

The Minster after the Reformation

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The Minster of Basel, stripped of its images and altars in 1529, became the principal church of the Reformed city. Its interior was whitewashed, its choir was adapted for the Reformed service, and its pulpit became the centre of worship. The Minster remained the seat of the principal pastor of the city, the *Antistes*, who presided over the Reformed clergy of Basel. Oecolampadius, the first to hold this position, was buried in the cloister of the Minster, where his tomb can still be seen. Erasmus, who had left the city because of the Reformation, returned to die in it and was buried in the Minster in 1536, with the participation of the Reformed clergy and the university.

The coexistence in the Minster of the tombs of Oecolampadius and Erasmus, the reformer and the humanist who refused the Reformation, symbolises the character of Basel in the sixteenth century: a city that adopted the Reformation but retained its respect for the humanist learning that had preceded it, and that honoured both the man who led its religious revolution and the man who opposed it. This capacity to hold together different traditions, to honour opponents and to avoid the extremes of confessional polemic, distinguished Basel from some of its Reformed neighbours and contributed to its reputation as a city of learning and moderation.

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