



剑桥政治思想史原著系列（影印本）

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

激进改革

The Radical Reformation

Edited by

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中国政法大学出版社

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***THE RADICAL
REFORMATION***

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

激进改革/(英)贝乐尔编译.—北京:中国政法大学出版社,2003.5
剑桥政治思想史原著系列(影印本)

ISBN 7-5620-2349-2

I. 激... II. 贝... III. 国家机构—改革—理论研究—英文
IV. D035.1

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2003)第 034793 号

* * * * *

书 名	《激进改革》
出 版 人	李传敢
经 销	全国各地新华书店
出版发行	中国政法大学出版社
承 印	清华大学印刷厂
开 本	880 × 1230mm 1/32
印 张	10.75
版 本	2003 年 5 月第 1 版 2003 年 5 月第 1 次印刷
书 号	ISBN 7-5620-2349-2/D·2309
印 数	0 001-2 000
定 价	24.00 元
社 址	北京市海淀区西土城路 25 号 邮政编码 100088
电 话	(010)62229563 (010)62229278 (010)62229803
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网 址	http://www.cup1.edu.cn/cbs/index.htm

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THE RADICAL REFORMATION

剑桥政治思想史原著系列

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在政治理论领域，“剑桥政治思想史原著系列”作为主要的学生教科丛书，如今已牢固确立了其地位。本丛书旨在使学生能够获得从古希腊到 20 世纪初期西方政治思想史方面所有最为重要的原著。它囊括了所有著名的经典原著，但与此同时，它又扩展了传统的评价尺度，以便能够纳入范围广泛、不那么出名的作品。而在此之前，这些作品中有许多从未有过现代英文版本可资利用。只要可能，所选原著都会以完整而不删节的形式出版，其中的译作则是专门为本丛书的目的而安排。每一本书都有一个评论性的导言，加上历史年表、生平梗概、进一步阅读指南，以及必要的词汇表和原文注解。本丛书的最终目的是，为西方政治思想的整个发展脉络提供一个清晰的轮廓。

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CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Preface

This work brings together a variety of writings – published and unpublished tracts, letters, declarations, and lists of articles – illustrative of both the rich diversity and the fragile unity that existed in the political thinking of some major radical reformers of the early Reformation in Germany. To give the volume a coherent focus, the texts selected for translation have been drawn from a single decade, the 1520s. They concern the central event of that decade for German society, the Peasants' War of 1524–26, the most massive European popular upheaval before the French Revolution. During the period 1521–27, as Reformation radicals confronted the issue of revolution, and subsequently had to deal with the reality of a failed revolt, the basic patterns of the radicals' thought about society and politics were established.

Politics for the radical reformers was inseparable from religion, as it was for the vast majority of sixteenth-century Europeans. The texts assembled here are “premodern” in the sense that their criticisms of existing social and political arrangements, their legitimations of change, and their visions of an alternative society are animated by Christian ideas and values. But rather than attempting to categorize the writings in terms of a theological typology (Anabaptist, Spiritualist, etc.), I have presented them in roughly chronological order. This arrangement is appropriate to the inchoate nature of Reformation radicalism during the 1520s and to the evolution that radical thought underwent over the decade. Before 1525 no radical aimed at establishing a separatist church or “sect.” This alternative emerged only after the failure of the Peasants' War. The sole exception to a

chronological ordering comes at the end. Hans Hergot's *On the New Transformation of the Christian Life* was published a few months before Balthasar Hubmaier's *On the Sword*; presenting Hergot's writing last allows Hubmaier's work to be juxtaposed with *The Schleithelm Articles*, which set forth a position that Hubmaier sought to refute, and allows Hergot's work to serve as a recapitulation of some central themes of the collection. The documents appended to the writings present some of the programs of the peasantry and the urban artisan classes during the upheaval of 1525. They show the relationship between the religio-political convictions of the radical reformers and the concrete aspirations of the commoners during the Peasants' War. In many cases the radicals directly participated in, or influenced the framing of these programs.

Some of the writings presented here have been translated before, but all these translations are new, done from the best German editions of the texts. The combination of accuracy and readability in translating is elusive. In the interest of readability I have felt free to divide sentences, alter punctuation, add paragraph divisions, and occasionally eliminate redundancies.

The radicals usually cited Scripture in a general way – ordinarily their references are to whole chapters or psalms. Often I have offered more specific verse references, which have been enclosed in square brackets, as has editorial material in the texts. But the radicals insisted that specific scriptural verses must be understood in context; sometimes they wanted a reader to examine whole chapters or psalms. The Vulgate's nomenclature has been modernized according to *The New English Bible with the Apocrypha*.

This book owes much to the generous help I have received from several individuals and institutions. The preparation of the volume was made possible in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, whose support enabled me to spend the academic year 1988–89 in Germany. While there I benefited from the library resources of the University of Tübingen, both the main library and that of the Historisches Seminar. All the personnel of the Historisches Seminar were kind and helpful, but I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Professor Dr. Hans-Christoph Rublack, who did a great deal to make my year enjoyable and profitable. He facilitated the move from the U.S., shared office space, suggested secondary literature, and offered his expertise in translating difficult passages.

Preface

The seminar we taught together in the summer of 1989 on the political theory of the radical reformers was a pleasure. I worked through first drafts of the translations with Dieter Jellinghaus of Stuttgart, who offered numerous corrections and suggestions. My wife, Carol Baylor, and my parents, Murray and Elisabeth Baylor, also suggested many stylistic improvements. Dr. Robert W. Scribner of Clare College, Cambridge, shared with me a draft translation of *To the Assembly of the Common Peasantry*. Professor Ulrich Bubenheimer of Heidelberg gave generously of his great knowledge of Thomas Müntzer, and I profited from our discussions about Karlstadt. I also discussed Müntzer with Dr. Dieter Fauth, who lent me source materials. Dr. Gerhard Günther of Mühlhausen encouraged me and provided me with a copy of his manuscript analyzing *The Eleven Mühlhausen Articles*. Professor Joe Dowling, chair of Lehigh University's Department of History, reduced my teaching load to give me more time to work on the book.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the notes:

- FB* *Flugschriften der Bauernkriegszeit*, ed. Adolf Laube and Hans Werner Seiffert, 2nd revised edn. (Cologne/Vienna, 1978)
- MSB* *Thomas Müntzer, Schriften und Briefe. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Günter Franz with the collaboration of Paul Kirn (*Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte*, 33) (Gütersloh, 1968)
- QGTS* *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer in der Schweiz*, vol. I, Zurich, ed. Leonhard von Huralt and Walter Schmidt (Zurich, 1952, 1974); vol. II, Ostschweiz, ed. Heinold Fast (Zurich, 1973)
- PSMB* *Thomas Müntzer: Politische Schriften, Manifeste, Briefe*, ed. Manfred Bensing and Bernd Rüdiger (Leipzig, 1973)
- WA* *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. Iff. (Weimar, 1883ff.)
- WA Br* *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Briefwechsel*, 18 vols. (Weimar, 1930-85)

Introduction

I. The radical Reformation

Radicalism in the sixteenth-century Reformation first appeared in the stormy early years of the movement in Germany and Switzerland. Especially from 1521, the year when Luther was condemned at the Diet of Worms, a powerful current of popular evangelicalism convulsed society. During the early 1520s a cause which had begun with the defense of Luther in his conflict with Rome entered a phase of rapid proliferation. Evangelical preachers appeared in numerous towns, gaining a widespread following among the laity. And, contrary to popular stereotype, the laity did not always follow clerical leaders. From urban bases the Reformation quickly spread to the countryside. With this rapid growth, the reform movement inevitably became more diversified and its message more diffuse. Influential new centers of evangelical theology appeared, such as Zurich where Ulrich Zwingli emerged as the dominant figure. In addition to those of Wittenberg and Zurich, a variety of other Reformation programs were also initiated at the local level. Here preachers and laymen advanced their own understanding of slogans initially made popular by Wittenberg theologians ("the pure gospel," "Christian liberty," "the priesthood of all believers," etc.). As the Reformation spread – through a flood of printed literature, but, more importantly for lay commoners, through sermons, public debates, and less formal oral channels – it also absorbed preexisting socio-economic grievances and political aspirations, and gained a revolutionary momentum. This popular movement

culminated in the Peasants' War of 1524–26, or, as it has also been termed, the Revolution of the Common Man.

Reformation radicalism must be considered in the fluid context of this powerful social movement. The radicals are commonly viewed as a fringe element in the Reformation – “marginal” reformers or “reformers in the wings.” But during the early 1520s they were the ideologists of the popular evangelicalism that swept Germany and Switzerland. Like the popular Reformation, the radical reformers were driven by a fervent, impatient desire to see sweeping reforms made on the basis of religion. The radicals also insisted that Reformation meant much more than changes in devotional practices and ecclesiastical institutions; public life as a whole was urgently in need of Christianization. Two other important features of this popular evangelicalism are reflected in the themes of Thomas Müntzer's *Prague Protest*: bitter anticlericalism and apocalypticism. The clergy as a whole – but especially prelates, theologians, and monks – were held responsible for the pervasive corruption of Christendom. Müntzer, like many commoners, charged the clergy with preaching a false faith designed to sustain their privileged position in the decayed social order. The social counterpart of this anticlericalism was an exaltation of the “common man” – a term which the popular Reformation and the radical reformers used to designate, not the destitute lower classes, but the modestly propertied peasants and artisans who had no share in government. Radicals held that the common man, rather than the monk or priest, was the better Christian, a model of simple but genuine piety, better able than the clergy to understand the essential message of the gospel. Secondly, *The Prague Protest* and the popular Reformation were suffused with apocalyptic expectations, a conviction that history had reached its “harvest time,” and that God was about to intervene directly in the culmination of human affairs. Anticlericalism and apocalypticism were both strong emotional forces, contributing to the urgency of the commoners' demands for change. But it is doubtful if either can explain the distinctive politics of the radical Reformation.

As a popular movement, radicals stood at the center, not at the periphery of the Reformation. But the commoners' cause was not the whole of the Reformation. The radicals came to differ with other, more moderate, “magisterial” reformers over matters of scope and strategy, as well as in their underlying attitude toward the popular

movement and the prevailing structure of politics. The magisterial reformers rejected traditional ecclesiastical authority but did not question the authority of existing secular governments. They wanted reform with the approval and backing of princes and urban magistrates. They hoped, as Luther did, for a princely authorization that would leave much control in the hands of the clergy, or they felt it legitimate, as Zwingli did in Zurich, to pressure an oligarchical city council to institute change. But in the last analysis the magisterial reformers asserted a basic Erastianism. Rejecting traditional ecclesiastical authority, they clung more firmly to existing secular authority, which they held to be ordained by God. They also deeply distrusted the common man and feared that his participation in politics would lead to anarchy. They were willing to proceed only as far as authorization would allow. The ecclesiastical counterpart to this view of secular authority was the magisterial reformers' view that the power to proclaim the meaning of the gospel – and to advise secular authorities about the interpretation of Scripture – should remain in the hands of a university-trained, properly ordained clergy. Reformation radicalism was, in the first instance, “internal dissent” within the Reformation – opposition to the paradigm for change set forth by such magisterial reformers as Luther and Zwingli.

Nowhere was this internal opposition more forcefully expressed than in Müntzer's savage criticism of Luther. Beginning with his *Sermon to the Princes*, and reaching a climax with his *Highly Provoked Defense*, Müntzer's attack on Luther was simultaneously personal, theological and political. Although his final work acknowledged Luther as having inaugurated the Reformation, Müntzer excoriated him as a vain academic who led a pampered life, as the theologian of a morally flaccid faith which relied on a literal view of Scripture, and as the toadying accomplice of secular rulers whose primary aim was the exploitation of their subjects. In Müntzer's view, and in that of the radicals generally, a Reformation guided by the magisterial reformers did not go far enough; it was incapable of bringing about the sweeping improvement of society which they sought. By remaining at the disposal of existing elites, the magisterial vision of reformation failed to perceive how deeply Christian society was flawed.

Recently it has been suggested that while there were Reformation radicals – a heterogeneous group of internal critics and dissenters –

there was no “radical Reformation” in the sense of a positive movement with any cohesiveness of thought and action. Was there no more to Reformation radicalism than a heuristically useful but negative “unity in opposition”? There does not seem to be an identifiable set of theological doctrines that radicals shared and that set them apart. What are commonly claimed as distinctive emphases in radical theology – biblical literalism, opposition to sacerdotal and sacramental thinking, moral earnestness, and reliance on personal experience and direct revelations – do not clearly distinguish the radicals from the magisterial reformers. The same is true for the notion that the magisterial reformers sought to reform an existing institutional church, while the radicals aimed to reinstitute an apostolic church. In addition, efforts to construct a theological typology of the radical Reformation commonly emphasize its fundamental internal differences and tensions – e.g. those between so-called “Spiritualists” (such as Müntzer and Andreas Karlstadt in Saxony), who held that the believer may receive divine revelations independently of Scripture, and “Anabaptists” (such as Conrad Grebel or Felix Manz in Zurich), who were committed to a biblical literalism. But such categories fail to do justice to an early Reformation theological context that was as fluid as the social context. Anabaptism, formerly regarded as the most unified strand of the radical Reformation, is now seen as emerging from diverse origins, and for some early Anabaptists (e.g. Hans Hut and Hans Denck) Müntzer’s influence was formative. In recent research Karlstadt too has emerged as an important influence on the Zurich radicals who were among the progenitors of Anabaptism. In short, distinctions between Spiritualists and Anabaptists are of doubtful value, especially during the early and mid-1520s, and the possibility of constructing a distinctive theology for the radical Reformation as a whole seems remote.

Despite the absence of theological unity, the radical Reformation had more cohesiveness than that of a common opposition to magisterial reformers. In the first place, many radicals thought of themselves as constituting a unified movement or informal party. At a time when communication and transportation were slow and uncertain, they sought contact and dialogue with one another. The *Letter to Thomas Müntzer* from the Zurich radicals around Conrad Grebel, for all the disagreements it mentioned, also expressed a striking awareness of a shared identity, a sense of solidarity with

Müntzer and other radicals in Saxony and Thuringia that overrode theological differences. Müntzer himself developed a network of contacts and communications with fellow radicals. He was in contact with Karlstadt and sought to win him for a political alliance. When Müntzer left Thuringia in the fall of 1524 he met with Hans Hut, probably with Hans Denck, and perhaps with his Nuremberg publisher Hans Hergot. After leaving Nuremberg, Müntzer traveled to southwestern Germany and Switzerland where he made contact with other radicals, including Balthasar Hubmaier. Similar networks of mutual contacts can be established for other radicals, suggesting that they had a sense of common identity.

In some cases this subjective sense of unity was no doubt misguided. Müntzer's efforts to win Karlstadt to a political alliance is a case in point. Nevertheless, on certain basic issues it is possible to find agreement among radicals that provided the basis for their sense of identity. This agreement was not monolithic, of course. It lacked the ideological uniformity that an organized political party or church can provide. As a political movement rather than an institution, the identity of the radical Reformation is to be found primarily in terms of two issues. Radicals were in rough agreement about a strategy for bringing about Reformation and an underlying conception of politics which it implied.

In contrast to the magisterial reformers' reliance on the support of the secular authorities and on postponing change until it was won, the radical reformers were the theorists and executors of immediate Reformation through direct action from below, a strategy which is defended in Karlstadt's tract, *Whether One Should Proceed Slowly*. Radicals took the view that each community had the right to restructure its life immediately according to the gospel as understood by the community. Like Karlstadt, the radicals also held that zealous Christians (the "elect" in the community, whether the pastor or pious laymen) had the obligation to initiate changes even if others disagreed – or, as the radicals saw it, did not "yet" understand the reasons for change. They embarked on a campaign of Reformation through provocation: shouting down sermons by those they held to be preaching something other than the pure word of God; engaging in iconoclastic assaults on images and shrines they regarded as embodying blasphemous practice and superstitious belief; transforming old usages and initiating new ones without asking the permission of

superior authorities. Some refused to have their children baptized or to pay tithes and other dues, demanding that laws be changed so as to conform to the gospel.

This strategy contained no principle for compromising or adjudicating differences with those who disagreed. The radicals were convinced of the righteousness of their cause and, like the popular reformation for which they spoke, assumed that collective forms of decision-making would bear them out. But despite their image as wild-eyed fanatics, some radicals took the view that everything need not be changed at once. Müntzer at Allstedt and Hubmaier at Waldshut were critical of infant baptism yet retained the practice for parents who wanted it. Nevertheless, Müntzer at Allstedt, Karlstadt at Orlamünde, and the radicals around Grebel at Zurich all identified the magisterial reformers' justification of a gradualist approach – postponing reforms in order not to offend the weak – as a pious hypocrisy contrived to conceal their subservience to secular authorities.

The strategic differences between magisterial and radical reformers were symptomatic of a more fundamental difference in their politics, especially in their attitudes toward the authority of existing secular rulers. Above all, what gave the radicals their coherence as the Reformation's "left wing" was the rejection of a hierarchical conception of politics in which legitimate authority, whether secular or ecclesiastical, devolved from the top down. Instead, the radicals' vision of politics was rooted in notions of local autonomy and community control which also implied an egalitarianism. The radicals were the most articulate theorists of a "grass-roots" paradigm of Reformation, one based on principles of communalism that grew out of the late Middle Ages. In addition to asserting traditional communal rights to administer certain local affairs, the radical Reformation stood for the right of each local community to hear the gospel preached in pure form and regulate its life according to the gospel. The radical Reformation also advocated community control over the local church, including the rights of each congregation to choose its own minister and to control the use of ecclesiastical payments. In 1522 Luther had indicated support for this kind of communal Reformation; by 1524 he opposed it.

At first the radicals did not explicitly repudiate the existing authorities. Both Müntzer's *Sermon to the Princes* and Felix Manz's *Protest and*

Defense were appeals set before secular rulers to do what God had ordained for them. But the radicals also made the legitimacy of government conditional. The most characteristic feature of the radical Reformation was that, unlike the magisterial reformers, radicals made the legitimacy of existing political authority contingent on its willingness to serve the gospel and the needs of the community. Müntzer's *Sermon to the Princes* was also an ultimatum: if existing rulers did not carry out the proper functions of government, the community would assume the power to do this. Müntzer's final treatises of 1524 document how this contingent acceptance of secular authorities was, for some radicals, transformed into support for popular insurrection.

II. Politics and religion in radical thought

The radical reformers saw themselves as pious Christians seeking to live their faith. But it would be false to stress the religious character of their thinking in opposition to the political. The Christian faith and church were so integral to social life that thinking about religion was also inherently political thinking. Religious discourse in the sixteenth century had an unavoidable dimension of political reference, just as ideas about political authority and the polity were articulated in religious language. To say that the radical reformers saw themselves as “religious” rather than “political” in the modern sense is inaccurate; the distinction is anachronistic.

The sacrament of baptism, for example, became a focal issue for early Reformation radicals. Their opposition to infant baptism was based on more than rigorous biblicism. Baptism was a sacrament with socio-political implications. It was a rite of admission into the polity of Christians, an agreement to a social contract. The practice of infant baptism became, for radicals, compelling evidence of how corrupt Christendom had become. To admit infants to the polity transformed the Christian community into something infantile. To refuse to have one's child baptized, as did Hans Hut and others, was to repudiate the bonds connecting both parent and child with church and society. An opponent of infant baptism such as Felix Manz might protest to the Zurich council that he had never taught rebellion; but the authorities saw him as propagating subversive ideas that threatened the whole structure of authority and obedience.