

## CALVINISM'S FIRST BATTLEGROUND

# STUDIES IN EARLY MODERN RELIGIOUS REFORMS

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# CALVINISM'S FIRST BATTLEGROUND

Conflict and Reform in the Pays de Vaud, 1528-1559

*by*

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## **Dedication**

*This book is dedicated to  
Jeanine*

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## Abbreviations

ACV	Archives cantonales vaudoises
AVL	Archives de la ville de Lausanne
BDS	Bucer, Martin. <i>Bucers deutsche Schriften</i>
BHV	Bibliothèque historique vaudoise
BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
<i>Calvin-Studienausgabe</i>	Calvin, John. <i>Calvin-Studienausgabe</i>
<i>Chroniqueur</i>	Vulliemin, Louis. <i>Le Chroniqueur</i>
CO	Calvin, John. <i>Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia</i>
<i>Correspondance de Bèze</i>	Bèze, Théodore de. <i>Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze</i>
EA	Segesser, Anton. <i>Die Eidgenössischen Abschiede</i>
<i>Guillaume Farel</i>	Comité Farel, <i>Guillaume Farel 1489-1565</i>
HBBW	Bullinger, Heinrich. <i>Heinrich Bullinger Briefwechsel</i>
Herminjard	Herminjard, A.-L. <i>Correspondance des Réformateurs</i>
HS	Helvetia Sacra
MDR	Mémoires et documents publiés par la société d'histoire de la Suisse romande
MHR	Musée historique de la Réformation
OS	Calvin, John. <i>Ioannis Calvini Opera Selecta</i>
PL	Migne, J.-P. <i>Patrologia Latina</i>
Pierrefleur	Pierrefleur, [Guillaume de]. <i>Mémoires de Pierrefleur</i>
RCP	<i>Registres de la compagnie des pasteurs de Genève</i>
RHV	<i>Revue historique vaudoise</i>
Ruchat	Ruchat, Abraham. <i>Histoire de la Réformation de la Suisse</i> . 1728 edition
STAB	Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern
THR	Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance
Vuilleumier	Vuilleumier, Henri. <i>Histoire de l'Eglise Réformée du Pays de Vaud sous le régime Bernois</i> , vol. 1: <i>L'Age de la Réforme</i>
<i>WA Br</i>	Luther, Martin. <i>D. Martin Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel</i>
Z	Zwingli, Ulrich. <i>Huldreich Zwinglis sämtliche Werke</i>
ZSKG	<i>Zeitschrift für schweizerische Kirchengeschichte</i>

## Preface

Before his untimely death in April 2001, my *Doktorvater* Heiko A. Oberman was a strong advocate for an approach to history that he labelled “the social history of ideas.” It is a method that seeks to explain the dynamic interaction between society and ideas, for the fundamental principle behind it is that intellectual currents both affect and are affected by social trends, institutions, and identities. The social history of ideas seeks to steer between the socio-economic determinism of Marxist scholarship and the elitism of traditional intellectual history that charted the course of ideas from the mind of one “great man” to the next.<sup>1</sup>

I now realize the significant impact that Oberman’s training has had on my own work. I am indeed exploring the social history of an intellectual system, Calvinism, by analyzing how the political and social history of the Reformation in the Pays de Vaud affected Calvinist doctrine, particularly teachings on ecclesiastical discipline. It is an effort to ground Calvinism more firmly in its historical context; indeed, my fundamental premise is that one cannot fully understand early Calvinism apart from its specific historical context as it developed in Geneva and neighboring Vaud.

Early in my graduate studies, Oberman asked me to help him edit one of his influential articles: “Calvin and Farel, the Dynamics of Legitimation.”<sup>2</sup> In a way, I have been in dialogue with that article ever since. Many of the major themes in this book are the same as those in Oberman’s article: the

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Heiko A. Oberman, *The Impact of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), viii-xi.

<sup>2</sup> Heiko A. Oberman, “Calvin and Farel, The Dynamics of Legitimation,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 2 (1998): 32-60

triumvirate of Calvin, Farel, and Viret, the legitimation of the Reformed movement, and the transformation of Calvin from a city reformer to an international figure. Tragically, Oberman died before I developed my own ideas on these subjects and could discuss them with him. Although I criticize a number of his positions in this book, I am fully cognizant of the fact that he helped prepare me to do so. Oberman always saw his role of *Doktorvater* (never just “advisor”) as one in which he would provide his students with the training that would allow them to find their own voice in the world of scholarship. I can think of no better way to honor his memory than by what I have tried to do in this book: to develop further his important insights and to critique his views where I believe he was mistaken.

Before beginning, some notes on terms and usage are in order. Most of this book will focus on the French-speaking lands conquered by Bern in 1536, which today comprise parts of Canton Vaud in Switzerland and the French *départements* of Haute-Savoie and Ain in France. In order to avoid anachronistic terminology, I will use primarily the contemporary sixteenth-century terms for these areas, referring specifically to the *Pays de Vaud* or simply *Vaud*, the *Pays de Gex*, and the *Chablais*. When referring to Bern’s French-speaking lands in general, I again use the contemporary phrases, *pays romands*, *welsche Länder*, or the English equivalent, *Bern’s French-speaking lands*. I make one exception to the rule on anachronism to avoid needless wordiness; when referring to all the areas which today comprise French-speaking Switzerland, including Vaud, as well as Geneva, Neuchâtel, and their environs, I use either *French-speaking Switzerland* or the *Suisse romande*. The reader should be aware that neither Geneva nor Neuchâtel were part of the Swiss Confederation at the time, but these areas were tied closely together through language, religion, and alliances with Bern.

With regard to city names, I use standard English equivalents when they exist (e.g., Geneva rather than Genève or Genf). For other Swiss cities, I use the spelling of the city’s dominant language: hence, Fribourg rather than Freiburg, Bern instead of Berne, Basel rather than Bâle or Basle, etc. I follow basically the same rules for personal names: e.g., John instead of Jean Calvin, but Pierre rather than Peter Viret, Guillaume not William Farel, Nägeli rather than Naegueli, etc. One exception is that my use of the French *Henri*, rather than *Henry* when referring to the king, is intended to eliminate any confusion with the many other European monarchs of the same name. When in doubt about a name, I have used the spelling in the online *Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse*.<sup>3</sup> Note that the permeability of

<sup>3</sup> “Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse/Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz/Dizionario Storico della Svizzera,” online at <http://www.lexhist.ch/>.

the linguistic border in the Swiss Confederation often created mixed French-German family names; “de Diesbach,” for example, is correct.

Finally, some preliminary explanation is necessary for more conceptual terminology. I use both the adjective and noun *Protestant* in the broadest possible sense to refer to people, regions, and churches that officially severed ties to Rome and abolished the Catholic Mass in the sixteenth century. I try to avoid using the vague phrase *Protestant theology*, preferring to specify theological systems through reference to their founders. The term *Lutheran* can be tricky; first, it should be remembered that Catholics referred to all “heretics” as *Lutherans*. Second, Lutheranism itself was not yet firmly defined during most of the time period under consideration; hence, although Bucer and the Lutherans in Bern may not have fit more precise later definitions, they fell into the Lutheran camp at the time. Finally, by *ecclesiastical discipline* I mean the attempt to enforce doctrinal conformity and moral behavior by an ecclesiastical body, usually the consistory.

*Michael W. Bruening*

*Irvine, 21 April 2005*

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Sadly, one of the people I most need to thank is no longer with us. Heiko Oberman, died shortly after I had started writing the dissertation. I can only hope that the outstanding training and guidance he provided comes through in this work and that it would have pleased him.

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