



The Zwinglis of Today

Ever since Huldrych Zwingli set the Reformation in motion from his base in Zurich, the city has continued to be a source of stimulus for societal change. It is a perfect environment for innovators like Christian Bärtsch or Reto Knutti.

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The City on the Limmat is currently celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and with it, Huldrych Zwingli, thinker, influencer, and pastor of Zurich's Grossmünster church. His thinking not only inspired change in the ecclesiastical world, but also directly influenced society in Zurich and Europe. Zwingli focused on the Word of God, strove for general understandability, and took a stand for the common good, education, and freedom of opinion. These same values are upheld more than ever in present-day Zurich. With its international character, educational institutions, health system, and general quality of living, Zurich is the perfect breeding ground for developing and implementing revolutionary ideas in the most diverse fields. Thanks, among other things, to Zwingli.

The Food of the Future

"Zurich is the perfect place to realize our vision," says Christian Bärtsch, who with his company, Essento, is working on the food of the future. Together with his business partners, the economist develops insect-based hamburgers and meatballs. Mealworms and grasshoppers, he believes, will form part of our diet in future. "I am convinced that in a few years' time we will be eating insects several times a week," says the St. Gallen University graduate. "Insects are very likely to soon become a staple like the potato once was."

After years of groundwork and lobbying, Essento products have recently gone on sale in Swiss retail stores. That has only been possible with support from many sides. "We've seen a real movement emerging," Bärtsch says with pride, drawing a parallel with the Reformation. "In recent years, more and more like-minded people have joined forces and campaigned for tasty, sustainable, and resource-friendly foods."

Advocating a Revolution in the Energy System

Climate researcher Reto Knutti, too, sees his work as part of the same tradition as that of figures like Huldrych Zwingli, Wolfgang Pauli, or Albert Einstein, all of whom left their mark on the City on the Limmat. "Zurich is a cosmopolitan city with an excellent infrastructure. It is a place where research is possible and ideas can be put into practice," he says. The professor at the ETH Zurich develops complex computer models that examine climate change and aim to provide answers to its development in the coming decades. He was one of the lead authors of the climate reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2007 and 2013.

Forty-four-year old Reto Knutti considers dialog to be an essential part of his work. "Research should not just serve its own purpose, but also benefit society. My aim is to help get us on a better track for the future," explains the well-connected researcher. Zurich could play a key and pioneering role in these efforts, he believes.

In two short videos, these remarkable men from Zurich provide an insight into their work and their relationship with the city. They are just two of the many unconventional thinkers that Zurich has produced since the Reformation. The spirit of the great reformer, Huldrych Zwingli, lives on in the work of these innovators.

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