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Calvinism's First Battleground: Conflict and Reform in the  
Pays de Vaud, 1528-1559 (review)

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certain to serve as a spur to further comparative study of the Eucharist and other central religious rituals.

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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. Dordrecht: Springer, 2005. xvi + 286 pp. index. append. illus. map. chron. bibl. €117. ISBN: 1-4020-4193-4.

Most scholarly work on the early Reformation in French-speaking areas has focused on Calvin and Geneva. Michael Bruening has had the genial idea of placing his focus instead on the Pays de Vaud, the largest single political entity in French Switzerland. He proposes to provide a “social history of ideas” (xi). What he really supplies is a set of elaborate narratives of developments in politics and theology in this time and place. After a general introduction, he offers a narrative of politics and diplomacy between 1450 and 1564, when the area was wrenched away from the control of the Duchy of Savoy and, for the most part, annexed to the Swiss Republic of Bern — a process only completed with a treaty signed in 1564. During the same period, Bern became Protestant and tried to impose Protestantism on all its territories. Bruening then offers a sophisticated narrative of the struggle between Lutherans and Zwinglians within Bern for control of the variety of Protestantism that would prevail in the Republic. It ended with a Zwinglian victory in 1566. Meanwhile, Protestant evangelization in French Switzerland began with a slashing attack on the Catholic Mass, led by Guillaume Farel with substantial support from Bern between 1528 and 1536. The resulting Protestant conquest, however, proved to be relatively superficial. Preachers led by Calvin in Geneva and Viret in Lausanne, the largest city in the Vaud, attempted to deepen the grip of Protestantism by introducing discipline, backed by the power of excommunication administered by semi-ecclesiastical bodies. Their attempt succeeded in Geneva but failed in the Pays de Vaud, in good part because of Bernese opposition. The Calvinist movement then changed from an effort to create a single type of Reformed Christianity for all of Switzerland to a “Reformation of the refugees.” This effort was directed in Geneva by French refugees who launched a mission to France in the hope of making their homeland a country dominated by the same sort of Protestantism.

Bruening’s analysis is backed throughout by archival research in several parts of Switzerland. It is sprinkled with fresh and salutary emphases, for example, on the power of Bern throughout the area, and on Calvin’s unsuccessful attempts to negotiate alliances between the French Crown and the Swiss cantons. It makes a significant contribution to our knowledge of the history of the early Reformation in French-speaking parts of Europe.

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