



Faculté Jean Calvin

Evangelical Protestant Institute of Theology

NEWSLETTER



We might think we know what's in a name, but what's in a change of name?

There are several reasons that lead us to take this rather surprising step and perhaps some people will have difficulty understanding why "reformed" was abandoned...

Since 1974, when the FLTR was founded, the world has seen tremendous changes. Globalisation, internet and virtual communication, the rise of more and more sophisticated technology, the intermingling of peoples and beliefs, the threat of terrorism: all of these things have brought about dramatic changes in our society, in ways that are often disturbing. We are living in a different world and this is true of the Church and theology as well.

At the Seminary, a great deal of thought has been given to the religious changes in our society, particularly to the most immediate challenges. For starters - de-christianisation means France is no longer a Roman catholic country, traditional ethical values have gone out of

the window, the presence of Islam makes itself increasingly felt and the rise of new age spirituality and "do-it-yourself" religion have all had an impact. Within French Protestantism there has also been a numerical falling away in the "main-line" institutional churches with a corresponding decrease in their influence and the rise of "relational" churches also within evangelicalism.

In view of these sea-changes, what does the word "reformed", that the Seminary chose 35 years ago, mean? Elsewhere "reformed" refers to Reformed theology, "reformed according to the Word of God", to quote Dr Pierre Courthial, one of the founding fathers of the Seminary. However it's not the case in France! Very few people understand it that way, because the major Protestant church, the French Reformed Church, is pluralistic.

The word "réformé" had become ambiguous in the present church situation and is simply synonymous with theological liberalism and modernism. It was time to find a new name that conveyed our identity while avoiding all ambiguity. But what name should we choose? Several unsatisfactory suggestions were made, but finally our president, Pascal Geoffrey, came up with the name FACULTÉ JEAN CALVIN. 2009 was the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth, and it seemed a good way to bring Calvin home and honor him in his native France.

The new name gives a more accurate take on our theological position. Calvin's name is inseparable from the

unchangeable Gospel he dedicated his life to, the Gospel of grace revealed through the Holy Scriptures. Calvin's theology honors God's sovereignty, the unique place of Christ as mediator between God and man and the work of the Holy Spirit. His teaching on the "two graces" that flow from Jesus Christ, our justification and sanctification, on the authority of Holy Scripture inspired by God and on the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross are the foundations of evangelical theology. This is the teaching that powered revivals in many countries and missionary activity throughout the world.

The Seminary holds to the great doctrines of grace epitomized by the Calvinistic Reformation: Christ alone, Scripture alone, grace alone, salvation by faith alone, the glory of God alone, our Creator, our Redeemer and our hope. Our vision is to see these great truths preached today and in the years to come, in France and throughout the world.

The mission of the Seminary has not changed: the name of John Calvin will make its commitments clear to all. It is not intended to show an attachment to Calvin for Calvin's sake, nor do we unconditionally agree with all that Calvin did or said, but it shows our deep concern for the proclamation of biblical truth that characterised his action five centuries ago.

Dr Paul WELLS

Dean & Professor of Systematic Theology



Retrospective

The beginning

The Faculté Libre de Théologie Réformée was inaugurated on 1st October 1974. The opening of the new Seminary was the result of cooperation on the part of three different groups working together to set up a centre for theological education independent of any of the existing church denominations. The Seminary adopted as its doctrinal standard the French Confession of Faith, *La Confession de La Rochelle* (1559) and the *Declaration of Faith of the World Evangelical Alliance*.



Eugène Boyer, one of the founder members of the Faculté libre de Théologie Réformée, said:

Would Calvin himself have wanted an "academy" named after him? . He would only have accepted it on condition that it remained truly faithful to the authority of the Word of God and to Christ our only Redeemer!"

The Faculté was set up as a registered charity with independent funding. One of the bodies involved in agreement with the confessional basis and the organisational structure, was the *Evangelical Reformed Church of France (EREI)*. As the official Seminary of this denomination, the Faculté de Théologie Protestante had closed some years earlier owing to lack of candidates for the ministry. In 1973 and 1974 two synods voted to set up the new Seminary under the authority of an independent Board, on which the church was to have significant representation.

The second body involved was another registered charity, the legal owner of the property in Aix-en-Provence. It adopted the project in May 1974, allowing the new Seminary use of its premises.

Finally the new Seminary Board was made up of representatives of these two bodies and the three professors present at the time: evangelist Eugène Boyer, Paul Wells

and François Gonin, the pastor of the Evangelical Reformed congregation in Aix. They were subsequently joined by Peter Jones, fresh from Princeton Seminary and Pierre Courthial, whose arrival from the Reformed Congregation in Passy, Paris, gave a new impetus to the newly founded Seminary. Pierre Berthoud came a year later from l'Abri in Switzerland.

So the Faculté Libre de Théologie Réformée was born. Its name indicated what its founders intended it to be. Should we change it now? If change there has to be, I would choose a clearer, more explicit name.

Pierre FILHOL

President of the Board from 1974 to 1986



History and vision of the FLTR

When the FLTR opened its doors in 1974, it served only the Reformed churches in France. Its aim was to make a significant contribution to the renewal of these churches by giving students, essentially French students, teaching that was to be thoroughly reformed and biblical and that would get to grips with the contemporary cultural environment.

As time went by the FLTR widened its horizons in two different ways. First, a number of foreign students from other French-speaking European countries and Africa were drawn to the teaching offered by the Seminary at Aix. Today a third of the student body comes from

countries other than France. Secondly, more and more students from evangelical churches, the dynamic branch of Protestantism today, were drawn to study theology at the Seminary in Aix. It could even be said that the larger part of the student body is made up of students from evangelical and Pentecostal churches. In view of the changes it seemed appropriate to change the name of the Seminary. Over the course of the last thirty years the Seminary had become a link between the evangelical churches and reformed churches, the heirs of the Reformation solidly rooted in apostolic doctrine.

The Seminary is not dependent on any denomination; rather it seeks to serve all denominations. It is attached to a global perspective of the historical Christian faith. Its university-level teaching, both for students on campus and distance students, seeks to throw light on every aspect of human thought and existence, with regard to individuals and to communities. We see theology as a gift of God, the God of Jesus Christ, to the Church, to ensure its edification and its growth.

Pierre BERTHOUD
Professeur Emérite

What do our friends think ?

A new name but the same vision !

Jean Calvin Seminary! The Free Seminary of Reformed Theology has changed its name after 35 years. How will this change of name be seen by our friends elsewhere? For our American friends, to be sure, the name Faculté Libre de Théologie Réformée conveyed little. For them, the word "faculty" refers to the teaching staff, and the word "free" refers to a status that has no equivalent in North America. "Reformed theology" has more

meaning, except that even this has often simply come to mean "theological liberalism" in many people's minds. But does the image of Jean Calvin make it any better, or any clearer? Absolutely! Especially since 2009, the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth, when French Christians were able to rediscover Calvin and read his writings with new eyes, not only through his excellent theology but also because of his piety and his pastor's heart. We must

therefore congratulate our friends at Aix for this decision! May the God of John Calvin, our God, the Lord who brought about the Reformation of the 16th century, continue to act in our own time, through a wonderful work of renewal!

*William Edgar
President of the Huguenot Fellowship, USA
Association of Friends of the Seminary
set up in 1977
Former Professor of Apologetics
Professor of Apologetics at Westminster
Seminary, Philadelphia*

The Faculté d'Aix as seen by our Swiss friends...

The burden of this Seminary is to train pastors and servants for other ministries for the church of Jesus Christ. The Swiss alumni are making a significant contribution to the edification of the churches in French-speaking Switzerland. Each year professors from the Seminary give conferences in Switzerland, in both Reformed and evangelical churches, stimulating our theological reflection, allowing us to deepen our knowledge of God and our relationship with Him, and to understand more fully how to share the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with our contemporaries. The annual *Carrefour* (a weekend conference) with its theological teaching and fellowship with other believers is a source of deep spiritual renewal, a means of refreshing and encouragement in the faith.

*Liliane Aubert
Secretary of the Swiss Association of Friends of the Seminary, set up in 1978*

... and by our Dutch friends.

The Dutch "Friends of Aix" congratulate the Seminary on its choice of new name, a very familiar name with a rich connotation. Our group has been linked to the Seminary for over 30 years and will continue to support this work which finds its inspiration in the work of Calvin ... "He (Christ) gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-12) May you receive the peace and the grace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

*Pastor Frans Hoek and Martine Burggraaf-van Dam,
President and Secretary of the Vrienden Van Aix in Holland*

The Seminary at Aix-en-Provence is characterised by :

- Its faithfulness to the Word of God
- Its solid teaching in the theological tradition following John Calvin
- Its commitment to the Church, society and higher education
- The diversity and unity of its student body
- Its atmosphere

In my opinion it is a gift of God to France and the French-speaking world.

*Gert Kwakkel
President of Kampen-Aix, an Association of Dutch Friends, Holland
Janine SCHAAP, Secretary*



“Neither by power, nor by strength ... but by the Spirit of the Lord”

Just a few more lines to add that the changes happening today in this Seminary are not only the result of the work of human hands and the reflection of human minds, but also answers to prayers offered up to the Lord in many a meeting and before every decision. Today, more than ever, I am convinced that the Lord, ever faithful and patient, is watching over the projects that are being carried out in Aix, in spite of the many difficulties that may arise.

He is the One who steers the boat, the One whose Spirit blows and the One who tells us where to cast our nets. I am deeply grateful to have been led here two years ago to be part of the Lord's work at the Seminary in Aix. Considering the challenges ahead of us, dear friends, we really need faith and perseverance. We must be vigilant in prayer, since our weakness, doubts and fears could assail us at any time!

However here in Aix we all seek to work together with conviction and strength! May the Lord grant that the “new” John Calvin Seminary be fruitful in his service and for his kingdom!

Kim TRAN
Director

“Seek first of all the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6.33)

Over the last few weeks these words from Scripture have been on my mind as I have been thinking about principles for the Christian life. We often seem to be caught between two stools as we try to put this exhortation into practice: going ahead in faith, but also striving in ourselves to find “all the things” that will be given.

However, the immediate context of the verse is clear: “Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your Heavenly Father knows that you

need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow...”

None of us here at the Seminary, whether we're salaried by the Seminary or not, wants to be unduly worried about the drop in gifts at the end of August (about 100 000 € behind on the budget).

Our heavenly Father knows what the Seminary needs; this faith gives us the will to continue to trust with grateful hearts. We are comforted and

encouraged in that we know that you, our friends in France and abroad, share this certainty with us. May the Lord inspire you in generous giving!

Patrick KELLER
Treasurer

