
The Sermons of John Livingstone: A Provisional Bibliography

MATTHEW VOGAN

Despite his significance, comparatively little has been written about John Livingstone (1603–1672).¹ Besides his initial resolute stand in connection with the Articles of Perth, he had an important role in the Second Reformation, especially the events surrounding the Prayer Book Petitions and National Covenant, and was also involved in the negotiations with Charles II at Breda. He was also chosen moderator of the Protester General Assembly in 1651.² Livingstone is a key source for the events of these times, and we know a great deal more about his life and experience than any other Covenanter. He also informs us concerning many of his contemporaries. Above all he is best known for his connection with notable times of revival at Stewarton, Shotts, and Holywood near Belfast. In the latter two places, 500 and 1000 respectively were said to be converted under his preaching. Even though it is nowhere claimed that this was owing to any great oratory, it would be understandable if such events piqued an interest in the reading of his sermons.

To those familiar with the published sermons of Covenanter ministers, it would seem that notes of only one sermon and several exhortations survive from Livingstone's pulpit labours.³ Even these,

¹ The main article remains R.G. Philip, 'The life and preaching of John Livingstone, 1603–1672', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 4 (1932), pp. 150-161. As Philip notes, the more accurate spelling of the surname is probably without the final 'e', which was the way that Livingstone and his contemporaries often spelled it. It is better known with the final 'e', however; and furthermore there are two manuscript letters from 1650 bearing Livingstone's signature with the spelling 'Livingstone'.

² G.R. Kinloch (ed.), *The Diary of Mr. John Lamont of Newton, 1649–1671* (Maitland Club, Glasgow, 1830), p. 35.

³ Philip recorded some but not all manuscript sermons (p. 161): 'Not many examples remain, but notes by hearers are to be found, in a manuscript collection in Glasgow

according to the editor, are ‘neither just so full, nor so methodical as could have been wished, yet it was thought proper to give them a place here, both on account of the man’s manner, and likewise because there have been none of his ministerial labours of this nature published before.’ The editor, John Howie, noted two further discourses in manuscript that had not been published.⁴ There is, however, much more available and the following bibliography seeks to highlight the extent of this.

I. Overview of the Sermons

Most of the sermons survive from around 1650 to 1661 with a few in 1662–3. While notes of sermons preached around the time of Shotts or in Ulster or indeed around the time of the 1638 revolution would create considerable interest, the latter part of his ministry is significant. Besides gaining much of his reflections and application in the period following the restoration of 1660, there are some notable examples from communion occasions in the Borders in the 1650s. This was a time of revival as Livingstone himself tells us.

Some of the discourses are lectures and others are exhortations at the Lord’s Table or one after the last communion held in Ancrum. One or two are prefaces and this lesser known practice requires explanation together with the practice of lecturing. At the start of the morning service the minister began by prefacing before the singing of the psalm. In one case Livingstone seems to have prefaced after the singing of the psalm. The preface was a short address intended to stir up the congregation in connection with the general theme of the whole day’s services, although sometimes it was connected with the psalm to be sung. There would also be a lecture or exposition of a chapter or substantial portion of either the Old Testament or New Testament reading. This would usually last for around thirty minutes. One notable occasion of Livingstone’s prefacing has been preserved by oral history, although the exact discourse has not. It is recorded by Robert Wodrow:

Mr Davidson, a preacher near Geddart, informs me, that he has this account of Mr John Livingstoun at Ancrum from some of his Elders, yet alive: That, generally speaking, it was observed, that he had much more

University Library ... They include two by Livingston – a preface founded on Psalm xciii. 5 to a sermon on Psalm cxxx. 1, as well as a Lecture on John xx. 24-29...A Wodrow manuscript in the National Library has notes by a hearer of a lecture on Psalm cx. and a sermon on 2 Sam. vii. 19. Both are without a date, but the second is marked as having been delivered one afternoon after Communion.’ See Sermons 16, 17, 19, 24 and 25 below.

⁴ John Howie (ed.), *Sermons delivered in times of persecution in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1880), pp. 625-6. See p. 635 of the original edition published in Glasgow in 1779.

success among strangers that came to hear him, than among these of his own congregation; that he was a very affectionate person, and weeped much; that it was his ordinary way, and might be observed almost every Sabbath, that when he came into the pulpit he sat down a little, and looked first to the one end of the Kirk, and then to the other; and then, ordinarily, the tear shott in his eye, and he weeped, and oftimes he began his preface and his work weeping. Persons came from a very great distance to hear him; and he heard one [of] his Elders tell, that a woman who had come a great way off, and was in the Sabbath wrestling in the fields among some bushes where Mr Livingstone sometimes used to come out in the Sabbath morning, and, hearing her voice, he drew near, and heard her wrestling to this purpose: 'Lord, I have come forty miles to this place, and shall I get nothing?'⁵ and so she went on, pleading for His presence with his servant. When Mr Livingstone came in and began his preface, he directed himself to them all, and then to the woman that had come so many miles, and had been so exercised; and assured her, God had heard what she had prayed for, though he knew her not, that she would have a good day; and, accordingly, she never had a sweeter time in her life.⁶

II. The Popularity of Livingstone's Preaching

It is clear from other records also that Livingstone's preaching was especially popular. When Andrew Hay of Craignethan was in Edinburgh during a communion season in 1659 he was keen to discover where John Livingstone was preaching on the thanksgiving Monday as the churches would be occupied simultaneously by various ministers. Walter Pringle of Greenknow tells us that he regularly travelled the fourteen miles between Stichill and Ancrum to hear Livingstone.

In the year 1651, I became a constant hearer of that lively man, Mr John Livingstone, going every Sabbath day from Stichill to Ancrum. By the way, I have had many a sweet hour, and I ever heard him with great delight and profit to my soul, always esteeming the word spoken by him not to be his, but God's. Beyond any that ever I knew, he hath brought his wisdom, learning, and parts, whereof he hath a very large share, most in subjection to God; so that not by these, but by the movings of the Spirit of truth, did he speak out of the abundance that was in his heart, therefore, through

⁵ This was probably a journey from Edinburgh and must have taken about 10-12 hours to walk, probably beginning on the evening before, and may well have meant a forfeited night's sleep.

⁶ Robert Wodrow, *Analecta: Or Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences Mostly Relating to Scotch Ministers and Christians* (4 vols., Maitland Club, Glasgow, 1842-43), Vol. 2, p. 249.

the goodness of God, his words did reach into the hearts of others; but, in a word, he hath seen the glory of God, and doth speak what he hath seen and heard. I am debtor more than I can express to this worthy man: for besides the hearing of him preach, I have had sweet fellowship with him, ever delighting in his company. And once when I was lying in one bed with him at Eglinham, about the middle of the night, I awakened with most sweet breathings upon my spirit, which caused me to shed tears with much joy upon my pillow. This I revealed not to him; and here I mention it without any observation, lest I should seem to be positive in that which is not yet understood. Now this precious man is banished out of these lands by the Lords of Council. As a child from a father did I part with him at Leith, upon the 14th day of this present month; yet nothing of this doth trouble me, but the fear I have of what the Lord God may be minding by banishing such shining; lights out of the land.⁷

III. Livingstone's Approach to Preaching

Livingstone's remarks and advice concerning public preaching as well as praying are reasonably well known and are included in an appendix. In general, they advocate a balance that avoids extremes. For instance, he says that a preacher should not premeditate everything he says in the pulpit yet also that it is not right to presume too much on special assistance at the time of delivery. His own experience of extraordinary assistance was of course at Shotts. Famously, he was ready to decline the duty of preaching and depart but he says:

I durst not so far distrust God, and so went to sermon, and got good assistance. I had about one hour and ane half upon the points I had meditated on Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26; and, in end, offering to close with some words of exhortation, I was led on about ane hour's time in ane strain of exhortation and warning, with such liberty and melting of heart as I never had the like in publick all my life.⁸

A week later he learned the difference when 'preaching in Irvine', he says, 'I was so deserted, that the points I had meditated and written, and had them fully in my memory, I was not able for my heart to get them pronounced. So it pleased the Lord to counterballance his dealing, and hide pride from man.' Livingstone also noticed that the first moving among the congregation began in the following way:

⁷ W.K. Tweedie (ed.), *Select Biographies* (2 vols., Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1845-47), Vol. 1, pp. 435-6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 138-9.

In the time of Mr Liviston's sermon, ther was a soft shouer of rain, and when the people began to stickle a litle, he said to this purpose, 'What a mercy is it that the Lord sifts that rain throu these heavens on us, and does not rain doun fire and brimstone, as he did upon Sodom and Gomorha!'

The lesson Livingstone drew from this was one that he pressed on the minister, George Barclay, to whom he related the events:

it was somwhat that, incidentally, he spoke that gave occasion to the motion among the people; and Mr Barclay repeated the words above, and Mr Livistoun added to him, 'Brother, when you are strongly pressed to say any thing you have not premeditated, doe not offer to stope it; you know not what God hath to doe with it!'⁹

Characteristically, Livingstone is self-effacing about his preaching and suggests that perhaps he did not always attain the desired balance between premeditation and free unpremeditated expression. Yet this was not necessarily entirely due to what he terms 'laziness'; he placed considerable emphasis on preparing the heart spiritually as well as the words. He also notes the impact that a spiritually uplifted congregation could have on his preaching.

As concerning my gift of preaching, I never attained to any accuracie therin, and, through laziness, did not much endeavour it. I used ordiuarly to write some few notes, and left the enlargement to the time of deliverie. I found that much studying did not so much help me in preaching, as the getting my heart brought to a spirituall disposition; yea, sometimes I thought the hunger of the hearers helped me more than my own preparation. Many a time I found that which was suggested to me in the delyverie, was more refreshfull to myself and to the hearers, than what I had premeditated. I was often much deserted and cast down in preaching, and sometimes tolerably assisted.

Clearly, he had no desire to publish his sermons and did not seem to prepare them for the press. The neatness and presentation of the notes taken of thirty-nine sermons on Isaiah 60 ('The Gold and growth of the New Testament Saints and Service', National Library of Scotland, Wod. Qu. LXVII) indicate something potentially prepared for the press or at least for private circulation.¹⁰ He also tells us that he found it hard to preach the same sermon twice, a fact that helps us in connecting the notes of sermons with reported dates by diarists.

⁹ Wodrow, *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 271.

¹⁰ The National Library records that the volume was transcribed by James Moffat ('Mophett') 22nd January – 1st March 1683.

I never preached ane sermon which I would be earnest to see again in wryte but two; the one was on ane Munday after the communion at Shotts, and the other on ane Munday after the communion at Holywood: and both these times I had spent the whole night before in conference and prayer with some Christians, without any more than ordinary preparation; otherwayes, my gift was rather suited to simple common people, than to learned and judicious auditors. I could hardly ever get my own sermon repeated, neither could I get the same sermon preached twice, although to other hearers. I thought it became tastless both to myself and others. I have sometymes, after some years, preached on the same text, but then I behoved to make use of new notes. Had I in a right manner behaved and taken pains, it had been better for myself and others; but a lazie trusting to assistance in the meantime kepted me bare-handed all my dayes.¹¹

Archibald Johnston of Wariston records in his diary a conversation with Colonel Ker that took place on 9th June 1656 at the time of the Edinburgh communion. It was in the context of a difference of opinion among Protesters about whether it was an appropriate time to renew the Covenant. Rutherford, Wariston, and James Guthrie appeared to have supported this move whilst Livingstone resisted it as inexpedient, apparently together with Patrick Gillespie.¹² The comments may be coloured by the debate but seem to indicate that the wider controversy was impacting on his preaching.

9 June. ... When I was going to the exercise Col. Ker cam in and told me strange storyes about his testimonye in the session of Ancrum against the late oaths, and M. Jn. Leviston his casting up our pressures of sprit to haive the Covenant renewed, and then his declaring in his session that he could not preach at Ancrum tho he took much mor tyme and paynes to his studys nor he used to doe; and others observing a decaye in M. Levistons preachings elswehir, and I thought so and som uthers in his Saboth sermon...¹³

Sometimes the two-and-a-half hour discourse at Shotts is alluded to in connection with long sermons. Livingstone did not believe in long sermons, he cautions 'ordinarily goe not beyond the hour'. Presumably this means the length of the sermon but he was certainly much less than the hour ordinarily himself. His sermons in many cases seem to have been recorded verbatim and it is clear that they would have only taken thirty to forty minutes to deliver.

¹¹ *Select Biographies*, Vol. 1, pp. 194-5.

¹² J.D. Ogilvie (ed.), *Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston, 1655-1660* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh 1940), pp. 6-7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Mr John Livingstone said anent long preaching, 'That we that were Ministers endeavoured sometime to preach the Spirit of God unto people; and then, by our long preaching, ere ever we were aware, we preached the Spirit of God again out of people.' For Mr Livingstone was alwayes very short in his public preaching; he hardly exceeded half ane hour at a time. The people was generally very sorry that he had ended so soon, and they would have come and told him so much, that 'The people had a very great desire and longing to hear more, and they are sorry that you were so soon ended.' 'And', said he, 'is it so? That is even the thing I would be at, to have you left with an appetite of hearing much more. I rejoice in that they are in such a frame!'¹⁴

Having spent some time in London before the signing of the National Covenant, he had opportunity to hear some of the best puritan preachers. He compared them with the Scots manner, concluding that there was a special edge to the latter whether in speaking more plainly and directly to the conscience or something that 'pierceth into the heart and affections, and comes immediatly from the Lord'.

After Mr John Livistoun had been in England, some of the West country Ministers asked him, what he thought of the English Ministers and sermons? After his homely way of expressing himself, he answered, he thought their sermons wer like their knives, very beautifull to look to; 'but', says he, 'ther ar some of your Kilmarnock whittles, that, though they look not soe fair on it as your English knives, yet have a better edge, and will cutt as weel and much longer then they will doe!'¹⁵

IV. Published and Unpublished Sermons and Other Discourses

1. Sermon on Micah 7:1, 7th July 1650 beforenoon, sermon at a fast. National Library of Scotland, MS 664A, ff. 308-313.
2. Sermon on Zephaniah 2:3, afternoon sermon, same day as above. National Library of Scotland, MS 664A, ff. 313-318.

¹⁴ Wodrow, *Analecta*, Vol. 3, p. 118. This remark is similar to that which Spurgeon quotes, 'He prayed me into a good frame of mind,' George Whitfield once said of a certain preacher, 'and if he had stopped there, it would have been very well; but he prayed me out of it again by keeping on'. 'Spend more time in the study that you may need less in the pulpit', Spurgeon exhorted. Opinions differ on the matter, but he said that we 'are generally longest when we have least to say. A man with a great deal of well-prepared matter will probably not exceed forty minutes; when he has less to say he will go on for fifty minutes, and when he has absolutely nothing he will need an hour to say it in.' *Lectures to My Students: A Selection from Addresses Delivered to the Students of the Pastors College* (London, 1883), pp. 62, 145.

¹⁵ Wodrow, *Analecta*, Vol. 2, p. 262.

3. Sermon on Micah 7:9, 25th November 1650. National Library of Scotland, MS 664A, ff. 501-506.
4. Sermon on Isaiah 63:16 (1), National Library of Scotland, MS 3469.¹⁶
5. Sermon on Isaiah 63:16 (2), National Library of Scotland, MS 3469.
6. Sermon on Isaiah 63:17, National Library of Scotland, MS 3469.
7. Sermon on Isaiah 63:16 (3), National Library of Scotland, MS 3469.
8. Sermon on Isaiah 64:2 (1), National Library of Scotland, MS 3469.
9. Sermon on Isaiah 64:2 (2), National Library of Scotland, MS 3469.
10. Sermon on Isaiah 64:4 (1), 2nd September 1651. National Library of Scotland, MS 3469.
11. Sermon on Isaiah 64:4 (2), National Library of Scotland, MS 3469.
12. Sermon on Isaiah 64:4 (3), 28th September 1651. National Library of Scotland, MS 3469.
13. Sermon on Isaiah 64:5, National Library of Scotland, MS 3469.
14. Sermon on Psalm 90:8, 7th August 1651. National Library of Scotland, MS 3469.¹⁷
15. Sermon on 2 Corinthians 13:5, at Ednam, 5th July 1654. National Library of Scotland, MS 3469.¹⁸
16. Preface after singing on Psalm 93. Glasgow University Special Collections, MS Gen 32.¹⁹
17. Lecture on Psalm 130. Glasgow University Special Collections, MS Gen 32. '28, Saturday [May]...about 11 a'clock I cam to the

¹⁶ From a manuscript volume entitled 'Thirteen sermons preached by that faithfull and zealous publick servant of his lord and master Jesus Christ Mr John Livingston minister of Ancrume in the year 1651 August 31 ten years before his banishment to Holland, where he departed this life'. The first sermon is labelled 'sermon 3'.

¹⁷ Labelled sermon 11 and sermon 12 in the manuscript.

¹⁸ Labelled sermon 13 and sermon 14 in the manuscript.

¹⁹ This MS is entitled 'A collection of seventy valuable lectures and sermons preached mostly in the time of the late persecution by these eminent servants of Jesus Christ'. Transcribed by Jo. Howie from several old manuscripts about the years 1778-79. The pagination is not clear.

church and heard Mr Joⁿ Levingstone lecture on Ps. 130. Obs. That belivers may be in very great deeps of sin, tempt^on, and defections; deeps of desertion are understood in this place, 2 things to be done in this case, trying and continueing in trying, v. 2. Obs. That many tymes in prayer particulares are swallowed up, and that it is a wyse prayer to crave hearing. v. 3. Obs. that the thing that ailes folk most is their iniquity. v. 4. Obs. that ther are many things w^t God that we doe not see, misbelief is like prating creatures that can never hold their peace. Obs. That the right way of being afraid of the Lord is because he is good. Obs. That patience is Christs waiting roome, and weells them that have their resolutions steeled to wait. Obs. that no waiting is comparable to that of the saints, etc.²⁰

18. Preface (published).²¹ From the Carluke Communion, Lord's Day service, 29th May 1659.
19. Lecture on John 20:24-29. Glasgow University Special Collections, MS Gen 32. From the same service as above. Andrew Hay of Craignethan records, 'I went to sermons and heard Mr John Levingstoun lecture on John 20.24. In the text 2 great wonders, great misbeleef and strange condescendencie. Obs. that so long as the church is heer on earth, ther is ay something amisse in it. Obs. 2, that the people of God should edefy one another and every one cary home a part to them that cannot win. Obs. 3, that when misbeleef is, ther will be some threeds of hope. 4^o that they are weel gets Christ's *healthing*, peace be unto yow. 5^o that some short words in scripture have more in them nor a long harange, etc.'²²
20. Exhortation after Two Tables Were Served.²³
21. Exhortation after All Tables Were Served.²⁴ Hay records: 'After sermons Mr Wm Jack opened the actioun, and I did comunicat at the 4th table served be Mr Joⁿ Levingston.'²⁵ It is not clear whether this means the fourth table served or the fourth served by Livingstone as he says that William Jack of Carluke opened the action, i.e. administration of communion.

²⁰ A.G. Reid (ed.), *The Diary of Andrew Hay of Craignethan, 1659–60* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1901), p. 36.

²¹ *Sermons delivered in times of persecution in Scotland*, pp. 625-6.

²² *Diary of Andrew Hay of Craignethan*, p. 37.

²³ *Sermons delivered in times of persecution in Scotland*, pp. 626-30.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 630

²⁵ *Diary of Andrew Hay of Craignethan*, p. 37.

22. Sermon on Luke 17:32.²⁶ Hay says that ‘in the aftemoone Mr Jo Levingston preached on Luc 17.32. Obs. 1, that among all the wares of the botle of our soule that is broken, our memory is one. Obs. 2, that we are bound to remember the Lords dealings towards uthers. 5 particulars wherin to remember Lots wiffe. Obs. that some seeme to go half way to heaven and die be the way. Obs. 2, that some things we count very smal which the Lord counts very great. 3. that a peeace of idle curiositie has been the undoing of many. 8 things supposed to be the causes of her looking back, etc.’²⁷
23. The Substance of a Discourse had by Mr John Livingstone, to his Parish at Ancrum, 13th of October 1662.²⁸
24. Lecture on Psalm 110. National Library of Scotland, Wod. Fol. LX, no. 60, ff. 201r-202r. It might seem likely that the lecture on Psalm 110 was from the communion occasion in Edinburgh on 12th June 1659; however, it is hard to find any of the expressions that Hay records in the manuscript (see Section V below).²⁹
25. Sermon on 2 Samuel 7:19. National Library of Scotland, Wod. Fol. LX, no. 60, ff. 202r-204v. It is marked ‘afternoon’ which might seem to indicate that it was preached on the afternoon of 12th June 1659, after the communion was administered except that Andrew Hay says that Livingstone preached in Greyfriars that afternoon (see Section V below).³⁰
26. Sermon on Isaiah 60:1 (1). First Sabbath March 1661. ‘The Gold and growth of the New Testament Saints and Service’, National Library of Scotland, Wod. Qu. LXVII, ff. 1-7.
27. Sermon on Isaiah 60:1 (2). ff. 7-15.
28. Sermon on Isaiah 60:2. ff. 15-28.
29. Sermon on Isaiah 60:3. ff. 28-37.
30. Sermon on Isaiah 60:4 (1). ff. 37-43.
31. Sermon on Isaiah 60:4 (2). ff. 43-52.
32. Sermon on Isaiah 60:4 (3). ff. 52-58.
33. Sermon on Isaiah 60:5 (1). ff. 58-68.

²⁶ *Sermons delivered in times of persecution in Scotland*, pp. 631-635.

²⁷ *Diary of Andrew Hay of Craignethan*, p. 38.

²⁸ *Select Biographies*, Vol. 1, pp. 199-212.

²⁹ *Diary of Andrew Hay of Craignethan*, p. 50.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 51. I am grateful to Dr Ulrike Hogg, a Curator at the National Library, for assistance in locating this item.

34. Sermon on Isaiah 60:5 (2). ff. 68-75.
35. Sermon on Isaiah 60:5 (3). ff. 75-83.
36. Sermon on Isaiah 60:5 (4). ff. 83-90.
37. Sermon on Isaiah 60:6-7 (1). ff. 90-99.
38. Sermon on Isaiah 60:6-7 (2). ff. 99-106.
39. Sermon on Isaiah 60:8 (1). ff. 106-114.
40. Sermon on Isaiah 60:8 (2). ff. 114-121.
41. Sermon on Isaiah 60:9 (1). ff. 121-128.
42. Sermon on Isaiah 60:9 (2). ff. 128-135.
43. Sermon on Isaiah 60:9 (3). ff. 135-144.
44. Sermon on Isaiah 60:10 (1). ff. 144-151.
45. Sermon on Isaiah 60:10 (2). ff. 151-161.
46. Sermon on Isaiah 60:11. ff. 161-171.
47. Sermon on Isaiah 60:12. ff. 171-178.
48. Sermon on Isaiah 60:13-14. ff. 178-186.
49. Sermon on Isaiah 60:14. ff. 186-194.
50. Sermon on Isaiah 60:15-17. ff. 194-201.
51. Sermon on Isaiah 60:15. ff. 201-206.
52. Sermon on Isaiah 60:16. ff. 207-214.
53. Sermon on Isaiah 60:17 (1). ff. 214-221.
54. Sermon on Isaiah 60:17 (2). ff. 221-230.
55. Sermon on Isaiah 60:18. ff. 230-237.
56. Sermon on Isaiah 60:19. ff. 237-248.
57. Sermon on Isaiah 60:20 (1). ff. 248-255.
58. Sermon on Isaiah 60:20 (2). ff. 255-264.
59. Sermon on Isaiah 60:21 (1). ff. 264-272.
60. Sermon on Isaiah 60:21 (2). ff. 272-282.
61. Sermon on Isaiah 60:21 (3). ff. 282-289.
62. Sermon on Isaiah 60:22 (1). ff. 289-298.
63. Sermon on Isaiah 60:22 (2). ff. 298-305.
64. Lecture on Revelation 16. Second Sabbath July 1661. ff. 305-308.
65. Amos 3:2 (two sermons) preached in Rotterdam in 1663. National Library of Scotland, Wod Qu. XCVIII. [[N.B. This item should be numbered "65 & 66" but I don't know how to do that.]]

V. Summarised Sermons

In some notes from a diary from 1634 Livingstone records his sermon preparation for preaching at a communion on 14th December 1634. It appears the communion was at Killinchy, with John McLellan assisting. The Presbyterian ministers had been given six months reprieve from deposition in May 1634. Livingstone had set apart the Friday for ‘private fasting and prayer, before this ensuing communion, but’, he records, ‘as yet deadness and aversness from God, and as great emptiness of meditation is in my heart as ever almost. Lord send a gracious change. This deadness continued till supper-time. I sat up till almost two of the clock. The Lord was pleased somewhat to remove it. I got some meditation on Cant. iv. I am so perplexed with the weight of this work, and sore and multiplied temptations, that I can neither speak nor wryte. Undertake for me, sweet Jesus, who hast ay helped me hitherto, for I have some threed of hope. Lord strengthen it.’ This gives an insight into his frame of mind towards preaching, particularly on a communion occasion.

He goes on to record his preaching the next day (Saturday) and to note the text of Scripture expounded. ‘Notwithstanding the anxiety I was in before I went to preach, yet the Lord was pleased to bear me out very well. Blessed be his name! He banished all my fears. I preached on that, “Come with me from Lebanon”, and the three verses following.’ He further records his experience on the Communion Lord’s Day.

14th December, Communion-Sabbath. — This day my mind was dead and wandering in the morning before I went in. In the preface I was weighted and born down, and began to suspect that the Lord would desert me all the day. In the prayer I found some presence. In the beginning of the sermon, the Lord bear me into a digression of the love of Christ, wherein I was helped with good liberty, and many found great sweetness. The stamp of this remained through the rest of the day. The text was, ‘A garden inclosed,’ &c. There were five tables. The Lord gave me lively exhortations to them all. I had forgott to communicate myself till the last table was almost ended, and I thought it a great mercy of God that put me in remembrance, whereas I had forgotten it so long.

On the Monday following he could also record: ‘This day also the Lord helped me very well, blessed be his name! and crowned his own work. I preached on “Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates,” even to “I sleep, but my heart waketh.”’ As was the custom, the Lord’s Supper was administered the following week also.

December 20, Saturday – Preparation for the Communion. — This day I was very full of faithless fears and discouragements, and because I gave so much way to them, the Lord was pleased to desert me in preaching on that text, ‘I sleep, but my heart waketh’. Light there was, blessed be his name; but I found the work born down, and my misbelief had the wyte of it. The Lord pardon, and let me be humbled for it in the right manner.

He intended to continue with the fifth chapter of Song of Solomon for the communion the next day but records, ‘I was forced to change my text after supper, from Cant. v. 4, to John xvii. 24, 25, 26. In short, while the Lord hath given some meditation on this place, which I have now written, but Lord make it lively to-morrow.’ ‘December 21, 1634, Sabbath Communion. — I was not so easilie born out this day as the last, but with some more frightening, yet very graciously, I bless his holy name.’³¹

In early March 1654, Cromwell summoned Patrick Gillespie and John Livingstone to London in order to discuss a new religious settlement for Scotland.³² Livingstone was unwilling to go but was told that if he did not consent he would be sent as a prisoner. When he preached before the Protector, his text was, ‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God’ (Hebrews 10:31).³³

Robert Bennet, laird of Chesters and Rafflet, in Ancrum parish recorded summarised notes of a communion held at Wilton Church, Hawick on 22nd June 1656. Livingstone was one of the ministers present, and one of the texts from which he preached was Isaiah 55:3, ‘Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.’ The sermon was full of invitations to come to Christ for salvation.³⁴

Besides the occasions mentioned above where Andrew Hay of Craignethan summarised surviving sermons by Livingstone, there are others during the Edinburgh communion season of July 1659 for which we do not have any fuller notes.

[11th June] About 1 acloak I went to M^r Stirling’s kirk,³⁵ and heard M^r Joⁿ Levingstoun preach the preparation sermon on Revel. 2.4. Obs. that the good that any man does takes not away the Lords displeasure against his

³¹ *Select Biographies*, Vol. 1, pp. 283-6.

³² *Select Biographies*, Vol. 1, p. 137.

³³ *Diary of Mr. John Lamont of Newton, 1649-1671*, p. 68.

³⁴ D. Stewart, *Covenanters of Teviotdale* (Galashiels, 1908), pp. 35-38.

³⁵ This was Lady Yester’s church which was constructed in High School Yards in 1647 on the site of the ruined Blackfriars monastery with funds supplied by Margaret Ker, Lady

ensuing falls, but increaseth it rather. Obs. 2, that almost it will lie in your power what to call sins befor God, if you call it great it will evanish, if small it will be drawn out in battell aray. Obs. 3, that forsaking of the first love is a thing incident to Christians, and is incident to the God of Christians to mak it a lasting quarrell, ay till it be remedyed; 2 considerations upon it. 4 properties of God's contraversie for our forsaking our first love, what the forsaking our first love faith, etc.

12 June, *The Lords day*...This morning being in Ed^r after I was readie I went to the Lady Yesters kirk and heard M^r Jon. Levingstone lectur on Ps. 110, being a prophecie of Christ's dominion. Obs. that his kingly office comprehends both preistly and propheticall. v. 1. Obs. That a christian may quite his welfare except he can say as Thomas did. My Lord etc. v. 2. that such as will not obey the word, shall not get a messenger from the dead, v. 3. that to be free, generous, and gentle, is a mark of God's people, v. 4. That God the Father officiats in consecrating his sone a preist for his people. v. 7. that it becomes all saints to lift up their heads and hearts, etc.

After sermons I did comunicat in M^r Stirling's kirk, M^r Jo. Levingston being administering, and took my sacramt upon the renovation of my personall covt with God on the termes as it stands written and signed, and promised and vowed in the Lord's strenth to beg grace to mourne for leaving my first lov, and to repent and doe my first works, and be more diligent and faithfull in duties thenever I have been: and the Lord gave me a good day, blissed be he, and allowed me more tendemes then I had at any comunion this yeer yet.

Then I went out with Mr Levingstoun and went to the Grayfrier kirk wher he served 3 tables and therafter preached in the afternoone on Revel. 2.4. Obs. that love to God is such a grace and exercise as is of great moment both for him and ws. Obs. 2, that becaus the Lord expects love but from few, therfor he quarrells for leaving it. 3^o That its a great matter that God will give ws leave to love him. Obs. 4, That anything of a christian is remarkable, but especially his beginings and first love; 5 properties of our first love; 3 steps of falling from our first love. 2 helps for a decayed christian to ryse againe, etc.

13, Monday. — This morning being in Edinb. After I was readie I went up to my sisters to know quher M^r Levingston preached, and finding he preached in M^r Stirling's kirk, I went thither and heard him, On Revel. 2.5, we please Christ best when we love him most. In the text ther is ane

Yester, widow of James Hay, 7th Lord Hay of Yester. It served the south-east section of the city.

exhortation, and a threatening. Obs. 1, that a sanctified memorie is a great help for a holie and christian walking. Obs. 2, that grace can mak use of all that nature had and sin hes defaced. Obs. 3, that the reeison of our not ryising after falling from our first love, is ane oblivion of our former good condition. 2 means to help our memory in spiritual thinges. Obs. 4, that when love toward God decays, so doeth love toward his people. Obs. 6, that by the word (fallen) the Lord calls all that know anything of God, to remember the sweet communion you have had befor. Obs. 6, that Christ proceeds orderly with the backslyding Christian; 1 to remember, 2 to repent, 3 to doe, etc.

After sermons I cam up to my sister's hous and breakfast; M^r Levingstone cam in and lay down with a pain in his head, so I took my leave of him.³⁶

VI. Conclusion

Robert MacWard described Livingstone as 'that burning and shining light, worthy and warm Mr. Livingstone, who used to preach as within the sight of Christ and the glory to be revealed.' Livingstone's characteristic humility would have baulked at being commended in this way but he acknowledged himself, 'I cannot say much of great services, yet if ever my heart was lifted up, it was in preaching of Jesus Christ.'³⁷ The sixty-six discourses that have survived from his pulpit ministry are the fragments that remain of the labours of a notable Covenanter preacher.

Appendix: Livingstone's Remarks on Preaching

REMARKS ON PREACHING AND PRAYING IN PUBLICK, MR JOHN LIVINGSTONE³⁸

It is most probable that no gift, no pains, a man takes to fit himself for preaching, shall ever doe good to the people or himself, except a man labour to have and keep his heart in a spiritual condition before God, depending on him allwayes for furniture and the blessing. Earnest faith and prayer, a single aime at the glory of God, and good of people, a sanctified heart and carriage, shall availl much for right preaching. There is sometime somewhat in preaching that cannot be ascribed either to the matter or expression, and cannot be described what it is, or from whence it cometh,

³⁶ *Diary of Andrew Hay of Craignethan*, pp. 50-52.

³⁷ *Select Biographies*, Vol. 1, p. 291.

³⁸ *Select Biographies*, Vol. 1, pp. 287-9; Wodrow MSS., Vol. IX, folio, No. 59, in Robert MacWard's handwriting.

but with a sweet violence, it pierceth into the heart and affections, and comes immediatly from the Lord. But if there be any way to attaine to any such thing, it is by a heavenly disposition of the speaker.

A man would [should] especially read the writings, and labour to follow the gifts, of those whom God hath, in the most eminent manner, blessed with the converting and confirming of their hearers, rather than those who seem to have rare gifts for learning and delectation, without such successe.

It is very needful, that a man prudently discerne what is the nature and extent of the gift that God hath given him, that in offering to imitat others, he doe not stretch beyond his owne line, but onely correct the defects of his owne gift, and what is good therin, labour to improve and exault that.

It is very fitting, that a man have plentie and choice of words, that as need requires, he may vary his expression; and sometime the inforceing of the same thing with diverse words to the same purpose hath its owne use, especially to a dull auditory; and so we finde, that often in the Prophets and Psalms, and poetick Scriptures, the same thing will be twice expressed onely in different words. But a custome of multiplieing synonymous words and epithets, and sentences, to the same purpose, is very unsavourie to ane understanding hearer, that seeks matter and not words, and would feign to proceed from scarcetie of matter, and a desire to fill the horn any way.

The light of nature, which is a sparke of the will of God, hath taught many usefull rules even to Pagans, anent the right way of makeing solemne speches before others, the most of which are to be applied to preaching with due discretion; so that what is thought unseemly in the one is to be avoided in the other. But the best rules are taken from the preachings of Christ, of the Apostles and Prophets.

DIRECTIONS, MISCARRIAGES, AND EXTREMITIES IN PREACHING

I. FOR MATTER

1. A mediocritie would be kept that there be not too much matter in one sermon, which but overburdeneth the memorie of the hearers, and would seem to smell of ostentation; and, on the other hand, that there be not too little, which hungers the auditorie, and argues ane emptie gift.

2. The matter would [should] not be too exquisit and fine, with obstruse learning and quaint notions, which goe beyond the capacitie of

the vulgar, and also savoureth of ostentation, nor yet too common, and such as most of the audiorie might themselves devise; for it procures carelesse hearing, and despiseing of the gift.

Moreover, these faults would [should] be shunned: —

1. Too many particular points reckoned, as 8, 10, &c., loads memorie, and too few is flat.
2. Too exquisit methode, and none almost at all.
3. Too much would not be left to assistance in the time, and yet not all premeditated.
4. Ordinarily goe not beyond the hour.
5. Not too much Scripture cited, nor too little.
6. Not to insist long in proveing cleare doctrines.
7. Not too few doctrines, nor too many.
8. Not to insist on points that may be spoke to on any text.
9. Neither too many similitudes, nor none at all.

II. WORDS

1. Not too fine, nor too common.
2. Avoid many synonymous words and sentences.

III. UTTERANCE AND VOICE

1. Not like singing.
2. Not long drawen words.
3. Not affect at a weeping-like voice.
4. Not too loud, nor too low.
5. Not to speake too fast, or too slow.
6. Not to interrupt with oft sighing.