview for the branch of sixteenth-century studies known as the Radical Reformation ever since he published in 1962 the first edition of *The Radical Reformation*.

Scores of scholars and countless undergraduates have taken their inspiration from him. Scores of monographs on the forgotten men and women of that period, translations of their writings, and reassessments of their place in history have been written in the last thirty years. They have given the Radicals a voice and allowed them to speak for themselves, often in gripping narrative. Due in large measure to the influence of George H. Williams, Christian discipleship on the sidelines of history in the sixteenth century has gained new meaning and an aura of respectability.

Williams' approach proved appealing enough to attract scholars in the Spanish-speaking world as well. A second, revised edition of his book was published in 1983 with the title *La reforma radical*, translated by Antonio Alatorre. Indeed, interest in the "Randfiguren" of the sixteenth century has been growing rapidly in recent years, that it is now virtually impossible for one single scholar to keep abreast of the information explosion. Advances in the field have been most significant in Canada and North America. To assess these became Williams' challenge when, as a well-seasoned septugenarian, he undertook a third, revised and greatly enlarged edition. This arduous task was encouraged and supported by the *Sixteenth-Century Journal* and by Northeast Missouri State University. The end product is a remarkable, magisterial "handbook on radical reform" of over fifteen hundred pages.

The same meticulous progression that characterized the first edition is apparent in this work as well. Clear chapter headings and mastery of primary as well as secondary sources are still the author's forte. Many sections have been rigorously revised, and expanded where further information was at the author's disposal. The original edition has grown by nearly six hundred pages of new material. Williams' superb style makes reading this tome a pleasure.

Nonetheless, there are also clear signs that the days are gone when one single authority, however brilliant in retaining and disseminating vital information, could provide an almost sure-fire comprehensive volume on the Radical Reformation. Small errors of omission and commission are found throughout the volume. Bibliographical material on many of the persons dealt with is far from complete, let alone exhaustive. While the work of some scholars is amply acknowledged, others have fared less well in being included in the work. Typographical errors, especially in the critical apparatus, are numerous enough to

suggest some haste in preparing the manuscript for publication. While the cost of the volume may appear high to many students, the quality of both paper and hard cover binding should amply recompense them for their expense. In any case, a greatly revised "classic" like this deserves a lasting place in every good library, whatever the price and would reward the diligent peruser with expanded horizons and much needed correctives to views of sixteenth-century historiography from which sixteenth-century Radicals are still largely excluded or by which, at best, they are treated as unwelcome nuisances.

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Collected Works of Erasmus, Volume 10: Correspondence; Letters 1523 to 1534. Trans. R.A.B. Mynors. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992. ISBN 0-8020-5976-7. Pp. xxi+515.

Erasmus of Rotterdam was one of the most prolific correspondents of the sixteenth century. This volume, the tenth instalment in the correspondence of Erasmus, presents 179 letters written by or to Erasmus between 3 April 1523 and 29 December 1524. (Another twelve volumes of his letters are still in preparation.) Erasmus' correspondents in the present volume read like a veritable Who's Who of the Reformation: princes, prelates, popes, reformers and reactionaries. These include notables like Henry VIII, Martin Luther and Huldrych Zwingli.

We have come to expect the highest standards of translation from the Erasmus Project, a standard which the present volume fulfils eminently. Each letter is introduced briefly with such details as the history of the autograph of the letter, an account of the circumstances of its publication, a biographical sketch of its recipient or author, or other pertinent particulars. The texts are carefully annotated and cross-referenced to other letters. The volume is rounded off with a table of correspondents, a list of frequently-cited documents and an index.

Erasmus' letters are a goldmine of historical information. The student of Erasmus will find here a version of his autobiography (*Compendium Vitae*) and numerous discussions of his various writings, including several comments on his *De Libero Arbitrio*. The student of the Reformation will read the inside story of one of the most important actors on the stage at this vital juncture in the play. The student of epistolary literature will delight in the examples of letters of every category including dedications, letters of flattery and scathing attacks.

Erasmus presents himself in these letters as a moderate wounded by attacks from both sides of the reform debate. He appeals to the pope to silence his