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Michael W. Bruening, *Calvinism's First Battleground: Conflict and Reform in the Pays de Vaud, 1528-1559*. Studies in Early Modern Religious Reforms 4. xvi + 286 pp. Dordrecht: Springer, 2005. Bibliography and index. \$139.00 (cl). ISBN 1-4020-4193-4.

Review by Raymond A. Mentzer, University of Iowa.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Robert M. Kingdon's *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555-1563* (Geneva: Droz, 1956). Over the intervening decades, surprisingly few scholars have taken up Kingdon's challenge to explore the connections between developments in John Calvin's Geneva and the French Reformation. He thought the associations powerful and critical, suggesting that a close examination would reveal much about the character of religious conflict in early modern France. Now, in the study at hand, Michael W. Bruening advances this important question, albeit in oblique fashion, through an exploration of reform in the Pays de Vaud. While acknowledging Kingdon's contribution, Bruening locates the book, an outgrowth of his doctoral dissertation, within the scholarly orbit of Heiko A. Oberman, his late graduate mentor. Oberman's notion of a "social history of ideas" holds particular attraction for Bruening. At the same time, he takes issue with Oberman's view that Calvin moved "from early aggression and confrontation toward legitimation" (p. 7) in the attempt to spread his views on the reform of Christianity beyond its Genevan center. Bruening adopts precisely the opposite tact and means to demonstrate it through a careful analysis of events in the Pays de Vaud, the region immediately adjacent to the city-state of Geneva. Calvin's initial approach in the Vaud, according to Bruening, was conciliatory and open to negotiation. Only slowly did he become resistant, aggressive and confrontational. The experience in the Vaud had, moreover, broad repercussions, particularly in Calvin's attitude toward fostering Reformed communities in his native France.

Bounded by Lake Neuchâtel to the north, the Alps to the east and south, Lake Geneva also to the south, and the Jura Mountains to the west, the Pays de Vaud along with its principal city Lausanne were the object of considerable military and political contestation during the late medieval and early modern periods. The key event was the conquest by Bern in 1536. The Bernese had already opted for the Protestantism, having made the decision by 1528. This latter date provides one of the chronological bookends for the study; the other is 1559 when Pierre Viret was driven out of Lausanne and he, along with a substantial group of Calvinist coreligionists, mostly ministers, departed for Geneva. Viret's expulsion emphatically underscored the reality that the Bernese version of Protestant Christianity differed from that which had taken root in Geneva. In order to establish the context for these divergences, the present volume opens with a long narrative detailing diplomatic, military and political events, perhaps ultimately understood as "squabbling between the Protestant and Catholic cantons" (p. 58). In general, this account of the Reformation's diffusion privileges the conjunction of political and religious developments. Thus, the fact that it took the Bernese twenty-eight years-- from the initial conquest of 1536 until the Treaty of Lausanne in 1564--to secure the Pays de Vaud firmly had significant consequences in the religious sphere. Some Vaudois were reluctant to embrace Protestantism as they expected a return of Catholic Savoyard rule. More crucial to Bruening's purposes, Protestant pastors following Calvin's lead pursued a strenuous campaign to place religious discipline squarely in the hands of ecclesiastical rather than political officials. The government of Bern objected and the ensuing conflict resonated widely among the Protestant city-states of western Europe. It went to the heart of the urban Reformation. Given the critical position of religion in early modern civic culture, who would control its construction, magistrate or cleric?

The essential religious conflict in the Vaud was a disagreement between the two branches of the so-called Reformed tradition—Zwinglianism originating in Zurich and Calvinism with its base at Geneva. The two groups disagreed, above all, over the character of ecclesiastical discipline. Bern, following a Zwinglian lead, insisted upon the magistrate's jurisdiction over the politically delicate matter of excommunication. The 1558 crisis between Bern and the Lausanne Reformed ministers turned on this very question. Bern further maintained that its own matrimonial court (*Chorgericht*) with secular judges would alone administer religious discipline. The Pays de Vaud and the city of Lausanne were not to have an equivalent to Calvin's model of a powerful consistory, an ecclesiastical body dominated by church elders and pastors. Bruening approaches these critical matters in a decidedly deliberate, occasionally tedious fashion. He offers a protected discussion of the clash between the followers of Martin Luther and those of Ulrich Zwingli. An even lengthier examination of the pre-Reformation church at Lausanne and the Vaud follows. Both chapters are important for a proper appreciation of the broader argument, but considerable abridgment would have been beneficial.

The aggressive style of Guillaume Farel, who preceded Calvin at Geneva, was, in Bruening's view, effective in reforming medieval Christianity, but less so in resolving differences with other Protestants. When Calvin succeeded the fiery Farel at Geneva, he pursued moderate tactics that "shifted from confrontation with the old order to education and discipline within the new" (p. 133). The impact on activities in the nearby Pays de Vaud ought not to be taken lightly. The campaign against the Catholic Church at Lausanne and other Vaudois towns went very well. Success, however, brought Calvin and Farel into conflict with the Bernese magistrates, who demanded strong supervision over religious reform and the church itself. Calvin argued for greater ecclesiastical autonomy, particularly in the imposition of church order. The emerging clash was prolonged and multifaceted, involving Catholic and Lutheran, but most prominently Zwinglian and Calvinist positions. These tensions, according to Bruening, eventually led Calvin to reassess his goals for the spread of his ideas and to refocus his energy, directing attention away from the "Germanic Swiss Confederation and towards his native France" (p. 168).

As Calvin's reliance on political or state-sponsored reform waned and he concentrated increasingly on clandestine, dangerous and illegal actions for the evangelization of the French kingdom, so too his movement evolved into a "Reformation of the Refugees." The terminology again derives from Oberman and means to evoke the image of Calvin's followers as a persecuted minority most everywhere in Europe. Frankly, this aspect of Bruening's argument is less persuasive, even though he pursues it with vigor and enthusiasm. Severe tensions swirled around the Academy of Lausanne and its Calvinist founder Pierre Viret. The school trained future pastors and the professors' views on the Eucharist differed from the ideas supported by the Bern government. Viret was also chief pastor of Lausanne and he pushed for Geneva-style discipline in screening people for participation in the Lord's Supper. For their part, the Bernese magistrates had no desire to see their close supervision over religious affairs diminished. In addition, Bruening insists upon a diplomatic angle in this ever more strident exchange, arguing that Calvin had hoped for a French alliance with the Swiss Confederation to thwart Catholic Habsburg ambitions. When this gambit failed, Calvin adopted a more confrontational attitude toward France and his program for its conversion. Bruening's rendering of this interpretation is more encompassing and intricate than that offered here. The essential point, however, is that this is a challenging perspective—one likely to prompt robust reaction from more traditionally minded Calvin scholars.

Altogether, Bruening provides a thought-provoking reconsideration of Calvin's reform movement and the manner whereby it spread from Geneva. The history of events in the Pays de Vaud is a lively case study, which scholars have too long glossed over. The subject itself is demanding and Bruening has explored it in fresh ways, moving well beyond the usual printed sources to incorporate findings from an impressive body of manuscript materials housed in the archival collections at Bern, Lausanne and Paris.

Equally striking is Bruening's facility in moving between French, German and Latin texts. To these considerable sources, he has wedded a stimulating interpretative framework. As with any good study, this one prompts further queries. The career of Pierre Viret, for instance, seems ripe for reevaluation. He was a controversial figure at Lausanne and later played a prominent role in the Reformation in southern France. In addition, although Bruening elucidates developments among the members of an educated elite who participated in the intense theological discourse, it would be helpful to know more about tensions at the lower levels. For example, what exactly did the *Chorgericht* do? How did it interact with the faithful in furthering reform? Was it, in fact, significantly different from the Genevan consistory or, for that matter, the consistory as it developed within the Reformed Churches of France? In short, was Calvinism's first battleground dominated by political and intellectual perspectives as Bruening suggests or was there also a strong underlying dynamic linked to the beliefs and practices of ordinary believers in the Vaud? How did these everyday folk view and inform the debate among their social and intellectual betters? Let us hope we will not have to wait yet another half century before we see additional studies on the subject.

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