

# Inaugural Service of a Swiss Church in London

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**INAUGURAL SERVICE OF A SWISS CHURCH IN LONDON, Sunday, 22nd June, 1924.**

*"Rest in the sunshine of the Love of God."*

—Rev. H. C. THOMAS, M.A.

No words could describe last Sunday's beautiful inaugural service better than the above passage from the address by the Rev. H. C. Thomas, Chaplain, who acted as the representative of the Bishop of London.

A blue sky over London, happy faces, smiles lit up by welcome sunshine everywhere on the way to the City, the latter itself a harmonious study in grey-brown, topped by white towers stabbing the intense, almost Italian blueness of the heavenly canopy, and, in Gresham Street, an arrival of eager Swiss of both sexes and of all ages, all wending their joyous way towards the beautiful church of St. Anne, which from now onwards is to be the Home in which the Alemannic Swiss may "rest in the sunshine of the Love of God."

In spite of the short notice, quite a good number of compatriots had answered the call, and the little church was nicely filled when, after the organ recital, the service started with the singing of the hymn "All people that on earth do dwell," sung to the tune of the Geneva Psalter.

In his collect and address the Rev. H. C. Thomas spoke of the revivifying pure air of our beautiful native country, which to visit had been his good fortune. And as the weary earth dweller seeks fresh vigour by resting amidst the glorious scenery of Switzerland, so, he hoped, would the Swiss in London come to their church, there to "rest in the sunshine of the love of God." That phrase, more beautiful than any I remember having heard before, both in its construction and its deep and uplifting meaning, might be taken to express the feelings which, I feel sure, animated every one of the hearers.

Mr. Aug. Mueller, president of the Kirchengemeinschaft, then spoke as follows:—

As president of the newly founded Swiss Church in London (a branch of the National Protestant Church of Switzerland) it gives me great pleasure to be here at the opening of a new chapter in the life of the Swiss Colony in London. It was the Great War that awakened in many compatriots coming from Central, Northern and Eastern Switzerland a desire for Church fellowship and the consciousness of a need of a spiritual nature, and it is in answer to this that we have constituted ourselves as the "Schweizerkirche London."

First of all, we wish to publicly acknowledge the kindly help offered by the Rt. Rev. the Lord Bishop of London, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Herbert Bury, and the Wardens of this Church to give us facilities for the institution of public worship every Sunday morning at 11 o'clock. We greatly appreciate this wholehearted Christian hospitality extended to us by the great Church of England.

Great Britain and Switzerland have found many an occasion in late years for working together for the cause of humanity, but none surely touching the deepest things of life so much as this instance.

We both stand here (1) in confirmation of the Universality of the Christian Religion; (2) as a proof of that Christian Love which transcends the limitation of language and the barriers of nationality; (3) and we believe that the true Christian Faith is the highest dynamic force in the world to change men and women.

I hope and pray to God Almighty that our collaboration in this Temple, consecrated to His Name and Glory, may result not only in the strengthening of our international friendships and great blessing to our countrymen, but may, also, contribute to the common good of the life of this great City of London and the advancement of the Kingdom of God upon earth. Amen.—

Wir aber, liebe Landsleute, wollen dieses Haus im Namen Jesu Christi seiner hohen Bestimmung weihen.

Unser treuer Gott verleihe uns die Gnade, dieses Haus zu einem Orte Seiner Ehre und Anbetung zu segnen — Seiner Gemeinde in Jesus Christus aber zur Sammlung und zur Erbauung.

Er selber wache über ihm Tag und Nacht. Diesen unseren Wunsch und Willen wollen wir alle bekennen und bekräftigen durch den Gesang des zweiten Liedes (No. 177 unseres Kirchengesangbuches).

After the singing of another hymn, the Rev. W. Dietsche preached from the text Isaiah lxxi, 1 and 2: "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

In the course of his sermon the reverend gentle-

man laid stress on the fact that it is not sufficient to have a Temple of God, but that the work done in such a Temple is all-important. Christian Love has here a home, an ever-flowing source of reviving energy. From this Temple of God this Love must be radiated into every corner of our Swiss congregation. "Kommet her, die ihr mühselig und beladen seid, ich will euch erquicken." Not one among us who has not known or will not know the pangs of a stricken conscience, the troubles of ill-luck, physical and mental. Let them seek this Temple of God! Let them come here and cast their burden upon the Lord! There is no pain too great but that the Lord will turn it into a blessing. But in times of joy and happiness such joy and such happiness will be glorified, become purer and more precious if the Lord is taken gratefully as witness, and acknowledged as the fountain of all such happiness and joy.

The sermon concluded with a strong and earnest appeal to the congregation to work for absolute unity of purpose in that direction, to make this Temple of the Lord a real Home for our Swiss compatriots in London, a reminder that the inauguration of this church is not the end, but the beginning of an epoch in the history of the Swiss Colony in London.

It might, perhaps, be mentioned that the acoustics of this church require study, in order to give the preacher full scope.

The beautiful hymn "Wach auf, Du Geist der ersten Zeugen" followed, and then the representative of the Consistoire of the Eglise Suisse, Mr. J. Weber, expressed a few words of welcome in the following terms:—

Frères et Sœurs,

Vous avez exprimé le désir que le Consistoire de l'Eglise Suisse de Londres fut représenté à l'inauguration des services en allemand de la Deutsch-Schweizerische Gemeinde à Londres, et vous l'avez fait d'une façon si aimable, en invitant si cordialement un représentant de l'église que vous appelez votre 'Mother Church,' que c'est de grand cœur que le Consistoire a voulu y répondre et m'a délégué ici, ce matin, en l'absence de son président, Mr. Baer, qui n'est pas à Londres aujourd'hui.

'Mother Church,' avez vous dit, et cela est vrai, car c'est bien de la vieille Eglise Suisse d'Endell Street qui, depuis plus de 160 années, a groupé tous les Suisses qui voulaient se réclamer d'elle, dans cette ville immense, qu'est sorti le culte dominical que vous établissez ce matin dans cette église de Gresham Street. Je ne vous ferai pas l'historique de ce développement; il est dans toutes les mémoires. Mais je soulignerai ce qu'il y a de vraiment remarquable dans l'occasion qui nous rassemble. Figurez-vous une église de langue française, comme l'est l'Eglise Suisse, commençant des services en allemand, ici à Londres, en pleine guerre de l'Angleterre contre l'empire allemand; cela n'est pas banal! Puis, voyant les besoins évidents, cette église appointe un suffragant de langue allemande et s'oriente de plus en plus vers une organisation bilingue.

Enfin, les temps étant mûrs, cette poussée profonde s'épanouit en une branche nouvelle, entièrement développée, avec lieu de culte, services dominicaux réguliers,—ce qui est essentiel pour une église si elle veut réellement répondre aux besoins des âmes qui ont faim et soif de vérité,—avec son pasteur et son consistoire à elle. N'est-ce pas là un fait dont il faille se réjouir, un progrès dans le sens du développement du Royaume de Dieu?

Or, c'est ce que vous cherchez ici, à Gresham Street, tout comme nous voulons continuer à le faire à Endell Street, et c'est les vœux du Consistoire que je vous apporte de tout mon cœur, pour que votre travail puisse être entièrement à la gloire de Dieu, pour le salut des âmes.

Et si j'ai un dernier mot à ajouter, c'est que la mère suivra son enfant des yeux, avec la plus vive sympathie, et qu'elle espère et demande cette seule chose dans ses prières, c'est que dans la famille chrétienne suisse de Londres les deux membres de cette famille manifestent au monde ce qui est le propre de toute vraie famille, l'esprit d'union et d'unité, l'esprit dont parlait le Christ quand il disait, prophétiquement:

"Que tous soient un, comme toi, Père, tu es en moi, et comme je suis en toi; afin qu'eux aussi soient un en nous, pour que le monde croie que c'est toi qui m'as envoyé... et qu'ils soient parfaits dans l'unité, et que le monde connaisse que c'est toi qui m'as envoyé, et que tu les aimes comme tu m'as aimé." (Jean ch. 17 v. 21 et 23.)

There followed a few more words of thanks by the President of the Kirchengemeinschaft, who said:—

Wir danken dem Vertreter der Eglise Suisse für seine herzlichen Worte. Unser Auseinandergehen ist nur die glückliche Lösung der Frage der Arbeitsteilung. Je länger wir arbeiten, je mehr werden wir einander brauchen. Der Segen und der Gruss der Mutterkirche ist ein Zeichen unserer Einheit. Lasst uns nie davon abkommen.

Wir danken ebenfalls unserem hohen Gesandten, Monsieur Paravicini, für seine Anwesenheit.

The service closed with Prayer and the Benediction. Just before, we had a collection on behalf of the Metropolitan Hospital Sunday Fund, which latter will benefit to the amount of £6 4s. 8d. I should like to express the hope that in future the custom of having 'open' collections will be abandoned and that the Swiss custom of having boxes at the church door, where everyone can drop into them what he likes, without anybody seeing 'how much' will be instituted. The open collections always bring to my mind the parable of the widow's mite!

By about 12.30 the service was over. Out into the strangely quiet Gresham Street. Again happy faces, sunny smiles, now perhaps a little bit more imbued with a soft inner joy—and then good-bye all round with promises, seriously meant, I feel sure, of "uf widerseh!"

I should like to add one reflection: London is an extremely difficult place in which to get such a congregation together, Sunday after Sunday, owing to the great distances to be covered by individual members. Gresham Street, however, seems to be ideally situated for such a purpose, being easily get-at-able from all parts. On a fine Sunday, as was the case last Sunday, it is a glorious treat to pass through the City, and on a wet Sunday (we shall, no doubt, have many in the course of the next twelve months) it will be a great relief to find an hour's happy spiritual companionship in this really beautiful little church of St. Anne.

I think that my Swiss Allemannic compatriots ought to make it a point of honour to come to this church of their very own, at least once, and that soon. I am confident that once they have been there, once they have been stirred again with a wealth of memories of early youth, of father and mother, of the dear, far-away old home-church, they will come again and again, and that this our own church will really become the spiritual centre of our part of the Swiss Colony in London.

"KYBURG."

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Amongst the 101 present were included:— Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, Monsieur J. W. Sterchi, Mr. and Mrs. Muller, Mr. and Mrs. Bertschinger, Mr. and Mrs. Steiger, Mr. F. G. Sommer, Mr. G. Hafner, Mr. A. Manzoni, Mr. B. Norman (senior churchwarden), Mr. Murray (vestry clerk), Mr. J. A. Batchelor (organist), Mr. and Mrs. Bossard, Mr. and Mrs. A. Schmid, Mr. W. Meyer, Mr. Theo. Ritter, Mr. H. Jenne, Mr. W. Jenne, Mr. U. Bretscher, Mr. P. F. Boehringer, Mrs. F. Ochsner, Mrs. M. Sigerist, Mr. C. Klæger, Mr. Ch. Schupbach, Mr. W. Sommer, Mr. P. Sommer, Mr. H. Pfirter.

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The following telegrams were received, but too late to be read out during or after the Service:—

From Pfarrer Wildbolz, who acted as assistant clergyman at the Eglise Suisse for two years:—"Gott segne und leite Euch. Joh. 17, 3. Röm. 8, 31-39.—Wildbolz."

From Pfarrer Heinrich Urner, now at Arosa:—"Den Geist der Liebe wünscht der Schweizerkirche zum Weihefeste grüssend.—Heinrich Urner, Arosa."

**SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.**

The Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society was held on Wednesday, June 25th, soon after 8 p.m. at No. 1, Gerrard Place, W.1. The intense heat was presumably responsible for the regrettable fact that on such an important occasion barely 40 members were present, out of a total of nearly 700.

Mr. G. E. DeBrunner, the president, was in the Chair and opened the proceedings with the announcement that in the person of Mr. J. Bossard, who had passed away last Monday, the S.M.S. had lost one of its staunchest supporters; as a contributing member he had liberally responded to the recent appeal in connection with their educational campaign. As a token of sympathy those present remained unstanding for a few moments.

The president then singled out the presence of Monsieur Henri Martin, Counsellor of Legation, and also welcomed the principal teachers of their educational department, who, he hoped, would gather sufficient evidence that evening to recognize how greatly their valuable work was appreciated. A lengthy report, read by the President, dealt chiefly with the doings at the banquet, recently held at the Midland Hotel. It further criticised the meagre attendance which during the past twelve months had characterised their monthly meetings and other gatherings, in fact, the only events that proved to be an unqualified success were the cinderella dances.

Mr. J. Pfandler and Mr. B. Bretscher, the secretary and chef de cours respectively of the education department, gave interesting statistics as regards the development of the day and evening classes. The attendance at the former were registering month by month record figures, whilst the evening classes were somewhat handicapped by the new regulations issued from Berne. In