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«calvin09»



Dear readers,

From Australia to Zimbabwe, this special edition will take you on a twelve-part journey to the churches celebrating John Calvin's Reformation.

We will meet a global Calvin: Plans have been made to erect a bust of Calvin in Cuba; a small exhibition designed for congregational use and published on www.calvin09.org has now been translated and adapted for use in Australia; Calvin has been the focal point of a careful rapprochement between the Protestant church on the Chinese mainland and Taiwanese Presbyterians; the unification of the Hungarian-speaking Reformed churches has been celebrated alongside Calvin in the Carpathian Basin; Calvin has been turning up in the events planned in Germany to celebrate Luther in a few years; the heads of state of the Netherlands and France (who would have thought it?) have been rushing to pay homage to the memory of this great intellectual and reformer; and in Switzerland, the issue of the confession of faith has found its way back on the agenda of the churches of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches. It is undeniable and quite heartening to see that the influence of Calvin and his work in Geneva has clearly moved beyond the Franco-Swiss horizon to spread throughout the world.

The calvin09 jubilee has also had a surprising local impact within Switzerland, with Calvin's thought being rediscovered in congregations, pastoral care, universities, and the press. His thought provides a framework to understand our world and to contemplate the identity and purpose of the church today.

Faced with the current marketplace of religions and a blurred consensus of the churches on the content of the faith, the simplicity and clarity of Calvin's theology provides our congregations with new resources and shows them the way to resources unknown, forgotten, or lost. No, Calvin's place is not now relegated to museums. Whether in the cultural world, the media, think tanks, or the banking industry, the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth is an occasion for reflection on our assurance of life, our joyous creativity, and our great responsibility.

This is indeed a case of Calvin vs. the Calvinists: And we've had it with those who would spoil everyone's fun! Calvin's heritage is full of its contradictions and dark places, something that is hardly surprising and which nobody would challenge. And yet, the very wish to honor and celebrate Calvin despite it all, and without great fanfare but also without false modesty or feigned guilt, still seems difficult to many. Together with the Protestant Church of Geneva, which has redoubled its efforts and creativity in its role as host, and alongside the churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches is entering into the jubilee imbued both with joy and gratitude to God.

Serge Fornerod
Director of the calvin09 project for the FSPC

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«I'm a Calvinist who likes a celebration»

Calvin's tolerance and will for change hold a great fascination for the head of the Geneva office of the Avenir Suisse think tank. He is troubled that the Reformer of Geneva is most remembered for being a puritanical moralist.

Mr. Comtesse, would you say that you idolize John Calvin?

Xavier Comtesse*: I could not idolize Calvin. It goes against my religious beliefs to idolize a person. Calvin himself would have told me not to idolize him.

But you must at least be a fan of Calvin.

(Laughs.) No, I am proud of Calvin. And I feel very close to some of his ideas.

You have publicly criticized the celebratory activities for John Calvin's 500th birthday for being not attractive enough.

Celebrating the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth is a paradox. On the one hand, we are not able to celebrate the jubilee properly, since celebrating Calvin would constitute a form of idolization. In order to respect that, on the other hand, the occasion is being marked with events that are somewhat off the mark. But this does not really bother me. The only thing that I cannot accept is that nobody has brought Calvin's thought up to date for the occasion.

What do you mean by that?

In January, I held a talk entitled «Calvin would have loved the Internet».

Why the Internet?

The Internet reflects many of Calvin's ideas in the modern world: the concept of community and the idea that everyone can have access to knowledge – and without cost. This is an example of how Calvin's thought has been brought up to date. One should have referred to that during the celebrations.

But how would you celebrate the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth?

It is not easy to answer that question. For Calvinists and Presbyterians abroad, Geneva is the Protestant Rome. Here in Geneva, however, most people don't even know that the city is Protestant. And still, more could be done to celebrate Calvin than has been planned.

Is it at all possible to hold celebrations for the puritanical Calvin?

Yes, most definitely. But I don't know whether it is possible in this city. American Presbyterians would, for example, celebrate in a different way than we do. If Geneva were in another country, the jubilee celebrations would surely be more exuberant. I also have a need for that: I'm a Calvinist who likes a celebration and enjoying myself with others.

Your enthusiasm for Calvin is surprising. You are a representative of Avenir Suisse, a neo-liberal think tank. And Calvin turned Geneva into a theocracy. How is that mutually compatible?

I have no problem with that. Avenir Suisse is not a religious organization. Calvin was the first to support free trade, a goal that we share with him. He did not ban capitalism. Calvin was also very open and suggested many new ideas that others would later carry forward such as Rousseau and Voltaire, but also Avenir Suisse and Klaus Schwab with the World Economic Forum.

You depict Calvin as a renewer and a liberal. But what about the puritanical Calvin, who introduced moral laws and controlled the population?

It is true that Calvin was a little ayatollah as well. His severity was part of a struggle against the Catholics who surrounded Geneva on all sides – a frightening situation. An inclination toward an authoritarian system is understandable under the circumstances. After 500 years, it is not Calvin's moral severity but his values that have endured. That is why I call myself a Calvinist of values and not one of faith.

Have not Calvin's values also endured in today's Geneva in contrast with his severity, which the town has left behind?

I am certain of that. His puritanism only lasted for a few decades. What Geneva maintained was Calvin's tolerance and openness and his idea that structures and the community must be continually renewed. Calvin was the first leader to make change into an objective. He gave people, organizations, and history the strength to change. That is what makes him so special.

There are many who do not share your enthusiasm for Calvin. One French-language Swiss weekly wrote that one



Fotos: Luc Georgi

can be shocked to discover that French-speaking Switzerland is Calvinist. Where does this anti-Calvin reflex come from?

Calvin's puritanical and severe side continues to dominate our image of Calvin today, even if puritanism has long since subsided. That bothers me. We could have done away with this image of Calvin with a proper celebration.

Why do the people cling so much to Calvin's puritanism?

People are too lazy to peer beneath the surface of things. They would rather cling to what they read in papers they got for free. I think that is a shame. Societies, values, and cultures are things of great depth. One must invest time, energy, and thought in order to comprehend them. Calvin is faced with difficulties in a world that is in love with celebrities and the «fast food» media.

Is it not the other way around, that Calvin's ideas are outmoded today?

On the contrary: They continue to lead the way. His separation of powers is, for example, the model for how «soft institutions» continue to function today. Just like church congregations, they are neither entirely democratic nor are they purely hierarchical organizations. This pertains to the organization of the Internet, environmental groups, the financial industry, and many other organizations.

Was Calvin perhaps also a bit foolish to take on diverse positions, which opened up countless points of vulnerability to his critics?

We can compare Calvin with Barack Obama in this regard. He also has to reconcile a variety of positions and needs, making him vulnerable to criticism. We have, however, no

other choice in a sophisticated world. Things are not all just black or white. We have to accept that change is not easy because our organizations, culture, and society are sophisticated by nature.

Was this still different during Calvin's times?

Calvin, in any event, demanded a great deal from his contemporaries. He was of the opinion that everyone should be able to read the Bible in their own languages. Understanding the Bible is a highly complicated matter, very similar to the internet. Calvin was convinced that people were sufficiently intelligent, responsible, and tolerant to read the Bible without someone having to tell them how to interpret it.

If you were to look ahead to the 600th anniversary of Calvin's birth in 2109, what aspects of Calvin do you think would be important then?

Maybe we will have advanced so far in the next 100 years that we will have the resources necessary to cope better with the complexity of the world. I hope that, by then, we will have finally rid ourselves of the image of the strict and authoritarian Calvin, and that we are able to celebrate Calvin properly in Geneva.

*Xavier Comtesse (60) studied mathematics and computer science at the University of Geneva, which was founded by Calvin. Since 2002, Comtesse has been the deputy director of the Avenir Suisse Foundation, managing its Geneva office. Xavier Comtesse is married with three sons, and lives in Geneva.

Brazil



Faith in practice

In an otherwise Catholic Brazil, Presbyterianism only began to take serious hold in the 19th century. Later, Protestant congregations were persecuted when they criticized the social injustice of the mid-20th-century military regime. The Calvin jubilee should provide some impetus to showcase the ethical consequences of the Gospel.

Eduardo Galasso Faria

The first attempt at establishing Reformed Protestantism in Brazil came about in the 16th century as part of a French settlement project at Guanabara Bay near Rio de Janeiro. Calvin had sent 14 Huguenots to «establish a church in accordance with the word of God» there, and to preach the Gospel to the indigenous people. A second attempt was made in the 17th century under the leadership of Dutch Reformed Christians. Both attempts were, however, without success.

It was not until the 19th century that Presbyterianism was able to truly take hold in Brazil. American missionaries began to spread their ideals based on freedom and democracy, combined with a puritanical and anti-Catholic attitude.

Persecution during the Military Regime

The Brazilian Evangelical Confederation, which brought the country's most important denominations together in 1934, was of particular historical importance. In the 1950s and 1960s, the congregations of the Confederation proclaimed the Gospel in both with prophetic vision and an ecumenical scope, and criticized the social injustice of the era. The Confederation suffered strongly under Brazil's new military regime (1964) and its persecution, and in the end had to disband. Among Presbyterians divisions would follow, 1975 under the influence of the Pentecostal movement, and then in 1978 as the result of disagreements between Liberals and Conservatives.

Today's Presbyterian and Reformed churches in Brazil have some 800 000

members, divided into 14 different denominations. The members of the small historical churches of the Reformation come mainly from the middle class, while the members of the Pentecostal churches form the majority of Brazil's Protestants and represent all social classes.

Calvinism on the Blink in Latin America

In Brazil, and throughout Latin America, the image of Calvin has long been influenced by more recent developments in Calvinism. Following a form that is bound to tradition, these churches follow a liturgy lacking in participatory and dynamic elements. They are thus unable to fulfill the wish of the people for more spontaneous and less rational forms of spirituality that are full of symbolism.

Reverting to Calvin

As a church that is called to witness Jesus in a Latin American society characterized by inequality and injustice, the jubilee celebrations provide a welcome opportunity to revisit Calvin's legacy:

- First, we are aware that it is impossible to simply repeat Calvin's words today. We should instead attempt to recover some of his spirit and the obedience to God that was deeply seated in his heart, putting this into practice as a symbol of committed spirituality;
- Secondly, we should work toward reducing the stereotypes linked to Calvin in order to better understand his sensible human personality, including his ability to react well to the great questions and necessities of his time;

- Thirdly, we should view our mission as an opportunity to express the ethical and social implications of the kingdom of God as an expression of solidarity with the people living on the margins of Latin American society;
- And fourthly, we should maintain an awareness of the problems of church disunity, and work toward opening ourselves to the Spirit of God and toward contributing to unity in Christ.

Prof. Eduardo Galasso Faria is pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil and professor for systematic theology at the Theological Seminar in São Paulo, Brazil.

The Reformed family of churches in Brazil came together on March 21, 2009 to celebrate the Calvin jubilee and the first Calvinist Lord's Supper in the Americas, and will repeat the celebration on July 10.

Hitherto unknown Calvin sermons and Bible commentaries, as well as new teaching material on Calvin for Sunday schools and theological seminaries are being published to celebrate the jubilee. A conference on Calvin's theological thought will also be held in September 2009.

Further information can be accessed at:

www.ipib.org/calvin09

China



The fascination of the elite

Calvin is for Chinese Protestants what Confucius is for all of China. His understanding of the church, his views on diakonia, and his economic ethics have all strongly influenced the Protestant Church. It is even currently considered modern to be Protestant among China's intellectuals.

Aiming Wang

It might seem presumptuous to inquire into the influence of John Calvin, the 16th-century Reformer of Geneva, on 21st-century China – a country with 1.3 billion inhabitants that is faced with problems and questions hitherto unknown to humankind.

Elites are interested in Calvin

Chinese intellectuals are indeed quite interested in Calvin and his work, many of whom have studied at renowned American, European, and Japanese universities, where they have become increasingly interested in discovering the origins of Western affluence. Should there be a connection – even if only indirect – between Calvin and the Chinese project of modernization?

We must, however, first point to a key distinction: Calvin as viewed in the theology that has been emerging in China is not identical with the Calvin in the economic thinking of the Chinese world, whether in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or the Chinese diaspora in major cities around the globe.

Calvin is a central and foundational figure in Chinese Protestant theology, which is perhaps more aware of the Geneva story and the Reformation Monument than are those living in Geneva today. With his ideas, his understanding of the church, his words on the relationship between church and state, his views on diakonia, public education,

and economic ethics, Calvin has played a role for the Chinese Protestant Church similar to that of Confucius for the entire nation: that of a chief «father» figure. Both the missionary work conducted before 1949 and the teachings and congregational proclamation of today afford considerable space to the Calvinist tradition.

Chinese Protestantism is driven by typical Calvinist issues: ministerial discipline and church rules in a church influenced by American fundamentalism; democracy issues; the relationship between church and state in accordance with the Reformed tradition of autonomous cooperation; and the freedom of faith, conscience and creed.

Debates among Calvinists

Chinese theology is currently in a period of intensive debate between the representatives of the Calvinist doctrine of citizens' responsibility and representatives of a more puritanical, pietistic and/or fundamentalist theology.

Calvin's thought, generally as seen through the prism molded by Max Weber (*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*), has been an object of study for broad intellectual circles in China. From this perspective one often poses the question: Why did a great nation like China suffer such a decline following the end of its imperial era, at the same time that the West saw an in-

crease in prosperity, particularly in those countries that were influenced by Calvinist and capitalist ethics? Would it be possible to adopt something from Western ethics to support economic development in China? In contrast with today's Europe, being a Christian – and particularly a Protestant – is now viewed as particularly «modern» in China.

Calvin next to Confucius

At China's universities, both Calvinist-Protestant and Confucian ethics are now on the agenda. Does Confucius or Calvin have a form of ethics on offer that could connect social conservatives with social progressives, and that demands both a strong loyalty to the state and nation alongside an equally strong sense of individual responsibility?

In a country with over 60 million Protestants, most of whom are the poor inhabitants of rural areas, Protestantism has been rapidly gaining ground among the intellectual elite. Calvin's teachings have captured the imagination of the people along with the Calvinist, Puritan, and Presbyterian movements that he has inspired over the past 500 years of Protestant thought.

Prof. Dr. Aiming Wang is Dean and Vice President of the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in China.

Germany



A delicate balance among reformers

It was not until after the 1648 Peace of Westphalia that Calvinists would be officially recognized alongside Lutherans in Germany. Calvin, we must recall, revered Luther as an illustrious servant of the church, although criticizing his immoderate and counter-productive polemics against the Swiss view of the Lord's Supper.

Achim Detmers

The Protestant influence on politics and society remains strong in Germany, the home of the Reformation, even as 40 years of socialism have made a clear dent in Protestantism in the East, where it is traditionally predominant. Some of the German population are Protestants, 32 million people. Of these, just almost 2 million belong to Reformed and only 10 million to Lutheran churches. Most German Protestants are in fact members of United churches, which were founded as unions of both Lutheran and Reformed congregations. Other churches and groups in Germany include the Baptists, Moravians, Mennonites, Methodists, and Quakers.

Struggling for Equality

Zwinglians and Calvinists at first had a hard time gaining traction in Germany. The 1555 Peace of Augsburg did not legally recognize the confession within the limits of the Holy Roman Empire. Two territories would, nevertheless, soon declare themselves to be «Calvinist»: the Palatinate in 1562 and Hesse-Cassel in 1604. There was also a strong Calvinist influence in Anhalt, Lippe, Bremen, Holstein-Gottorp, and Brandenburg. It was not, however, until the 1648 Peace of Westphalia that «Calvinism» was given an equal status alongside Catholics and Lutherans in the Empire.

Calvin's view on Luther

This Calvin Year, the relationship between Calvin and Luther is of particular interest, not least due to the close interaction between Lutheran and Reformed Christians in Germany. Calvin revered Luther greatly, but also identified weaknesses in Luther during his later years, as summarized in the following seven points:

- Luther was 26 years older than Calvin, whom he never met personally. Calvin wrote only one letter to Luther, which Melancthon, however, unfortunately never dared deliver to Luther.
- In his letter, Calvin describes Luther as an illustrious servant of the church, who excelled through his extraordinary intellect, who had always taught with fortitude and constancy, and who worked effectively to proclaim the Gospel.
- At first, Luther read some of Calvin's writings with great sympathy. Later, however, Luther would accuse him of not speaking out clearly enough on the Lord's Supper. Luther suspected that Calvin shared in the error of the «Sacramentarians» in that he saw the bread and wine only as symbols. In view of this, Luther advised against reading Calvin's writings.
- Luther's criticism of Calvin did not dissuade him from deeming Luther to be a distinguished servant of God.

- Calvin, however, also found flaws in Luther, including his harsh words and impetuosity when he was enraged by the agitators around him. Calvin would have liked Luther to do more to keep his bluster under control and to come to terms with his flaws.
- Calvin criticized Luther and Zwingli for not having the patience to listen to each other in the debate over the Lord's Supper in order to join together to seek out the truth in a calm manner. Calvin would also have liked for Luther to distance himself more from the physical presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper.
- Calvin was particularly disappointed by the fact that Luther saw it necessary to attack dissenting Swiss theologians at a time when the numerically weaker Protestant movement was surrounded by enemies.

Dr. Achim Detmers, a pastor of the Evangelical Church of Anhalt, is the appointee for the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Union of Reformed Churches in Germany for the Calvin Year 2009.

France



A prophet unrecognized in his own land

Calvin had to flee from France and continues to be poorly known in his country of origin. French Protestants still, however, remain proud that the theological vision of their countryman has had such a strong influence all around the world in a wide variety of fields.

Jean-Arnold de Clermont

Do we really need to celebrate John Calvin's 500th birthday? In France, he is much too poorly known to serve as a drawing card for Protestants. Would not such a celebration threaten to burden us with a reputation of living in the past or even of cultivating the past in order to cover up for an inability to adopt to the present?

Calvin: Largely forgotten in France

French Protestants have followed an entirely different tack this Calvin anniversary year. Since John Calvin has been forgotten by a great many Protestants and French people alike, we sought to call attention to both the French and Reformed sides of the reformer. The celebration thus serves to recall an historical truth, both for his home country, which was not able to keep him, as well as for the French churches that arose from the Calvinist Reformation, which have lost sight of their own identity, again and again.

Calvin undoubtedly served to help France enter into the modern era, and he did so most strikingly through his language. In the words of Bernard Cottret: «Calvin's monodic prose always strikes us by the modernity of its tone; all allowances being made, even when they express the apparently most complicated ideas, his sentences preserve an immediacy and a feeling of concreteness that make them curiously accessible. ... A number of his lexicological inventions have passed into the standard language: *tergiverser*, *hyperbolique*, even *manigance* and *antiquailles*.»

[Quote translated by M. Wallace McDonald]

In the Midst of an International Network

Calvin's international influence is even more impressive. Calvin rapidly became the center of an international network, one that he maintained through his letters and numerous visitors, students, and other listeners. Following on Luther, Calvin rethought the relationship between the «holy» and the «profane». Both reformers agree in their high esteem for the profane obligation of work, which becomes one's vocation. Calvin, however, supported this revolution in Christian thought even more strongly, by emphasizing the ethical dimensions of work.

Calvin has also taught Reformed Christians that religion itself is an area particularly prone to temptation, as it can establish false images of God, and that the Bible indeed demands from us to continually question all that arises from religious culture. This explains why the «Reformed world» is so diverse and works just as well in South Korea as it does in Latin America, whether as a «Presbyterian Church» or as a «Congregational Church».

Strong Identity and Sufficient Flexibility

Calvin developed a dynamic and open view of the charismata and ministries within the church, ensuring that their identity is strong enough for them to continue to carry the Gospel onward, as

well as a structure that is flexible enough to serve in a variety of times and places. The strength of his model has proven particularly helpful in changeable times such as our own, as our churches must be able to continually adapt without losing their own substance in the process.

Living Source of Inspiration

In no way do we wish to turn Calvin into an unrecognized «saint», cleansed of all criticism leveled against him. To celebrate his 500th birthday, we can say that he was a man of his time and the creator of a legacy that contributed to the founding of the modern world; he remains a living source of inspiration for the churches and for Christian spirituality. We remember that he was a man of France, just as we take into account the questions that he left for future generations to answer, through our own times: What is the place of the religious in our current society? How can Christians bear ethical responsibility in that society? What freedoms do we have to develop new church forms that are more suited to the proclamation of the Gospel today? Even if Calvin cannot perhaps answer those questions for us now, he did indeed pose the right questions.

Rev. Jean-Arnold de Clermont, based in Paris, is coordinator of the Calvin09 Jubilee for the Fédération Protestante de France and is President of the Conference of European Churches (CEC).

Italy



Protestantism in the presence of the Pope

The Waldensian Church is Italy's largest Protestant community. As a small minority, Italy's Reformed Christians have made it a point to celebrate the Calvin Jubilee together with state and Roman Catholic institutions as well as the country's Pentecostal and Evangelical churches.

Pawel Gajewski

For Italy's Protestant churches, the celebration of Calvin's birthday already began in December 2004 with the official introduction of the first volume of Calvin's «Selected Works», entitled *Dispute con Roma*, in the auditorium of the Waldensian Theological Faculty in Rome. The book's publisher is a cooperative venture of the Waldensian, Methodist, Baptist, and Lutheran churches, which combine for a total of 35 000 members in Italy. For Italy, the four churches represent a direct link to the 16th-century Reformation and to the European and global ecumenical movements. The Evangelical Waldensian Church is Italy's largest Protestant group with some 20 000 members. This union of Waldensian and Methodist churches combines both the legacy of the medieval Waldensian movement and the theology of the Reformed churches.

Calvin's Social Reform

The decision to begin celebrating the jubilee with the publication of Calvin's polemic writings has symbolic power as well, since the Italian Protestant churches always have to contend with the omnipresence of the Vatican and the Pope. Italy's Calvin 2009 project takes this into account by working toward including into the festivities not only Protestant churches but the entire cultural spectrum, including institutions with a secular or Catholic background.

One focus of the jubilee project has been placed on a travelling exhibition of eleven presentation boards entitled «John Calvin, the design of a society». Local churches can then use this exhibition to develop and present its own ideas on the subject. Both the title and the content of the exhibition are designed to present Calvin's work not only as a successful attempt to design a new church model, but as a major social reform project as well. This social aspect has indeed gained particular significance for the current political and social situation in Italy, which has suffered from a serious crisis both within its political institutions and throughout civil society.

Most Protestants are Foreigners

One very important jubilee year initiative was the study conference held in Rome on «John Calvin and Calvinism: The migration of people, ideas, and books» from March 26–28, 2009. Numerous Italian reformers (Vermigli, Zanchi, Turretini) made significant contributions to the development of Reformed theology. The current presence in Italy of immigrants with a Protestant background has provided an historic opportunity for the Italian Protestant movement. An estimated 60 000 Reformed Christians from other countries (Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa) now live in Italy, more in fact than the total number of Protestants of Italian origin.

It is of particular importance that state institutions are being included in the Calvin Year projects. While, for example, the *Centro Culturale Valdese* was joined by a National Civil Service volunteer, the National Central Library in Florence hosted an exhibition of different publications of the works of Calvin and Italian reformers, in cooperation with the Ministry for Cultural Assets and Activities.

Inclusion of Evangelical Churches

Another positive step would be to inspire the interest of Pentecostal and Evangelical churches for Calvin's legacy, and thus reach the vast majority of Italian Protestantism (with some 200 000 members). This was met with the first encouraging responses in early 2009. Two important theological journals have indeed already dedicated a large amount of space to Calvin: *Oltre*, which is close to the Federation of Pentecostal Churches in Italy, and *Il Cristiano*, which is connected to the independent Church of the Brethren (Chiesa Cristiana Evangelica dei Fratelli).

Dr. Pawel Gajewski is pastor of the Waldensian congregation in Florence and teaches systematic theology at the Waldensian Faculty in Rome.

Korea



Towards healing our rifts

Korea's Protestant churches are deeply divided amongst themselves, including differences of ideology. This reflects the effects of the competitively run missions from the United States and the anti-Communist stance with regard to North Korea. Revisiting Calvin could indeed prove to be of particular value.

Meehyun Chung

Korea's very first Protestant Christian church was founded by a Korean who himself had received the Gospel in China. Korean Christians are indeed proud of this fact. But the Presbyterian/Evangelical Reformed Church was first given its structure through American missionary ventures. The first Presbyterian missionary in the country was Horace Grant Underwood, who originated from Great Britain but had lived in the United States before arriving in Korea on April 5, 1885 together with his Methodist friend and missionary Henry G. Appenzeller, an American of Swiss heritage.

Doctrine of Predestination leaves its Mark

The population of South Korea is now 18 percent Protestant, of which 69 percent are members of the Presbyterian Church. Another 11 percent are Catholic, while others are Buddhists, Taoists, Cheondoists, Confucians, or Shamanists.

Although the roots of the Reformed Church of South Korea date back to Zwingli and Calvin, Martin Luther is much better known as a reformer than his counterparts in Zurich and Geneva. While Calvin is less celebrated than Luther, he has had a great inner influence on the church with his doctrine of predestination, his understanding of being a Christian, and his ideas of the ministry and church structure. Unfortunately, his teachings were introduced to Korean Christianity in a one-sided, at times corrupted form by American-styled churches.

Competitive Missionary Politics

In building its church, the Reformed Church in South Korea places strong emphasis on forms of piety including house fellowship groups, Bible groups, and early morning prayer. The Korean

church is also strongly characterized by positive Calvinistic characteristics such as hard work, a disciplined life, and accepting one's profession as one's calling.

The deep rifts within Korea's Reformed Church have been a chronic problem, resulting from the competitive nature of American missionary societies. A renewed focus on their common roots could provide impetus toward healing these differences and divides. While Calvin's teachings are no panacea for these problems, we can list a few thematic areas from his legacy that could prove beneficial to the future of South Korea:

Humanitarian Aid instead of Anti-communist propaganda

Overcoming ideological dualism: Calvin's doctrine of double predestination has had serious repercussions in South Korea, as it has been misused to stamp people with other beliefs or ideological points of view as enemies. South Korean churches, instead of labeling their North Koreans brothers and sisters as an «axis of evil», should work more actively toward building bridges and offer them humanitarian assistance.

An obligation to support economic justice and protect the integrity of creation: Calvin's Christian social and economic ethics are of great importance both to the church and the society at large. One should be able to expect sustained protest from South Korean churches on matters such as the environmental damage caused by building golf courses, and their work to assist migrants done in solidarity with the weak.

The foundations of a democratic church structure: Western patriarchy and Calvinistic Puritanism have been strongly mixed with the traditional

Korean patriarchy of Confucian origin. Particularly in the churches, one must learn to avoid discrimination by gender, race, or social class, and instead place as much esteem as possible on each individual. That is the essence of it. As Calvin might have put it: Each of the organs of the Holy Spirit that form the body of Christ is precious, as the Holy Spirit grants life to each part of the organism, without prejudice.

Dialogue of the Strengths and Weaknesses

Unity in reconciled diversity: Too great a focus on one's own confession can lead to divisions in society. Such divisions among Protestants are now being exported throughout the world as the result of a missionary policy that replicates the errors of the European and American missions of the 19th century. It is more important than ever before that we work toward coalitions and cooperative efforts to overcome conflicts of spirituality and theology.

Switzerland is the birthplace of Reformed churches, while the global presence and influence of the movement is much stronger than is generally known in Switzerland. It remains an excellent idea for Switzerland's Reformed churches to maintain a theological dialogue with the newer churches of the world as a means of discovering each other's strengths and weaknesses. Instead of being viewed in a negative light or as mere history, this tradition could then be revived creatively to meet the needs of each situation.

Since 2005, Dr Meehyun Chung has been head of the Women and Gender Division at the Mission 21 Protestant mission in Basel, Switzerland and Rev. of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK).

Mexico



Intertwined with liberalism

The introduction of the Reformed tradition to Mexico in the 19th century was connected closely with political liberalism. Although Reformed Christians are but a small minority in the country, they have had a considerable influence on the practice of democracy in Mexican society.

Leopoldo Cervantes-Ortiz

John Calvin is no stranger to Mexico. Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos, leaders of Mexico's independence movement, were denounced and excommunicated as «followers of Luther and Calvin» and condemned as «followers of French liberty sects,» a ridiculous charge to be sure. Both were in fact Catholic priests and these charges were merely part of the general rejection of anything that had the sound of Protestantism or reform.

With Calvin for Democracy

As very few representatives of Calvinism had actually arrived in this part of the world at the time, one cannot truly speak of a formal introduction of the Reformed tradition in Mexico until the beginning of the 19th century. This was indeed the time when liberal governments had begun to rescind the privileges that Catholicism had enjoyed. The United States served as a political model for Mexico, and the Protestant-Calvinist background of the neighbors to the north was not a problem for liberals, who believed it possible to introduce these political elements into the Mexican state system. They would, however, pay too little heed to the Spanish-Catholic background of the country. When the United States intervened militarily in September 1847, this only confirmed the suspicions of the Mexican people that the religious ideas of the north were being used as an instrument of cultural domination.

Reliable historical sources show that the first Presbyterian worship service was, ironically enough, held by the invading army in the occupied National Palace in Mexico City. The image created by the arrival of the foreign Protestant mission is characterized by the belief that they had brought with them the true Gospel to put an end to «Roman superstition».

The model of a community in partnership that Protestant congregations followed did, in any event, have a significant influence on Mexico. The at times subconscious search for a true democratic approach has formed an ideological axis through in the center of society. Similarly, many understood that if the educational system were to remain in the hands of the Church, it would lead to major problems with the country's path to development. The support that the Protestants have characteristically provided for a secular state is therefore quite understandable.

Protestants in the Whole Country

Protestant churches have been able to spread throughout a considerable part of the country – with particularly strong growth, in terms of numbers, in the states of Chiapas and Tabasco. In Chiapas, numerous indigenous congregations can be seen to follow fundamental Calvinist ideas of faith and practice, even if they have little formal knowledge of it.

One hundred years ago, to mark the 400th anniversary of Calvin's birth, the future Presbyterian politician Aarón Sáenz held a speech, in which he touched upon how, before the Mexican Revolution, Protestants would do all that they could to inspire the people's yearning for the changes they saw to be necessary. When the regime that arose from the Mexican Revolution began to stabilize in the late 1920s, Sáenz was nominated as a candidate for president of the country, but lost in the primaries – seemingly due to his Reformed education.

A place of its own in Mexican Society

In spite of great resistance, the Reformed-Calvinist tradition found its own place in Mexican society even as Protestants there are often not sufficiently informed of their own theological roots.

Calvin's legacy can thus be seen to have influenced the development of a religious, political, and cultural identity that is inseparable with today's pluralistic and diverse Mexican nation.

Prof. Leopoldo Cervantes-Ortiz is a publisher, writer and presbyterian professor of Theology. He coordinates the Basilea Center of Research at Mexico City. He is author of several books and essays and collaborates with some ecumenical organizations. He is member of the WCC's Ecumenical Formation Commission.

Netherlands



More Calvinist than one might think . . .

After centuries of orthodox forms of Calvinism in the Netherlands, it has now become one of the most liberal countries in the world. The Calvinist legacy, however, continues to be prominent, whether in Dutch culture or in a Sunday church turnout that is better than in other European countries.

Douwe Visser

Trouw, a Dutch newspaper with a Reformed background recently published a «Calvin test» to begin the Calvin Year. The 25 questions determined the readers' «C-Factor», and those who answered 75 percent correctly qualified as «true Calvinists». The readers' reactions showed how some were surprised that their «C-Factor» was higher than expected, and that they were more Calvinist than they might like to be. This also showed that the term «Calvinist» is often laden with a negative connotation.

The Calvin jubilee is nevertheless receiving a high level of attention in the Netherlands. It is being celebrated with a diverse program, ranging from talks to a special theatre presentation. A glossy Calvin Book sold out within a few days of its release.

Long Struggle for Calvinism

Viewed historically, the Netherlands is a Calvinist country. And yet, Calvinism was only able to establish itself after a long and entrenched battle over religious freedom after the movement began to spread in the country during the second half of the 16th century. This is perhaps the reason that Calvinism has often taken an orthodox tack in the Netherlands, as evidenced in its many moral principles. Dutch Protestants perhaps followed even stricter standards than Calvin himself. Keeping the Sabbath was an obligation that went without saying, and included attending two church services each Sunday. Outdoor activities on Sunday, aside from

short strolls, were anathema until only a few decades ago.

The situation in the Netherlands has now fully changed. It would seem that the country has shaken off its Calvinist legacy. The Netherlands is, in any case, one of the most strongly secularized countries of the world, with each individual defending his or her lifestyle as strongly as possible, and in doing so, invoking their own personal freedoms. The Netherlands now have the highest degree of tolerance with regard to morals and ethics, and was, for example, the first country to officially recognize same-sex marriages.

The Calvinistic roots are still easily recognizable in the Dutch society and culture. While the membership of the Reformed church has fallen considerably over the past decades, church members feel a strong obligation to be active in their churches. Sunday church attendance in the Reformed churches continues to be relatively high in comparison with other countries such as Switzerland or Germany. Those, however, who no longer regularly attend church, often formally end their membership as well.

Moslems are very Religious Today

One interesting phenomenon is the emergence, with the migration of large numbers of Muslim immigrants to the Netherlands, of a new strict religious lifestyle that indeed does not have its roots in Reformed Christianity. Dealing with this development has proven

difficult for the secularized Dutch society, which had just freed itself from the all-pervasive Calvinism of the past. The view proved to be false that religion is a private matter with no effect on social and political life.

This situation is much different from that of the 17th century when numerous religious refugees streamed into liberal Holland. Back then, the Calvinist tradition played a decisive role in bringing about a successful integration policy. This historical achievement can now provide inspiration for solutions to the integration problems of today.

Much Attention for the Jubilee

The Calvin jubilee year would at least provide ample opportunity to make this possible. Calvin's legacy is receiving great attention in the Netherlands this year. The Reformer of Geneva has been resonating with the people much more had been thought possible for a long time. This is yet another reason to use the jubilee year as an opportunity to reconsider the roots of today's Dutch society.

Dr. Douwe Visser is pastor of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and is the Executive Secretary for Theology and Ecumenical Engagement for the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) in Geneva, Switzerland.

Scotland



Providing identity in a secular society

It took over 100 years for Scotland to find its Reformed identity – after a long period of wavering between Anglican Episcopalianism and Calvinist Presbyterianism. It is the latter that has done much to form Scottish society through today.

Sheilagh Kesting

When John Knox returned to Scotland after his time in exile in Geneva, nobody could have known how much Calvin would go on to influence the country. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland joined the Reformed movement in 1560. Then, for over 100 years, the church wavered between Presbyterianism and Episcopalianism. In 1689, the Church of Scotland was recognized as having a Presbyterian form of church government, and, to this day, at the General Assembly, the queen or king reaffirms the commitment to maintain Presbyterian church government in Scotland.

One Large, Many Small Churches

With 490000 members, the Church of Scotland is clearly the largest Reformed church in Scotland. Other Reformed churches include the United Free Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, and the United Reformed Church, with around 4000 members each, as well as numerically small Associated Presbyterian Churches and the Free Presbyterian Church.

Within Scotland's Protestant community, the Scottish Episcopal Church, with 40000 members, is the largest church after the Church of Scotland. Smaller Protestant churches in the country include the Methodist Church, the Congregational Federation, the Salvation Army, and the Religious Society of Friends. All together, around half of the Christian population of Scotland belongs to a Protestant church.

Calvinism has had a decisive influence on Scottish society, its cultural ethos, and political development. Its status and influence may be less obvious in today's secular and religiously pluralistic society, but the legacy still continues to play a role as a source of identity in Scotland.

Calvin into the Limelight

With such a legacy that remains palpable to this day, 2009 is an excellent opportunity to revisit the past. The spotlight, however, should now be placed more on Calvin than on Calvinism and perhaps recover a theology that is more catholic in its breadth and more ecumenical in its intention.

The Very Rev. Dr. Sheilagh Kesting is the Church of Scotland ecumenical officer, based in Edinburgh.

Calvin Year events in Scotland

The Scottish Church Theological Society held a week-long conference in January. Numerous topics were on the agenda, including Calvin's life, his times, and his place within the Reformation, his influence on Scotland, his lasting theological legacy, the political and economic dimensions of Calvinism, and the current Reformed contribution to the global church.

An ecumenical symposium will be held in November together with the Roman Catholic in Scotland entitled «Calvin: Catholic and Reformed». The talk held by a Roman Catholic speaker will discuss the influence of the theology of Bernard of Clairvaux on Calvin's thought. A second talk will present a comprehensive look

into Calvin's theology from a Roman Catholic perspective. Two talks will be held from a Reformed perspective on «Calvin and Liturgy» and «The Church as Mother in Calvin's Institutes.»

Since 2010 also marks the 450th anniversary of the Reformation in Scotland, the Cunningham Lectures will be held at the University of Edinburgh from November 2009 to January 2010 and will again take an in-depth look into the influence of the Reformation on Scotland.

South Africa



A long period of deep ambivalence

While churches of the Calvinist tradition numbered among those that supported Apartheid in South Africa, the opponents of the regime also invoked Calvin's legacy. The churches now face the challenge of living a more visible unity in their worship and in their structures.

Dirkie Smit

Calvinism arrived on South African soil in the middle of the 17th century, with the first Dutch settlement at the Cape of Good Hope. During the colonial period, several waves of European settlers brought different streams of the Reformed church and tradition to South Africa, so that the influence of Calvin proved significant and lasting. Dutch Calvinism played a particularly major role, but a large group of French Huguenots followed starting in 1688, and Presbyterian and Congregational groups would also gradually arrive to play an important role in public life.

One Fifth is Protestant

The population of South Africa remains mostly religious to this day, generally with a Christian background. Roughly one third are members of independent African churches, while around a tenth are Roman Catholic. The others belong to a variety of Protestant movements of which the different churches of Dutch Reformed origin are the largest confessional group, representing about one fifth of the population.

Until the end of the apartheid era, however, the Reformed community in South Africa had a deeply ambiguous history and public presence. Beginning in 1857, the Lord's Supper was held separately for white and black parishioners in Dutch Reformed congregations, which would develop into the

complete separation of believers into different churches on the basis of their race. Many believe that this church development would later contribute strongly to the political ideology of apartheid (which literally means separateness). Apartheid was in fact justified biblically and theologically by Reformed theologians and ministers, and supported by the majority of white members of these churches.

Pioneering Belhar Confession

At the same time, however, the ecumenical movement, both inside and outside South Africa, came together to form a strong anti-apartheid movement. It is of particular interest that this opposition would also invoke Calvin and the Reformed tradition. During the 1980s, a new Reformed confession was adopted, the Confession of Belhar, addressing what was regarded to be the three main tenets of apartheid theology and faith. This included the refusal to practice living unity in the church, the lack of trust in the power of Christ's reconciliation to overcome natural and cultural divisions, and the deep social and economic injustices resulting from these convictions and practices. It praised the Triune God of the Bible for providing unity, while it called upon believers to embody this visible unity to bring about real reconciliation and compassionate justice.

During the current period of social transformation in South Africa, the churches continue to be faced with the challenge of making their own unity more visible through a revision of their church structures and orders, and through common worship and confession. This is the only chance they have to overcome the destructive divisions of the past. Sadly, a lack of unity still remains, with deep and painful effects on the witness of the Reformed churches as united and uniting churches.

Testifying God's Justice

Lastly, the churches still face the challenge of bearing public witness, through their words and deeds, to God's compassionate justice, whether through their own discipleship, or through their appeals to the state, society, and public opinion. They can and should, in this way, not only address past injustices, but also the current challenges of poverty, suffering, HIV/AIDS, the denial of human dignity, crime and violence.

South African Calvinists are aware that they can only carry out these tasks together with other Christians and non-Christians in South Africa and throughout the entire world.

Dr. Dirkie Smit is professor for systematic theology at the Stellenbosch University in South Africa.

Hungary



Little known but big influence

Even though Luther was much better known than Calvin in the Hungary of the Reformation era, Calvinist confessions were adopted in the country in 1567. Calvin's concept of a reformation of one's whole life offered a better perspective in a time of chaos for Hungary, a place where the term Calvinism has maintained a positive connotation through our own times.

Gustáv Bölskei

The diffusion and rapid expansion of the Calvinist Reformation in Hungary may seem surprising at first glance. Calvin did not personally know or correspond with the main figures of the Hungarian Reformation. It would take a long time before one would make reference to Calvin, not in fact until 1564, the year of his death, when his arguments were quoted in a debate on the Lord's Supper – although without even mentioning him by name.

The Hungarian bourgeoisie primarily adopted Lutheran thought, and was at first little influenced by the southern German Reformation. It is thus surprising that the Swiss branch of the Reformation was able to take hold in Hungary in the 1550s, with the Heidelberg Catechism and the Second Helvetic Confession then adopted as the official confessional documents of Hungarian Reformed Christians at the Debrecen Synod of 1567.

Reformation of one's Entire Life

Any explanation for this perhaps unexpected development is to be found in the chaotic political, economic, and social situation of the time, and in Hunga-

ry's confused political system. Within this situation of instability, the central Calvinist concept of a «reformation of one's whole life» was best suited to provide an answer to the existential questions of the time instead of the solely inner reformation and renewal that was the goal of Lutheranism. Calvin's renewal went well beyond doctrinal decisions and church structures. His conviction that the entire world was the theater of God's glory (*theatrum gloriae Dei*) had real formative power in our country.

This is indeed the reason why Calvin has been viewed positively throughout the history of Hungarian politics and culture, in contrast with the negative stereotypes commonly held of him in other countries. These positive associations most prominently include liberty, independence, political, cultural, and economic autonomy. From the very beginning, Reformed congregations and the schools they have run have been drivers of national independence, Hungarian language and culture, and a puritan way of life. The resulting sense of social responsibility and a willingness for sacri-

fice served as a bulwark against dictatorial machinations and libertine tendencies.

Essential: Unity of the Church

It is well known how much Calvin took the unity of the church to heart. This legacy also contributed to the fact that Hungarian Reformed Christians were themselves never responsible for church schisms, unlike many other cases throughout the worldwide Reformed family of churches. The various churches of the Carpathian Basin have maintained a sense of cohesion even through rifts came about for external historical reasons. This does not, of course, give us the right to look at ourselves as the custodians of the Reformed tradition. We instead view our responsibility to lie in the transformation of our living Reformed heritage into a church that is active beyond its own domains to support the welfare of all.

Dr. Gustáv Bölskei, based in Debrecen, is the Senior Bishop of the Reformed Church in Hungary.

USA



Turning to Calvin for Renewal

Calvin has an ambiguous image in the United States. And yet, his legacy could provide valuable support for unity among fragmented U.S. churches, for a boost to the priesthood of all believers, for more social commitment instead of competitive thinking, and grace instead of self-assertion.

Joseph D. Small

Many Presbyterians have received the news of the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth with a yawn, a roll of the eyes, or even a derisive snort. Why are we so dismissive of our forebear in the Reformed tradition? Lutherans adore Martin Luther. Methodist hearts are strangely warmed by John Wesley. But Presbyterians are uncertain about John Calvin and his legacy. Calvin is not a Reformed idol.

Calvin's big Influence, but no Pedestal

John Calvin would have been pleased by our reluctance to revere him; he did not want to be idolized. We do not need to put Calvin on a pedestal in order to appreciate the ways in which his perspectives on Christian faith and life have shaped Reformed churches throughout the world, and continue to shape our churches today.

During this jubilee year in the United States, four areas of Calvin's legacy are particularly important sources for the renewal of church life:

Unity: Calvin has the reputation of a firebrand who rejected the Catholic Church with enflamed rhetoric and bitter invective. Yet, while his censure of the Catholic Church and its practices was pervasive, his purpose was always reform, not separation. Calvin understood that the restored unity of the church was a gospel imperative. He ranked the disunity of the church «among the chief evils of our time.» This insight is especially important in the United States, where church life is char-

acterized by easy satisfaction with denominational proliferation, acceptance of market-oriented church competition, and an antagonism toward ecumenical efforts to shape meaningful forms of church unity. At least forty-five Reformed denominations – and twenty-two of them Presbyterian! – are strewn across the American landscape.

No Scission of Christians

Ministries: Calvin's plurality of ministries – pastors/teachers, elders, and deacons – seeks to break down the divide between «clergy and laity». His ordering of ministries in the church gives visible form to the «priesthood of all believers». While American Reformed churches have preserved the form of Calvin's vision, they have lost much of the substance. Too often, deacons are reduced to providers of polite services within the congregation, elders are transformed into congregational boards of directors, and pastors assume the role of CEOs.

Social Righteousness: Calvin's actions in Geneva join his writings, teaching, and preaching as powerful testimonies to the church's responsibility for economic and social justice in society. His theological convictions served as a basis for his commitments to education, health care, refugee relief, employment, and fair lending practices. In an America too often characterized by the assertion of competing rights, Calvin provides the church with new insight into its social vocation.

Grace instead of Self-assertion

Grace: In an America typified by self-reliance and self-assertion, Calvin's emphasis on grace is liberating. Rather than an anxious striving that sets us over against others, we are set free from all worries about our own justification before God and the depth of our personal beliefs. Neither what we do nor what we believe can justify our lives; neither is a precondition to God's love. Calvin stresses that gratitude for the grace of Christ liberates us to respond thankfully to God's unrestricted love and provides us with the space we need to enter into relationships of love with others. Following Calvin, we, too, can live grace-filled lives in that we, too, do what we can for others unreservedly and in selfless love.

Dr. Joseph D. Small is the Director of the Office of Theology, Worship, and Education for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Louisville, Kentucky.

Information about the Calvin Jubilee in the United States, including a study documentary with subtitles in six languages, can be found at www.pcusa.org/calvinjubilee.

«We now all have to work twice as hard»

Calvinist values continue to play a role among the private bankers of French-speaking Switzerland, values that serve Adrian Künzi of Bank Wegelin as an invaluable compass to navigate the financial crisis. He hopes for inspiration from the Calvin jubilee year as well.

Mr. Künzi, has the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth come at the right time, in the midst of the financial crisis? Can the banks do with a good dose of ethics in hard times?

Adrian Künzi*: The financial crisis has indeed shown that the banking industry can do with more ethics. The arrogance of the banks and bankers numbered among the causes of the crisis. They had the feeling that they were in control of everything. The central banks thought that, with their large sums of money, they could steer the world economy and even prevent future recessions. The major banks indeed assumed that limitless growth was possible. This arrogance also manifested itself in personal matters. Bankers demanded bonuses that were no longer anchored in reality.

What has to be done?

It is important to reestablish a balance. Those able to make large profits should also bear the risk of incurring heavy losses. This symmetry has been lost.

How can this symmetry be established?

Those at the top of a bank should not only be managers but also owners of the bank. At Bank Wegelin, we have such a system due to our legal status as a limited commercial partnership. We do not distinguish between owners and managers. Those in charge of the private bank are also owners and have their own personal finance on the line. We can make large profits but can also lose everything as well.

Does this system correspond with Calvin's idea that wealth and responsibility are interlinked?

Absolutely. The system also prevents bankers from thinking only of short-term gains. Once they have a stake in the bank, they have a vital interest in the bank making long-term profits. So they take much fewer risks.

Representatives of your bank leveled early criticism at the excesses of the financial markets. Are the people at Wegelin particularly astute or is this reserve part of your corporate policy?

We are not more astute than others. But we are critical observers. We can do that because we do without many areas of activity that have recently come under criticism. For example, we deliberately limit our branch network to



the Swiss market. Other banks that, like us, have 600 employees and that manage 21 billion Swiss francs, would have had branches outside Switzerland long ago. Precisely because we are not active abroad, we enjoyed the necessary distance to see how alarming the price trends in the U.S. real estate market and the increasing debt worldwide had become. We view our role not as purveyors of financial products but as partners in the sustainable investment of assets.

Is Calvin's idea that wealth can never be an end in itself also relevant in this regard?

This idea is indeed the foundation of the Swiss private banks. Earnings should not only be consumed but also reinvested. This principle is a major factor in the success of our segment.

Isn't the focus now more on the maximization of personal profit?

Wealth is indeed often simply an end in itself and no longer – as in Calvin's day – a sign of being elected by God. Unfortunately, people are more interested in which resort hotel they spend the weekend than how they reinvest they money they earn. This is a long way from Calvin's manner of thinking. I hope that the jubilee provides the inspiration needed to return to Calvin's excellent principles.

In any event, the large number of successful private banks in Geneva and its environs is viewed as a consequence of Calvinism. Are the bankers of French-speaking Switzerland still aware of this tradition?

The private banks are very much aware of their cultural heritage. Geneva's Museum of the Reformation has, for example, received the financial support of several private banker families. But this is not only a matter of having a nice museum, but also of what Calvin's ideas still have to tell us today.

To what extent does Calvin's view that wealth obliges us to be socially responsible still resonate with the private banks?

Many private banks are involved with numerous foundations in a wide variety of charitable projects. Bank Wegelin, for example, supports a project for a clean drinking water supply in poor countries, which uses a simple principle based on plastic bottles, and contributes to foundations that support the education of young people in marginal areas of Switzerland as well as in Central America.

With the greatest of respect for social involvement: How do you explain to the bank's customers that their money should not only be used to create the greatest profits but also entails social responsibility?

We believe that investments that take social responsibility into account are also in the interest of our customers. The risk of losing money by investing in stocks is much higher if the companies involved treat their employees poorly or have environmentally unsound practices. Investment in ecological areas such as water-treatment companies can, on the other hand, be quite interesting. Such companies now need a great deal of money for research. Such investments are poised to provide a strong



Fotos: Luc Georgi

yield in the future as the companies turn profits buoyed by demographic trends.

Could the banks also benefit during the financial crisis from Calvin's attitude toward work, which is to say maintaining one's zeal regardless of success?

We all need to work twice as hard to get out of this crisis. I do, however, hope that this success will not fail to come. It does not now help to point fingers at scapegoats such as bank secrecy, which is completely irrelevant as a cause of the crisis. The expansive stimulus packages are just as wrong, in my opinion. It cannot be the task of the state to maintain old structures. The crisis shows that we have to accept the fact that parts of banks must be able to enter into an orderly bankruptcy. This is not currently the case. And until it is, we only stand to benefit from Calvin's attitude toward work and diligence. But we need that even in good times so that we do not enter right back into a slow slide toward the next crisis.

* Adrian Künzi, 36, is a managing partner at Wegelin & Co. Private Bankers. Originally from Biel, Switzerland, he studied economics in St. Gallen and Cambridge. Since 2004, he has been active in establishing Bank Wegelin branches in Lausanne and Geneva.

calvin09

«Calvin is a cataract, a primeval forest, a demonic power, something directly down from Himalaya, absolutely Chinese, strange, mythological ; I lack completely the means, the suction cups, even to assimilate this phenomenon, not to speak of presenting it adequately. [...] I could gladly and profitably set myself down and spend all the rest of my life just with Calvin.»

Karl Barth *in a letter to Eduard Thurneysen, June 8, 1922*