

What the Council left behind

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When the Council left Basel in 1448, the city returned to its provincial dimension. The visitors departed, the revenues from lodgings and consumption declined, and the Italian bankers moved on. Yet the Council left a durable legacy.

The first legacy was intellectual. The Council had brought to Basel scholars, theologians and humanists from all over Europe. It had also created contacts that the citizens of Basel could use. The Dominican convent of Basel had hosted part of the Council's library and received manuscripts, among them Greek manuscripts brought by John of Ragusa, the Council's envoy to Constantinople, which later passed to the university library.¹ These manuscripts would be used by Erasmus and other humanists for their editions of the Greek New Testament and of the Church Fathers.

The second legacy was economic. The paper industry, established during the Council, survived and grew. The merchants of Basel had established relationships with the Italian banking houses and with the merchants of the regions represented at the Council. The city's finances had benefited from the revenues of the Council period, although they had also been burdened by the costs of hosting it.

The third legacy was institutional. The Council had shown that Basel could host an international assembly, guarantee the safety of its participants, regulate the market for its needs and maintain its neutrality between the parties. These capacities would be used again, most notably when the city became the seat of the Bank for International Settlements in 1930.

The fourth legacy was the university. The connection between the Council and the foundation of the university through the person of Pius II is the most tangible expression of the Council's influence. The next chapter examines the foundation of the university, the imperial fair privilege and the accession of Basel to the Confederation.

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1 Notes

1. On the Greek manuscripts brought to Basel by John Stojković of Ragusa and their later transfer to the university library of Basel, see HLS, article "Johannes von Ragusa"; publications of the Universitätsbibliothek Basel. To be verified. ↩

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