

THE REV. ROBERT DOUGLAS, A.M., 1594-1674

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THE Rev. Robert Douglas, five times Moderator of the General Assembly, minister successively in Kirkcaldy, St. Giles, Tolbooth, St. Giles again, Greyfriars and Pencaitland, is remembered chiefly, if not exclusively, for the sermon and exhortations he delivered on New Year's Day in the year 1651 at the last coronation which ever took place in Scotland—that of King Charles II at Scone. John, third Marquis of Bute, points out¹ that while the name of Robert Dowglas appears on one edition of "The Forme and Order of the Coronation of Charles the Second, King of Scotland, England, France and Ireland, as it was acted and done at Scone, the first day of January, 1651," probably because the pamphlet consists largely of the sermon and exhortations addressed to the King, the description and the Forme were not the work of Mr. Dowglas, but of Sir James Balfour, the Lord Lyon King of Arms, who officiated at the coronations of both Charles I and II. The Marquis of Bute always uses the spelling "Dowglas" in his book, as do the records of the General Assembly² for the years in which Dowglas was Moderator, or when he is mentioned by name as a Commissioner,³ and it is very probable that he himself used this form of spelling, although the *Fasti* and other works consistently use the modern form "Douglas."

TRADITIONS OF HIS ORIGIN

Robert Douglas, however, has more to contribute to the history of seventeenth century Scotland than the mere preaching of a Coronation sermon, even though, looking back, it has a special interest as being the only Coronation performed under purely Presbyterian auspices, the nearest being that of a Queen Consort, Anne of Denmark, in 1590.

The facts of his birth are nowhere clearly stated, and the tradition which grew up later has been the source of some controversy among historians. That tradition was accepted by Hew Scott when he wrote "Robert Douglas, A.M., said to have been a grandson of Queen Mary and George Douglas, younger of Lochleven, while she was confined in that castle."⁴ It appears also that Douglas himself encouraged the spread of this tradition, although whether in a spirit of pride or enjoyment is not

¹ *Scottish Coronations*, p. 141.

² *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1642.

³ *Ibid.*, Session 12, p. 68.

⁴ *Fasti* (1st edition), p. 517.

indicated. Historians of the period are apt to overlook the fact that while ministers in the succession of John Knox may have at all times comported themselves with becoming gravity, and taken life seriously (as they exhorted their congregations to do at great length on Sundays and weekdays), the spirit of humanity and the ability to perceive the humorous side of life were not absent. And there is more than a suggestion that Douglas found it amusing to watch the reaction of people towards himself when they "discovered" that his grandmother was Mary, Queen of Scots. It was a tradition he never contradicted, which he was not in a position, so far as is now known, to confirm, and which on the face of it was not impossible.

John, fourth Lord Erskine, had a daughter Margaret, who was mistress of King James V¹ and mother of the Regent Moray.² She married Sir Robert Douglas of Lochleven, and their eldest son, Sir William Douglas, sixth Earl of Morton, married Lady Agnes Lesley, eldest daughter of George, fourth Earl of Rothes, and they had four sons and six daughters.³ Sir William's brother was Sir George Douglas, and it is around this George and Queen Mary that the controversy arises. Tradition says that during the Queen's imprisonment at Lochleven Castle, or as a result of her stay there, a child was born, George Douglas, illegitimate son of Sir George and the Queen, and father of the Rev. Robert Douglas.

From the chronological point of view, this is perfectly possible, for it would mean that Douglas's father was born in 1567-8, and was 26 years of age when Robert was born in 1594. The question of Douglas's ancestors on the male side has never caused either doubt or misgiving, and the Douglas family was not unique in having illegitimate sons. What was and is questioned was his ancestry on the female side, and Burton makes a good deal of it, even while he admits⁴ that "in most of the Courts of Europe the illegitimate family took rank immediately after the legitimate, and at almost every great Court there is a prince called the "Bastard." Questions of succession and legitimacy were, of course, never raised. Mary was imprisoned in Lochleven Castle from 17th June, 1567, and escaped on 2nd May, 1568,⁵ and of the events of these ten and a half months we know little, apart from what the Queen herself revealed. Burton covers six pages condemning the "inquisitiveness" of the whole world in their attempts to find out the details of these months, and much of his displeasure is poured out on the harmless stones of the ruins of Lochleven

¹ *Dictionary of National Biography*, p. 365.

² *Scottish Correspondence of Mary of Lorraine*, p. 113.

³ *Dictionary of National Biography*, p. 366.

⁴ Burton: *History of Scotland*, Vol. 4, p. 281.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

Castle.¹ His excuse for so doing is given in a footnote in which he says that attempts have been made "to draw history out of these stones." He follows this by saying, "It is a vain task . . . to argue on the history of the captive's treatment from the aspect of the ruins of Lochleven Castle,"² and proceeds to show that Lochleven lay in the most civilised district of Scotland, with Perth, Edinburgh and Glasgow not far off, and Inverkeithing, chief of the Fife ports, only a moderate walk away—giving access to French wines and other imports.

Burton is on firmer ground when he continues along the line of the persons known to be near the Queen in Lochleven. Her keeper was the Lady Douglas, widow of Sir Robert (great-grandfather of the Rev. Robert). As mother of the illegitimate regent, she may have shown little laxity towards the Popish woman, who had inherited the crown of her former lover. It was an irony of fate that the child born of her to James V should now be fulfilling the duties of King, without the title, but that is small reason to assume that Lady Douglas was a cruel jailer. It was, however, necessary that the Queen be kept under close guard, and it is recorded that the daughters of the house were in constant attendance, night and day. Yet it would be asking too much of human nature to expect that these daughters all agreed with their mother from the point of view of her emotional attitude towards the Queen, or that they all sided against the Queen for political reasons; or that they did not perhaps make an exception in the case of their brother, Sir George, if he were a frequent visitor to the Queen. If the Lady Douglas was strict, so far as political contacts went (and in this she would have been wise to be strict) it is quite possible that she relaxed in the case of family contacts; whereas if she had any personal feelings against the Queen, it is quite possible that her son did not share them and even that an exception was made in his case. Some light is thrown on the situation by another rumour—of the 17th century—first mentioned by the Editor of the *Memoires de Michel de Castelnau*³ that the Queen gave birth to a female child during her imprisonment. This is strengthened by the fact that when Throckmorton advised the Queen to renounce Bothwell as her husband and allow a divorce to be carried through "she sent me word that she will in no wise consent unto it, but rather die, grounding herself upon this reason, that taking herself to be seven weeks gone with child, by renouncing Bothwell she should acknowledge herself to be with child of a bastard, and to have forfeited her honour, which she will not do to die for it."⁴ Now this quotation is from a letter of Throckmorton to Queen Elizabeth, dated

¹ Burton: *History of Scotland*, Vol. 4, p. 359f. ² *Ibid.*, p. 360.

³ *Ibid.*, 363n. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 363n.

18th July, 1567. This child is said to have been taken to France and brought up in the house of Notre Dame of Soissons, but Burton thinks it well nigh impossible that a child should have been born in Lochleven, been removed to France and lived to maturity without leaving some record in correspondence or memoirs. Yet there are these two references, to which may be added an extract from a letter from the Queen to Elizabeth Tudor, dated 27th January, 1569: *Considerez je suis mere et d'un seul enfant*.¹ One can agree with Burton that the days after her escape have been so closely examined that there is no possibility of her having borne a child after 2nd May, 1568, and consequently, if Mary were indeed pregnant at the time of her imprisonment, the child was Bothwell's and not Douglas's, but the argument must be founded on such evidence as exists in favour of Bothwell, and not on any supposed vigilance on the part of the Lady Douglas. The truth of one tradition obviously cancels out the possibility of the other.

Burton later admits that even the Lady Douglas might have yielded to the charm of the Queen of Scots, as certainly young George Douglas did—indeed, he uses the word “enslaved” concerning him, and Sir William Drury, reporting at second-hand about an interview between Moray and the Queen, states that Mary had named George Douglas as a husband “to her liking.”² Burton dismisses this as a piece of current rumour, but states that the enslavement of Douglas was such that his removal from Lochleven was made necessary—but even that may have been part of the plans by which her escape was made possible.

It would appear tolerably certain, then, that the Rev. Robert Douglas's father was an illegitimate son of Sir George Douglas, brother of the sixth Earl of Morton, great-grandson of Margaret, mother of the regent Moray and mistress of James V; that Sir George was familiar with the Queen and of great service to her, but that the tradition that she bore him a son is cancelled out by the stronger evidence that she bore Bothwell a daughter during the ten months of her imprisonment.

Nothing more is known of his early days except that he was educated at the University of St. Andrews and graduated Master of Arts in 1614, and was licensed as a preacher of the Gospel in 1617. Thereafter, he became chaplain to one of the Scottish auxiliaries sent through the influence of Charles I to help Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War. Wodrow records that Gustavus thought highly of Douglas, especially for his military skill. It is stated that during the campaign he had no other book

¹ Labanoff II, p. 288.

² Burton: *op. cit.*, p. 364.

than the Bible to read and could repeat most of it from memory.¹ One would wish to know the source of the statement quoted in the *Fasti* (First Edition) that the Commander declared when Douglas left the service: "that for wisdom and prudence, he might be a counsellor to any European monarch, a general who might conduct an army from his knowledge of military tactics, or a Moderator to any Assembly in the world." The last phrase suggests that someone was reading back into European service a statement which might have been made in 1644 when Douglas was chaplain to one of the Scottish regiments in England.²

MINISTERIAL CAREER

When we turn to the ministerial career of Robert Douglas, we come out of the realm of conjecture, and into that of known fact. He succeeded the Rev. John Gillespie, father of Patrick Gillespie, Principal of Glasgow University, in the Second Charge of Kirkcaldy, and was admitted on 9th November, 1628. Less than a year later, on 8th October, 1629, he was called to the Second Charge in South Leith, but he declined, and remained in Kirkcaldy for ten more years. He was a member of the Assembly of 1638—that Glasgow Assembly which abjured episcopacy, deposed the pretended Bishops, condemned the six previous pretended Assemblies, appointed annual Assemblies, and repressed the Licentiousness of the Press!

On 22nd August, 1639, he was translated to the Second Charge of St. Giles,³ where his colleague in the First Charge was Alexander Henderson, who came there from Leuchars in January of the same year, and who had been mainly responsible for the signing of the National Covenant of 1638 and had been Moderator of the Glasgow Assembly.

Less than two years later, he was removed to North-West Quarter, or the Tolbooth parish, where he was admitted on 24th December, 1641.⁴ This parish had been allocated to him by the Town Council of Edinburgh,⁵ and he was translated again to the High Kirk in 1649, this time to the First Charge. Douglas was the first minister of the Tolbooth Kirk, which for 200 years consisted of the west portion of St. Giles.

Back in St. Giles, where he succeeded George Gillespie, son of John Gillespie, his colleague in the First Charge in Kirkcaldy, and had as his colleague in the Second Charge, David Dickson, twice Moderator of the Assembly, Professor of Divinity, successively in Glasgow and Edinburgh,

¹ *Fasti*, Vol. VII, p. 518.

² *Ibid.*, (1915 edition), Vol. VII, p. 385.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 105.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 64.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

and a leader in the Glasgow Assembly, Douglas settled for some thirteen years. It was during this period, as we shall see, that he came forth as a public figure as well as an ecclesiastic. But, in 1662, he encountered troubles over the episcopal question, and according to the *Fasti*,¹ for refusing to accept the restoration of Episcopacy, "he was removed to the Greyfriars, or South West Quarter, 2nd June, 1662, 'that the bishop might be provided,' " while the *Dictionary of National Biography* states that on 27th June, 1662, he was removed to the pastorate of Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh, and "for declining to recognise episcopacy was deprived of this charge on 1st October following."² The *Fasti*³ says he was translated to Old Greyfriars on 2nd June, 1662, to make provision for the new Bishop of Edinburgh, and then on 1st October deprived for not submitting to Episcopacy. The *Fasti*⁴ gives 27th June, as the date of his translation from East (St. Giles) to Greyfriars.

Of the next seven years, nothing is known, but he was admitted as "indulged minister"⁵ to the Parish of Pencaitland on 2nd September, 1669, the parish where David Calderwood had written his famous *History of the Kirk of Scotland*. For four and a half years Douglas ministered there, and he died in February, 1674, and "No man," it was said, "contributed more to the Restoration, and received less benefit from it."

MODERATOR OF ASSEMBLIES

So much for Robert Douglas as minister of a parish. We turn now to his place in the Church as a whole. We have already seen that he was a member of the 1638 Glasgow Assembly, and that may well have had a great influence on his mind as to the place and power of the General Assembly, for although he had been licensed for twenty-one years and an ordained minister in a Parish for ten years, through the action of the two kings (James VI and Charles I), the Assembly had not met for twenty years (1618-1638).⁶ When the Assembly did meet, one of its first important acts was to condemn the six late pretended Assemblies as "unfree, unlawfull and null, and never to have had, nor hereafter to have, any ecclesiasticall authoritie, and their conclusions to have been and to bee of no force, vigour or efficacie."⁷ The Assemblies referred to are those held in 1606 and 1608 at Linlithgow, 1610 at Glasgow, 1616 at Aberdeen, 1617 at St.

¹ *Fasti*, I, p. 59. ² *Dictionary of National Biography*, p. 347.

³ *Fasti*, I, p. 38-9. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 385.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 385. ⁶ *Ibid.*, VII, p. 440.

⁷ Acts of General Assembly, Session 12, Dec. 4th, p. 6.

Andrews and 1618 at Perth. Douglas's first taste of the Assembly, therefore, was calculated to strike him with some force, with a show of power and authority, and to impress him that here was a Church governing body which claimed to speak with all the authority of the prophets: Thus saith the Lord! The same Assembly went on, as is well known, to depose the bishops, to remove episcopacy and restore the Presbyterian Courts of the Church, and among many other acts suited to the times, to pass the important act which ensures the freedom of the General Assembly of the Established Church of Scotland:¹

“ The Assembly, having considered the reasons lately printed for the holding of Generall Assemblies, which are taken from the light of nature, the promise of Jesus Christ, the practise of the holy Apostles, the doctrine and custome of other reformed Kirks, and the liberty of this nationall Kirk, as it is expressed in the Book of Policie, and acknowledged in the Act of Parliament 1592, and from recent and present experience, comparing the lamentable prejudices done to religion through the former want of free and lawfull Assemblies, and the great benefite arysing to the Kirk from this one free and lawfull Assembly, finde it necessary to declare, and hereby declares, that by divine, ecclesiasticall, and civill warrands, this nationall Kirk hath power and liberty to assemble and conven in her yearly Generall Assemblies, and oftener, *pro re nata*, as occasion and necessity shall require: Appointeth the next Generall Assembly to sit at Edinburgh the third Weddinsday of Julie, 1639; . . . ”

Less than four years later, on 27th July, 1642, Robert Douglas, then minister of the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh, was elected Moderator of the General Assembly which met at St. Andrews. This Assembly gave great heed to ensuring that ministers to be presented to vacant charges held a certificate that their trials have been duly sustained, and that all “expectants” to be taken on trial before the Presbyteries forward their names—they were allowed to submit six names—to patrons for presentation to vacant charges.² It is interesting to note that this Assembly passed an Act declaring that “considering that in Argyle, and in other places of the Irish language, there will not be gotten six expectants able to speak that language,” a list of as many expectants as can be had will be taken to satisfy the legal requirements. It was at this Assembly also that a letter was read from the Parliament of England, stating the grief felt by the Lords and Commons that their country is upset by dissolute clergy, malignant Papists, incited by bishops and other ill-affected

¹ *Acts of General Assembly*, Session 26, Dec. 20th, p. 32.

² *Ibid.*, Sessions 6, 7, Aug. 2nd and 3rd, pp. 54-5.

persons. The Assembly replied at length, in an answer drawn up by Alexander Henderson, giving the solution of the problem in one phrase: free and lawful Assemblies, one Confession of faith, one Directory of Worship, one publicke Catechisme, and one form of Kirk Government.¹

But not all the time was taken up with matters of Church and State, and some light is shed on the domestic life of the time—with consequent problems for ministers and elders, in a reference from the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy, asking the Assembly to declare the “limits of the Sabbath during which the Pannes (i.e. salt-pannes) should stand”² and the Assembly approves³ an Overture urging Synods and Presbyteries, especially in the north, to observe more carefully the family exercise, visitation of the churches, catechising, keeping Presbyterial and Provincial meetings, both by preaching and ruling elders (the synod “problem” is three hundred years old), and the Presbyteries are instructed to “give up to the Justice the names of the adulterers, incestuous persons, witches, and sorcerers, and others guilty of such grosse and fearfull sins, within their bounds that they may be processed . . . and because that witchcraft, charming and such like proceeds many times from ignorance, therefore, the Assembly ordains all Ministers, especially in these parts where these sins are frequent, to be diligently preaching, catechising, and conferring, to inform their people thereintill.” On 22nd January, 1645, Douglas was again Moderator of the Assembly which met in Edinburgh and received a letter from the Westminster Assembly of Divines and from its own commissioners in London, viz., Henderson and Rutherford. This Assembly took up matters for the improvement of grammar schools, for bursaries for students of theology and their maintenance and discipline, and records opinions of a special committee anent certain parts of the Directory of Publick Worship.⁴ Baptism is to be administered in face of the congregation, after sermon, and before the blessing; that silence be observed during the Communion, except only when the minister pronounces some few short sentences “suitable to the present conditions of the communicants in the receiving, that they may be incited and quickened in their meditations in the action.” Distribution of both elements is to be universally used, and the minister is to break the bread and deliver it to the nearest. Not least important of the Acts of this Assembly over which Douglas presided was that in Session 16, February 10th, 1645, when, having three times read and diligently examined the propositions concerning Officers, Assemblies, Government of the Kirk, and Ordination of Ministers, brought from the Assembly of Divines

¹ *Acts of General Assembly*, Session 8, Aug. 3rd, p. 59.

² *Ibid.*, Session 13, Aug. 6th, p. 72.

³ *Ibid.*, Session 10, Aug. 5th, p. 64.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

at Westminster, approved them and authorised their representatives to agree to and conclude "an uniformitie betwixt the Kirks in both kingdoms."

We find the usual kind of acts passed by the Assembly—one against Lykwakes, one concerning the observers of "Yule-day and other superstitious dayes, especially if they be schollars,"¹ and another restraining abuses at Pennie Brydals. But the closing session records a "Humble Remonstrance" to the King's most Excellent Majestie warning him of the danger in which he and the whole country lies, as the people's patience is above measure tempted by acts of the "cursed crew of the Irish rebels." No doubt Douglas as Moderator put his name to this "Humble Remonstrance" which, *inter alia*, contains the following: "We make bold to warn your Majestie freely, that the guilt which cleaveth fast to your Majesty, and to your throne is such as (whatsoever flattering preachers of unfaithfull counsellors may say to the contrary), if not timely repented cannot but involve yourself and your posterity under the wrath of the ever living God, for your being guiltie of the shedding of blood of many thousands . . . permitting the masse, and other idolatry . . . for your authorising, by the Book of Sports, the profanation of the Lord's Day . . . for your not punishing of publick scandals, and much profanness in and about your court . . ."²

On 4th August, 1647, when Douglas was still minister of the Tolbooth the Assembly again met in Edinburgh, and for the third time elected him as Moderator. This Assembly, from its Acts, seemed to have been more concerned about the Church affairs in the strictly domestic sense, and it is pleasant to find brotherly exhortations to the brethren in England, and letters to countrymen in Poland, Sweden, Denmark and Hungary. There were, of course, the usual censures for the neglect of family and public worship, but the most interesting, effective and lasting Act of this Assembly—one wonders whether Douglas realised it—was the Act for "Revising the Paraphrase of the Psalmes brought from England, with a Recommendation for Translating the other Scripturall Songs in Meeter."³ This Act appointed John Adamson, Thomas Crauford, John Row and John Nevey to revise the collection, and called their attention to the work of Rowallen, Zachary Boyd, and any other known to have worked on the subject. Mr. Boyd is instructed to translate the other "Scriptural songs in meeter," and to report. It is to be noted that only in the last session of this Assembly is Douglas's signature given, and the spelling is Douglass. In Acts where he is named in 1642 it is Dowglas.

We have seen that Douglas was elected by the Town Council in December, 1648, to St. Giles, First Charge, and he was translated in 1649.

¹ *Acts of General Assembly*, p. 128. ² *Ibid.*, p. 133. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

That year also saw him Moderator of the Assembly for the fourth time at the meeting in Edinburgh on 4th July. There are no Acts of this Assembly which call for a special mention, but the letter to the King takes a more than formal tone when it expresses great grief and sorrow that the King has not seen fit to even send a letter telling them of His Majesty's mind "which princely condescension had not wont to be wanting in your royall father to former Generall Assemblies, even in times of greatest distance."¹ "It is high time to fall down before the throne of grace and make your peace with God."² And they exhort him to conform his family worship to what has been agreed upon "by scripture, the Westminster Assembly, and the Generall Assemblies of this Church."

In view of what happened to succeeding Assemblies, it is permissible to wonder if Douglas was not chosen Moderator deliberately because of the reputation he had acquired of being a good man for State occasions and dealings with the State. He was not unique, of course, in being Moderator for the fourth time (he was to be yet again). Alex. Henderson of Leuchars was three times Moderator, John Spottiswoode, Archbishop of St. Andrews was four times, as was Carstairs, Principal of Edinburgh University, while William Wishart of South Leith and William Mitchell of St. Giles were each five times Moderator of the Assembly. But 1649 was to be the last normal meeting of Assembly for forty years. The meeting called for Edinburgh in 1650 did take place, with³ Andrew Cant, minister of St. Nicholas, Aberdeen, in the chair, but none of the Acts have been printed.

The *Fasti*⁴ says that on 16th July, 1651, the Assembly met at Edinburgh, but that must be an error, for the Assembly which met on that date was the one over which Robert Douglas presided as Moderator for the fifth time, and it met first at St. Andrews, and on the news of the arrival of Cromwell's army in Fife, adjourned to Dundee. A note in the Acts of Assembly⁵ says that after three days the business was hurriedly brought to a conclusion and the members dispersed when intelligence was received that Cromwell's troops were marching on Perth. But in the few days in St. Andrews the retiring Moderator (Andrew Cant) opened the meeting with a condemnation of the recalcitrant policy, while Douglas, the new Moderator, upheld it, and before business began, James Guthrie of Stirling protested against certain members taking their seats, and Prof. John Menzies proposed that the whole Commission be debarred!⁶ Samuel

¹ *Acts of General Assembly*, pp. 217-8. ² *Ibid.*, p. 219.

³ *Fasti*, Vol. VII, p. 440. ⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 440.

⁵ *Acts of General Assembly*, p. 220.

⁶ King Hewison, *The Covenanters*, p. 34.

Rutherford and twenty-one others protested against the meeting as unconstitutional. The Resolutioners voted Douglas into the chair, and the temper of the Assembly was not improved by an unwise request from the King that the opponents of the Resolution should be censured! At this point the Assembly fled to Dundee, and there on 22nd July, Rutherford, with twenty-one supporters, tabled a Protest declining the Assembly. After much discussion, Guthrie and four others were cited, and not comparing, Guthrie and two of the four were deposed, the other two being referred to the Commission.¹ It was after this Assembly that the work appeared entitled, *A Vindication of the Freedom and Lawfulness of the late Assembly*, to which answer was made in *The Nullity of the Pretended Assembly at St. Andrews and Dundee*, which includes the names of forty Remonstrants, and which I dealt with in a previous paper on James Guthrie.²

While it is not part of Douglas's career, it is not out of place here to notice that an Assembly met in Edinburgh in 1652 with David Dickson as Moderator, but that protestation was made by several ministers, elders and professors, against the lawfulness of it. Again on 20th July, 1653, the Assembly was constituted by Mr. Dickson as Moderator (after he and Douglas had preached "two gracious sermons" during the fast), and was broken up by Lieut.-Col. Cotterall on Cromwell's orders. The account written by Baillie is interesting in the light it throws on the situation³ when we remember that Douglas was present, that he apparently was a moderate type of person with a reasonable outlook, one with whom it would have been wise, and possible, to deal in a reasonable way, and who must have realised that there were enthusiasts, albeit sincere, whose conduct made it difficult for a government to govern wisely yet firmly: Baillie writes thus :

On the 20th of July last, when our Generall Assemblie wes sett in the ordinarie tyme and place, Lieutenant-Colonell Cotterall besett the Church with some rattes of musquetiers and a troupe of horse ; himself . . . entered the Assemblie-house, and immediately after Mr. Dickson, the Moderator his prayer, required audience ; wherein he inquired, If we did sitt there by the authority of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England ? or of the Commanders in Chief of the English forces ? Or of the English Judges in Scotland ? The Moderator replied : That we were ane ecclesiasticall Synod, ane

¹ King Hewison, *The Covenanters*, p. 35.

² Scottish Church History Society, *Records*, Vol. XI, Part II, pp. 176-188.

³ Letter to Mr. Calamy, minister in London, 1563. *Acts of General Assembly*, p. 220.

spirituall court of Jesus Christ, which medled not with any thing civile; that our authoritie wes from God, and established by the lawes of the land yet standing unrepealed; that by the Solem League and Covenant, the most of the English army stood obliedged to defend our General Assemblie . . . the Lieut. Col. told us, his order was to dissolve us. . . .

And he led them a mile out of the town, surrounded them with foot soldiers and musketeers, and warned them to leave the city under pain of imprisonment.

Another attempt to meet was made in Edinburgh in July, 1654, but before the meeting was constituted, the commander-in-chief of Cromwell's army gave orders to his soldiers to break it up.¹ The Assembly did not meet again until after the Revolution, when it met in Edinburgh, 10th October, 1690, and except for the years 1691 and 1693, it has met annually, thus carrying into effect the decision of the first Assembly of which Douglas was a member—that of 1638.

CONNECTIONS WITH THE STATE

Even apart from preaching at the Coronation of Charles II, Robert Douglas had a certain place in public life and especially in affairs where Church and State converged. In July, 1641, he preached a sermon before the Scottish Parliament,² and in 1643 he was named one of the Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly of Divines; along with Henderson, Rutherford, George Gillespie, Robert Baillie, and three elders, he was commissioned to prosecute the Solemn League and Covenant in London, but he appears not to have done so,³ for Henderson wrote him from London in that year: "If the Scottish army were heere the Covenant would go through the more easily."⁴

In 1644 he was chaplain to one of the Scottish regiments in England, and he has left a Diary of that period. He was a commissioner for visiting the Universities of Edinburgh, St. Andrews and Aberdeen in 1649⁵ and in 1650 was one of the ministers who waited upon Charles II at Dunfermline. Subsequent events must have disappointed Douglas bitterly, for it is over this incident, and what led up to it, that Douglas stands out clearly as a man of diplomacy, a man whom both sides could not well do

¹ *Acts of General Assembly*, p. 220.

² *Dictionary of National Biography*, p. 347.

³ Burton: *Op. cit.*, Vol. 6, p. 381.

⁴ King Hewison, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 380 note.

⁵ *Dictionary of National Biography*.

without, and who, in spite of his clear-sightedness that some arrangement had to be come to, was unable to keep either side to his sane and reasonable way of thinking. He was one of those men who knew that whatever differences of opinion or policy there might be between Church and State, between King and Parliament, Cromwell and people, yet Church and State must go on; but he was never able to persuade others that this was the only sane way of behaving. He was an honest man among men who were other than honest, and that explains much of the substance and tone of the sermon he later preached at Charles' Coronation—indeed, it may even explain why he was chosen to preach it.

The Scottish army, confronted with innumerable pious declarations issued by Cromwell, "a God-intoxicated-man"¹—a fanatic whom school history books have elevated almost to a point of canonisation under the misleading idea that Puritan means pure-living, had somehow to get Charles to become a Covenanted King. This fight had all the elements of a holy war, and it would never do for either side to leave open to the other the accusation of paganism, popery, or any of the sins which the public so eagerly devours when applied to the enemy.

John Livingstone had tried to persuade Charles on political grounds to declare where he stood, and failed. Douglas made every effort to get the ear of King Charles,² and tried, in a private interview, on religious grounds (?), but without apparent effect until the Covenanters got a resolution through Church and Estates on 13th August, 1650, which declared they would fight only for a Covenanted King. Lesly, the General, rather unwisely sent this to Cromwell, but an easy way out was found for Charles at Dunfermline on 16th August, when Douglas and other ministers got Charles to sign a seven-point declaration agreeing to all that was asked. Douglas must have felt³ pleased at having got Charles to this point, but his mistake lay in believing Charles would keep his word. Cromwell knew Charles better, and Douglas had every reason to speak plainly when next he had opportunity, viz., in January, 1651.

It is nowhere stated why Robert Douglas was appointed to conduct the religious ceremony of coronation. King Hewison⁴ refers to him as Moderator, but he was not Moderator of the preceding Assembly, and became Moderator only in July, 1651. It may have been because he undoubtedly had some influence with the King, because he was a moderate man, obviously trustworthy, and capable of carrying out the ceremony with due dignity, but without any taint of popish ritual. A more obvious

¹ King Hewison, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 6.

² H. Macpherson, *The Covenanters Under Persecution*, p. 25.

³ King Hewison, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

explanation is that he was then Minister of the first charge of St. Giles, Edinburgh. King Hewison describes the coronation scene, at Scone, waxes sarcastic about Douglas's sermons and denounces Charles for his "indecent outrage on religion and patriotism."¹ Professor Cooper, in a paper read to the Ecclesiological Society, 1902, goes into great detail, while John, Third Marquis of Bute,² gives the fullest account of all, with a summary outline of the sermon preached by Mr. Douglas.

The sermon covers fifty pages 6¾ ins. by 3½ ins., but apart from the length of it, there is nothing in it that is unreasonable, or unseasonable, or inapplicable. The text is from 2 Kings xi, 12, 17, not inappropriate in its words: "And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king and anointed him; and they clapped their hands and said: God save the king. . . . And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king, and the people, that they should be the Lord's people; between the king also, and the people." Within the body of the sermon, Douglas stated that it was their duty to crown the Prince, and leave the success thereof to God; he also stated—what even Charles could not deny—that there were "many sins upon our King and his family." There had, after all, been a solemn fast and day of humiliation—many, including Charles, had joined in it. He added that all crowns were fading crowns, and Charles should have an eye on the crown that fadeth not away. That part of the text which deals with the Anointing was not obeyed in practice, because, at that time at least, the Kirk deemed it to savour of superstition, and while his arguments may not be convincing, they were no less so than the arguments of some who are more obedient to the jots and tittles of the law than the law itself. Cooper,³ while admitting that as a pageant, considering it was winter, it was very fine, from the religious point of view it had "three grievous mutilations. There was no Unction. There was no Communion. And it was by the hands of laymen, acting in a purely civil capacity, that the King was invested with his Crown and other Insignia of Royalty." Yet Cooper's objection is not to the fact that there were precedents for the part played by laymen, and for omitting Unction, but to the alleged reasons for these things taking place—viz., jealousy of place, snobbery on the part of the nobles against Churchmen, especially bishops for one, and Presbyterian superstition for the other. Communion is not mentioned, so even Cooper cannot make a guess as to why it was omitted, except to say that Douglas probably celebrated it only at "Communion seasons"—for which there is more to be said than Professor Cooper

¹ King Hewison, p. 30.

² *Scottish Coronations*.

³ Cooper: *op. cit.*, p. 32.

implies. And Cooper finds he has to agree with Lord Bute's encomium upon the sermon: "a singularly able and powerful exposition of Covenanting principles upon Church and State—Hereditary Constitutional Monarchy, complete Religious Intolerance, and the entire Independence of the Church."¹ The word Covenant, of course, is the master-key to the whole discourse and I find it difficult to realise why later historians object to the preachers of those days referring to the Covenants in their sermons, especially on such an occasion as the one under consideration. Had Douglas made no reference to the Covenants, it would surely have been a serious omission, for the Covenanters, and the Assembly, took the Covenants seriously. The Solemn League and Covenant had been agreed to between responsible parties, and could not be ignored. And all that is quite apart from the fact that the custom in those days was to speak directly to men's condition, to speak clearly, and not leave doubts in the minds of the hearers. Cooper thinks² that for Charles II to hear the sermon was a great humiliation, and objects strongly to Charles having to hear the National and Solemn League and Covenant read over, and the oath administered to him, although, apart from the length of the reading, nothing was being asked of Charles which had not already been asked of others. Charles I had indeed refused to subscribe, and Charles II no doubt, would have subscribed anything to obtain his crown, but that does not make Douglas and those who acted with him either fools or criminal autocrats. The closing psalm seems singularly prophetic: "Jehovah hear thee in the day when trouble He doth send!"

Had Charles kept the oaths he took that day, Douglas would have been a satisfied man, for he was to suffer somewhat for the part he played. Cromwell sent him to London as prisoner, but he was soon released, and the next year, 1654, he was again summoned to London, this time to consult with the Protector upon the affairs of the Church of Scotland. Another instance of Douglas being a man they could not get on well without! But according to King Hewison, Douglas refused the invitation, as he did Guthrie and Blair. He was by now the acknowledged leader of the moderate Resolutioners, and he retained that position till the Restoration of the King. But he was not willing to leave Scotland to treat of matters which affected the Scottish Kirk so deeply. He was willing, with Dickson and a few others, to try to bring the extremists into line, and "to pray for the English government."³ Lord Broghill informed Cromwell at this period that of Mr. Douglas "I may say he is the leadingest man in all the Church of Scotland."⁴

¹ Cooper: *op. cit.*, p. 37. ² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³ King Hewison, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 49. ⁴ *Ibid.*

Douglas alone was aware of the mission of James Sharp when he went to London in 1660 to see General Monck, who by this time had ingratiated himself with the Moderate party in the Church of Scotland, and was one of the subscribers to the policy of the Memorandum of Instruction, which the Resolutioners gave their envoys, after their meeting in Edinburgh that year. According to King Hewison, Sharp was far too crafty an ecclesiastic for the honest Robert Douglas to see through, but King Hewison rather tends to paint his villains as black and his heroes as pure gold, and he would like to make Douglas an ardent and enthusiastic Covenanter, overlooking the fact that Douglas was a parish minister all through these troublous times, and was more content to build up the kingdom of God, using the men among whom his lot was cast, than to build up for himself a reputation as a wandering prophet.

THE CLOSING PERIOD

Douglas preached at the opening of Heriot's Hospital that year, and in 1661 at the opening of the Scots Parliament. When Episcopacy was restored, it was obvious that Sharp would get the archbishopric of St. Andrews, but it has been stated that it was first offered to Douglas. Certainly the bishopric of Edinburgh was offered to him if he would agree to the introduction of episcopacy, but he told Sharp he would have nothing to do with it.¹ And as Sharp was leaving the house, Douglas called him back, and said: "James, I see you will engage; I perceive that you are clear, you will be bishop of St. Andrews; and take it, and the curse of God with it."² Douglas was removed from St. Giles to Greyfriars, as we have noted, to make way for the new bishop of Edinburgh, one George Wishart, on 27th June, 1662, and deprived of that charge on 1st October for refusing to conform to Episcopacy. He showed himself quite firm and consistent in his attitude towards this form of church government, and if he were willing to be deprived of his charge rather than submit to it, he was surely entitled to speak against it, above all, to speak reasonably and sincerely. The Scots Parliament was not the only Parliament to whose members Cromwell might have said: "I beseech you . . . think it possible you may be mistaken."

From the 1st October, 1662, until 2nd September, 1669, when he was admitted as an 'indulged minister' to the parish of Pencaitland, nothing is known of Robert Douglas. He was 68 years of age in 1662, and 75 when presented to Pencaitland, where he ministered for the closing five years of his life. He was buried on 6th February, 1674, aged 80. And lest any

¹ King Hewison, p. 138: *Dictionary of National Biography: Fasti*, VII, p. 385.

² King Hewison, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

accuse Douglas of retreating, be it noted that the conditional Indulgence provided (7th June, 1669) inter alia the establishment of a modified Presbyterianism—a public rebuke, says King Hewison of prelatric incompetence,¹ for the indulged ministers were to attend the Presbyterian courts, and when Sharp refused to recognise the indulged ministers, he was reminded that his archiepiscopal censures were no longer canonical.

Douglas was twice married, first to Margaret Kirkcaldie, by whom he had one daughter and six sons, of whom Alexander became minister of Logie (Dunblane)² in 1688, his testimonial being accepted by the General meeting of Presbyterians, in 1687, and he was ordained by the Presbyterian ministers in the Synod on 15th August, 1688. He was a member of the Assemblies of 1690 and 1692, and died in 1720, aged eighty. Robert Douglas' second wife was Margaret Boyd, whom he married on 20th August, 1646, and by whom he had one son and one daughter.

Robert Douglas has been a puzzle to many historians. At least, they have had difficulty in putting him into the proper category. Burton³ refers to Wodrow's opinion of him as "a great State preacher" and in a footnote refers to Douglas's ancestral sins in the rumour of his father's being the illegitimate son of Sir George Douglas and Mary Queen of Scots—for which Douglas can hardly be blamed; and the reference by Douglas in the Coronation sermon was not so much to condemn parental sins in the Stuart line, as to warn Charles II against continuing what the world knew was a dissolute court.

Burnett⁴ says, "There appeared an air of greatness in him, that made all that saw him inclined enough to believe he was of no ordinary descent. He was a reserved man. He had the scriptures by heart to the exactness of a Jew, for he was as a concordance. He was too calm, and too grave for the furious men, but yet he was depended upon for his prudence. I knew him in his old age, and saw plainly he was a slave to his popularity, and durst not own the free thoughts he had of some things for fear of offending the people.' But in his old age he was an indulged minister of Pencaitland, too old to be of much use, even with sweet reasonableness, and it behoved him who had given his word, and as one who was always an honest man, not to indulge in speaking which might incite younger and less wise men to where Douglas himself was too old to lead or accompany."

Dean Stanley finds no fault in him, and writes:⁵ "He was a staunch Presbyterian, and steadily declined all offers of the episcopate at the time

¹ King Hewison, *op. cit.*, p. 225. ² *Fasti*, p. 736.

³ Burton: *op. cit.*, Vol. 7, p. 32. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 135n.

⁵ J. C. Johnston, *Treasury of the Scottish Covenant*, p. 338.

when others who had been thought equally staunch gave way. He was, in fact, a statesman as well as a divine . . . yet in his statesmanship he never lost his sacred character. He was one of those rare men sometimes met with in history, evidently far greater in himself than circumstances permitted him to be."

But the historian whom Douglas puzzles most of all appears to be Principal Rainy, who, in spite of the evidence, would fain have Douglas a 19th century evangelical. He objects to Dean Stanley's eulogy of Douglas, as a man of commanding character, good sense, and statesmanlike qualities, not that he would deny them, but solely on the ground that Stanley thought Douglas a moderate, reasonable man. Rainy claimed he was evangelical in his teaching, was a *jus divinum* Presbyterian, looking on Presbytery as the Lord's ordinance and Prelacy as man's invention, and therefore, "the Dean would have made out a fully better case if he had described him as a highflyer, and as one of those fighting Scotsmen whose zeal so far outran their discretion."¹ It may be that Rainy lived too near the time of the Disruption to see the other side clearly, but there is hardly the same excuse for not seeing Douglas clearly, except that the word 'Moderate' was so abused last century that no two people meant the same thing by it. Douglas would certainly have claimed to be evangelical, to speak to men's condition, even when the men were the King and nobles of the land. He at all times tried to be reasonable and moderate in his methods—and there is Scriptural authority for so being, whereas calling down fire from heaven did not seem to be approved in the Gospels as a method of winning men for Jesus Christ or building up the kingdom of God.

In fact, when we consider the career of this Fife minister, with his nine children, his ministry in Kirkcaldy, and for the most troublous years, in St. Giles, the Tolbooth, Greyfriars, five times Moderator of the General Assembly, twice chosen to preach before Parliament, chosen to preach at the Coronation of a King, which was a bold act in any case, and recollect that he seemed to be the natural choice, and an acceptable choice, on such occasions, not only by the Assembly, but by such variant bodies as the Town Council of Edinburgh, the Scots Parliament, Charles II and Oliver Cromwell, what inevitably stands out is his ability to get along with men, his reasonableness, backed up by his utter trustworthiness in an age when few could be trusted.

Professor Mitchell's verdict is as well-phrased as any:² "Robert Douglas, the silent, sagacious, masterful man . . . came to occupy a place among his brethren almost as unique as that of Calvin among the Presbyterians of Geneva."

¹ J. C. Johnston, *Treasury of the Scottish Covenant* p. 338.

² *Ibid.*, p. 106.