

Swiss Cathedrals

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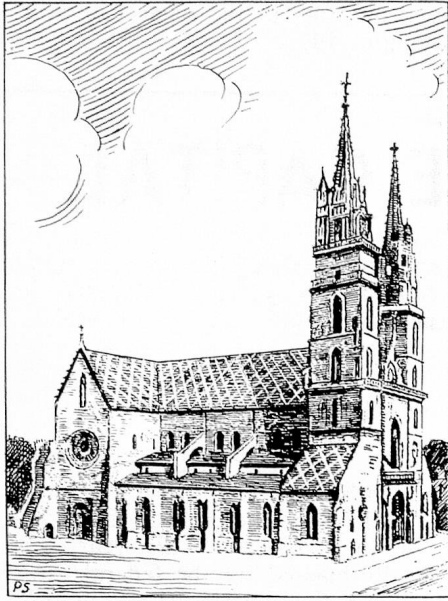
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SWISS CATHEDRALS



**BASLE:
THE MINSTER**

The town of Basle was founded in 374 by the Roman emperor Valentinien I. In 917 the town was destroyed by the Hungarians, but it rapidly raised again from its ruins and in 1019 the emperor Henry II, who became the patron of the town, dedicated the newly constructed cathedral. It is a

spacious edifice partially reconstructed in the 14th and 15th Centuries, after the earthquake of 1356, and strongly restored in the 19th Century.

The town of Basle is rich in constructions of all kinds and in addition to the cathedral, possesses 18 imposing churches and a dozen chapels and oratories, and the synagogue in Oriental style. The cathedral ranks first of all, erected on an elevation and occupying the most beautiful site of the town, in Great-Basel (Grossbasel) on the left bank of the Rhine. Surrounding the cathedral is to be found the ancient part of Basle, which was named "Auf Burg" in former times.

The cathedral is the work of several centuries, blending gracefully the Roman and Gothic styles. Constructed in red sandstones, it is surmounted with two Gothic towers from the summits of which there is a fine view of the town, the Rhine, the Black Forest and the Voges. The North tower of St. Georges is 67m. high and the St. Martin tower 65m.

The difficult problem to conciliate the ancient Christian basilica with the exigencies of Protestant worship which demands a vast auditorium, has been resolved in a very successful way; the tower and the lateral naves

are part of the principal nave.

The interior of the cathedral admits of five vessels and the cathedral nave possesses Romanesque capitals and a triforium.

As in Lausanne Cathedral, the artistic development of the chancel reveals the French influence. The capitals of the nave encircling the chancel offer a singular quaintness. At the extremity of the left aisle can be seen the tombstone of Erasmus and a bas-relief of the 11th Century representing the Martyr of St. Vincent.

In the 15th Century, whilst architecture remains still faithful to Gothic traditions, the Italian Renaissance begins to exert its influence in painting and engraving on wood and metal north of the Alps.

In the 16th Century, Basle became an important artistic and literary centre, and is today, with Berne and Geneva, a renowned art town of Switzerland.

Can we again recall to the fortunate visitor, the grand panoramic view from the towers of the cathedral, a tableau blending greatness and grace, bringing together the happy variety of the work of Nature with that of Man.

Pierre Savoie

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