

An oecumenical divine service

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DR. ARMIN DAENIKER 70

Too late, unfortunately, for publication in the last issue, we heard that Dr. Armin Daeniker, former Swiss Ambassador in London, celebrated his 70th birthday on 24th February. He was born in Zurich, and he studied law at the universities of Zurich, Geneva, Berne, Berlin and London, taking his degree in his hometown. He joined the Federal Political Department in 1925 and held posts in many parts of the world. In 1948, Monsieur Daeniker was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to India and Thailand and in 1953 to Sweden. Whilst still accredited there, he was Head of the Swiss Delegation of the Neutral International Commission for the Exchange of Prisoners of War in Korea (1953/4).

Early in 1955, the Federal Council appointed Dr. Daeniker Minister to the Court of St. James's, and two years later, he became the first Swiss Ambassador in London. For nine years, Monsieur and Madame Daeniker worked in London, and they left a mark not only as representatives of their country, but also as active participants in the happenings in the Swiss community here. It was with considerable regret that the Colony took leave of them at the end of 1963 when they retired to Switzerland. But whilst they live in happy retirement in Berne, it is impossible that two such active personalities should be idle, and they take great interest in many matters, not least in the activities of the Swiss-British Society and in Anglo-Swiss relations in general.

Belatedly, but nonetheless sincerely, we wish Monsieur Daeniker many happy returns of his birthday and him and his wife many more years of happy retirement.

"SWISS OBSERVER" PUBLICATION DATES

The "Swiss Observer" is published every second and fourth Friday of the month. Our next issue will appear on 22nd March. We shall be glad to receive all articles and reports not later than Tuesday, 12th March. Short news items only can be accepted after that date.

The next issue but one will be published on Friday, 12th April in time for Easter. All contributions should be to hand by Tuesday, 2nd April.

AN OECUMENICAL DIVINE SERVICE

With a congregation of young people and residents, the third oecumenical service of the Swiss Churches took place in London on Thursday evening, 25th January. It was organised as a kind of panel talk in the Swiss Catholic Church at Abbey Orchard Street, S.W.1.

The same liturgy as the two previous times, alternately French and German in form of a set dialogue between the ministers and the congregation, was used again, as there were French- and German-speaking Swiss people present. The Reverends Bosshard, Kästli, Nicod and Stefan were on the panel and each gave a short introductory speech. Briefly, they said that St. Paul himself exhorted us to unity with reference to the fact that there was one christening only. Christening, however, meant reconciliation with God and among ourselves. The future of the Church consisted in waiting for Christ and in clinging to the Word of God which implied that we had to translate the Word of God into our time. The Word was there to be preached, being the Gospel and the Promise of God, and His personal call to us. The Catholic Church faced the same task regarding the Sacraments. The Eucharist had become stylised in the course of time. But, now the moment had come for getting back to the genuine understanding of the Holy Communion and the breaking of the bread. We should then be able to realise that Christ was present at every community of Christians, as he had said himself: "*Where there are two or three assembled in my name . . .*"

The congregation took part in the following discussion. The first question "What is the Oecumenical Movement?" entailed further questions and suggestions. It was said that the Oecumenical Movement should not remain a matter for theologians and learned people, but must become understandable and practicable for laymen; another speaker held that all differences of opinion ought to be pointed out and clarified between the churches; whereas somebody else thought it more important to reduce it all to the same common denominator, making it possible for all to follow the same path. To achieve this, all of us had to pray and ask for truth and love. Thereupon another voice pleaded for the collecting together of all the matters of opinion, conceptions and ideas the Churches had in common, which would prove superfluous any existing fences and barriers anyway. In answer to these suggestions it was put forward very clearly and simply, "*We do not need a common denominator of a multitude of symbols and things in common, we all have Jesus Christ, our Lord. He came to us to redeem us. Our churches are based upon him; in listening to him, the Oecumenical Movement will become self-evident.*"

Everybody felt, that talking together was a good thing, and it was much regretted that the discussion had to come to a speedy end. Still, to *do* something was much more important. In order to realise the thought of the Common Meal and the faith that Christ is present whenever people meet in His name, hot tea and buns were served in church. People gathered in small groups, enjoyed the refreshments and each other's company and built a happy community.

The common desire was voiced, to meet more often and to discuss the common problems of the Swiss Churches in London, in order to find ways of much closer co-operation, which, after all, is oecumenism put into practice.

R.S.