Historians of the Swiss Reformation are surely delighted that the Genevan publisher Droz continues to publish new critical editions of Calvin’s works, but equally if not more important is Droz’s—first ever—effort to publish critical editions of all the works of Guillaume Farel. Of that French Swiss triumvirate of Farel, Viret, and Calvin, Farel was first to work for reform in the Swiss Romand territories, and he secured the services of both Viret (in 1531) and Calvin (in 1536), among dozens of other preachers. His indomitable spirit and abundant energy were key to the series of disputations and votes for reform among the populace of various Swiss cantons. Thus it is entirely fitting that, though his pen was not as active as Calvin’s and Viret’s, his writings should receive a closer examination. The treatises of the present volume and the one that preceded it in 2009 show that Farel knew how to use simple language that would reach the common people, understood the need to keep hammering home the same series of themes of reform, and especially led the fledgling Reformed communities in using prayer, appeals to temporal authorities, and love of his opponents to serve the cause of reform.

Scholars should appreciate the fine work of Reinhard Bodenmann in overseeing this new critical edition, as well as in writing a new biography of one of Farel’s contemporaries, the sometime antagonist Pierre Caroli. I will first describe the plan and editorial work of Bodenmann and Droz as regards to publishing the rest of Farel’s œuvre, then describe the contents of the treatises in these volumes, and third, scrutinize several assertions of the editors.

Working alongside Bodenmann on the critical edition are Françoise Briegel and Olivier Labarthe, whom Bodenmann introduces in the
general introduction of volume 1 (2009). Briegel transcribed all the French-language texts of Farel (it appears her work on the project is completed); Bodenmann compared manuscripts and established the text; Labarthe annotated the text (vol. 1, xvi).

Since nine years elapsed between volumes 1 and 2, it is sincerely hoped that future volumes will be able to be prepared sooner, so that the same team can oversee this important work to the finish, if at all possible. Funding for such projects can be precarious, but it should be emphasized that from a historical point of view, understanding how reform took root in the Swiss Romand territories requires more attention to Farel than to Calvin, and thus this project is highly valuable.

Bodenmann states that the critical edition has three audiences in mind: historians of the book, historians of the French language, and historians of ideas (vol. 1, xiii, xix). He notes the value of seeing Farel’s writings together, enabling one more easily to trace the evolution of Farel’s thought, and to see the differences between the beginnings of the reform under Farel and the later developments of Calvinism proper (vol. 1, xii–xiii).

Of the twenty-eight published works of Farel, these first two volumes provide five works. The plan of publication is not to follow Farel’s works chronologically but thematically. These first two volumes focus on the attempts of Farel from 1542 to 1545 to persuade the authorities of Metz to allow reform to take root in their city. The third volume is expected to present his writings on the faith of the church, such as Le Pater Noster et le Credo (1524), La tressaingt oraison (1541), and Confession de foi [of Geneva] (1536). Further volumes will appear, but their dates are not fixed (vol. 1, xv).

Given that the editors indicate that they will include writings for which Farel was responsible, though not sole author, I hope they will include the preface to Lefèvre’s French translation of the New Testament (1524), since both Denommé and Kemp (2004) and I (2011) have argued that it is Farellian. It will be extremely helpful to have all of Farel’s writings available in one set of volumes, including such little-known and rare works as Jesus sur tous et rien sur lui (1530), De la tressaingte Cene (1532), the account of the Dispute of Rive (1535), and La tressaingte oraison (1541), already noted.

It does seem unusual not to follow a chronological order: my sense is that the editorial team is playing to their strengths and I can appreciate this, given that no one is employed full-time for the work. Bodenmann studied Farel’s treatises of 1542–1545 most closely in
connection with his biography of Caroli, so these volumes came first; Labarthe studied the Geneva Confession of 1536 for a thesis some decades ago, and both that confession and Le Pater Noster et le Credo have already appeared as single-volume critical editions (Higman, 1982; Backus and Chimelli, 1986). Moreover, putting the writings of 1542–1545 first has highlighted a period of Farel’s work that is understudied.

As an aside, the Reformed party was quite consistently called the “Farellists” in this period, especially by Caroli, who also called Viret “Farel’s Timothy,” alluding to the relationship between the apostle Paul and Timothy. After 1545 the prominence of Calvin displaced that of Farel and by the 1550s the Reformed party began to be called “Calvinists” in their debates with Lutherans about the Lord’s Supper.

The contents of the volumes focus upon the attempt of the Swiss Reformers, led by Farel, to secure freedom of worship for the evangelicals of Metz, a city of French speakers at the point where present-day France, Germany, and Luxembourg converge. These, then, are the “Metz treatises” (Traités Messins). In the thirteenth century, this city had become a free imperial city (free from control of a local ruler, but under the emperor). This status would end in 1552 when the French captured the city, but in 1542 such was the political situation. Farel’s church of Neuchâtel allowed him to go there in mid-August 1542 to preach for the evangelicals and to seek a public disputation to try and win over the magistrates to the evangelical cause. His preaching, however, was contested from the start and raised the ire of the Roman Catholics in the city. In spite of the support of the maître échevin (judge/mayor), Farel and some six hundred Messins were locked out of the city when they departed to worship at a nearby fortress. A number of Messins were banished from their city. Later, around Easter 1543 French forces attacked two hundred Messins who were celebrating the Lord’s Supper at nearby Gorze, killing several (Farel had won over Gorze at the end of 1542 [vol. 2, 14]). From then on Farel remained in Gorze or Strasbourg to give advice and try to secure support for these evangelicals.

Bodenmann and Labarthe did some very fine work in volume 1 in terms of establishing the date of composition of Farel’s Oraison tresdevote. It appears that he wrote this first, in October 1542. In its original form the prayer is fifty-six pages long, written to help the evangelicals ask God for good pastors, the pure preaching of the gospel, and the right administration of the sacraments (vol. 1, 28–69).
Soon after this, Farel wrote his *Epistre au duc de Lorraine*, in February 1543, from Gorze (vol. 2, 27–115). In this treatise, he laid upon the duke the responsibility to lead Metz in the way of the gospel, by opening the way for true biblical preaching and administration of the sacraments. It is clear that Farel sought magisterial leadership of reform. To my mind, it is also very interesting that though Farel is known for his fierceness in promoting reform, he also models a very humble attitude in these published prayers as he leads the believers to confess their participation in Rome’s sin and as he commends Augustine’s maxim to love the person but hate the sin (vol. 2, 71). He addresses the duke as one for whom Jesus died (vol. 2, 111) and blesses him (vol. 2, 114).

In spring 1543 Pierre Caroli, an older theologian trained at the Sorbonne and now settled in Metz, renewed his attacks upon Farel, Viret, and Calvin. Caroli was an enigmatic figure who had gone over to the Reformed at the Disputation of Lausanne in 1536 and had become pastor of Lausanne, then had gone back to the Roman Catholics in 1537, but then in 1539 had returned again to the Reformed. The Reformed refused to give him a pastoral position, and soon thereafter he was again decidedly against the Reformed. On 14 May 1543 Caroli produced a rather pompous summons for Farel, worded like an official summons to a tribunal (vol. 2, 130–43). In it he urged Farel to give himself up to a recognized authority within eight days of receiving the letter in order that he might die for his heresies. Oddly, Caroli also offered his own death along with Farel’s, so that the peace of the church might thereby be secured (vol. 2, 142).

Farel replied to Caroli on 21 May, the day after he received the summons (vol. 2, 145–56). Farel’s tone is decidedly pastoral, even kind. Farel and Caroli had known each other since at least 1521 when they had both served in the bishopric of Meaux under the reforming bishop Guillaume Briçonnet. In the letter, Farel calls Caroli his friend, reminds him of his baptism, tells him that Jesus loved us so much as to die for us, and asks him why he would deprive his wife and child of his presence (Caroli had married). At one time Farel calls Caroli, “You poor man!” and says that he does not know whether to laugh or cry.

The story did not end at this point, however, for on 31 May, Farel had a letter on the table of the Geneva council requesting that Calvin be permitted to join him in Strasbourg in anticipation of the two of them participating in a public disputation in Metz, against Caroli.
Calvin joined Farel in Strasbourg from 18 June till almost the end of August, but the disputation never occurred. On 25 June 1543, Farel completed a second letter for Caroli (vol. 2, 171–93). In it he clearly states, as he had for the duke, that Roman Catholics (“papists”) and the Reformed agree on the Trinity and the true union of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ (vol. 2, 108, 111, 184). Then he lays out a series of disagreements, much as he had done for the Duke of Lorraine earlier in the year. Both Farel and Calvin finally returned to their churches in Neuchâtel and Geneva, respectively, between 24 and 27 August 1543, without Metz having permitted a disputation.

Later, in 1545, Farel would republish his letter to the duke and would republish his prayer, almost tripled in length, under the title Forme d’oraison pour demander a Dieu la saincte predication de l’Evangile (vol. 1, 87–235). Farel was convinced that reform in Metz would require ongoing prayer. Bodenmann and Labarthe hypothesize about why Farel republished his letter to the duke, concluding that it was in response to Caroli’s Latin treatise of 1545 that was directed against the “Farellists.” Although Calvin responded, Farel must have felt he too ought to speak up (this is the third reason entertained by the editors, and it may well be that all three reasons given contributed to Farel’s decision [vol. 2, 18–19]). I have analyzed the structure and contents of both of these prayers, noting in particular that Farel adheres closely to a chiastic structure in both the 1542 and the augmented 1545 edition, wherein prayer is addressed to the Father, then the Son, then the Spirit, and back to the Son, and finally to the Father (Zuidema and Van Raalte, Early French Reform, 82–85, 92–93). This point is important in view of Caroli’s charges (in 1537, again in 1543) against Farel, Viret, and Calvin of antitrinitarianism.

Political history was closely tied to the ecclesiastical situation in Metz: the Count of Fürstenberg was ready to fight the French troops of the House of Guise who were present in the area, and Philip of Hesse was prepared to support the count. Calvin was concerned that the two sides were unequally matched; the Strasbourg council, too, was not supportive of fighting (vol. 2, 277–79; cf. 2, 17, 126). Bodenmann and Labarthe account for these political eventualities well, not just in the notes but in particular through a lengthy set of appendices in each volume, which includes not just letters of the Reformers but also from the various city councils, the Smalcaldic League, and the emperor. These appendices publish a number of letters for the first time, while others are republished from Herminjard or elsewhere.
Volume 1 contains thirty-six appendices; volume 2 has sixty-seven. If a letter was referred to in existing correspondence but has not been found, it is so noted. It hardly seems possible to exceed the degree of detail in terms of source documents, unless some hitherto unknown manuscript should surface. On this point, I cannot but praise the work that has been done, though when one looks ahead to future volumes, it would be impossible to include such a great number of appendices for every writing of Farel. That said, the Metz treatises are particularly embedded in a situation that warrants the presence of these appendices (some scholars may be interested in Farel’s comparisons of the Roman Catholic practice of enforcing doctrinal conformity by way of physical force with Mohammed’s practices, as well as his other references to the Koran, and may wish to ask how his own ideal for magisterial reformation differs from this [e.g., vol. 2, 98; 102n687]).

Finally, I have three points of disagreement with the editors and one concern. First, Bodenmann’s one example of the evolution of Farel’s thought is Farel’s advocacy for a “material communism,” which he later spiritualized (vol. 1, xii). Evidence for Farel’s “material communism,” however, is restricted to one passage in Farel’s Le Pater Noster et le Credo wherein he confesses, “I believe that in this Christian community all things are in common, and that no one has anything that is his alone.” Farel states this under the rubric of the confession, “I believe the communion of saints,” and he explains immediately thereafter, “From this I know and am certain that all the good works, prayers, vigils, fasts, alms, and all other good deeds” of the Christian community are supposed to be done for the help of others (Zuidema and Van Raalte, Early French Reform, 115–16). I would contend that from the start Farel especially meant that Christians were given spiritual gifts for the good of all and that they are bound to help one another materially as well. Beyond this, we have zero evidence that Farel ever argued that actual personal ownership should be abolished or that everyone should possess in principle the same level of wealth. Nor did he ever seek to establish such in any locale. He simply meant that Christians are duty bound to assist each other—his own writings and actions speak highly of care for the poor and sick. In my view, since critical editions can be so influential in scholarship, this comment should have been omitted.

Second, in volume 2, 146n10 the reader is informed that the appellation “good God” occurs in Farel’s writings for the first time in 1541.
I presume that the editors are utilizing searches of their database of all of Farel’s writings, which I noted earlier. However, one must be very careful here. Farel uses this epithet already in 1533 (*Maniere*, e2r) and 1534 (*Summaire* c2r). In addition, references to the “good Father,” “good Savior,” “good Lord,” and “good Jesus” occur in Farel’s writings of 1524, 1533, and 1534. In my view, the presence of these expressions serves as part of the internal evidence for Farel’s authorship of the preface to Lefèvre’s New Testament (Zuidema and Van Raalte, *Early French Reform*, 45n56).

Finally, the question of Farel’s antitrinitarianism deserves to be revisited by Bodenmann and Labarthe. At the beginning of Farel’s response to Caroli, dated 21 May 1543, Farel begins, “Guillaume Farel (servant of God, not only baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—one only God in three persons)” (vol. 2, 145). Note 4 on that page states, “We note that this is the first time that Farel is this precise in his Trinitarian terminology,” Bodenmann’s book on Caroli is then referenced. But this is false. In *Le Pater Noster et le Credo* (1524), Farel writes, “This faith will be able to make me believe that you, Father, and your Son, with the Holy Spirit, are one only essence, and moreover one God in three persons” (b5r). Noteworthy is the republication of this work *unchanged* in 1536 by Wigand Koeln in Geneva, where Farel was working. Also, in *De la tressainte Cene* (1532), Farel references the “Trinity” without critiquing either the word or the teaching (c8v). His published prayers of 1541, 1542, and 1545, with petitions brought both individually to each of the divine persons and to God as one God—especially when considered with the polemic against prayers to the saints as a backdrop—affirm that all three are worthy of prayer and thus of worship and thus are divine. There are many other clear expressions of Farel that affirm the substance of this doctrine, even though he uses the terms “Trinity,” “essence,” and “persons” sparingly. Thus, the note at volume 2, 145n4 is incorrect. Again, it is unfortunate that this unsupported claim has occurred in the critical edition.

One last concern exists, and this regards the addition of Scripture references by the editors in cases where Farel did not supply these. It is absolutely the case that Farel’s writings in these volumes exude Scripture. However, in the *Traités Messins* very few references were provided by Farel; I presume the speed of composition and rush to print precluded these (indeed, note well that the editors take the view that Farel’s 1542 prayer was likely dictated to an amanuensis [vol. 1, 23],
a view with which I have agreed). If editors are then going to add Scripture references in the footnotes, they need to make clearer that these were not first provided by Farel. Furthermore, if such references are to be added, there ought to be good reason for them. It seems to me that the editors became too ambitious on this point. I will provide four examples from volume 1, page 105.

1. How is, “being servants to your glory” an “allusion to Ephesians 1:12” (n. 164) any more than it is an allusion to Isaiah 43:7 or Isaiah 43:21?

2. How is, “you have taken away your light” an allusion to Romans 1:21 (n. 170) any more than to Ephesians 4:18 or John 12:40?

3. Referencing Romans 7:14–23 (n. 173) for the plea, “Deliver us from this damnable captivity of sin and error,” is also rather odd because in this case the reference simply points us to a passage that speaks about the Christian’s ongoing struggle with sin—or does it? Some commentators think Paul writes about his preconversion struggle. The notes then introduce the problem of the editor’s interpretation of Romans 7 and run the risk of having readers think that this is Farel’s understanding of Romans 7. It may be, but he himself did not provide this reference.

4. When Farel recommends fasting with prayer, he is certainly not alluding to Romans 14:17 where we read that the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink (n. 178). I could add quite a few more examples (e.g., check the notes in volume 2, 41–42, 44, 49, 66, 110). It seems to me that some guidelines are needed for the coming volumes to determine when to add a Scripture reference and when to refrain.

These critiques on rather limited points are intended to improve the coming volumes and make all aware of the pitfalls of adding commentary when assembling a critical edition. They are not meant to deter anyone purchasing these very fine volumes. Historians of many specialties will benefit from consulting and possessing these volumes, whether historians of the book, of ideas, of language, and, may I add, of rhetoric and persuasion, and—especially given the great number of appendices—also historians of institutions and politics.
Bodenmann has ensured excellent quality and thus sets the basis—especially when the project is completed, as we hope!—for scholars to reexamine Farel’s role in the reform of the French-speaking Swiss. His teachings, his networks, his methods, and his heart are on full display and deserve fresh study.

—Theodore G. Van Raalte