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Editorial

JAMES SUTHERLAND THOMSON

AS BEFITS a periodical dedicated to the advancement of sacred studies, this *Journal* is no great respecter of persons. For the most part, its pages are occupied with the great issues of the interpretation and communication of the gospel of Christ in and through the church of Christ, to the exclusion of personal references. In fact, since our first number appeared thirteen years ago, our editorial writers have only twice been moved to pay extended tribute to individuals, and that in both cases in remembrance of great men departed.

In this first number of our fourteenth volume, however, we break with tradition to honour one who is, happily, still present and active among us in the flesh. Just a few months ago, the Very Reverend James Sutherland Thomson, formerly Dean of Divinity in McGill University and Moderator of the General Council of the United Church of Canada, celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday. It would be ungracious and ungrateful for us to let that occasion pass unnoticed in this *Journal*.

To mark Dr. Thomson's birthday, Professor George Johnston and Dr. Wolfgang Roth edited a symposium, *The Church in the Modern World* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1967), to which nineteen scholars contributed essays. The volume opened with a warm appreciation of "James Sutherland Thomson" from the pen of his successor as Dean of Divinity at McGill, Dr. Stanley Frost. Within the limits of eight pages, Dr. Frost managed to say a good deal about the contribution made by "J.S." to higher education, and above all to theological education, in Canada. He did not, however, mention two significant contributions, to which we may suitably draw attention here.

J. S. Thomson has always respected theological scholarship and despised slovenliness in theological thinking and writing. At the same time, far from remaining shut up in the study and the classroom, he has consistently worked both for the welfare of the professional theological community throughout Canada and for the promotion of serious theological studies in the Canadian churches as a whole. More than a dozen years ago, he took the lead in founding the Canadian Theological Society and then, as its first president, guided and fostered the Society in its formative years. Thanks to his vision and energy, Canadian teachers and other students of theology—Roman Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans—have for the first time acquired a forum for the effective exchange of ideas. The Canadian Theological Society has already done more than a little to stimulate theological research

and reflection in this country. Its annual conference, held in conjunction with two sister societies, devoted respectively to biblical studies and to church history, has become an important event in the intellectual life of our Canadian churches. A double portion of the credit for bringing all this about belongs to "J.S."

Interested readers of this *Journal*, both at home and abroad, are also indebted to him. Without his encouragement and support, the small group which met in the early 1950s to dream dreams of a Canadian theological quarterly might well have given up. As the first chairman of our Board of Directors, he rescued us more than once from imminent disaster. He was always hopeful; he never let us entertain the pessimistic notion that Canada was not ready for a serious theological periodical in the English language. After thirteen years, we are still publishing—bilingually now, at least on occasion—and making plans for the future. Perhaps we may be allowed to light at least one small candle before the genial and robust figure of "J.S."

The present writer was born in the year that saw James Thomson ordained to the ministry in the United Free Church of Scotland. Somewhat later, he had the honour of succeeding James Thomson as president of the Canadian Theological Society. Inevitably, he writes both with respect for an elder statesman and with affection for a friend. In neither is he alone. From Halifax and points east to Saskatoon and points west, a multitude of pupils and friends join in the heartfelt acclamation: *Ad multos annos!*

E.R.F.

FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Beginning with our next issue, we plan to devote the better part of at least two issues in each year to particular themes of current interest in the church. The main theme of our April number will be "Ferment in Theology." Topics planned for future issues include "Renewal in Theological Education" and "Worship in the Modern Church." Other suggestions will be welcomed by the Editor.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Canadian Journal of Theology, Incorporated, will be held at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, on Wednesday, May 15, 1968, at 4 P.M. All subscribers and friends are invited to attend.

JOHN S. MOIR
Secretary