

Mr. Robert Bruce, Minister at Edinburgh.¹

By Rev. John Livingstone

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He began to preach about the year 1590, and died about the year 1632. He was the second son of the Laird of Airth, from whom he had the estate of Kinnaird, and was bred in France at the laws, designed to have been one of the Lords of Session; but coming home, he was moved by the Spirit of the Lord to set to the ministry, and having studied sometime at St. Andrews, when he began to preach there were found more than ordinary gifts in him, so as he was most earnestly and unanimously called to be minister at Edinburgh, but for a long while only preached, and could not be moved to take on the charge till one of the ministry by advice of the rest entrapped him.

For that minister one day giving the communion had desired Mr. Robert, who was to preach in the afternoon, to sit by him, and when he himself had served two or three tables he removed out of the church, as being shortly to return, but sent in word to Mr. Robert Bruce by some of the elders, that he would not return at that time, and that therefore Mr. Robert behoved to serve the rest of the table, or else the work must be given over.

When, therefore, the eyes of the elders and the whole people were on him, any many also called out, he did go on, and celebrated the communion to the rest with such assistance and motion, as had not been seen in that place before, and for that cause he would not thereafter receive in the ordinary way the imposition of hands, seeing before he had the material of it, to wit, the approbation of all the ministry, and had already celebrated the communion, which was not, by a new ordination, to be made void.

No man in his time spake with such evidence and power of the Spirit: no man had so many seals of conversion; yea, many of his hearers thought that no man since the apostles spake with such power. He had a notable faculty in searching deep in the Scriptures, and of making the most- dark mysteries most plain, but especially in dealing with everyone's conscience.

He was much exercised in conscience himself for opposing Episcopacy that was creeping in; and because he would not join in giving thanks for the delivery of

¹ Written by Rev. John Livingstone, who preached with extraordinary power on: Monday, 21st June, 1630, at Kirk of Shotts Communion. - Editor

Gowrie's Conspiracy, for which he saw not sufficient evidence, the king removed him from Edinburgh. He was at first prisoned in the castle of Edinburgh, after that confined in Inverness, yet at last he got liberty to dwell in his own house of Kinnaird, where the parish of Larbert having neither church nor stipend, he repaired the church, and discharged all the parts of a minister, and many from other parts came to hear him. I was there his hearer for a great part of the summer 1627.

He told me once in private that he had dreamed, and had seen a great long book with black broads flying in the air, and all the black fowls flying about it, and that as it touched any of them they fell down dead; and that he heard a voice which he said was as audible as I heard him speak, "This is the ire of God upon the ministry of Scotland," and that he presently fell a weeping and crying to God that he might be kept faithful, and not be one of these that were stricken down dead; and he said that when he awaked he found all the pillow wet with his tears.

One day when I came to his house, he was late ere he came out of his study; he had heard that day of Doctor Lighton's censure at London, and when he came out all his face was foul with weeping: he told me what he had heard, and that" his grief was not for Doctor Lighton, but for himself; for, said he, "If I had been faithful, I might have got the pillory, and some of my blood shed for Christ as well as he; but he hath got the crown from us all"

He was both in public and private very short in prayer with others, but then every sentence was like a strong bolt shot up to heaven. I have heard him say, he hath wearied when others were longsome in prayer, but being alone, he spent much time in prayer and wrestling.

I went once with the tutor of Bonnitoun to see him in Andrew Ainslie's house in Edinburgh: it was about eight in the morning; he was in bed, and saith to us, "You must go and leave me at this time; I thought yesternight, when I lay down, I had a good measure of the Lord's presence, and now I have wrestled this hour or two and have not yet got access, and therefore I am not yet for any company." When he preached at Larbert, he used, after the first sermon on the Sabbath, when he had taken some little refreshment, to retire to a chamber in a house near the kirk.

I heard that one day, some noblemen being there, and he staying long in the chamber, and they having far to ride home after the afternoon's sermon,

desired the bellman to goe hearken at the door if there were any appearance of his coming. The bellman returned, and said, "I think he shall not come out the day at all, for I hear him always saying to another that he will not nor cannot go except the other go with him, and I do not hear the other answer him a word at all." The foolish bellman understood not that he was dealing with God.

He had a very majestic countenance, and whatever he spake in public or private, yea, when he read the word, I thought it had such a force as I never discerned in any other man. I heard him once say, "I would desire no more for one request but one hour's conference with King James: I know he hath a conscience; I made him once weep bitterly in his own house at Holyroodhouse."

I heard him say, anno 1627 or 1628, "I wonder how I am kept so long here. I have already lived two years in violence;" meaning he was seventy-two years old. I heard when he died, and his sight was failed, he called for the great Bible, and desired them to put his finger on the 28th verse of the 8th chapter to the Romans, and told he died in the faith that all things, even death, should work together for his good.