

SCOTTISH NATIONHOOD

No editor will dare to pontificate on the future of Scotland as a nation only a few weeks before a general election, although he may be safe in assuming that the election will leave many questions unresolved. Yet all readers of this *Bulletin*, within and without Scotland, will share a concern that Scotland's national future, whether in independence, devolution or union, be informed by 'a Christian vision'. This is the sub-title of as timely a book as one could hope for, to help shape a Christian mind about the nationhood issue – *Scottish Identity*, by William Storrar (Handsel Press, Edinburgh, 1990; 258pp., £6.95; ISBN 1 871828 01 5).

Evangelical sentiments about Scotland have sometimes smacked of a kind of Scottish Israelitism, as though the country enjoyed the status in the eyes of heaven of specially favoured elect nation. The authentic universalization of the Christian church in the twentieth century leaves no place for a Scotto-centric perspective on the missionary task. It was a shock to learn – not from the newspapers, even the Scottish ones with pretensions to national status – that the short-lived bill for Scottish home rule promoted at Westminster a few months ago by a Scottish MP explicitly excluded any law establishing the Christian religion. The drifting patterns of social and commercial life in contemporary Scotland should deflate any complacency about an assumed Christian identity for Scotland's future.

It is earnestly to be hoped that those churchmen prominent in planning Scotland's constitutional destiny, whether they belong to the national Kirk or, however puzzlingly, to one of the country's non-conforming minorities, are giving no less energy to securing its Christian identity. They will do well, as will all concerned with the unfolding fortunes of Scotland, to wrestle with the tough intellectual meat of *Scottish Identity*. With a breadth of sympathy and an almost poetic sensibility that

few evangelical writers command, Willie Storrar offers a biblical and theological understanding of nationhood, which sees 'the question of human and Christian identity in Scotland as central to rethinking what it means to be Scottish'. With this widely acclaimed book in our hands, we have no excuse to be unprepared for a debate over the shape of our national life that will run and run.

Honouring an Evangelical Heritage

Virtually the whole evangelical movement in modern Britain is immensely indebted to the doctrinal testimony of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, latterly known as the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship. None played a more significant role in the formative decades of the Fellowship than Douglas Johnson, who died last December. His CV listed very few publications (but see below), and he was no public speaker or preacher. Yet he must have been one of the most effective 'back-room boys' in the story of modern Christianity, a visionary and strategist of quite extraordinary single-mindedness and skill.

He was a voracious reader of theology, and one of his greatest contributions was, as John Taylor, Bishop of St. Albans, put in in *The Independent*, to recall 'evangelicals from anti-intellectualism to taking doctrine seriously'. As the reviser of T.C.Hammond's *In Understanding Be Men*, first published in 1936 and still doing yeoman service in several languages as an introduction to Christian doctrine, I was intrigued to discover from another obituary that its real author was largely Douglas Johnson, who persuaded T.C.Hammond to vet it and lend it his name. Such a man deserves to be honoured in his death, and the *Bulletin* is glad to be able to reprint the tribute that follows.

DR DOUGLAS JOHNSON (1904-1991)

Douglas Johnson was the first General Secretary of the IVF (Inter-Varsity Fellowship, now Universities and

Colleges Christian Fellowship). After graduating at the University of London in history, theology and medicine, he undertook the leadership of IVF, and was also to contribute greatly to the creation of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, London Bible College and the Christian Medical Fellowship (of which he was also General Secretary). He retired from IVF in 1964 and from CMF in 1974. His history of the IVF, *Contending for the Faith*, was published in 1979.

It was Douglas Johnson's initiative which led to the formation of the IVF Biblical Research Committee in 1938. The committee met first at St Luke's Vicarage, Hampstead, under the chairmanship of G. T. Manley. A. M. Stibbs, Norval Geldenhuys, J. W. Wenham and Douglas Johnson were present. Out of the Biblical Research Committee, seven years later were to come Tyndale House and the Tyndale Fellowship.

J. W. Wenham has written the following:

It gives me great pleasure to pay tribute to DJ (as he was commonly known), since his name is unknown to many of the younger generation, yet (in my considered judgement) he has almost certainly been the greatest single influence on the course of British Christianity this century. He would make a wonderful subject for a doctoral thesis and then a book.

I worked closely with him as a student member of the IVF executive committee for three years, after which my contacts were quite sporadic, but I saw enough of him to realise that he probably deserved the title of genius. When he took over as secretary of the IVF, evangelical fortunes were at their nadir. The little company was despised and even hated in the church at large. But now at the end of the century there can be little doubt that Evangelicalism is the most dynamic force in the Christian scene. We owe this to one man above others – Douglas Johnson.

He of course built up what is now the UCCF with its network of Christian Unions all over the British Isles,

sending out a stream of educated people into all walks of life trained in Christian leadership. With it came IVP with its high standard of Christian publishing. His was the main part in setting up IFES as a world-wide student fellowship. Then there was the more difficult field of theology which was for long Evangelicalism's weakest area. He pushed the Theological Students Fellowship along; he roped in G. T. Manley and H. E. Guillebaud to establish the Biblical Research Committee; and he was largely instrumental in getting the Tyndale Fellowship and Tyndale House off the ground. But he was into a multitude of other initiatives. I was with him when he persuaded the owners of the Beddington Free Grace Library which was stored in what he called Noah's Ark at the bottom of Geoffrey Williams' to convert it into the Evangelical Library, and when he plotted to set up a Bible college with first-class standards in London. In these endeavours he worked closely with Martyn Lloyd-Jones among others.

Where did all this prodigiously successful effort stem from?

First, from a simple desire to proclaim Christ. He worked with a passion which almost killed him, yet he had a great sense of humour which delivered him from an impression of tenseness. To him direct prayer, faithfulness to the Word and evangelism were always in the forefront.

Secondly, he felt a call to organise. Medical missionaries were commonly held to be top of the ladder of esteem. Frustrated in this direction he took the lowly stance of secretary to help Christians to help one another evangelise the world. It was making bricks without straw, but he gained the confidence of many and just enough money kept coming in to advance the work. His approach was statesmanlike – he believed in the essential unity of all Bible-believing, gospel-preaching Christians, and he worked to develop that.

Thirdly, he was a theologian. He had read theology as well as medicine, and was always reading widely in the

subject. I think it was a means of relaxation in his busy life. When condemned to rest in hospital after a heart attack, he asked the doctor if he could read biography, and then proceeded to devour Edersheim's two volumes on *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah!* On his shelves were not only a row of Warfield, but a great variety of books ancient and modern. He realised that theology, including apologetics, was essential to a healthy church.

Fourthly, he was a personal worker. He not only organised people, he talked to them one at a time; and he wrote letters. In an obituary it was said that on a conservative estimate he wrote a thousand letters of encouragement a year. These letters carried with them his enthusiasm, but they were also meaty with ideas – not pious clichés, but theology and practical application. His home welcomed a stream of visitors from all over the world. His wife Dorothy who provided the peaceful, secure base from which Douglas worked, is one of the unsung heroines of the modern church.

Fifthly, he was a man of humility. He did not like the limelight and genuinely did not seem to want the praise of men. He has assuredly earned his 'Well done' from the Master he served so faithfully.