

Lausanne



Places

Cathedral

The Lausanne Cathedral is one of the most important Gothic buildings in Switzerland and once served as an episcopal seat. The cathedral was built in the 12th and 13th centuries, and was then fundamentally altered by the Reformed in the 16th century.

The first Reformation edict of October 19, 1536 banned the mass and led to a gradual transformation of the cathedral. The Bernese took the cathedral's treasures in February 1537, filling 18 carts with valuable liturgical objects and large wall tapestries, which are now on display in the Bernese Historical Museum. A room was created in the crossing and choir for the education of future pastors in Reformed theology.

The Lausanne Cathedral is now under the care of Canton Vaud, which placed the Evangelical Reformed Church of the Canton of Vaud in charge of its spiritual stewardship. The cathedral is open for all to come.

St. François Church

The construction of the former Franciscan church was completed around 1280. The pulpit derives

from the period around 1500 and is the only medieval pulpit of a mendicant church in Switzerland that is still intact and at its original location. Pierre Viret preached the Reformed faith there for the first time in March 1536. He was not only sent by the Bernese, as is often claimed, but also appointed by members of the Lausanne nobility and bourgeoisie. They guaranteed that he would be permitted to use a church in the town.

A bishop still ruled the town with a large number of canons, priests, and monks. Viret wrote: "I was alone when I first set foot in this place. The town did not yet follow the instruction from Bern... What efforts were required to attack this stronghold of Diana of Ephesus! ... I held no illusions about how deficient I was for this task. But I have built upon the help of the Lord, who has placed me upon this battlefield."

Place St. François 9

The Gothic bay turret is from 1571 to 1573. The beginning of Psalm 25 in the translation of Clément Marot is written on the corbel: "To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul." Calvin loved music but only if God was praised in the appropriate manner. He therefore only accepted singing of the psalms in church: "We have found no better or purer songs than David's psalms, which were implanted in him by the Holy Spirit."

Fountain at Place de la Palud

The Fountain of Justice, created in 1584 and 1585 by the sculptor Laurent Perroud and his son Jacques, features a young woman with a blindfold, carrying a sword and scales. The Pope, the Kaiser, the Turkish Sultan, and a local magistrate can be seen to be subservient at her feet. In the general context of the Renaissance, the Bernese authorities carried out a certain unification and systematization of criminal justice.

Pierre Viret Fountain

The fountain, dedicated to the reformer of Canton Vaud, was built in 1921 with stones from the old parsonage which had previously stood there and in which Pierre Viret lived for 15 years. Viret's parents decided for him to become a priest and sent him to the Collège de Montaigu in Paris. Viret not only received a solid education there but was also convinced by Reformed theology there as well. Once back in his home town of Orbe, he also heard a sermon held by William Farel in 1531. A few weeks later, he also took to the pulpit to continue Farel's work. He remained a preacher until his death, 40 years later.

Disputation stained glass (Cathedral)

This stained glass display is the work of Charles Clément from 1931, and commemorates the Disputation of Lausanne of 1536. After they conquered Vaud in March 1536, the Bernese were completely occupied with building up the state, leaving church affairs alone. They only decided that the Gospel could be preached freely. In some areas, however, resistance to this liberty would arise.

The Bernese therefore organized a public gathering at which the questions were to be discussed freely and publicly. Bern also had an interest in firming up its annexation of Vaud through its connection to the Reformation. The disputation took place in the Lausanne Cathedral from October 1 to 8, 1536. The goal of the event was not to weigh the pros and cons of the Reformation, a question that had long been settled for the Bernese. Instead it was to demonstrate the superiority of the new doctrine before a wide public.

Old Academy

Three weeks after the Reformation edict that immediately followed the disputation, Bern founded a school for the training of pastors. Pierre Viret taught theology with the support of two other professors. In 1545, a scholarship was made available for twelve future pastors and teachers. The school was a great success as led by the educator Mathurin Cordier between 1545 and 1557. Theodore Beza, who taught Greek, wrote of as many as 700 students in 1558. A new building, which is the one we find there today, was thus opened in 1587. It was the first Protestant theological faculty in the French-speaking area.

St. Laurent Church

The St. Laurent Church survived the great fire of 1235, but would then fall apart bit by bit. A new building representing a typical Protestant preaching hall would be built between 1716 and 1619. The Baroque façade with its clock was added between 1761 and 1763. The building was not only used for worship but also for gatherings – such as those of the opponents to Bernese rule during the Vaud Revolution of 1798.

Vinet Monument

The statue erected in white marble in 1900 depicts the famous theologian and historian of literature Alexandre Vinet in a thoughtful pose and holding a book in his right hand. Vinet was born in Lausanne in 1797 and died in Clarens in 1847. He was a proponent of freedom of religion, the absolute separation of church and state, and was a pioneer for those pastors and laypeople who founded an independent church in 1847. Vinet is known for having said: “Christianity is the immortal seed of freedom in the world.”

History

The Romans established a settlement with a harbor in Vidy. In late antiquity, there was also a settlement on today's cathedral hill, and an initial church was built there in the 6th century. Around 600, Bishop Marius moved his seat from Avenches to Lausanne. In the 12th and 13th centuries, a small town flourished there and the Gothic cathedral was consecrated in 1275. In 1525, Lausanne signed Burgrecht agreements with Bern and Freiburg. In 1536, Vaud, including Lausanne, was annexed by Bern.

The new areas controlled by Bern now had to adopt the Reformed faith, which the town was happy to do while the surrounding rural areas were less willing to follow. Lausanne, as the capital of Vaud, thus had great influence on the French-speaking region. The first Protestant theological school was founded there, from which many thinkers, theologians, and pastors would emerge and would disseminate Reformed thought throughout French-speaking congregations. The Vaud Church received its structure from the Bernese authorities and its doctrine from Calvin, Viret, and Beza.

In the 1820s, tensions became palpable between adherents of the state church and of the revival movement. A split would follow in 1847 with the founding of the Free Protestant Church, until the two groups reunited in 1966. Today, fewer people have a sense of faith in this tradition, and the church has to reconsider its mission. It is no longer the inherited faith but the experienced faith that determines spiritual life. The Reformation lives on in this new sense.

Pierre Viret

Pierre Viret, born in Orbe in 1509, studied together with John Calvin at the Collège de Montaigu in Paris, but had to leave the city in 1532 due to his Reformed views. He preached the Gospel in Orbe and supported William Farel in Geneva beginning in 1534. In 1536, Viret moved on to Lausanne, which had just come under Bernese rule. He took part in the October 1536 disputation, in which the Reformation was adopted. In 1538, after Calvin's expulsion from Geneva, Viret was active there for a second period of time, but would return to Lausanne after Calvin went back to Geneva in 1542.

As a preacher and professor of theology at the Academy, Viret had a great influence on the Reformation in Switzerland. His numerous writings deal to a large extent with ethical issues. Matters of church discipline would, however, divide him from Bern in 1559 and force him to return to Geneva once again.

Viret moved to the warm South of France due to his poor health in 1561, where he provided considerable support to the Huguenots in the building of their church. Beginning in 1567, he taught at the Academy of Orthez as appointed by Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre. Viret died in 1571.

Theodore Beza

Born in 1519, Theodore Beza grew up in a noble family in Vézelay, Burgundy. Beza studied law in Orléans, before he moved to Geneva in 1548 and to Lausanne soon thereafter. He taught Greek at the Academy in Lausanne for ten years.

Starting in 1558, Beza was both a pastor and professor of theology in Geneva. As a confidant of John Calvin, Beza was sent to Protestant princes in Germany several times, where he asked for support for persecuted Protestants in Italy and France. He was able to participate in many religious dialogues and synods in France as a reflection of his diplomatic and rhetorical talent.

Following Calvin's death in 1564, Beza was seen as the leading Reformed theologian. He was Calvin's successor as the chairman of the consistorium, an office which he resigned from in 1580. Beza retired from teaching in 1598 and from preaching in 1600. Beza died in Geneva in 1605.

Source URL:<https://www.ref-500.ch/en/guide/lausanne>