

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST ISSUE OF 'THE ANNUAL' IN MAY 1928

### THE RIGHT REVEREND THE MODERATOR

*One of our members, The Revd. Dr. Conor Fegan, has been reading past issues of our journal. He was struck by this brief description of our worship. The author stresses the importance of preparation, praises the work of the Church Services Society and makes an appeal for the continual use of 'the most majestic words the tongue of man can utter, 'Let us worship God'.*

*It is the Moderator of the General Assembly, The Right Reverend Norman Maclean, who writes in response to an invitation to introduce the new journal of the Church Service Society. It was called 'The Annual' and was dated May 1928-1929. It is one of several extracts from past journals which may be worth revisiting if members thought it valuable. (Editor)*

The revival which the Church needs most in these days is the revival of worship. The greatest assemblage on earth is a worshipping congregation. In Parliaments and Senates men deal with the things of time which vanish away; but when men enter the House of God and bow down in adoration before the throne of the Eternal, they know themselves to be heirs of a destiny whose glory time cannot exhaust or dim. It is when men raise the voice of prayer and the psalm of thanksgiving that they rise to the highest; they proclaim themselves to be the sons of God and the citizens of Eternity. The greatest work given to men is therefore to order the worship of the Sanctuary. It is surely of all things the least fitting that we should enter the presence of Him who filleth heaven and earth with splendour, and offer Him a service from which all beauty is excluded, and in a form which takes no thought of reverence or adoration. There are all forms of superstition to be found among men ; but of them all the superstition of ugliness is the least commendable.

The freedom which the absence of liturgical forms confers upon the Church of Scotland is at once a great boon and a great snare. It is a boon in that the ministers can enrich their prayers with the devotions of the saintly in all the ages, and can thus link the living present with the past and with the hosts within the Veil, knitting the generations together in the Communion of Saints. The freedom which others strive for is the heritage of the Church of Scotland for its use and its enrichment. But that freedom can, and often does, become a snare when it is abused, and becomes a license to approach

the throne of God without that preparation of mind and heart and soul which so great an act requires. It is not a Christian service when a congregation goes through the forms of worship without confession or absolution ; when the first prayer is a theological meditation; and when petitions, incongruous and interminable, jostle each other in an inchoate mass.

The Church Service Society, in publishing the first of a series of annual volumes, is rendering a great service to the Church in drawing attention once more to the reverence and beauty and dignity which the worship of God requires. No Society has strengthened and enriched the Church as the Church Service Society has done. It has brought the Church of Scotland to realise that the bare and formless worship offered in the parish churches for over two centuries was not the fruit of the Reformation, but the unhappy legacy of Brownism and of the Cromwell occupation. For a hundred years after the Reformation the Church of Scotland had a liturgy ; and the Church Service Society, so far from being innovators, set itself to seek the old paths and to walk therein. Its publications brought light and guidance to clergy who were left uninstructed and perplexed. Its influence permeated the whole Church until orderly and reverent worship has become the rule, and chaotic forms the exception. That there is, however, need for an Annual such as this cannot but be manifest to those who have had experience even once of the strange formulas which some ministers use. There was a dignity about the old parish ministers fifty years ago, and though they had no written liturgy, they had each his own. And they began the service every Lord's Day with the most majestic words the tongue of man can utter : 'Let us worship God.' We can save that much at least.

This Annual is worthy of the long list of publications wherewith the Church Service Society has enlightened the churches in Scotland. It will help many to realise how great the worship of God is, and what care and preparation its fit offering requires.

*Norman Maclean*