

Thanksgiving Day and farewell sermon at the Swiss Church

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THANKSGIVING DAY AND FAREWELL SERMON AT THE SWISS CHURCH. (Deutschsprachige Gemeinde.)

21st September, the Swiss Federal Thanksgiving Day, dawned to mist and heavy rains, but as the morning wore on it turned out to become drier and brighter; in fact the sun tried bravely to struggle through the heavy clouds.

The faithful of the German-speaking Swiss Church found their way in great numbers to St. Mary Woolnoth, near the Bank Station, and by 11 o'clock nearly every seat was taken by a large and representative congregation, headed by the Swiss Ambassador and Mme. Daeniker.

The occasion was not only the 'Bettag', held in venerable esteem by every Swiss, but it also marked the Farewell of our beloved Pastor, the Rev. H. Spoerri, who left London for Rueschlikon (Zurich) after a most successful Ministry here over the past 6½ years. An appreciation of his work in London — by a pen far better qualified than mine — appeared in the last issue of this paper. Suffice it to say that Pastor Spoerri during his stay has greatly endeared himself to the whole Colony and in particular to his flock. We have it from his colleague of the Eglise Suisse, the Rev. Claude Reverdin, that Pastor Spoerri had at all times entertained a close and happy contact with the French-speaking community and with the Rev. Reverdin personally, for which he would be greatly missed; that warm thanks were due to him for his ardent work in the Church and particularly amongst the younger generation, who were keenly devoted to him. Certain it is that, whilst Pastor Spoerri's departure will be much regretted by old and young, their wishes and prayers for good health and for every success in his new mission will accompany him on his way.

The service was started by the Rev. Emil Spoerri — who has kindly agreed to act until a successor to Pastor Hans Spoerri has been appointed — reading out the Commandments and what they implied in their fullest meaning. This was followed by the singing of Martin Luther's hymn: "Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu Dir". Then came a prayer and The Lord's Prayer, after which the congregation sang another 16th Century hymn: "Allein Gott in der Hoeh' sei Ehre". Next, Mr. H. Mock, a member of the Consistoire, went to the Lectern to give out various Notices, after which

he read the Lesson of the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount (Matth. V, verses 3-16).

During a third hymn, "Tut mir auf die schoene Pforte", the Rev. H. Spoerri ascended the pulpit, and then announced as the Text of his Farewell Sermon, Hebrew 13, verse 9: "Never let yourselves be carried away with a variety of novel doctrines, for the right thing is to have one's heart strengthened by grace". He stressed how important it was that God should be at the centre of everything in life, for each individual as well as for the Nation. Instead, people and whole Nations were making all sorts of materialistic aims their centre and not the All Highest. But the preacher had warm praise for the younger generation, who, he said, were often accused of indifference and of neglecting religious thought. His experience had been that very many were anxious to get away from merely wordly pleasures and were eager to find that centre which alone could bring them the fulfilment of a contented and happy mind. Pastor Spoerri also referred to the controversy now going on in Switzerland about atomic weapons for the Army and hoped that a final decision would not jeopardise our country's lead as peacemakers and mediators. He felt confident that the right answer might eventually be found.

This powerful sermon must have made a deep impression on all the hearers and gave every one much food for thought on this great day.

The last hymn was: "O Herr bleib unser Schirm und Hort", which was followed by a prayer and the Blessing for those who were unable to stay for Communion as a fitting close to the great and solemn occasion.

W.D.

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