

Constitutional consequences

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The Reformation changed the constitution of Basel. The exclusion of the Catholic councillors and the pressure of the guilds strengthened the role of the guilds in the government of the city. The council was now composed of representatives of the guilds and of a small number of other members. The old knightly and patrician families, which had held reserved seats, lost their influence. The mayor and the other leading officials were chosen from the guilds.¹

The bishop's remaining rights in the city came to an end. The bishop had already moved his residence to Porrentruy in 1527. The cathedral chapter left the city in 1529 and settled in Freiburg im Breisgau, from where it moved to Arlesheim, near Basel, in 1678. The cathedral of Arlesheim, built for the chapter in the late seventeenth century, is today one of the most beautiful Baroque churches in Switzerland. The separation between the city and the bishopric, which had begun with the acquisition of the bishop's rights in the fourteenth century, was completed.²

The university was closed in 1529, because many of its professors and students were Catholic and left the city. It was reopened in 1532 with new statutes that made it a Protestant institution under the control of the council. The reopened university retained its four faculties and its right to confer degrees. It became one of the leading universities of the Reformed world, attracting students from Switzerland, Germany, France, the Netherlands, England, Hungary and Poland.

1 Notes

1. On the constitutional changes following the Reformation of 1529 (strengthening of the guilds, end of the reserved seats of the nobility), see HLS, article "Basel (Kanton)", section on the sixteenth century; Burckhardt, 1942. To be verified. ↩

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2. On the move of the cathedral chapter from Basel to Freiburg im Breisgau (1529) and to Arlesheim (1678/79), and on the Arlesheim cathedral, see HLS, articles "Arlesheim" and "Basel (Fürstbistum)". Dates to be verified. ↩

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