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Assembly of Delegates of the Swiss Evangelical Alliance on the Catholic Church

ideaSchweiz: “Address by an intimate Expert on the Pope”

(Bonn, 07.08.2017) Fritz Imhof in the *ideaSpektrum Schweiz* magazine, issue 21, 2017; here is the original as [PDF-Download](#).

SEA: No longer any fear of Rome

Changes in the Catholic Church are encouraging Evangelicals to cooperate with it. The Swiss Evangelical Alliance (SEA) has been working in Bern on a sensational working paper.

The topic of the Swiss Evangelical Alliance's (SEA) Assembly of Delegates and its Romandy partner Réseau Evangélique Suisse (RES) was a working paper which worked out the “Relationship of the SEA to the Roman Catholic Church” and made certain recommendations. Thomas Schirmmacher, a doctor of theology, prolific author of books, and sociologist, supported the general thrust of the efforts in his address.



Thomas Schirmmacher in front of the Assembly of SEA Delegates
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Address by an intimate Expert on the Pope

Thomas Schirmmacher, as a former student at STH Basel (Staatsunabhängige Theologische Hochschule Basel, or the Independent Theological University in Basel), with his corresponding understanding of the Bible and many worldwide contacts given his position as Chair of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, not only enjoys the trust of Evangelical Christians but also of Pope Francis. He describes Pope Francis as a representative of certain Evangelical convictions in the Catholic Church. Schirmmacher's book *Coffee Breaks with the Pope* demonstrates that.

According to Schirmmacher, two decisive things have changed in the Roman Catholic Church. The Church has moved more strongly in the direction of Evangelical



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Christianity and has in some countries more common features with it than differences. The sole great untouched sticking point remains the veneration of Mary. Secondly, the Church has received an accessible Pope, who not only eats in the cafeteria with the Vatican employees. He is also more easily reachable from the outside than his predecessor Benedict XVI. And yet Schirmmacher holds that Benedict's Jesus book made it clear that the Catholic Church is approaching Evangelical Christians.



Thomas Schirmmacher in front of the Assembly of SEA Delegates
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Large Differences around the World and throughout Switzerland

Schirmmacher acknowledged that the relationship between Catholic and Evangelical Christians still varies greatly around the world. The same applies for Switzerland where local individuals from the Catholic and Reformed churches as well as from free churches are often decisively in favor of a harmonious atmosphere. There are numerous joint meetings, prayers, worship services, and projects. The highest hurdles are those relating to joint public statements for all churches, as the report by representatives from Romandy, Michel Sigrüst und Michael Mutzner, confirmed.

Taking up Discussions with the Bishops' Conference

Marc Jost, the SEA Secretary General in Bern, has stated that owing to consultation among the sections, the paper has been reworked, whereby desires from the sections have been taken into consideration. The recommendations made in the paper could now be put into practice but also discussed further. The SEA will now take up discussions with the Swiss Bishops' Conference (Schweizerischen Bischofskonferenz, or SBK) with the intention of maintaining regular contacts. The working paper, about which the SBK has not yet issued a statement, will serve as a basis for discussion.

Downloads and Links:

- Photos:
 - [Photo 1](#), [Photo 2](#) and [Photo 3](#): Thomas Schirmmacher in front of the Assembly of SEA Delegates © BQ / Warnecke
 - [Photo 4](#): Answering Questions © BQ / Warnecke

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- Reports in German:
 - SEA: “Die Arbeitsweise der Evangelischen ist im Vatikan in”: <http://each.ch/medienmitteilungen/die-arbeitsweise-der-evangelischen-ist-im-vatikan/>
 - Catholic Church: <https://www.kath.ch/newsd/marienverehrung-trennt-evangelisch-glaebige-von-katholikenmarienverehrung-trennt-evangelisch-glaebige-von-katholiken/>
 - Regional church commentary by Peter Schmid: <https://landeskirchenforum.ch/berichte/mit-katholiken-zusammenarbeiten>
 - Commentary by the Catholic Schönstatt Movement on Maria: <http://www.schoenstatt.de/de/news/3637/112/Maria-im-Jubilaeumsjahr-der-Reformation.htm>
 - <https://www.egw.ch/news/sea-katholiken>
 - <http://www.ideaschweiz.ch/frei-kirchen/detail/allianz-ohne-beruehrungsaengste-zu-katholiken-101065.html>
 - http://www.livenet.de/themen/kirche_und_co/christliches_gemeindeleben/theologie_und_gemeinde/309510-keine_beruehrungsaengste_mit_katholiken.html
- Reports in French:
 - http://lafree.ch/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=4486:thomasschirmacher-encourage-catholiques-romains-et-evangeliques-au-dialogue&Itemid=101
 - <http://www.evangelique.ch/news/les-méthodes-évangéliques-sont-au-vatican>
- A comprehensive religio-sociological commentary by Jean François Mayer of Religioscope: <http://www.religion.info/2017/05/20/suisse-les-evangeliques-reflechissent-a-leurs-relations-avec-les-catholiques/>

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