

Alexander Shields, the Revolution Settlement and the Unity of the Visible Church

By Matthew Vogan

I. HISTORY AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Alexander Shields (1660?–1700) is less well known in comparison with other Covenanter field preachers such as Donald Cargill, Richard Cameron and James Renwick.¹ As Mark Jardine notes: “Considering his later importance as an ideologue for the Societies’ cause in *A Hind Let Loose* (1687) and his later leadership of the Societies, his biography has attracted comparatively little attention.”² His life is uniquely interesting, however. It spans the entire period of persecution and most of the subsequent reign of William III. One of the last of the field preachers and a close associate of James Renwick, Shields was also a prisoner on the Bass Rock. After the Glorious Revolution, he was the chaplain to the Cameronian regiment fighting in the Low Countries against France in defence of Holland and the Protestant cause.

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1. This article assumes a rudimentary knowledge of the period of persecution of the Covenanters due to their rejection of the claims of Charles II. Charles declared himself supreme in ecclesiastical as well as civil matters, and imposed the acceptance of episcopacy on the ministers of the Church of Scotland. He also ensured the rescinding of both the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant together with all the reforming legislation of the previous twenty-three years. A concise, readable but thorough introduction is provided in J. G. Vos, *The Scottish Covenanters* (Kilsyth, 2018). This article, however, provides an alternative to Vos’s assessment of the Revolution Settlement of 1690. The reflections that the book makes on Shields and his conduct are not well weighed.

2. Mark Jardine, “The United Societies: Militancy, Martyrdom and

In 1699, he was also among the first foreign missionaries of the Church of Scotland in the infamous Darien venture to what is now known as Panama.³ He died and was buried in Jamaica in 1700 at the age of forty.⁴ John Macleod well describes him as “one of the most striking figures of his epoch.”⁵

This article gives consideration to Alexander Shields and the position that he adopted in relation to the Revolution Church of Scotland in 1690, which brought him into disagreement with some of his former colleagues among the United Societies. The first part of the article focuses on the events leading up to the Revolution Settlement of 1690 and then the period until the death of Alexander Shields in 1700. In particular, it considers the ways in which the various parties engaged in the discussions concerning uniting fragmented Presbyterians

the Presbyterian Movement in Late-Restoration Scotland, 1679 to 1688,” University of Edinburgh, PhD Thesis, 2009, p. 165. During the time of persecution the most resolute Covenanters had no settled congregations or Church structures. Instead they met in local meetings for prayer fellowship known as societies. These were organised and connected together under the United Societies who held national meetings and came to joint decisions.

3. In this venture known as the Darien Scheme, Scotland attempted to found a colony called Caledonia on the Isthmus of Panama to create an overland route between the Pacific and Atlantic.

4. The main accounts of Shields’ life are Hector Macpherson, *The Cameronian Philosopher: Alexander Shields* (Edinburgh and London, 1932); a chapter in John Howie of Lochgoin, *The Scots Worthies: their lives and testimonies*, edited by J.A. Wylie (London, 1875); and Michael Jenkins, “Shields, Alexander (1659/60–1700),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). Patrick Walker stated that he intended to publish “Mr. Shields’s own Life and Death” in his “next Parcel, according as I proposed in my former Preface to the Passages of Mr. Peden’s Life and Death.” *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1827), 1.251, cf. pp. xxi, 34. Sadly, however, the intention was never realised. A new concise popular biography is Matthew Vogan, *Alexander Shields* (Edinburgh, 2018).

5. *Scottish Theology in relation to Church History since the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1943), 109.

within the national Church. These are compared with the commonly accepted principles on union and separation established by James Durham—principles which were very much in the minds of those engaged in the union deliberations of 1689–90. Alexander Shields defended his position in relation to the Revolution Church in the book *Church-Communion enquired into*, but this was not published until 1706. The book made a notable contribution to the elucidation of the Scottish view of the visible Church and is considered in the second part of this article.⁶

1. ALEXANDER SHIELDS AND THE UNITED SOCIETIES

Shields went to London in 1684, where he served as amanuensis or scribe to the Puritan theologian John Owen. He was licensed to preach by Scottish Presbyterian ministers in London. This was without any conditions in relation to disputed matters that would wound his conscience (such as not preaching against the Indulgence offered to ministers by the government). A controversy soon arose, however, in relation to the Oath of Allegiance enforced by the authorities after 1684. Shields believed that it was sinful to take the Oath of Allegiance and he preached against it, but this brought him into conflict with the Scottish ministers in London. This conflict did not prevent him, however, from being the regular preacher to a congregation meeting in the Embroiderers' Hall in Cheapside. In January of the following year he was arrested there by the city marshal in the act of preaching at an "illegal conventicle."

6. The treatise is sometimes referred to as *Enquiry into Church Communion* since this was its published title in 1747.

7. One particular feature of this declaration was that it strongly asserted the right of Covenanters to self-defence against the persecuting armies of the State.

8. Macpherson, *The Cameronian Philosopher*, p. 52.

9. Macpherson, *The Cameronian Philosopher*, p. 65.

10. *An Informatory vindication of a poor, wasted, misrepresented, remnant of the suffering, anti-popish, anti-prelatick, anti-erastian, anti-sectarian, true Presbyterian Church of Christ in Scotland, united together in a generall correspondence; by way of reply to various accusations, in letters, informations & conferences, given forth against them.* The document took around a year to draft and was approved by the General Meeting on 4 March 1687, published in Utrecht in July 1687 and available in Scotland by the end of that year.

11. J. H. Thomson, *A cloud of witnesses, for the royal prerogatives of Jesus Christ: being the last speeches and testimonies of those who have suffered for the truth in Scotland, since the year 1680* (Edinburgh, 1871), 481. Patrick Walker (*Biographia Presbyteriana*, vol. 1, p. 231) also refers to it as a joint production by Renwick and Shields. Mark Jardine notes that it was initially drafted as a six-page document by William Boyd before being revised by James Renwick and Michael Shields (Jardine, p. 176).

12. Macpherson, *The Cameronian Philosopher*, p. 215.

His initial trial coincided with the death of Charles II in February 1685 and it was determined to send Shields back to Scotland for full trial and sentencing. He defended himself ably but succumbed to pressure to sign a document disowning the *Apologetical Declaration* issued by the United Societies in November 1684.⁷ This step saved his life but it cost Shields much sorrow. He was sentenced to imprisonment on the Bass Rock. Many Covenanters were held on this sea-beat prison, located a mile or so from the Scottish coast, near North Berwick. After some time, the prisoners were brought to Edinburgh. This offered better opportunities for escape and in October 1686 a successful plan was effected.

After his escape from prison, the Privy Council described Shields as "a person of most dangerous principles, a trumpet of sedition and rebellion," "a rebellious field preacher debauched unto ill principles and practices."⁸ He joined himself with the United Societies and his brother Michael who was the clerk of the Societies' General Convention (1682 to 1690). With a £100 price upon their heads, both Shields and James Renwick were hunted by the government.⁹

In 1687 Shields went to Utrecht to ensure the publication of *An Informatory vindication* together with his own book, *A Hind Let Loose*.¹⁰ *An Informatory vindication* was a carefully drafted definitive defence of the position adopted by the United Societies in disowning the lawful authority of tyrannical civil magistrates who broke established law. It also justified separation from Presbyterian ministers who had defected from the most faithful Covenanting position and complied in some way with the Stuart claim to have supremacy over the Church (e.g. accepting the Indulgence). Thomson in the *Cloud of Witnesses* gives his opinion that "The first eighteen, or perhaps the first thirty, of its 108 pages bear traces of Alexander Shields, but the rest is evidently from Renwick himself."¹¹

Hector Macpherson regards *A Hind Let Loose* as "the reasoned exposition of Cameronian thought", implicitly contrasting its "logical, challenging, thought-provoking" character with the embattled tone of *An Informatory vindication*.¹² *A Hind Let Loose* gave an articulate voice to the suffering remnant and certainly holds its own place amongst closely-reasoned political treatises in the line of Calvin, Knox, Buchanan and Rutherford in defining the biblical limits of the power of the civil magistrate and maintaining that tyranny must be resisted.

The work is remarkable given the conditions of imprisonment and persecution in which it was written, even allowing for the several months' stay in Utrecht, where it was completed with the help of his brother

Michael. It “must have been written with extraordinary rapidity, and reveals a mind of no common power.”¹³ The only limit upon the impact of *A Hind Let Loose* was the short period between its publication and the end of persecution, at which point it came to serve as a vigorous record of the sufferings endured by the Scottish people and a testimony against the tyranny of their persecutors. It seems to have had significant influence upon William of Orange and William Carstairs who was the King’s chief adviser in Scotland.¹⁴

After his return to Scotland, Shields was also involved in the publication of *The Testimony Against Toleration*.¹⁵ Although authored by James Renwick, it was evidently a combined effort and Shields wrote the preface after Renwick’s death.¹⁶ Shields was probably one of the two friends with James Renwick when the latter was captured and arrested.¹⁷ After Renwick’s execution at the Grassmarket, Edinburgh, on 17 February 1688, the mantle of leader and preacher fell upon him. At Crawford moor on 11 March 1688 and Galston in April 1688, he denounced the judicial murder of Renwick, speaking of how the “blood of that faithful servant of Jesus Christ, Mr. James Renwick, hath a cry to the heavens against this generation.” He went on to detail six ways in which that blood was crying out.¹⁸ He had a strong affection for Renwick and besides publishing *An Elegy upon the Death of Mr. James Renwick*, he began to work upon a biography. *The Life and Death of Mr. James Renwick* was complete by September 1688.¹⁹

2. THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION 1688–90 AND THE UNITED SOCIETIES

The Glorious Revolution appeared to take place with astonishing speed considering that it occurred in the same year in which James Renwick was arrested and executed. Covenanters were still being imprisoned and martyred in the summer of 1688. Michael Shields wrote in August 1688 that the persecution was still “very hot, and in many respects harder and heavier to conflict with than before the Toleration ... Prisons are daily filling, some threatened with death. One hath lately been murdered in the fields. Courts are holding up and down the country for taking a roll of our names ... interdicting under the pain of death, either to countenance our meetings in the fields whither their fury hath forced us, or to converse or supply us with so much as a drink of water.”²⁰ The reference to one recently murdered, is to the last of the Covenanting martyrs, a sixteen-year-old Ayrshire boy named George Wood, who in July 1688 was shot dead in the fields near the village of Sorn, Ayrshire. His only crime

was that he had been in possession of a Bible when apprehended.

It began to be rumoured in the autumn, however, that deliverance might be possible. According to Michael Shields, the country was “full of commotions and rumours of war; everyone looking for changes and revolutions, some hoping for, and others fearing the same; and almost all were expecting the ensuing of these calamities that attend war, as its inseparable companion.” The heightening climate of opinion speculated that the Dutch might land in Scotland in order to lead a rising of British Protestants against their Roman Catholic oppressors.²¹ This was realised in the invasion at Torbay in November. Michael Shields describes the sudden transformation: “Behold on a sudden a very wonderful alteration. He who not long before claimed an absolute power and prerogative royal, which all were to obey without reserve, was made to flee, and could get few to obey him, yea, despised by many of those whom he exalted. The wicked were ensnared in the work of their own hands, and the counsel of the heathen brought to nought. Those who formerly were persecuted were now in quiet, and those who had been persecutors are in fear and glad to hide themselves. Those who formerly were a terror to many, are now feared for those whom they

13. M. Hutchison, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland; its origin and history 1680–1876* (Paisley, 1893), 109.

14. See discussion below in relation to William’s “Declaration to the People of Scotland”; cf. also David Osborne Christie, “Bible and Sword: the Cameronian Contribution to Freedom of Religion,” University of Stellenbosch, ThD Thesis, 2008, p. 202.

15. *The Testimony, of Some Persecuted Presbyterian Ministers of the Gospel, unto the Covenanted Reformation of the Church of Scotland, and to the Present Expediencie of Continuing to Preach the Gospel in the Fields, and Against the Present Antichristian Toleration in its Nature and Design.*

16. *The Letters of James Renwick, the last of Scotland’s Covenanted Martyrs*, ed. Thomas Houston (Paisley, 1865), 261.

17. This speculation is made on the basis that books and papers belonging to Shields were violently seized by a merchant John Justice from the house of John Lockup on the Castlehill in Edinburgh. It is possible that this happened during the raid to catch Renwick and therefore that Shields was present. See Petition of Alexander Shields and Others, 1689 (from the Laing Collection), printed in Patrick Walker, *Six Saints of the Covenant: Peden, Semple, Welwood, Cameron, Cargill, Smith*, ed. D. Hay Fleming, 2 vols. (London, 1901), 1.232.

18. *Notes or heads of a preface and of a lecture, preached at Distinctorn-Hill, in the parish of Gaastoun, April 15, 1688* (n.p., 1688), 3.

19. It was, however, never published in Shields’ own lifetime, but eventually published in 1724 by John M’Main, a schoolmaster at Liberton’s Wynd, Edinburgh.

20. *Faithful Contendings Displayed* (Glasgow, 1780), 355. *Faithful Contendings* (hereafter *FCD*) is an account of the actions and events relating to the United Societies written by Michael Shields.

21. *FCD*, p. 360.

made afraid before. These are the doings of the Lord, and should be wondrous in our eyes.”²²

It has been observed that the convictions of Richard Cameron and James Renwick regarding the lawfulness of disowning tyrannical rulers were vindicated in the Glorious Revolution. The welcome that their successors in the United Societies gave to this event was not, however, without reserve. Indeed, they were divided as to the appropriate response to this dramatic turn of events. On 25 December members of the United Societies proclaimed their support for the “Protestant Protector” William of Orange and his “Declaration to the People of Scotland” in Glasgow. This was led by William Boyd and was probably the first public response to the Declaration.²³ This declaration to the Scottish people on 10 October 1688 echoes the famous frontispiece of Shields’ book *A Hind Let Loose*, in recalling the destruction of “the poor people” “by hanging, shooting and drowning them, without any form of law or respect to sex or age.” Despite this, however, Boyd’s action was not supported by all within the United Societies.

A Remonstrance was drafted which was intended to be presented to William of Orange by a delegation who would be sent to London. It was to be a document “warning him of his duty”, requesting a covenanted settlement of Church and State and asserting the testimony maintained by the Societies in order “that forrainers may have an information of the state of our cause.”²⁴ This endeavour had to be delayed, however, because the key men who would deliver the petition in person to the Prince were urgently required in the fast-moving events that were now unfolding.

22. *FCD*, p. 367.

23. Boyd studied at Glasgow and went to Holland for ordination by the Classis of Groningen in 1686. He was inducted to the parish of Dalry in 1690.

24. Robert Wodrow, *Analec̄ta*, 4 vols. (Glasgow, 1842–3), 1.186; *FCD*, pp. 375, 380, 386–7.

25. *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 1.279–80.

26. Wodrow, *Analec̄ta*, 1.186.

27. Instances of “rabblings” are discussed more fully by Jardine, pp. 236–8.

28. *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 1.282. The same psalm had also been sung ten years earlier at the Battle of Drumclog, one of the few military successes for Covenanters bearing arms.

29. *FCD*, p. 370.

30. The references to Hamiltonians and Macmillanites in this article are not intended to be pejorative. The name of “United Societies” was dropped after the Revolution and the new name was either “The Societies of the South-West” or “The General Meeting of the Witnessing Remnant of Presbyterians in Scotland.” There are several groups who had their roots in the Societies but declined a connection with the Church of Scotland after the Revolution. These are generally known by their leaders, e.g. Adamites, Harlites, Howdenites, etc.

The Societies were also quick to respond to the political vacuum in other ways during the interregnum, when King James VII had fled the country and no succeeding monarch had been proclaimed. They decided to use the opportunity in order to purge the Church of Scotland; as Patrick Walker relates, they determined “to go to all popish houses, and destroy their monuments of idolatry.”²⁵ An insurrection under the leadership of Daniel Ker of Kersland involved forcibly removing or “rabbling” the curates of churches in the south-west and also destroying any “Romish wares” within churches. All idolatrous images discovered (some in the houses of ministers) were burnt at the market crosses of Dumfries and Peebles.

Elsewhere, the process of expelling the curates was being carried out in a more disorderly way. This began at Glasgow on 27 December where a number decided “to take the Prelate and his Curates there, and tear their canonical coats off their backs.” Alexander Shields sent a letter to restrain them; reasoning with them that the time was not right and that it would be detrimental. They ought “first, to set apart some time for humiliation,” then petition the Prince of Orange, and finally give warning to the curates to remove.²⁶ A meeting of the Societies on 13 February agreed on the form of a letter that could be given to the curates giving them notice to quit under threat of force.²⁷

On 4 January 1689, a gathering of representatives of the United Societies convened at the market cross of Douglas, Lanarkshire, in order to defend their role in these activities. Shields first proposed the singing of Metrical Psalm 76, a psalm praising God’s remarkable triumph over his raging enemies in the deliverance of His Church. It is hard to think of more appropriate words of praise that might have been used at this time. In commenting upon the psalm he recalled that it had been “sweetly sung by famous Mr. Robert Bruce at the Cross of *Edinburgh*” when news was received of the defeat of the Spanish Armada one hundred years before.²⁸

There was a General Meeting at Douglas where the spirit was less united and protests, led by James Wilson, were presented condemning Boyd’s declaration. It was resolved that Boyd’s reading of the Declaration was “rashly gone about without common consent” and that to “espouse” it “so abruptly” as their declaration, when it made no mention of the Covenants, was “lame and defective.”²⁹ It is significant that despite this, however, that there was no official repudiation of the action or the Declaration. It was not until the Sanquhar Declaration of 1692 by the Hamiltonian remnant that William’s authority was publicly repudiated.³⁰ Alexander Gordon

of Earlstoun moved that Boyd and any others who had joined with him in the Declaration should be excluded from the General Meeting, but this was not carried.

The Societies had also mustered arms, gathering a force comprising at least 800 men formed into companies with officers appointed over them. They were sent to guard the Convention of Estates in Edinburgh from a potential Jacobite attack led by Claverhouse. Ultimately, the Cameronian regiment would be formed within the army loyal to William, but some in the United Societies dissented from this as constituting a sinful association with malignants.³¹ At a General Meeting of the Societies in Douglas on the 29 April, Shields preached on a text which revealed his inclination for extending such support: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty" (Judges 5:23). Various qualifications were proposed and ultimately a regiment was raised, which Shields accompanied, but contention persisted. The regiment played a critical role at the battle of Dunkeld in August which brought the Jacobite rebellion to an end.

The Societies decided to renew publicly the signing of the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant, with appropriate alterations to suit the changed times. On 2 March 1689, a day of humiliation and preparation was observed at Boreland Hill or the Black Hill, Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire.³² Shields preached from Deuteronomy 29:25 to a vast congregation and then read a solemn acknowledgement of national sins, but as darkness fell he could not finish it. On the following day Shields "began and publicly read the National Covenant, and Solemn League and Covenant, with some short notes of explication, and apologies for some alterations of the expressions, where they [were] accommodate to [the] times."³³ William Boyd preached on Jeremiah 50:5, after which Thomas Linning³⁴ read a "Solemn Acknowledgment of Sins and Engagement to Duties, as now composed for and applied to the present times." There was then an opportunity for confession of personal defections which included hearing the curates, paying the cess,³⁵ and taking the Oath of Abjuration. This was done with notable expressions of grief.³⁶ Shields himself declared his own sorrow for his former sins in relation to the Oath. There was no time for a further sermon and after prayer seeking pardon and grace, Linning read the Covenants which were sworn to with uplifted hands. At night, the Covenants were then subscribed after a sermon by Shields on Deuteronomy 26:16 and prayer, with the whole exercise concluding

at 2 a.m. The Covenants were further subscribed in parishes across the south of Scotland, especially in the south west.³⁷

It was a significant event which was to be referred to in later discussion of the various positions adopted in relation to the Revolution Settlement. According to John Howie, its significance was acknowledged by Alexander Shields who said at the time: "From this day shall be dated either our reformation, or deformation."³⁸ Hector Macpherson considers that the event was a public demonstration of the strength of the Societies to William of

31. The Macmillanite party later vehemently condemned such support, especially in the Auchenshugh Renovation of the Covenants in 1712. It rejected "sinful union and confederacy in terms prejudicial to truth; as our joinings in the *Angus regiment*, at the *Revolution*, and our guarding and supplicating that corrupt *Convention of Estates*, which consisted mostly of such as had been directly or indirectly guilty of the murder of the Lord's people."

32. Lesmahagow provides a central location and Boreland hill gives a commanding view across the whole countryside. Shields states that it was "within sight of Lanark." It is possible that covenant renewal in a hillside location was intended to reflect biblical precedent (Deut. 27:9–13). It was evidently a district where there was strong support for the Societies: conventicles were common in the vicinity and the United Societies had been established here in 1681. There may have been some historical considerations in selecting this location. It also appears to have been along the route taken by the army involved in the Pentland Rising of 1666. Their intention was to renew the covenants in the vicinity of Lesmahagow on Saturday 24 November "at some Kirk by the way towards Lanark" but when put to the vote it was decided to be "neither safe nor convenient." Thomas Reid, "Fords, Ferries, Floats and Bridges Near Lanark." *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Vol. 47 (1912–13), 209–56, 228.

33. *Analec̄ta*, 1.187.

34. Linning, also Lining or Linen (c.1657–1733) studied at Glasgow and then studied theology at Emden, Holland. He was ordained by the Classis of Emden in early 1688, and was admitted to Lesmahagow parish in May 1691. He was appointed Chaplain-in-Ordinary to the King in Scotland in 1727. He has been described as "one of the most eminent clergy in his day, and an able defender of the rights and privileges of the Church: scrupulously honest in his principles, and well skilled in Church discipline." *Faſti Ecclesiae Scoticae: The Succession of Ministers in the Church Of Scotland from the Reformation*, ed. Hew Scott and Donald Farquhar Macdonald (Edinburgh, 1915), vol. 3, p. 314. There are manuscript sermons in Glasgow University Library: MS Gen 938, Item 48/2, Sermon at Kirkintilloch, 2 August 1714, Song 3:4; and MS Gen 938, Item 29/4, Sermon at Provan, 2 July 1705, 1 Corinthians 9:24.

35. The cess was a tax specifically levied to provide for troops persecuting the Covenanters.

36. Evidently there were a significant number of Gibbites (described as "gracious women") who made confession. For more on this group see the article by Douglas Somerset, "Walter Ker and the 'Sweet Singers,'" *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal* 2 (2012): 85–108, and Maurice Grant, *No King But Christ: the Story of Donald Cargill* (Darlington, 1988), 158–64.

37. *Analec̄ta*, 1.188.

38. *FCD*, p. 382.

Orange.³⁹ Shields, Linning and Boyd stated in *Account of the Methods and Motives* that they had hoped that the Covenant renewal would prepare the Societies for union with the Revolution Church.⁴⁰

While the connection between those two events might not appear to be very obvious, it becomes clearer on closer consideration. In his book *Church-Communion enquired into* (posthumously published), Shields refers to the “Engagement to Duties”, which, together with the “Solemn Acknowledgment of Sins,” was “composed for and applied to the present times.” Shields cites Article 2.4, “To wit, that we shall guard against all Schism or sinful Separation from any part of the Communion of the true Reformed Covenanted Church of Scotland, holding Purely and Intirely the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government of the same, in Principles and Exercise, According to the Rule of Christ, and the Standing Acts and Constitutions of this Church ... And shall study to Maintain Union and Communion in Truth and Duty, with all Ministers and Members of the said Church, that do, and in so far as they do follow the Institutions of Christ.”⁴¹ Shields argued that this engagement committed the Societies to union with those who were now pursuing a course of Reformation in the Church of Scotland.

There were long debates in the General Meeting of the United Societies throughout 1689. Shields records in his diary that the opinion of some at a General Meeting in Douglas on 13 May 1689, was that “without acknowledgment of these defections, there could be no communion.” Further questions were put to the objectors in debate in order to understand the full implications of their position.

39. Macpherson, *The Cameronian Philosopher*, p. 83.

40. Thomas Linning, Alexander Shields, William Boyd, *An Account of the Methods and Motives of the late Union and Submission to the Assembly* ([London?], 1691), 11.

41. *Church-Communion enquired into* (Glasgow, 1706), 27–8. Thomas Boston lays similar stress on this clause of the Solemn League and Covenant in challenge to those separating from the Church of Scotland in his sermon “The Evil and Danger of Schism” (1708).

42. *Analec̄ta*, 1.194.

43. *Analec̄ta*, 1.192.

44. Shields records in his diary: “I mett with some Ministers, Dr Rule, Mr Kennedy, Mr Lau, Mr Legate, Mr Forbes, &c., with whom we conferred about Overtures for Union.” Shields urged that the General Assembly would have to consider the testimony of the United Societies in relation to matters such as “hearing the curats, indulgence, tolleration, &c.” The ministers “pleaded the inexpediency of this, affirming it wer necessary to bury these in oblivion, but that they would admit we should represent what grived us to the Assembly, and protest for exoneration of our conscience.” Shields desire for union is evident in that he finishes the entry by quoting the first line of Psalm 133 in Latin. *Analec̄ta*, 1.191.

Whither, if they should find a Minister confessing all defections, yet still abiding in the communion of the Church, would they joyn with him, and whither with us, if we should doe so? Whither they required confession in ane united way, or divided? And whither they would sus̄pend their communion untill all confessed, or would they hear any one confessing without respect to the rest? In answer to which they did not agree; though it was said by the forsaid messengers they did; but still pleaded some way or other. Noe communion without confession, some way or other; and argued, [if] scandalouse Elders must be urged to confesse, why not Ministers? and if Ministers doe not, hou can they urge others to doe it? It was replied, Ministers’ scandals are epidemick, and not convicted. It was urged, that this would bury the Testimony. Replied, it would rather bury the Testimony to have it to degenerate into schisme, and would be for its glory to have it recorded, that a people continoued it while defections stood, but as soon as ever they could be in a capacity to joyn with Ministers, without sin, they had such respect to the ordinances and the peace of the Church, that they would noe longer separate; and notwithstanding all former provocations.⁴²

It was decided in August that some of the key leaders of the Societies, including Shields and Hamilton, should go to London to present the previously delayed petition to the King. Hamilton disapproved of the petition, refused to address the King as “King” and objected to accompanying Shields whom he said “had receded from the former testimony in the matter of association, &c.”⁴³ Only Shields was able to go to London for this purpose and he was not willing to go alone. The errand was, therefore, never fulfilled.

With episcopacy abolished on 22 July 1689, Presbyterian union was becoming a live issue. In the General Meeting on 25 September 1689, Thomas Linning informed the meeting that he, together with Shields and William Boyd, had met with some other Presbyterian ministers on 16 August in order to discuss union.⁴⁴ This occasioned serious debate at the General Meeting, with the field preachers responding to vigorous opposition.

Generally, they concluded it could not be admitted, without their acknowledgment of their defections. It was replied [by the field preachers], We will alwise plead for, and presse the necessity of that, by contending, testifying, and protesting against their defections, (which Mr Linning, repeating the condescensions of the Ministers at the late Conference at Edinburgh, said would

be allowed to us;) but the want of that being only a shortcoming and difference in judgment, could not be owned as a ground of separation, while we wer neither required to justify their defections, nor to condemn our testimony, nor to subscribe to any sinfull imposition in the terms of the communion, putting us in hazard of partaking of their sin; and that though these corruptions standing established wer sufficient grounds of withdrawing, yet not nou, when ceasing to be snares.⁴⁵

Evidently Linning was quoting the words of one particular minister amongst the company with whom they had met, who had specified that the way to clear their conscience would be to draw up a protest against the former defections and have it registered in the official records of the General Assembly of the Kirk. Michael Shields recorded these words as quoted: "After you are united, you shall have liberty to debate, remonstrat and protest against everything sinful."⁴⁶ This did not quell the opposition which refused to accept anything less than confession on the part of those guilty of former defections. Debate was even stormier at the General Meeting on the following day. "Many arguments wer mutually tossed, and it was like once to turn to great heat; some precipitantly rising and going away."⁴⁷ It is evident that Shields sought to be a peacemaker and to maintain unity amongst the various factions.

Mr Linning and Mr Boyd plainly told they had a mind to unite, though not to settle suddainly. A. S. [Mr Alexander Shields] allayed it a litle, by telling them it was a grave and greatly important matter, not rashly to be determined; protesting nothing might be concluded here at the time, but let dayes of humiliation be set apart for light, and an-other meeting appointed. In the mean time, some might be appointed to try Ministers' freedom in their preaching, to see hou they liked them; and that he would not urge to hear the more grosse hearers of Curats, actually indulged, adressers for Tolleration, &c., but others more free of defecation; and to search through all the country for such as would confesse those to be defections. In the mean time, that they should protest alwise against the entry and calling of any that would not confesse them; shouing there was a difference between calling and hearing when called. At lenth [they] came to more calmness and composure....⁴⁸

Shields recorded in his diary at the time that he believed union was possible if the differences were to be removed. This could be effected by various means: "either

by having these things doctrinally confessed, or synodically condemned, or at least our Testimony recorded, signifying our nou joyning, is not a receding from it, nor a justifying these things formerly condemned." He was against rash action either way but particularly opposed to "a precipitant concurrence," perhaps conscious of the need to proceed cautiously in order to keep together the differing parties within the Societies.⁴⁹ Things took a different turn at the General Meeting on 6 November 1689, however, when Hamilton asserted a position of secondary separation⁵⁰ and refused to negotiate:

after hearing some debates and conferences about union and communion with the Ministers with whom we differed, he arose and gave a verball protestation, which afterwards he put in writing, against the admitting the Prince of Orange to the throne without taking the Covenants; against the sinfull association of Angus' regiment; the admitting the commissioners from that regiment to sitt in the Generall Meeting; the purseuing union with the Ministers; admitting Mr Boyd in the Generall Meeting; admitting some already joyned with the Ministers, in hearing and sitting in sessions with them. This occasioned all the confusion. We offered to discourse and debate with him upon all these heads. He declined, and went away. We promised ane answer. The Meeting was much disturbed, with much heat and rage; resolutely exclaiming against all union on any terms, except the Ministers should confesse their defections; yea, that they would not hear others, nor us that did confesse and witness against these defections, unlesse we should separate from the rest. They brought in papers from some Societys, declaring their minds to the same effect, some of them unsubscribed....They pleaded this should be answered. A. S. [Mr Alexander Shields] answered evry word in it, yet it would not satisfy. We broke up that night very abruptly.

The next day the Meeting reconvened, "but came to noe better conclusion."⁵¹ Harmony declined to the extent that some enquired whether there could now be communion with Shields, Linning and Boyd in view of their position in advocating union. There were fears,

45. *Analecta*, 1.193.

46. *FCD*, p. 415.

47. *Analecta*, 1.194–5.

48. *Analecta*, 1.195.

49. *Analecta*, 1.193.

50. Secondary separation is separating from those with whom we would otherwise associate because they continue to associate with those who are guilty of error or compromise.

51. *Analecta*, 1.195–6.

however, that this would mean that they could no longer attend upon their ministry if this conclusion were to be reached. It was resolved to draw up a form of protest to the Assembly containing their grievances and “plead with ministers, in order to convince them of, and to get them brought to acknowledge, and condemn defection.”

Those in favour of union argued that “we had sufficient ground to withdraw from these ministers, in the time of persecution, which was a broken and unsettled time, yet now, when the same was removed, and the church growing up in reformation, the case was altered: And as there was one way of contending then, which was by withdrawing, so there was another way now, which is by joining with a protestation against defection.”

In response it was argued that while these ministers had been stopped in their defections by providence, “the tentation had left them, before they had forsaken it; and still they were defending what they had done: And to join with them while they continued so, would harden them therein, and offend and stumble others: And moreover, the church was not yet constitute, which if it were, and ministers zealously carrying on reformation, (of which there was little appearance) it would then be an encouragement to speak of joining with them.”

Michael Shields writes that after “some debates, (wherein were too much heat and passion on both sides),” it was concluded that the ministers should write a paper to “answer the objections which were given in against joining, without confessing and condemning defections, of which they would send copies to the Societies.” Howie observes, “Of this writing there is no further account, but it is probable this hath been the

original source of a pamphlet called Church Communion, which was published by Mr. Lining a number of years afterward.”⁵²

Shields further records that “in the interval”, “the complaints and discontent amongst the generality of people, was no way abated but rather augmented and increased ... and many uttered their fears of matters growing worse.” Ultimately, reconciliation never would be reached. Shields had been in contact with James Wallace, the minister of Inchinnann, Renfrewshire, who decided to write an irenic and loving letter to the Societies. He advised them:

I would have you moving slowly into any formal, settled union with any, until you see what you obtain, lest there be a new rupture, and a worse division, for if this be not granted, which you supplicate for, wherein will you unite? In the mean time, I would have you keeping concord amongst yourselves, unfriends will study to divide you, and so to break you, and do with you what they will, and then laugh at you. In the last place, that with these that you are called to be unite with in the Lord, and with whom you now differ, I earnestly intreat that both in preaching, prayer and practices, you will do nothing to irritate, or make the breach wider, which may consist with a good conscience, not neglecting necessary duties, nor making yourselves partakers of other men’s sins.⁵³

According to Michael Shields, this helped in “the allaying and hindering of heats and debates, that otherways might have fallen out.”⁵⁴ Stationed at Montrose, Alexander Shields wrote his own letter in the spirit of reconciliation to be read at the February General Meeting. He felt that the meetings were becoming “nurseries of division and nurseries of disorder.” “More love and more humility and more patient watching of the Lord’s clearing up the darkness would prevent all these things. It must be darker and darker ere the daybreak, but the sky will clear to them that watch for the morning.” Shields also sent a reply to Hamilton’s protestation, but due to lack of time and illness it was in an unfinished state.⁵⁵ Ironically, however, there was a majority at the meeting who opposed reading the letter from Shields.

The April meeting approved a petition to Parliament which asked for past wrongs to be redressed, the royal supremacy in ecclesiastical matters to be abolished, and Presbyterian government to be restored in order to discipline the ministers that had been intruded since the Restoration and renew the Covenants. Parliament was proceeding with some of these matters, establishing

52. *FCD*, pp. 421–2.

53. *FCD*, p. 424.

54. *FCD*, p. 423.

55. *FCD*, pp. 423–24. The letter is quoted by Macpherson (*The Cameronian Philosopher*, p. 98), and is archived in the Edinburgh University Library, New College Laing collection, Cameronian Papers, EUL MSS La.I.344 (260). The reply to the protestation is archived in the National Library of Scotland, “Alexander Shields’s answer to Sir Robert Hamilton’s protest,” NLS. MSS. Wod. Qu. XVI, fos. 101r., 99r. Howie comments, “Mr. Shields in his Journal, mentions several days in which he was writing an answer to this Protestation, in the last of which he says he was seized with a sweating sickness and fainting which obliged him to lay it aside unperfected.” *FCD*, p. 425. This was introduced and transcribed in Justin B. Stodghill, “Alexander Shields’ Response to Sir Robert Hamilton in 1690,” *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal* 7 (2017): 73–103. The initial points relate to the validity of William of Orange’s monarchy, including his not swearing the Solemn League and Covenant at his coronation. It breaks off in the discussion of the disputed matter of whether the association with Angus’ regiment was sinful.

Presbyterian Church government amongst other things, and there is no record of a formal response.

At the June General Meeting, in view of such changes, it was agreed that a paper should be drawn up for submission to the General Assembly “shewing the grounds of our former withdrawing from them, with our earnest desire of union at the time upon good terms.”⁵⁶ Hamilton refused to participate in the committee set up in order to compose this paper because Shields, Linning and Boyd were involved and they were guilty of “carrying on the late defections.”⁵⁷ Shields alone became entrusted with the work, but he was delayed through accompanying the Cameronian regiment which was then fighting against the Jacobite rebellion.

3. SHIELDS AND THE REVOLUTION SETTLEMENT OF 1690

The first General Assembly since 1653 took place in October 1690. In anticipation of this, there was a General Meeting of the United Societies on 1 October. Some were not in favour of submitting any documents whatsoever to the Assembly; others considered that a protest could be submitted against former defections and if these were not confessed they would not join in communion with them. Shields had drafted the paper, however, which was read and debated with various amendments proposed. It was agreed that copies would be sent to local Societies who could send representatives to Edinburgh.

On 9 October in Glasgow, Shields, Boyd and Linning again met with some of the prominent ministers in advance of the Assembly. These ministers were against specific references to past defections in the paper to be submitted and tried to persuade the field preachers simply to state that “in the general” they “adhered to former testimonies.”⁵⁸ This could not be acceptable and created some unease.

Linning, Shields, and Boyd submitted a long paper of their grievances to the Committee of Overtures on 16 October. A sub-committee had been appointed in order to confer with Shields and his colleagues in relation to this paper. The committee heard Shields read the paper and then “urged the smoothing of it, the taking out particulars which they called reflections.” The three field preachers could not negotiate on this since they desired to clear their consciences. The resolution was that the sub-committee asked them to prepare a shorter version of the paper “showing the scope of the larger,” that could be read in the Assembly. The first was to set out their “testimony against the corruption and defection in this Church” and was intended for “the exoneration of their consciences,” and the second

summarised version would contain their submission to the judicatories of the Church. The substance of this shorter paper is worth quoting.

With the greatest earnestness of longing we have desired, and yet with a patience perhaps to excess, we have waited for an opportunity to bring our unhappy differences (of which all parties concerned are weary) to a happy and holy close; and for this end, to have access to apply ourselves to a full and free General Assembly of this Church, invested with authority and power, *in foro divino et humano*, to determine and cognosce upon them. The want of which, an Assembly constituted in that vigour to which, through the mercy of God, this venerable national Synod hath arrived, hath been the greatest let and impediment of our composing these differences, in a way, wherein not only we, but all of the same sentiments, would acquiesce. Now, having obtained this much longed and long prayed for privilege, we cannot forbear any longer humbly to accost and address this venerable Assembly, with a free and ingenuous representation of our minds and desires. The scope of which is, to represent these things which have been most stumbling to us, for the exoneration of our consciences; and to declare our design, after we have exhibited our testimony against these courses, which we understand to have been corruptions and defections in this Church, and laid it down at the Assembly’s feet to be disposed of as their Wisdoms shall think fit, that we shall, in all required submission, subject ourselves, our lives and doctrine, to the cognizance of the judicatories of this Church, and shall equally oppose schism and defection, in any capacity that we shall be found capable of. And here, by these presents, we bind and oblige ourselves faithfully to live in union, communion, and entire subjection, and due obedience in the Lord, to the authority of this Church, in her respective judicatories.⁵⁹

The Committee of Overtures met with the field preachers the same day and heard Shields “read the large paper with a loud voice.” The verdict of the Committee was that while they agreed “that it contained a great many sad truths,” they felt that it also contained “several grosse and peremptory mistakes, injurious reflections on godly Ministers, and some unseasonable and impracticable

56. *FCD*, p. 439.

57. *FCD*, p. 440.

58. *Analecta*, 1.198.

59. From: “Acts, 1690,” *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1638–1842* (Edinburgh, 1843), 221–235.

Overtures; and, therefore, could not be presented to the Assembly.” Shields and his colleagues responded that they “wer not sensible of any of these, nor hou the things there could be otherwise represented.” The Committee decided to remit the matter again to the sub-committee with further members added. As Shields records, there was a vigorous discussion for and against reading the full paper before the General Assembly. “They laboured to perswade us to sist, and urge it noe further, with many arguments. Mr William Ker gave me in a paper full of arguments for it. We wer peremptory to have it exhibited in full Assembly, and let them read it, or not read it.” Again the matter came before the Committee on Overtures on 17 October where they were “pressed to forbear.”⁶⁰ Shields writes:

We answered we could not, except the Comitty would assume to themselves, or get devolved upon them, the pouer of the Assembly to cognosce upon that matter; then we would sist; otherwise, our business was at the Assembly, and we pleaded the papers might be given in. Heirupon they dreu Overtures, first, that we should be received into union; nixt, that the large paper should not be read, for the reasons formerly given . . . We opposed these reasons, but could not prevail.⁶¹

Both papers were transmitted to the Assembly on the 25 October. The overtures of the Committee were read together with the shorter paper. Two motions were submitted which could be summarised as “Read the large paper or not” and “Approve the overtures with reasons or not.” The vote to receive the field preachers was unanimous and no vote was taken upon whether or not to read the larger paper. It seems to have been assumed generally that the second motion was carried which would have adopted a refusal to read the larger paper together with the Committee’s criticism of it. Shields sought to correct this:

It is commonly reported and belived the vote went soe [i.e. not to read the larger paper]; but when I challenged it afterwards, as being very illegall to vote a paper should not be read for such and such reasons, giving a

character of and condemning the paper, when the Assembly kneu not what was in the paper. Mr Kirkton informed me that the vote did not goe soe, but that he stood up and proposed that it should be voted concerning the first Overture only, touching our being received; and the other that the paper should not be read, Aprove these, or Not; the whole Assembly voted Aprove, *ne-mine contradicente*.⁶²

Linning maintained that the confusion arose from wording of the Assembly minutes which read that the Assembly “did conclude, by one single vote, that the foresaid longer paper should not be read.” “The blame why that affair is so printed in the Acts of the Assembly is to be laid upon the revisers of the minutes, who printed more than was in the extract given out under the Clerk’s hand of that Assembly, a considerable time before the Acts of that Assembly were printed, which authentic paper I have to this day ready to produce, if need be.”⁶³ Shields, Linning and Boyd were called back into the Assembly and addressed by the Moderator.

The Moderator had an exhortation to us to live orderly; and, reflecting on our extravagancys, exhorted us to be as instrumentall in healing as we had been in breaking. Mr Linning gave a short answer, disouning the injurious reflections said to be in the paper; and asserting we wer not consciouse to ourselves of these extravagancys charged; wishing the Assembly had thought fitt to read the paper; but seeing it could not be obtained, we should submit. I began to speak, saying, “Is it desired or expected I should speak?” All said, “Noe.” The Moderator said, “Misken nou, misken nou! I request you forbear. We all knou what you would say!” whereto I succumbed. Then several nixt us took us by the hand, and we wer desired to sitt down. Some of our freinds there present wer exceedingly offended at my silence.⁶⁴

There remained to consider the petition submitted by the United Societies, which was similar in content to that of the field preachers and was also presented to the Committee on Overtures by Alexander Shields on 28 October. They were met by a sub-committee comprising Gabriel Semple, James Fraser of Brea and the laird of Glanderstoun. The delegation had complained that the paper presented by the field preachers did not appear to have been read in the hearing of the Assembly. They were told that “the reason wherefore it was not read in open Assembly, was, that if the same had been done, several members of the Assembly would have risen in a heat at it, and likewise there were many Gilli-Crankie

60. *Analec̃ta*, 1.198–99.

61. *Analec̃ta*, 1.199.

62. *Analec̃ta*, 1.199.

63. *Church-Communion enquired into*, pp. iv–v.

64. *Analec̃ta*, 1.200. Patrick Walker says that “Mr. Shields much lamented his silence before the Assembly, and coming so far short of his former resolutions, ‘that if ever he saw such an occasion, he should not be tongue-tacked.’” *Six Saints of the Covenant*, 2 vols. (London, 1901), 1.260.

blades waiting on, who if they had heard any thing like a debate in the Assembly, would have presently spread it abroad that the Assembly were all by the ears amongst themselves.”⁶⁵

The petition was read and certain points were discussed. It was considered that due to the similarity to the paper previously presented by the field preachers there was no need to read it in the Assembly. The subcommittee “desired the men to be tender of the church’s peace, and to do nothing that might tend to the renting of it; also they said, As ye have somewhat against us, so we have somewhat against you; forgive ye us, and we will forgive you, and let us unite.” The Committee moved that the papers should be “given in to these who were to draw up the Monitory Letter and Causes of the Fast, that they might make their own use thereof in drawing up the same.” A letter was issued to the Societies to advise them of this.⁶⁶

There was a General Meeting of the United Societies at Douglas on 3 December when these events and the various documents were rehearsed. Alexander Shields records that the “Meeting generally disrelished the whole affair, and objected much against union and communion on these terms; yet some were more sober.”⁶⁷ The question remained now as to how the Society members should proceed. Shields, Linning and Boyd advised members “to hear those ministers who were most free and faithful, that they could have the opportunity of, and to have a care of running upon extremes on the right hand.”

Shields produced “a form of a Protestation to be given in to Kirk Sessions and Presbitrys; after the exhibition wherof, we proposed they might joyn with the Congregation where they lived.”⁶⁸ The Protestation was “against the defections of the ministers they were to hear ... and what induced them to join at the time; as also, that their joining at present, was neither a condemning of, nor receding from our former testimony and contentings, nor approving of these defections they witnessed against before.” There were “different sentiments about it”; “not coming to any agreement, it was left to people’s liberty and freedom to give it or not as they thought fit.”⁶⁹ Alexander Shields noted that while the “most part refused; some accepted, and made use of it.”⁷⁰

4. AFTER THE REVOLUTION

Sir Robert Hamilton was determined to remain separate both from Church and State. It has been estimated that around one third of the membership of the United Societies adopted this position. Patrick Walker writes that “it was but the least Part of it that belonged to them:

All know that it was the fewest Number of the united Societies, that was led off with *Robert Hamilton* to the disowning of King *William* as King of *Britain*, and his Government; the greater Part reckoned it their Duty, to take a legal unite Way of witnessing, by humble Pleadings, Representations, and Protestations, pleading for and with their Mother, to put away her Whoredoms.”⁷¹ They did so using the paper drawn up by Shields. As early as December 1690, the presbytery of Paisley recorded in its minutes a protest received from thirty male members from the Societies who intended to join the Church of Scotland.⁷²

In acknowledging (together with all “who truly Fear God”) the mixed character of the Church of Scotland after 1690, Thomas Linning observed, “Christ hath sowed good Seed in his Church in this Land. ... But it is as true, That the Enemy hath sowed Tares also, and that while Men Slept.”⁷³ Though conscious of the shortcomings of the Revolution Settlement, some later recalled it as a time of spiritual revival. Writing in 1744, John Willison of Dundee extols the benefits of the Revolution Settlement in that “the church enjoyed the freedom of gospel ordinances; the Lord gave large testimony to the word of his grace, and there were great days of the *Son of man* in many places of the land, and multitudes of souls were brought in to Jesus Christ their Saviour.”⁷⁴

Any mixture was, however, unacceptable to Hamilton and his supporters. One of the first public actions taken by Robert Hamilton was in conjunction with members of the Tinwald Society. They produced

65. *FCD*, p. 455.

66. *FCD*, p. 456.

67. *Analec̄ta*, 1.202.

68. *Analec̄ta*, 1.202.

69. *FCD*, p. 460.

70. *Analec̄ta*, 1.202.

71. *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 1.126. Elsewhere Walker also states that “The greater part of the gleanings of that persecution were for humbly pleading for the good old way, in a legal manner representing these grievances to judicatories of both kinds: this, we thought, was a legal testimony against them and exoneration of us, and that nothing more was required of us, in our stations and capacities, but to mourn before the Lord for the great and grievous wrongs in the State, but especially in the Church: the snares being broke, and the practices of these defections stopt by this merciful Revolution-dispensation, tho’ the sin of the tyranny and defections of that time did and do still ly as a dead weight upon this sinful land.” *Six Saints of the Covenant*, 1.260.

72. NLS, Societies members’ statement on entering communion with the Church of Scotland, Dec. 1690, Wod. Fol. XXVIII, fos. 144–5, cited by Alasdair Raffe, *Religious Controversy and Scottish Society, c.1679–1714*, University of Edinburgh, PhD Thesis, 2007, p. 167.

73. *Church-Communion*, p. ii.

74. *A Fair and Impartial Testimony* (Glasgow, 1765), 26.

a paper denouncing the “defection” of Shields, Linning and Boyd.⁷⁵ The United Societies were reconvened in a general correspondence as “The Societies of the South-West” or “The General Meeting of the Witnessing Remnant of Presbyterians in Scotland.” There were various further issues of controversy and William McMillan observes that “The Societies seem to have done very little without causing controversy in their own ranks.”

75. FCD, first part, pp. 467–8.

76. The Hamiltonian General Meeting also condemned those who worshipped or obtained marriage under David Houston and Hugh McHenry, the suspended minister of Dalton, Dumfries-shire. Cf. NAS, Conclusions of the United Societies’ general meeting, 1681–1724, CH3/269/1, pp. 3, 5–6, 11, cited by Raffe, p. 163. Matthew Hutchison candidly acknowledges “recourse to contraband trade.” *The Reformed Presbyterian Church*, p. 128. He also notes that the minutes of the Hamiltonian General Meeting record a “duty to recover by force poynds taken for supplies, or other taxation when in a capacity.” This refers to a duty to resist by force when goods were seized for non-payment of taxes.

77. Hutchison, p. 127.

78. William McMillan, “The Covenanters after the Revolution of 1688,” *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 10 (1950), 141–53 (quotation, p. 146).

79. NAS, Collection of Sir Robert Hamilton’s letters, 1682–1701, CH3/269/16/3, pp. 7–8, quoted by Raffe, p. 127.

80. Most Separatists had no ministers to hear or ordinances to wait upon, although according to Patrick Walker the Harley brothers set themselves up as preachers. Walker, *Six Saints of the Covenant*, 1.242. William Wilson left his “witness and testimony against the sinful intrusion of John and Andrew Harlaws, once in Cotmuir, who, after they had fallen into several dotting delusions, did usurp the holy office of the ministry of the Gospel, without being any way qualified for the same; without the trial and ordination of any presbytery, and without any lawful call thereunto, either ordinary or extraordinary.” *A Collection of the Dying-Testimonies of some Holy and Pious Christians*, ed. J. Calderwood (Kilmarnock, 1806), 375–76.

81. Ian B. Cowan, *The Scottish Covenanters: 1660–1688* (London, 1976), 145.

82. William McMillan, p. 146. Patrick Walker runs the names of the various groups together frequently as if to emphasise the number of them.

83. *The Ravished Maid in the Wilderness, or, A True Account of the Raise, Causes and Continuance of the Difference between a Suffering Party of Presbyterians, commonly called Cotmure Folk, and these that follow Mr John Mackmillan, commonly called Mountain Men* ([Edinburgh?], 1708), 2–5, 35–6, quoted by Raffe, p. 165. In 1697, Widow Cleghorn alias Isobel Wright, left a testimony upon her death-bed “against those who are commonly called the Cotemuir-folk.” “I never saw any in my time that professed godliness have such a practice as they; or of such exasperate spirits, and so full of revenge in all their writings and scribblings. I never saw [in them] anything that was Christ-exalting, or self-abasing; or that was for the credit of truth, or godliness, but that was for the credit of themselves. And they stand not to say, and constantly to maintain, that the testimony of Jesus is in their hands, and in the hands of no other but them and such as adhere to them.” *A Collection of the Dying-Testimonies*, pp. 38–9. Wodrow reports from those acquainted with the Harleys, that there was some hypocrisy in their practices (*Analecta*, 1.272).

All who paid taxes or had any interaction with Church and State were barred from membership. In effect, this meant that Society members could not obtain marriage let alone baptism; it also inevitably involved the Societies in smuggling and illicit trade.⁷⁶ They were also forbidden from appearing at civil courts and applying for licences. Still less could they attend any part of a wedding celebration where a minister of the Established Church had officiated or even plough the glebe land belonging to a minister.⁷⁷

McMillan reckons that a “considerable portion of the body” must have been purged due to these terms of communion.⁷⁸ Further declarations were issued in 1692 (at Sanquhar) and 1695. Hamilton and others were arrested and imprisoned for six months after issuing the 1692 Sanquhar declaration which repudiated the authority of the Privy Council as a “pretended” court. In the same year members of the Tinwald Society kidnapped the Episcopalian ministers in Dumfries in order to intimidate them into abandoning their office. They burned the prayer books belonging to the ministers at the mercat cross. Hamilton praised these efforts.⁷⁹ After Hamilton died at Bo’ness on 21 October 1701, the group that had formed around him continued in societies for prayer and discussion without leader or minister until 1706 when they issued a call to John Macmillan, the deposed minister of Balmaghie parish, to minister to them.⁸⁰

The Hamiltonians were not, however, the only party to dissent from the Revolution Church of Scotland. There were those such as the Russellites (followers of James Russell), who had divided from the Societies in the early 1680s, but there were also the Coat-muir Folk, as well as followers of John Hepburn, John Halden, and William Wilson. Ian B. Cowan observes that: “Divisions continued and at least eight identifiable parties were to be found by 1725.”⁸¹ Later Reformed Presbyterians were perhaps not especially interested in highlighting the fact that the Hamiltonians were only one group amongst many. “Dr Hay Fleming states that in Hutchison’s work *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland*, one may look in vain even for the names of the small sections whom Walker calls, Adamites, Harlites, Howdenites and Russellites.”⁸²

There was considerable antagonism between these parties. The Coat-muir Folk, for their part, attacked the Macmillanites in their treatise called *The Ravished Maid in the Wilderness*.⁸³ In their second edition of *An Informatory Vindication*, updated to reflect their grievances, the Hamiltonians in turn accused the Hebronites (followers of John Hepburn), of seeking to bring division

among the ranks of those who rejected the Revolution Settlement.⁸⁴ Thomas Linning wrote that it is “to be Lamented that bitter Reflections, and Ungoverned passion are every where too much used, as weapons among Different Parties, to the great Offence of all Serious and Judicious Christians, and to the Scandal of Religion itself.”⁸⁵

John Hepburn was minister in Urr, Dumfries-shire but exercised an itinerant ministry that was highly critical of the Established Church and resisted the discipline of Church courts. As a minister he represented a greater threat than the various groups with no stated ministry; he also had wider support amongst Church of Scotland ministers such as Thomas Linning and other former Society men such as Patrick Walker.⁸⁶ It is likely that this was in part because Hepburn had not pursued complete separation in contrast to the Hamiltonians and Macmillan of Balmaghie, but continued consistently to bring petitions of grievances before the Church courts. The separatist spectrum therefore comprised a variety of shades, which may have presented complex challenges to those in the Established Church.

In December 1698, the Commission of the General Assembly approved a pamphlet entitled *A Seasonable Admonition and Exhortation to some who Separate from the Communion of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1699). This resisted the central principle of separatism by acknowledging that the Church of Scotland contained weak and sinful men, but that it was unscriptural to think that they could contract guilt and pollution by any communion involving sinful men amongst others. They lamented that religious division “tempts some to turn *Papists*, and some to turn *Atheists*.”⁸⁷ Deism was becoming a significant threat with its concomitant message of latitudinarian toleration and its outright attack on spiritual religion which it denounced as “enthusiasm.” Their apprehensions were indeed apt; John Locke for instance published in January 1699 an additional chapter dismissing enthusiasm in his *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. The General Assembly had previously warned in January 1696 that there were “not a few” people, “of Atheistical principles, who go under the name of *Deists*, and for the time refuse the odious character of *Atheist*, maintain and disseminate pernicious principles tending to Scepticism and *Atheism*.”⁸⁸ There were significant battles to be fought apart from the internecine troubles with Separatists in various parts.

A Seasonable Admonition also denied the imputation of Erasianism in relation to the Revolution Settlement by asserting the headship of Christ over the Church,

the divine origin of Presbytery and the intrinsic powers of the Church. The debate was now about to be swept along, however, by a strong tide of general interest and opinion in political issues of national consequence in the period between the Darien crisis of 1699–1700 and the Treaty of Union in 1707.

5. THE COMMONLY ACCEPTED PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH UNION

Shields frequently refers to principles regarding Church union, schism, and separation that were commonly accepted amongst Scottish Presbyterians. He speaks of the “general Truths granted on all hands.” The first section of *Church-Communion enquired into*, as announced on the title page, deals with “Some Truths confessed on all Hands, are held forth, which if Rightly considered would do much to End the present Controversie.” The truths were widely acknowledged, but it was the “solid and practical impression” of them that was lacking.⁸⁹ They are principles that were outlined by Samuel Rutherford and George Gillespie in an earlier generation. Writers such as Robert MacWard and John Brown of Wamphray further restated and elucidated them in the intervening decades of the Restoration.⁹⁰

The most notable discussion of these principles, however, was James Durham’s *The dying man’s testament to the Church of Scotland; or, A Treatise on Scandal* (Edinburgh, 1659).⁹¹ The context for Durham’s book was the division between Protesters and Resolutoners in the 1650s concerning the Church’s approvals of Parliament’s Public Resolutions. Durham sought to remain neutral in the division and aimed to unite

84. *An Informatory Vindication of a Poor, Wasted, Misrepresented Remnant* ([Edinburgh?], 1707) sig. [¶¶¶]v, quoted by Raffé, p. 170.

85. *The friendly conference, or, a discourse between the country man and his nephew, who having fallen off from hearing, hath for some years been a follower of Mr. M’Millan* (Edinburgh, 1711), 9, quoted by Raffé, p. 252.

86. It is worth noting that all Presbyterians, whether separatists or within the Revolution Church, were firmly committed to the abiding obligations of the Covenants.

87. *A Seasonable Admonition and Exhortation to some who Separate from the Communion of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1699), 23.

88. From “Acts: 1695–6,” *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1638–1842*, pp. 245–256. There were also growing concerns that in some instances the philosophy curriculum in the universities was becoming infected with rationalism and heterodox opinions (cf. Raffé, pp. 232–33).

89. *Church-Communion*, p. 3.

90. They are also a significant aspect of the *Informatory Vindication*.

91. The contents and parallels of Durham’s *Concerning Scandal* and Shields’ *Church-Communion* are noted in Edwin Nisbet Moore, *Our Covenant Heritage: The Covenanters Struggle for Unity in Truth* (Tain: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 268–277.

both parties.⁹² The title of Durham's book owed to the fact that it was completed on his deathbed. The book was frequently referred to during the discussions concerning union in 1689–90, without always being explicitly named. Perhaps this is why Shields uses key phrases from Durham's book without direct reference, yet evidently without fear of being accused of plagiarism since they were so well-known. In *Church-Communion*, Shields emphasises several major principles: (1) union is an absolutely essential duty; (2) division, contention and schism are great evils; (3) the causes of division need to be addressed in order to bring about union; (4) separation is only warranted when union would require one to sin.

It is evident that Durham's treatise was vitally important to Renwick and Shields in defending their distinct position during the time of persecution. Renwick wrote to Shields in January 1688, detailing the changes to be made to *The Testimony Against Toleration*, including transcribing certain passages from James Durham's *Treatise on Scandal*.⁹³ *An Informatory vindication* alludes to some of Durham's points under Head IV. It also emphasises that the grounds of withdrawing from fellowship in the "broken and declining" state of the Church that obtained at that time could not be sustained in a settled period. Later, Patrick Walker, who was an important figure in the United Societies before 1690, records in one place his assessment of Durham and the practical significance of his principles. "Great Durham says, Before he were the Member of no Church, he would rather be a Member of a corrupt Church."⁹⁴

92. The division is explored in detail in Kyle D. Holfelder, *Factionalism in the Kirk during the Cromwellian Invasion and Occupation of Scotland, 1650 to 1660: The Protester-Resolutioner Controversy*, Ph.D. Thesis, The University of Edinburgh (1998). For a shorter explanation and background see "Antiquary: A Transcription of James Durham's Sermon on Ephesians 4:11–12," Introduction, *The Confessional Presbyterian* 12 (2016): 263 and "Antiquary: The James Durham MS III: James Durham's 228 Sermons on Song of Solomon 2–8," Introduction, *The Confessional Presbyterian* 13 (2017): 224–226.

93. Renwick writes: "I have added what was to be transcribed out of Durham upon Scandal, and did oversee the writing of the most difficult places." *The Letters of James Renwick, The last of Scotland's Covenanted Martyrs*, p. 261

94. *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 1.255.

95. *Scandal* (1659), 285; Durham, *Concerning Scandal*, edited by Christopher Coldwell with an Introduction by David C. Lachman (Dallas, TX, 1990), 257.

96. *Collected Sermons of James Durham*, vol. 1 (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 933. See the introduction and transcription in "Antiquary: A Transcription of James Durham's Sermon on Ephesians 4:11–12," 279.

97. *Church-communion*, p. 12.

98. *Scandal* (1659), 283; (1990), 235.

Walker's remark was of course intended to reflect upon the fact that the Hamiltonians did not constitute an ecclesiastical body but rather praying societies.

In reviewing the course of action and discussions during 1689–90, it is possible to witness the influence of many of the principles outlined by Durham which relate to the causes of Church divisions, their consequences and the methods necessary to resolve them. A number of observations of practical value may be derived from considering these events in this light.

1. There is (as Durham puts it) "An absolute necessity laid upon a rent church to unite."⁹⁵ Durham immediately goes on to show how union and edification are joined together. He states this principle very succinctly in a sermon preached on the subject. "If union be the great step to edification as dissention and strife are the door that lets in distraction, then division and separation cannot be the cure, but union is the first and great step of edification. Therefore separation cannot be the cure. Separation has ever been the greatest enemy of edification and reformation."⁹⁶ Shields expresses it similarly in *Church communion*. Division, "is an Evil which produces the saddest Effects, as in its own Nature it is apt to produce no good Effects, however Men improve it, being not a Mean of Edification of the Lord's Appointment, and therefore cannot be used in Faith and Expectation of the Lord's Blessing..."⁹⁷ The difference between the attitude of Shields and Hamilton arose in part from whether and how far they were prepared to act on this principle.

2. Frequently it can be observed in church history, that divisions between those otherwise fully agreed in their principles often arise by virtue of the necessity of adopting a position towards the position or actions of a third party. As Durham puts it, divisions "may arise from different apprehensions about some persons, or from a different manner of doing the same thing, or from the use-making of different persons."⁹⁸ At the Revolution, the third party were those ministers who were deemed to have complied with the usurped State supremacy over the Church during the time of persecution. The question was whether there could be any union which involved them without their having first confessed the defections of which they had been guilty. This was the key matter that occasioned long and heated debates at the General Meetings of the United Societies during 1689–90. Some were prepared to suspend union with all other Presbyterians until these ministers would confess their defection. Their motto, as expressed in May 1689, became "Noe communion with-out confession." Others, led by the field preachers, maintained that

they would be free to protest against such defections but that it was a matter for the Church courts whether or not they proceeded to any discipline in such cases. As long as faithful Presbyterians were not being “required to justify their defections,” there were no grounds for separation.

3. Sometimes the issues that give rise to division relate to matters not explicitly ecclesiastical. Association with the Angus regiment and whether or not William of Orange could be acknowledged as a lawful king generated considerable contention. Durham identifies a sad precedent of division arising from “the Churches meddling in extrinsick or unnecessary things” and “when Churchmen have become too pragmatick in civil things, or affairs of the world.” He says that “seldome Churchmen have been too much taken up and occupied about such things, but it hath had such a consequent.”⁹⁹ We might include under this category, the danger of defining too closely, through terms of ecclesiastical communion, the civil duties and responsibilities of Church members. We refer here to the terms of communion established by the Hamiltonian party after the Revolution. Although a Reformed Presbyterian, Matthew Hutchison asks, “was it not an overstraining of Church power to prescribe for the civil or political action of the members?... is it right ... to make a certain civil or political attitude towards Government, even though that be assumed on religious grounds, an essential pre-requisite to communion. If it is, where would it end? Would it not degrade the Church into a political organization?”¹⁰⁰ Such detailed requirements in civil matters within terms of communion also serve to erect significant barriers to unity with other bodies that are not of an essentially ecclesiastical nature.

4. It is evident from the various debates amongst the United Societies concerning union that the central issue was whether or not uniting with the Church of Scotland would entail partaking of the guilt of those who had in some way complied with the royal supremacy over the Church claimed by the Stuarts. The 1698 Commission of the General Assembly, in their pamphlet *A Seasonable Admonition and Exhortation*, identified the root of separation with the concern about contracting guilt from association with those guilty of certain past defections. The question was whether or not communion with the Church in its ordinances and government could be sinful in the light of this. In May 1689 Shields and his colleagues maintained that “as soon as ever they could be in a capacity to joyn with Ministers, without sin, they had such respect to the ordinances and the peace of the Church, that they would noe longer separate;

and notwithstanding all former provocations.” They considered that the only way in which they would be sinning in uniting was if they were to be compelled to give formal approval to the former defections; this was not, however, being required of them.

Durham gives the example of the necessity of separating from corruption in one ordinance, yet argues that if on the basis of this someone were to separate from all ordinances “that were to exceed the ground given.”¹⁰¹ He asserts very strongly that such “defects as do not make communion in, a Church, and in its Ordinances sinfull, will not warrant a separation or division from the same.... It is acknowledged by all, that there is no separation from a true Church in such Ordinances, as men may without sin communicate into, although others may be guilty therein.” In this respect there is a danger of extending separation beyond the warrantable grounds where there is “a defect in the Church, but not such as doth make communion therein sinfull.”¹⁰²

5. It is easy to see from the historical account of the Presbyterian cause in Scotland, both before and after the Revolution, that it was very difficult to attain unity once divisions had taken place. Such divisions are not easily or quickly removed and “may continue long”; as time passes they become more difficult to heal. Each side tends to justify itself and time serves to add new obstacles as opposing parties develop and entrench their position. Several declarations were published on the Hamiltonian side and later a considerable number of pamphlets were being exchanged in debate. This also serves to increase the severity of the reflections. *A Collection of the Dying-Testimonies of some Holy and Pious Christians* reveals the tendency in the Hamiltonian party after the Revolution to leave dying testimonies inveighing bitterly against the actions of Shields and his colleagues at the Revolution.

Durham observes, “Though it be frequent to them [divisions] to come to an height, yet they are not easily removed, even amongst the best.”¹⁰³ Frequently, if opportunities for healing divisions are not grasped the “breach will grow greater and wider, and be more difficultly removable. In such a case men ought to

99. *Scandal* (1659), 289; (1990), 239. Sometimes the civil government may be seeking the Church to adopt a certain position or declare their mind on a specific matter. Such “extrinsic” matters can introduce significant division, as was the case in the Resolutioner-Protester divisions of the 1650s.

100. Hutchison, p. 123.

101. *Scandal* (1659), 277; (1990), 229.

Scandal (1659), 277; (1990), 229.

102. *Scandal* (1659), 320; (1990), 266.

103. *Scandal* (1659), 281–2; (1990), 232–3.

stretch themselves *with all the moderation that is possible* (as Calvin's expression is) if they may now, at least, through God's good hand upon them, come to some agreement."¹⁰⁴ The Presbyterian cause splintered into a considerable number of separate groups after the Revolution. This demonstrates that not only is separation often maintained over many generations but inevitably appears to generate further separation.¹⁰⁵

6. We can note that the very real concern at the development and strengthening of atheistic principles during the 1690s in Scotland was connected with the degree of open division amongst Presbyterians. Shields refers to this danger in *Church-Communion*: "And thus the World comes to be Plagued with Atheism, being tempted to think Religion but a Fancy. Therefore the Lord Jesus Prayeth for Unity amongst his Disciples, *John 17.21,23. That the World might believe that Christ was sent.*"¹⁰⁶ Durham had earlier observed that division is "often a great snare to many carnall Professors; for, thereby some are hardened in profanity, and become Atheists, as if all that is spoken by Ministers concerning Religion, were not to be believed; Therefore the Lord prayeth for unity, and against differences amongst His Disciples, for this cause, That the World might believe that Christ was sent by God, and that these are loved of him, Joh.

104. *Scandal* (1659), 427; (1990), 356. Durham adds: "how actively should men, zealous for God and His precious Ordinances, and tender of the edification of souls, bestir themselves to follow after peace in such a vehemently urging case." Durham is citing Calvin's letter to the English at Frankfurt. See *Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, edited by Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet, 7 vols. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 3.117.

105. Durham asks very strikingly: "what may be the thoughts of the generation that shall succeed? Shall such a division be propagated to them, and they made heirs thereto? Shall not they either continue miserable under such a condition, and that for ever, with such heightening circumstances as cannot but follow?... Or they must endeavour the recovery of union with much more difficulty than it may now be; and if so, certainly that generation will be in hazard to curse these that went before them, who did bring them forth under the necessity of continuing under the sin, snare, and torturing-plague of divisions; or, at least, of being in so greatly-puzzling and perplexing straits, ere they could expedite themselves out of the same." *Scandal* (1659), 430, cf. also p. 350; (1990), 291.

106. *Church-Communion*, p. 10.

107. *Scandal* (1659), p. 296. Durham speaks of the extra necessity and duty of expediting union when "a Church by division, is laid open to grosse hereticks, who wait the occasion of such a division, that they may make (as it were) an infall upon her. Division should be shunned at any time, but in such a case, union should be at any rate, of warrantable condescendency, purchased." *Scandal* (1659), 426; (1990), 355.

108. *Scandal* (1659), 314; (1990), 325.

109. *Analecra*, 1.193.

17.23. which importeth, that this plague of Atheism followeth in the world upon such divisions. Again, others are stumbled so, as they cast at the Truth preached by them, and thereby become a prey to be carried about with every wind of doctrine; for preventing of which, Ministers, and union among Ministers are required."¹⁰⁷

7. The union effected between the Societies (particularly the three field preachers) and the Revolution Church of Scotland is often passed over without calling attention to its significance. A considerable number of people were reconciled on the basis of the principles advanced by Durham. This is all the more significant when we consider that the Protester-Resolutioner divisions were never formally resolved and that later ecclesiastical unions in Scotland were often only achieved through the abandonment of principles formerly held. The union achieved in 1690 shows that while there may be some significant differences of opinion in matters of practice, unity is nevertheless possible while there are means available for conscience to be exonerated. While division is something that is "hardly cured," it is important to have the conviction that unity is attainable. It is common to yield to a counsel of despair which regards unity as impossible. Durham says that "if men will do their duty, there can be no division amongst Orthodox Divines or Ministers, but it is possible also to compose it, and union is a thing attainable."¹⁰⁸

8. Union is possible even though there may be differences in opinion, as there were between the field preachers and many of the rest of the ministers in the Church of Scotland respecting past duty during the time of persecution. The field preachers considered that the lack of confession on the part of the those guilty of these former defections "being only a shortcoming and difference in judgment, could not be owned as a ground of separation, while we were neither required to justify their defections, nor to condemn our testimony, nor to subscribe to any sinfull imposition in the terms of the communion, putting us in hazard of partaking of their sin; and that though these corruptions standing established were sufficient grounds of withdrawing, yet not nou, when ceasing to be snares."¹⁰⁹

According to Durham, union is especially possible if we do not insist upon "an universall union in every thing, in judgement and practice." Differences in judgement must, however, be "such things that are consistent with the foundation, and edification; and such a forbearance." Clearly, things that do not relate directly to present duty may be included here. Union is also possible where there "may be dissatisfaction with many persons, whether Officers or Members; and to expect

a Church free of unworthy Officers, or Members, and to defer Church union thereupon, is to expect the barn floor shall be without chaff, and to frustrate the many commands whereby this duty is pressed.”

Significantly, Durham notes that “bypast failings, and miscarriages “are frequently a point of contention after a period of “darknesse, or persecution, when men, being in the dark, and in a distemper, were led away by tentation, and overtaken with many faults, and sometimes amongst others, made to jussle with, and trample one upon another (as it were) not knowing what they were doing; and when this time was over, some were ready to carp at what was past in the dark, and to quarrell at others for such jussling, when they were so through-other.”¹¹⁰

Shields and his colleagues believed that those guilty of grosser defection during the time of persecution should now be disciplined in some way. They did not believe, however, that this was an absolute impediment to union, but that they could rather testify to their own conviction before the General Assembly and leave it there. Similarly Durham had asserted previously that union “may also be consistent with many particular failings, and defects in the exercise of government. as possibly the sparing of some corrupt Officers and Members. . . . These indeed are faults, but they are not such as make a Church to be no Church; and though these have sometimes been pretended to be the causes of schisms and divisions in the Church in practice, yet were they never defended to be just grounds of schisms and divisions, but were ever condemned by all Councils and Fathers, and cannot be in reason sustained.”¹¹¹ Durham also asserts that “union is to be preferred to the censuring of some unfaithfull men” and ought not to be delayed upon condition of discipline or until it is exercised.¹¹²

9. There was a concern, particularly on the part of Shields, to proceed slowly and cautiously so as to carry everyone in the process of deliberating union. He believed “it was a grave and greatly important matter, not rashly to be determined.” His desire for days of humiliation formally agreed by the United Societies for this purpose does not seem to have been entirely successful, however. James Wallace, the minister of Inchinnan also counselled that the Societies should proceed “slowly into any formal, settled union with any.” As Durham puts it “time may do many things, and that may be easie ere long which is difficult now.” Durham sees the need of “many brotherly consultations, and conferences.” Such conferences ought to involve delegated individuals, as with the delegated sub-committee that met with Shields and his colleagues.¹¹³ This allows more time to bring

difficult matters to a “cordial close” between “fretted spirits” than is available in the higher Church courts and avoids the feeling that the hearing of grievances is being hastened. “Matters of difficulty would rather be committed to deputed persons than instantly decided”, says Durham.¹¹⁴

10. Shields emphasised mutual forgiveness. “As long as there are differences and distances between us and our Brethren not removed by Reconciliation, our Acceptance, Profit and Edification is marred: And if Reconciliation cannot be obtained by any other way, there must be mutual *Forgiveness*; Not Judiciary to take away the Guilt, that is GOD’s Prerogative; But Charitative, which must be extended to many more Offences and Trespasses than are confessed and acknowledged to us.”¹¹⁵ This was a point also urged by James Fraser of Brea and Gabriel Semple: “As ye have somewhat against us, so we have somewhat against you; forgive us and we will forgive you, and let us unite.”¹¹⁶ It is also a very common requirement following periods of persecution or trial where there is usually a sense that everyone has not stood together and some have been less faithful than others. Durham gives much consideration to the spirit in which the discussion of proposals for union should be conducted. He commends “mutual forgiving” and “mutual condescending.”¹¹⁷ This was the spirit of some who were deputed to confer with the Society men, as seen above. What Durham calls a “conviction of singleness,” the rightness of one’s own cause and actions, may dissuade from condescending in order to seek an accommodation.¹¹⁸ It is possible that these sentiments were held by Sir Robert Hamilton and other Society men in their reluctance to confer about union. “Too much peremptorinesse where there may be some condescending, hath much hand in this; when men become not all things (so far as is lawfull) unto others.”¹¹⁹ Shields also highlights this point: “Peremptoriness without condescending on either hand in things that might be condescended unto, hath a great hand in keeping up Divisions. The Remedy of this, and a great help to make Union Easy, were mutual Condescending.”¹²⁰

110. *Scandal* (1659), 363; (1990), 302.

111. *Scandal* (1659), 318–9; (1990), 264.

112. *Scandal* (1659), 405–8; (1990), 335–38.

113. *Scandal* (1659), 415; (1990), 346.

114. *Scandal* (1659), 416; (1990), 346.

115. *Church-Communion*, p. 4.

116. *FCD*, p. 456.

117. *Scandal* (1659), 367; (1990), 306; and (1659), 324; (1990), 269.

118. *Scandal* (1659), 309–10; (1990), 256.

119. *Scandal* (1659), 288; (1990), 239.

120. *Church-Communion*, p. 14.

11. In managing these events, Shields embodied well a principle of selflessness of which we would do well to take account. Howie acknowledges that Shields was “of a public spirit” and “full of zeal whatever way he intended ... in arguing very ready, only somewhat fiery.”¹²¹ It is interesting, however, that nothing of this fiery nature appears to have been recorded in the debates concerning union, although the general temperature of these meetings was evidently very high. On the contrary his influence appears to have been mostly intended to pacify and his book *Church-Communion* manifests an irenic spirit. David Allan describes him rather inappropriately as “the irascible Covenanter.”¹²²

In *A Hind Let Loose* Shields himself commends “a public spirit, the true spirit of all Christ’s zealous lovers and votaries”, those who have “a Gallant greatness & generosity of a Publick spirit, having their designs & desires not limited to their own interests, even Spiritual, but aiming at no less than Christ’s Publick Glory, the Churches publick good, the Saints publick Comfort, having a publick Concern for all Christ’s Interests, Publick Sympathie for all Christ’s Friends, and a Publick declared Opposition to all Christ’s Enemies.”¹²³

It is of course easier to consider these matters as illustrated by the past than as pressed upon us by the present; particularly when the Presbyterian cause in Scotland has never been so divided and weakened as it is in our own day. In a North American context too, there may be a temptation to substitute good relations between divided denominations instead of biblical union. Durham’s concluding words are very relevant to such considerations:

we shall leave the judicious, consciencious, and tender Reader, to answer these and many such things to himself, and accordingly to do; and if any, out of prejudice, (as we hope none will, and heartily wish none may) shall not conscientiously ponder the same, we leave him to consider that he must reckon to God therefore, and

121. J. Howie, *Biographia Scoticana: or a brief historical account of the lives, characters, and memorable transactions of the most eminent Scots Worthies, noble men, gentlemen, ministers, and others* (Glasgow, 1781), 476.

122. D. Allan *Virtue, Learning, and the Scottish Enlightenment: Ideas of Scholarship in Early Modern History* (Edinburgh, 1993), 36.

123. *A Hind Let Loose* (1687), 554.

124. *Scandal* (1659), 430; (1990), 360.

125. Jardine, p. 244.

126. Cowan, p. 144.

127. Jardine, p. 243.

128. Christie, pp. ii–iii.

129. William Fraser, *The Melvilles Earls of Melville and Leslie Earls of Leven*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1890), 2.115–6, cited by Jardine, p. 231.

shall only obtest him that he will have more respect to the Churches peace, than to his own inclination; and that he Will at least by some other lawfull, possible and probable mean essay the removing, or at least the prevention of the growth of such divisions; and that he would withall construct well of the essayes of others, till we come all before the common Judge, who, we are persswaded, loveth the Truth in peace, and hath joynd these together, which therefore ought by no man to be put asunder.¹²⁴

6. THE CRITICAL ROLE PLAYED BY ALEXANDER SHIELDS Mark Jardine aptly describes the United Societies as “one of the midwives of the Revolution.”¹²⁵ The Glorious Revolution and a Protestant royal succession would both have been seriously endangered without the Cameronian defence of the Convention of Estates and the victory at Dunkeld which “secured the protestant revolution in Scotland.”¹²⁶ This provided the secure conditions for a Presbyterian establishment of the Church of Scotland. Interestingly, Jardine also observes that “the integration of the Society men alongside their former presbyterian brethren in Lord Angus’s Regiment effectively marked the rebirth of a unified presbyterian movement.”¹²⁷ It could be argued further that the Revolution Settlement would not have been as far reaching in Presbyterian terms or as well-established without the significant presence of the United Societies in Scotland at this time.

David Christie argues persuasively that the United Societies “made four significant contributions to freedom of religion in Scotland.” Firstly, their struggle during the Killing Times secured the freedoms obtained in 1690. Secondly, their military role ensured that there was no external threat to the key legislation passed by Church and Parliament. Thirdly, through their reconciliation with the Church of Scotland they were “catalytic in the establishment of a [virtually] united Presbyterian front in Scotland.” Fourthly, “Alexander Shields stands out as catalytic” in the achievement of these last two contributions. “It can be argued that his behaviour, in itself, was a significant contribution to Freedom of Religion.”¹²⁸ The role that Alexander Shields played in ensuring the success of the civil and ecclesiastical consequences of the Glorious Revolution is not widely acknowledged. Shields had a crucial input, however, within each of these contributions made by the United Societies. At the time, some felt that the Societies were “madd men not to be governed even by mastr Sheils ther orachle.”¹²⁹ While his influence was not universally decisive for all of the Society men, there can be

no doubt that his leadership in these events provided the main catalyst. The times required both his zeal and public spirit.

II: CHURCH-COMMUNION ENQUIRED INTO

The first part of this article focused on the position that Alexander Shields (1660?–1700) adopted in relation to the Revolution Church of Scotland in 1690 which brought him into disagreement with some of his former colleagues among the United Societies. This part continues to follow the course of events from 1703 onward in considering the treatise *Church-Communion enquired into* which Shields had left in manuscript. This was published in 1706 by Thomas Linning during a significant moment in the history of Church and nation in Scotland and a time of intense speculation and debate.¹³⁰ James Walker describes this book as “once well known and often referred to,” but both its contents and context now require extensive description. It is a significant contribution to the Scottish view of the unity of the visible Church which continues the work of James Durham (see above) in defining and applying these principles codified in *A Treatise Concerning Scandal*. The modern relevance of these views is considered at the close of the article, together with a brief assessment of Shields as an author.

7. THE PUBLICATION OF CHURCH-COMMUNION ENQUIRED INTO

The movement of dissent against the Church of Scotland appeared only to be growing in impetus in the early years of the eighteenth century, arising partly from the oath of allegiance to Queen Anne in 1703, but then more especially as the Anglo-Scottish union of 1707 began to be discussed. In the period between 1699 and 1707, Karin Bowie has suggested, “popular participation in Scottish national affairs increased dramatically” to a level “remarkable for the time, whether assessed in a Scottish, British or European context.” One harbinger of the enormous popular opposition to the union was the petitioning campaign of late 1699 and early 1700, organised by the leaders of the country party in order to exert pressure on the court over the failure of the Darien scheme (in which Alexander Shields had been engaged).¹³¹

This is the context for the publication of *Church-Communion* in 1706. Thomas Linning himself was playing a key role lobbying parliamentarians in seeking the security of the Presbyterian establishment in the event of union.¹³² He dates the preface to *Church-Communion* only a day or two before the meeting of the General

Assembly on 4–16 April 1706. Immediately following the Assembly, on 18 April, treaty negotiations began in London.¹³³ While public debate had been running on the theme of union since at least 1699, a vigorous pamphlet war was now being waged during 1706 and 1707. Karin Bowie estimates that during 1706–7 “a lack of effective censorship meant that the volume of print appearing in Scotland exceeded anything seen before in the kingdom.” Parliament ordered the burning of only one Scottish pamphlet; significantly, it was by Archibald Foyer, a Church of Scotland minister, advancing a robust Covenanting viewpoint on the matters in hand.¹³⁴ Key issues in the debate were: the status of the Scottish Church; the Solemn League and Covenant, and the degree to which union involved tacit acceptance of Episcopalianism in England. It was a unique moment for separatists to muster strength and support against the Revolution Church of Scotland.¹³⁵

In a printed address to the High Commissioner and Parliament from “a Considerable Number of People of

130. *Church-Communion enquired into: or a treatise against separation from this National Church of Scotland. Wherein I. Some truths confessed on all hands are held forth which if rightly considered would do much to end the present controversie. II. Some concessions are laid down for clearing the present debate III. The controversie is stated and truth vindicated. IV. The objections are solidly and clearly answered. Which was left in manuscripts by the reverend and worthy Mr. Alexander Shields, minister of the Gospel at St Andrews, when he was sent by the Church of Scotland unto Caledonia.* (Edinburgh, 1706). The treatise is sometimes referred to by the title *Enquiry into Church Communion* under which it was republished in 1747.

131. Karin Bowie, *Scottish Public Opinion and the Anglo-Scottish Union, 1699–1707* (Woodbridge, 2007), 7, 30–3.

132. Jeffrey Stephen, “Defending the Revolution: The Church of Scotland and the Scottish Parliament, 1689–95,” *Scottish Historical Review* 89:1 (April 2010):19–53 (see pp. 22, 30, 32).

133. Jeffrey Stephen, *Scottish Presbyterians and the Act of Union 1707* (Edinburgh, 2007), 226.

134. Bowie, *Scottish Public Opinion*, pp. 92, 124. Foyer was minister of Stonehouse, Lanarkshire, which was relatively near to Lesmahagow where Linning ministered. Both were in the Presbytery of Hamilton which presented a strongly assertive address to Parliament. Bowie, pp. 124–25 and 127. They reported that the “disposition of the people” in their Presbytery was “generally most averse from the Union.” Another minister in the same Presbytery who was leading something of a campaign against the union was Robert Wyllie of Hamilton, a correspondent of Wodrow’s. Cf. Michael Fry, *The Union: England, Scotland and the Treaty of 1707* (Edinburgh, 2006), 235.

135. One leading unionist, Sir John Clerk, wrote (no doubt hyperbolically) in 1706 that “in a corner of the street one may see a Presbyterian minister, a popish priest and an Episcopal prelate all agreeing together in their discourse against the Union but upon quite different views and contradictory reasons...” [John Clerk of Penicuik], *A Letter to a Friend giving an Account how the Treaty of Union has been received here* (Edinburgh, 1706), 7; quoted by Richard Holmes, “James Arbuckle and the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707,” *Journal of Irish Scottish Studies* 1:2 (March 2008): 45–57 (see p. 45).

the South and Western Shires,” the Hebronites declared their opposition to the union on the basis that the Covenants obliged them to maintain the Scottish Parliament and that England had broken the Solemn League and Covenant.¹³⁶ Other separatist pamphlets were promoting “collective action against the treaty, often in violent terms.”¹³⁷ The pamphlet entitled *A speech in season against the union, or a Smoaking Furnace and a Burning Lamp* (thought to be authored by Patrick Grant) may be taken as representative of these, which called upon “all true Presbyterians in heart” to be ready to “sacrifice all your Lives and die in a good cause.”¹³⁸ Other such pamphlets published in 1706 include one probably by the Harley brothers, *The smoaking flax unquenchable: Where the Union Betwixt the two Kingdoms is Dissected, Anatomized, Confuted and Annuled*. There were also pamphlets directly addressed to the parliamentarians such as *To the loyal and religious hearts in parliament, some few effects of the union, proposed between Scotland and England*, and *We heard that the parliament is sitting at Edinburgh ... A word to the Unioners and their confederats thee parliamenters*.¹³⁹

The Presbytery of Dumfries complained that before

136. Bowie, p. 100. “We incorporate with a nation deeply guilty of many national abominations, who have openly broke and burnt their Covenant with God, and league with us, their public and established worship corrupted with superstition and idolatry.” Quoted by Fry, p. 236.

137. Bowie, pp. 147–8, 152–3.

138. Bowie, p. 101.

139. Bowie, p. 101. See also Alasdair Raffe, *Religious Controversy and Scottish Society, c.1679–1714* (University of Edinburgh, PhD Thesis, 2007), 166, 257–9.

140. National Archives of Scotland [NAS], Letter of Dumfries Presbytery to the Commission of the General Assembly, 1706, CH1/2/26/1, fo. 85r; quoted by Raffe, p. 174.

141. NAS, Penpont Presbytery instructions to the General Assembly, 1705, CH1/2/5/1, fo. 34r, quoted by Raffe, p. 177.

142. NAS, Penpont Presbytery letter, 22 January 1707, CH1/2/5/4, fo. 255r; quoted by Raffe, p. 189.

143. [J. Bannatyne], *Some Queries proposed to Consideration relative to the Union now intended* ([Edinburgh], [1706]), 3; quoted by Raffe, p. 188.

144. National Library of Scotland, James MacDougal to Robert Wodrow, 30 November 1706, Wodrow Letters, Qu. IV, fo. 160r.

145. NAS, Biggar Presbytery letter to the Commission, 28 November 1706, CH1/2/5/4, fo. 228r; quoted by Raffe, p. 188.

146. Raffe, pp. 171, 175–6.

147. Cf. A. Ian Dunlop, *William Carstairs and the Kirk by Law Established* (Edinburgh, 1967), 115. Ultimately, however much the ministers feared or disliked the union, it must have become clear that the Church would be exposed to greater danger from the Jacobite cause if Scotland remained independent than if it joined in a union with England.

148. NAS, Register of the Commission, CH1/3/9, p. 72; quoted by Raffe, p. 189.

“long we shall have independencie set up in these bounds.”¹⁴⁰ The Presbyteries of Penpont and Kirkcudbright were evidently feeling the heat of Separatist fervour when they overtured the Assembly in the same year for renewal of the Covenants and “all o[the]r effectuall Means [...] for removing [th]e Grievances of these amongst us who separate from the Com[m]union of this Church.”¹⁴¹ By 1707, the moderator of Penpont Presbytery later reported significantly heightened concern that “Discontent and heart burnings are so increased against the Union, that a very small Incendiary may soon Ruine our Ministry.”¹⁴² Alasdair Raffe notes considerable concerns amongst the ministry of the Church that national union would in fact mean ecclesiastical division. John Bannatyne, minister of Lanark, feared that union “may beget a Schisme and Convulsion, both in Church and State, that may be attended with fatal Consequences.”¹⁴³ James MacDougal, minister of Mearns, related his concerns to Robert Wodrow that “instead of union with our neighbours we are like to have sad divisions among ourselves.”¹⁴⁴ Later in 1706, James Forrester, moderator of Biggar Presbytery, wrote to the Commission of the General Assembly approving its first two addresses, and requested “a suitable expedient for the preservation of unity and concord in this Nationall Church [so] that separate courses” could be avoided.¹⁴⁵

Hepburn had been deposed by the General Assembly in 1705, an event that did nothing to undermine his popularity. He was joined in 1706 by James Farquhar, minister of Tyrie, and their preaching was attended by great multitudes. In August 1706, Farquhar was censured but received no more severe disciplinary action from the Commission of the General Assembly.¹⁴⁶ This may give an indication, together with references above, that significant parts of the Church were opposed to the union and certainly wary of increasing the separatist cause which was being bolstered by anti-union feeling. As late as October 1706, the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr arranged a private fast which appeared to some to be a show of feeling against the proposed union.¹⁴⁷

By April 1706, when Linning completed the manuscript of *Church-Communion*, it appeared very likely that the deposed minister, John Macmillan of Balmaghie would be accepted as minister to the Hamiltonians. Once accepted, his preaching forays enjoyed significant popularity. In early 1707 the Commission of the General Assembly were aware that Macmillan was preaching “to great multitudes of people who flock to him up and down the whole Country.”¹⁴⁸

The success of this preaching tour was no doubt

viewed in the light of the militaristic threat that the group posed. By 27 December 1706, the Scottish Parliament had issued the third proclamation within three months forbidding anti-union “meetings and gatherings of the subjects as unwarrantable and contrair to law.”¹⁴⁹ The threats of armed insurrection were close to being realised in late 1706, with a concomitant rumoured rising of Jacobite Highlanders under the leadership of the Duke of Atholl.¹⁵⁰ According to Christopher Whatley and Derek Patrick, support for bearing arms in resistance to the union had now narrowed down solely to the Macmillanites (as the Hamiltonians were soon called).¹⁵¹ Handbills were circulating in Lesmahagow (where Linning ministered) and the area around, summoning Presbyterians to arms. There had been rioting in Edinburgh in October, followed by riots in Glasgow, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries and other areas in November and December 1706.¹⁵² On 20 November 1706, three hundred armed separatists, probably Macmillanites, entered Dumfries, ceremonially burnt the articles of union as “utterly destructive of the nation’s independence, crown rights, and our constitute laws, both civil and sacred,” and denounced those in the Scots Parliament who “shall presume to carry on the said Union by a supream power, over the belly of the generality of this nation.”¹⁵³

It appears that as time went on, significant numbers of people moved backwards and forwards between hearing separating ministers such as Hepburn or Macmillan and the parish minister. In the longer term, this initial separatist success was not, however, to materialise as sustained and consistent support, but this could not necessarily be predicted at the time.¹⁵⁴

The Correspondences of Eskdale and Ettrick Forrest had seceded from the Societies of the South-West after disagreement with Hamilton following the publication of the Sanquhar Declaration of 1695. In 1707, these now rejoined the Societies after the admission of Macmillan and quickly availed themselves of the privilege of baptism for their children.¹⁵⁵

Thomas Boston entered upon his charge at Ettrick in the midst of these events and actually upon the same day that the union was effected in May 1707. He notes in his diary that the numbers and influence of Macmillanites near Ettrick exercised “a dead weight on my ministry in the place” and were “continually buzzing in their ears something to the disparagement of the church and the ministry. Moreover, the union with England, which they were violently set against, trysted with my settling among them, and brought in an unacceptable change of the state of affairs.”

Boston was surprised to find an ignorance of biblical truth among the dissenters and “the prevalency of the sin of profane swearing” amongst those who made such protests about public oaths.¹⁵⁶ He had a higher opinion of the Hebronites than the Macmillanites and describes a particular encounter that he had with the former.

I found them to be men having a sense of religion on their own spirits, much affected with their circumstances

149. NAS, PA3/7, Printed Minutes No.46, 1 or NAS, PA6/36, 204, f.46–46v. “Proclamation against unlawful convocation of the lieges debated,” in “Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707,” <http://www.rps.ac.uk>. The Scottish Parliament issued previous proclamations against such “tumultuary meetings” on 25 October 1706 and 29 November 1706.

150. Bowie fully describes the threat of arms during this period, pp. 142–57. See also the full account of Macmillanite involvement in Stephen, *Scottish Presbyterians and the Act of Union 1707*, pp. 168ff.

151. C.A. Whatley and D.J. Patrick, *The Scots and the Union* (Edinburgh, 2006), 294.

152. Cf. Fry, p. 244.

153. William Ferguson, *Scotland’s Relations with England: A Survey to 1707* (Edinburgh, 1977), 267–8. The Scottish Parliament responded on 30 November 1706 by ordering that the pamphlet *An account of the burning of the articles of union at Dumfries, bearing the declaration read and affixed at the market cross thereof by the tumult assembled on that occasion*, “be burned by the hand of the hangman.” On 12 December 1706, Parliament also ordered the public burning of the pamphlet entitled *Queries to the presbyterian noblemen, barons, burgesses, ministers and commoners in Scotland who are for the scheme of an incorporating union with England according to the articles agreed upon by the commissioners of both nations*, “Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707,” <http://www.rps.ac.uk>.

154. Some have claimed that “the old tradition of radical Presbyterian nationalism ... was emasculated after 1707.” Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain, 1689–1746* (1980: Dalkeith, 2004 edn), 285, quoted by Valerie Wallace, “Presbyterian Moral Economy: The Covenanting Tradition and Popular Protest in Lowland Scotland, 1707–c.1746,” *The Scottish Historical Review* 89:1 (April 2010): 54–72. There was a split amongst the Macmillanites in 1715 following disagreement over a declaration made regarding the accession of George I. The splinter group was led by William Wilson, a school master from Douglas. See William McMillan, “The Covenanters after the Revolution of 1688,” *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 10, pp. 141–53 (pp. 147–8). Thomas Boston states that “at length [Hepburn’s] own party broke among themselves, and many of them left him: so that this day, though he still continues his schism, his affairs and reputation are in a sorry situation.” Another separatist group was led by John Adamson (also Addison) an itinerant preacher whom William McMillan believes to have been the leader of the Adamite group. Hepburn would not unite with Adamson because the latter did not have a license to preach from a Presbytery. The Societies likewise apparently regarded Adamson as a “greater snare” than other opponents (cf. McMillan, p. 146). See also Robert Wodrow, *Analecta*, 3.337.

155. McMillan, “The Covenanters after the Revolution of 1688”, pp. 145–6.

156. Thomas Boston, *Memoirs of the life, times and writings of the Rev. Thomas Boston of Ettrick* (Aberdeen, 1852), 197–98.

as destitute of a minister, endowed with a good measure of Christian charity and love, and of a very different temper from that of Mr. Macmillan's followers. I perceived their separation ultimately to resolve into that unwarrantable principle, viz. That joining in communion with the church, in the ordinances of God, is an approbation of the corruptions in her; the very same from which all the rest of the separations do spring; some carrying that principle farther than others, in different degrees. I understood, that the abjuration-oath straitened them, as to addressing the general assemblies any more. I shewed a readiness to administer ordinances to them, on testimonials from their ministers; but found, they scrupled to seek them; and I had no freedom to do it on testimonials from their meeting; since I could not in conscience approve of their separation, and had seen and felt so much of the mischief of separating. So we parted on the morrow after; but with great affection, and much heaviness on both sides.¹⁵⁷

On 12 December 1708 Boston preached a sermon entitled "The Evil and Danger of Schism," on 1 Corinthians 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together, in the same mind, and in the same judgment." Boston relates in his *Memoirs* that the sermon was preached "Upon public reading of the act of the commission of the General Assembly, against Mr John Macmillan and Mr John Macneill, the two preachers of the separation."¹⁵⁸ Boston establishes several key doctrines.

- That schism and division is an evil incident to the churches of Christ while in this world.
- That professors ought to beware of schism and

division, as they tender the authority and honour of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Where schism and division enter into a church, there will be great heats, diversity, yea, contrariety of opinions, people contradicting one another in matters of religion, "That ye all speak the same things," etc.
- That however hard it be, yet it is possible to get a rent church healed.
- That it is the duty of all church members to endeavour the unity of the church, and the cure of schisms: and particularly, it is the duty of disjointed members to take their own places in the body again.
- That schisms and divisions, as they are grievous to all the sons of peace, so they are in a special manner heavy and afflicting to faithful ministers of the gospel of peace.¹⁵⁹

The sermon outlines the nature of schism and, as Boston indicates, "was directed precisely against the separation," refuting separatist objections against uniting with the Church of Scotland. He transcribed it, "allowed to be given out: and it was of some use for a time." He says that "Mr Macmillan preached within a mile of this parish in February thereafter ... a sermon, on design to confute that sermon of mine, producing the copy of my sermon, and reading parcels of it before the people ... I understood after, that several who were there were disgusted, and that it had done their cause little service. He left this country, leaving no copy of his sermon behind him; which has been taken notice of by judicious persons. I waited a while, till I should see whether any copy of it appeared or not: at length none appearing, I spoke a little of it in the pulpit, desiring the people to believe what I had taught them, till they should see it confuted by scripture, etc."¹⁶⁰

Church-Communion appeared within this general context of debate and commotion. More and more perhaps, it must have seemed essential to Linning that a voice of authority and sanity such as that of Shields should be heard, even at the risk of being drowned out in the apoplexy surrounding the treaty. There is a sense in which *Church-Communion* bears comparison with Durham's *Treatise on Scandal* which was subtitled "A Dying Man's Testament to the Church of Scotland." Dying in 1700 and having left his manuscripts to Linning, Shields had bequeathed something similar for the benefit of the Church of Scotland.

157. Boston, *Memoirs*, p. 419.

158. Boston later discovered that he had been mistaken in thinking that he was required to read the act of commission to his congregation. His view, however, was that it should have been obligatory and that his reading of "it was a happy mistake, ordered by the good Providence of God." *Memoirs*, pp. 207, 218.

159. *The Whole Works of the late Reverend Thomas Boston of Ettrick*, ed. Samuel M'Millan, 12 vols. (Aberdeen, 1850), 7:593–613.

160. Boston, *Memoirs*, p. 207. John Macpherson opines regarding this sermon: "I am not sure but it is one which Renwick, had he survived so long, would have been quite prepared to preach." "The Doctrine of the Church in Scottish Theology," *An Anthology of Presbyterian & Reformed Literature*, ed. Christopher Coldwell, volume 5 (Dallas, TX: Naphtali P'press, 1992), p. 165. See also, Macpherson, *The Doctrine of the Church in Scottish Theology*, Sixth Series of the Chalmers Lectures, ed. C. G. McCrie (Edinburgh: MacNiven & Wallace, 1903), 124.

In acknowledging (together with all “who truly Fear God”) the mixed character of the Church of Scotland after 1690, in the prefatory epistle Linning makes use of the parable of the wheat and tares (Matt. 13:25, a classic proof text against separatism). “Christ hath sowed good Seed in his Church in this Land.... But it is as true, That the Enemy hath sowed Tares also, and that while Men Slept.” The Enemy was also assaulting the Church “on Right and Left Hand.”

Linning was not the first to use the biblical allusion to right hand and left hand defections (cf. 2 Cor. 6:4–7). Most notably it was used by Robert McWard to describe the early divisions amongst the most resolute Covenanters in Rotterdam. In 1679 McWard refused to separate from Robert Fleming who in turn refused to separate from indulged ministers. This position was opposed by Robert Hamilton and James Boig who believed that secondary separation was essential. Donald Cargill sided with McWard.

McWard sent a letter to Scotland in late 1679 expressing his fear of Satan’s devices “who, since he cannot carry you aside to the left hand snares, will see by all means if he can fling you ... to excesses on the right hand,” which would “prove most ... destructive of the whole of the old cause of the Church of Scotland.” His great concern was that the right hand excesses of Hamilton and Boig were resulting in a view that was not only separating them from every minister but undermining the very basis of Church union and communion. He felt a greater fear that by this the “cause of the whole frame of Presbyterianism may be more certainly destroyed, than by the other” as the “poor remnant may run down one another with division.” “Whosoever adopts this principle,” he warned, “hath not the mind of Christ; for there are other patent and obvious ways to witness against all the evils of our way besides these.”¹⁶¹ Significantly, he states the following:

I told them then, so it has proved too true since, and will prove more true every day, that if the principle whereby they defend their practice were owned, it would not only infer the dissolution of the united visible church, but also of all Christian society.¹⁶²

Linning does not make explicit reference to McWard, but since he too is applying the language of right-hand defections to the Hamiltonian party, the resemblance is surely significant. The troubles in Rotterdam and the issues at stake were all too similar compared with the situation faced a decade later. It may be that some were tracing the root of the later divisions to this point.

Linning refers to left and right hand opposition frequently within the “Epistle to the Reader” and Shields also makes use of it in the main treatise.

Prelatists, upon the one hand, are pressing Separation from this Church.... And some on the other hand, who profess themselves Presbyterians, are continuing in a stated Schism from this Church, which yet is the Purest in the World for Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government, even those People themselves being Judges.¹⁶³

Linning makes the case that all of the most resolute Covenanter ministers and martyrs who witnessed against the Indulgence would not have adopted the same position as Hamilton towards the Revolution Church, but would have united with it. He refers to Richard Cameron, Donald Cargill and James Renwick, drawing upon a specific relevant quotation from Cargill. The latter

often declared that his Soul hated Separation, and objected his Hearers to pray for Faithful Ministers, adding particularly this Reason (in a Preaching on a week day at Loudoun hill) that People could not be long kept free of Schism or Heresie, if they wanted Spiritual Guides, to which I was Ear Witness: And the worthy Martyr *Mr. Richard Cameron* Minister of the Gospel, is said often to have had the like Expressions.¹⁶⁴

161. McWard, *Epagonismo; or, Earnest Contendings for the Faith. Being the answers written to Mr. Robert Fleming's first and second paper of proposals, for union with the indulged; the first paper printed Anno 1681. In which Answers, more sound and solid proposals for a safe and lasting Union are offered, and a solemn Appeal thereanent made. Whereunto some of the Author's Letters relative to the Sins and Duties of the day are annexed. By that faithful servant of Jesus Christ, Mr Robert M'Ward, some time Minister of the Gospel in Glasgow* (Edinburgh, 1723), 369–74, cf. also pp. 375–84.

162. McWard also says that he was “brought to the gates of death” by these “cause-destroying excesses.” Quoted by Maurice Grant, *No King but Christ: the story of Donald Cargill* (Darlington, 1988), 252. Shields expresses sentiments similar to McWard when he asks how the principle of separatism would work out in the future. “Shall it be in these that for every Scandal, Defection and Corruption not confessed there must be a Rupture, Division and Separation again? Then how long shall that Church last?... Must there be endless Divisions and Withdrawings?” *Church-Communion*, p. 68.

163. *Church-Communion*, pp. 9, 16. Patrick Walker records: “It was one of the Sayings of worthy *John Livingstoun* a Sailer in *Borrowstounness*, and which he said to my self. That when he was any Time at Home, he saw many Defects and Faults amongst us; but when he went abroad into another Nation, he thought there was a goodly Number in *Scotland*, without either Spot or Wrinkle.” *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1827), 1.254.

164. *Church-Communion*, pp. ii–iii.

Cargill is said to have remarked in his lecture that “of necessity we cannot do without [ministers] . . . Leaders we must have, for it is not come to that yet, that we shall be able to lead and guide ourselves.”¹⁶⁵

These remarks were spoken against the excesses of the Gibbites who disowned all of the current ministers, including Cargill, for various degrees of defection. Instead they were led to extremes by one who was not a minister, John Gibb.¹⁶⁶ It is likely, though not explicit, that Linning intended some reflection upon the Hamiltonians who likewise had been led by one who was not a minister to disown all current ministers.

165. Quoted by Maurice Grant, *No King but Christ*, pp. 166–7. Grant asserts with good justification that Cargill would have entered the Revolution Church of Scotland, given his steadfast adherence to Rutherford and Durham’s opposition to Separatism (pp. 208–9). Cargill also sought to reconcile differences between John Welch and Robert Hamilton at Bothwell (pp. 96–97) and refused to associate with Hamilton’s withdrawal from Robert McWard at Rotterdam (p. 106).

166. Walker also refers to this: “Mr. Cargil, preaching at *Lothian-hill*, upon the 5th May 1681” warned against casting off ministers in the way that the Gibbites were doing. “Oh! for the Lord’s Sake, pray for faithful Ministers to your selves, and never content your selves without them; for ye will not continue long sound in the Faith, and straight in the Way, if ye want faithful Guides.” *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 1, p. 255.

167. Linning himself published *A Letter from a Friend to Mr John Mackmillan, wherein is Demonstrate the Contrariety of his Principles and Practices to the Scripture, our Covenants, Confession of Faith, and Practice of Christ* ([Edinburgh?], [1709]), together with a pamphlet in the form of a dialogue called *The friendly conference, or, a discourse between the country man and his nephew, who having fallen off from hearing, hath for some years been a follower of Mr. M’Millan* (Edinburgh, 1711). Evidently there was something of a pamphlet war at the time with a response to Linning entitled *A Modest Reply to a Pamphlet Intituled A Letter from a Friend to Mr John M’millan* (1710), and a response to this: [Gavin Hamilton], *Just Reflections upon a Pamphlet, entitled, A Modest Reply to a Letter from a Friend to Mr John M’millan* ([Edinburgh?], 1712). There was also a reply to *The friendly conference* which was entitled *The survey, of the friendly conference: Or The discourse between the countrie man and his nephew: breifly examined. . . In a letter from the countrie-man his surveyer* (Edinburgh, 1712).

168. A verbal pun on Linning (Linen). According to Hew Scott, he wrote his own name as Linen in 1691. The material linen was also sometimes spelt “linning.” *Faſti Eccleſiæ Scoticanæ: The Succeſſion of Miniſters in the Church Of Scotland from the Reformation*, ed. Hew Scott, second edition, 7 vols. (Edinburgh, 1915–28), Vol. 3, *Synod of Glasgow and Ayr*, p. 314.

169. Hay Fleming states that this postscript “may be found in the 1707 edition of the *Informatory Vindication*, pp. 230–32.” *Six Saints of the Covenant*, 2.151. This seems to be the same as the source described by Hector Macpherson as “Pamphlets bound up with *Informatory Vindication*,” p. 231. *The Cameronian Philosopher*, 217. The postscript also appears to be titled “A Preface Introductory to the following Sheets,” written as a preface to *Declarations of the United Societies 1692–1707*.

8. THE AUTHORSHIP OF *CHURCH-COMMUNION* ENQUIRED INTO

There does not appear to have been a direct response to *Church-Communion* in terms of a publication refuting its claims.¹⁶⁷ One response to the book was to issue a new edition of *An Informatory Vindication* together with various pamphlets. Incorporated within this publication was a postscript asserting that Alexander Shields was not the author of *Church-Communion*, but that Thomas Linning himself had written the work and published it under the name of Alexander Shields. This entails a serious allegation of fraud and indicates the opprobrium with which Linning was now regarded amongst the Societies since they believed him to be capable of such an act.

As for that pamphlet, entitled *Church Communion*, emitted by Mr. Linning and fathered on Mr. Shields, we say that our thoughts of it is, though that the once worthy Mr. Shields was turned off his feet by cunning and slight of Messrs. Linning and Boyd, so that he could not easily recover them again; yet that he was a man more consonant to his principles, than so openly to condemn by his pen that which he had so openly avouched before, as may be clearly seen both in the *Vindication* and *Hind let loose*: for we having had the occasion to know the judgment, humour and temper of the three men, as much as any in the nation, must say, (that abstract from Mr. Shield’s parts) for faithfulness, zeal, love, and constancy to the cause of God, we found him by many degrees preferable to the other two, although he was (as said above) stolen off his feet by his false brethren: and as for Mr. Thomas’s pamphlet, as we judge him to be the author, so as the swatch is not pleasing, being round spun linning indeed,¹⁶⁸ we shall suffer the author to make the best hand of it he can: and as for what bitterness he hath kithed against the poor remnant by words and deeds, in hindering them to get the gospel faithfully preached: he being the principal man that instigated his brethren to write to the colleges abroad, that all doors of hope might be shut as to the poor remnant’s bettering their condition, we say, it ill became him to have stood so cross in the way of their mercy of the preached gospel, for it was to their purses he was beholden for what advancements he attained unto when abroad.¹⁶⁹

Patrick Walker knew Shields better than the author of this postscript and he refutes the allegation in his own characteristic language. Walker recommends “that compendious Treatise written by worthy Mr. Shields upon Church-Communion, and against Separation from the

Church of Scotland; which they say, in a slanderous, fool, lying Postscript to their Pamphlets, That Mr. *Linning*, who was the Publisher, had fathered it upon him.” Walker identifies the characteristic style of Alexander Shields in the treatise: “it is plain to all (that it fathers itself) who have read his Writings, and heard him preach, reason and debate.” There is in Shields a distinct manner of close reasoning and semi-poetic flights that would be difficult to imitate. The preface, authored by *Linning*, is manifestly an entirely different style to that of the treatise itself which compares closely with *A Hind let loose*. Walker is in no doubt due to these considerations, but even more so on considering the nature of the arguments which are consistent with those used by Shields “as soon as we entered into this Period, under other Dispensations and Circumstances,” i.e. following the Revolution when there were significant debates in the General Meetings of the United Societies. Walker refers to the publication of *Methods and Motives of Union* which was issued to clarify the views of Shields, Boyd and *Linning* on this subject in 1691. Shields published

Methods and Motives that induced him and others to unite with the Church at that Time, considering his Answers to their Objections; and there are some yet alive, worthy of all Credit, who were Witnesses to his publick Conference with them on these Heads, who can testify that he spake with the same Breath that now is published [i.e. in *Church-Communion*].¹⁷⁰

Walker confirms the impression given by the diaries left by Alexander Shields and the record produced by Michael Shields in *Faithful Contendings Displayed* that the entrenched opposition adopted by Hamilton ensured a permanent irreconcilable breach between the different factions of the United Societies:

when *Robert Hamilton* came from abroad among them, they got a Brow of Brass, calling him a Liar, and up-braided him to his Face, saying, Altho’ he used these Arguments to draw them out of the Way of the Lord, yet you dare not publish them. I well remember, he [Shields] said, Dare I not? dare I not? I promise before you all, I both dare and will, and avow it before the World. But alas! they still gave us a deaf Ear, and now will not be spoken to, nor pled with.¹⁷¹

Walker regards the disputed authorship as a tactic that allowed the Macmillanites to evade rather than answer the treatise:¹⁷²

that which hath induced them to publish that lying Postscript, was, to evite the Dint of Mr. *Shields’s* unanswerable Answers to their Objections against Communion with this Church, now when they know he is not to answer for himself; if he had been spared to this Day, he would have owned and avowed all that is in it.

It seems likely that the confrontation between Hamilton and Shields referred to above was at the General Meeting of 6 November 1689 when Hamilton delivered a protest that Shields gave a promise to answer.¹⁷³ Walker notes that Shields proceeded to work upon this immediately and that this was the commencement of *Church-Communion*. “I was Witness to his Writing of it in *Corsick*, in the Parish of *Carmichael*, shortly after that Promise in a publick Meeting in the Kirk of *Douglas*; and I well remember the best Chamber he then had, when he wrote it, was an old Kiln, and a Pickle of his Horse’s Hay for his Chair, and his Feet below his Horse’s Belly.” Shields himself refers to the promise in *Church-Communion*: “being under the bond of a Promise, extorted from me some years ago at a Meeting at *Douglass*, so here I shall essay to give my poor Thoughts upon this Subject.”¹⁷⁴

170. Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 1.125–7.

171. Walker is keen also to refute the idea that *Linning* was maintained financially by the Societies when abroad. “They say, in the End of that lying Postscript, That it ill became Mr. *Linning* to oppose them; for it was to their Purses he was beholden for what Advances he attained to when abroad. I know none now alive who was more concerned, both in Contributions and Distributions, than I was in these Years; and yet I ingenuously declare, I never heard Mr. *Linning’s* Name mentioned amongst us as a Person in these Circumstances; and I know assuredly, that he was supplied in and by the honourable Laird of *Kersland’s* Family: “If the Lord spare,” he adds, “I resolve to give the World a more surprising Account of the rude Treatment and unheard-of Ingratitude Mr. *Shields*, *Linning*, and others received at that Time, and since, at their Hands.” This would have been included in the projected biography of Shields which was never published.

172. The same tactic was employed later in 1731 in Andrew Clarkson’s *Plain Reasons for Presbyterians Dissenting from the Revolution-church*. Amongst other charges it was suggested that John Carstairs had corrupted places in Durham’s *Concerning Scandal*. The attack on Carstairs’ character is as easily refuted as the one against *Linning*. See Introduction, “A Defense of John Carstairs,” in *Collected Sermons of James Durham*, volume 1 (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 34–37.

173. See page @ fn 50.

174. *Church-Communion*, p. 3. It is evident that the “Answer to the protest” to which Walker refers is not of identical extent with the eventual treatise, the manuscript “Answer” having only twenty-six pages single and double sided. “Alexander Shields’s answer to Sir Robert Hamilton’s protest”, Wod. Qu. XVI, ff. 99r–113r. The “Answer” expanded upon the issue of sinful associations, which is not reiterated in *Church-Communion*. Shields emphasised that not all associations with the ungodly are sinful, *Church-Communion*, p. 22.

It is worth noting that this reference allows a rough dating to when Shields wrote these words. “Some years ago” implies that a handful of years at least had passed since 1689. It seems unlikely that, in the midst of the field of war in the Low Countries, Shields would have had the appropriate conditions or opportunities to work upon this treatise, despite maintaining his diary. The greater likelihood is therefore that it was being worked upon no sooner than the latter part of 1695 when he returned to Scotland in order to consider the five calls that he had received from various congregations. Three of the calls that he received were from the strong Covenanting areas in Lanarkshire and the west. Shields felt, however, that his presence there would be more of a hindrance than a help to healing divisions. In his answer to the Hamilton Presbytery he stated that he believed that the work of healing “requires a more skilful hand than mine, that had the unhappiness all my days to be involved in contentions and divisions, but could never had either satisfaction in them nor success in endeavours to heal them.”¹⁷⁵

Shields has an aside in *Church-Communion* containing similar sentiments to the effect that he had previously feared “that my moving in them [i.e. contentions] might make them worse, and in the hope that forbearance for a while might contribute to the sooner cooling and quenching the heat of them.”¹⁷⁶ The treatise had become a necessity due to separatism “Spreading and

Growing” rather than cooling. The latter comment suggests that the manuscript reached its final form nearer the period of time when separatism seemed to be gathering more momentum and when the Commission of the General Assembly felt it necessary to issue *A Seasonable Admonition and Exhortation to some who Separate from the Communion of the Church of Scotland* (1699). It seems less likely that Shields would have worked on the substance of the treatise in the period of around two years before he was settled in St Andrews since he shows a reticence for controversy in considering calls to parishes in the southwest.

Frequently, the successors of the Macmillanites in the Reformed Presbyterian Churches either imply or state without justification that Shields repented of entering the Revolution Church of Scotland.¹⁷⁷ It is evident in the extracts from the diary left by Shields (reproduced in Wodrow’s *Analecta*), however, that *Church-Communion* does indeed reflect his views accurately in relation to union with the Revolution Church of Scotland.¹⁷⁸ Shields himself says that “tho’ my Sentiments are shallow and changeable, as other Mens are, having the imperfection of Mutability as well as Fallibility; yet I know no change of Principles that these Contentions need drive me to.”¹⁷⁹ Linning seeks to show in the preface to the treatise that this was always the position held by Shields.

in the Year 1687 ... when he came to Utrecht, in Discourse with me, among other things, he positively owned, that none of these things, which were in Controversy betwixt us and some other Presbyterian Ministers, could be owned as sufficient Grounds of Separation, if the Lord should send deliverance to his Church, and give us access to present our Grievances to Church Judicatories, with personal Safety, (which we could never have, until the late happy Revolution).¹⁸⁰

In June 1685 Shields had written a very irenic letter “to the prisoners of Christ at Dunottar Castle.” The letter addresses the issue of what sort of communion ought to be among fellow Presbyterian prisoners who, though they were being similarly persecuted for their opposition to tyranny, did not hold the same separate position as the Societies. In a phrase that was to reappear in *Church-Communion*, Shields said that the “want of peaceableness as well as the want of truth will make our salt to lose its savour”; though difficult to obtain, peace must be pursued. He maintained that it would be lawful to hear ministers “holding the same Presbyterian testimony against Popery, Prelacy, Erastianism,

175. D. Hay Fleming, “Alexander Shields and his five calls in 1696,” *Original Secession Magazine* 29 (1931): 363–71 (see p. 369).

176. *Church-Communion*, pp. 2–3.

177. “Mr. Alexander Shields was prevailed upon by his two brethren to join in communion with the established Church. He repented of this compliance, but not in time to recover, what he lost, his character.” *Reformation Principles Exhibited by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (New York, 1807), 96. John Howie states: “This compromise ... caused Shields much self-reproach and many a sorrowful day. A gloom settled upon his spirit which does not seem ever to have passed away.” John Howie of Lochgoin and James Kerr (eds), *Sermons Delivered in the Times of Persecution in Scotland By Sufferers For The Royal Prerogatives of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh, 1880), 580.

178. “Alexander Shields’ Memoires” in Wodrow, *Analecta*, Vol. 1, pp. 177–205.

179. *Church-Communion*, p. 2. This was a point also emphasised in the answer to Hamilton’s protestation. It is worth noting that Linning did not abandon his own views either and continued to protest against former sins within the Revolution Church. In December 1695, he preached at the Tolbooth church in Edinburgh. George Home of Kimmerghame recorded in his diary that Linning “insisted upon the sins of the land, particularly covenant breaking, bloodguiltiness, and persecution.” National Archives of Scotland, Copy of George Home of Kimmerghame’s diary, 1694–1696, GD1/649/1, pp. 147–8, quoted by Raffé, p. 150.

180. *Church-Communion*, p. 3.

Sectarianism, tyranny and malignancy ... having liberty withal to protest against their former defections and offences, and to withdraw from them again if they shall be stated in the same circumstances wherein they were before, when we maintained a separation from them.”¹⁸¹ This is the essential argument of *Church-Communion*.

Contrary to the author of the postscript as quoted above, the substance as well as the style of *A Hind let loose* compares directly with *Church-Communion*. Shields enlarges upon the subject of unity and schism considerably in *A Hind let loose*, laying down similar principles. In very forthright terms Shields asserts that “to dissolve or break off Communion with a true Church, whereof we are Members, were an unnatural *Schism*, which is horrid sin.” He also expresses reluctance to withdraw fellowship but concedes that “in some cases, as we are warranted, so are necessitated to *withdraw*: yet neither do we allow it upon slight or slender grounds.” Shields also opposes separation from ministers on account of their personal failings.¹⁸²

Walker also demonstrates from firsthand knowledge that these were the views that Shields continued to hold until the end of his life, implicitly refuting those who have asserted that he repented after the Revolution.

Mr. Shields said to me, in our last Parting at *Edinburgh*, before he went abroad, Altho’ ye have many naughty Ministers in this Church, yet ye have some worthy Men; cleave to the Best, for it is not only dreadfully dangerous to separate from all, but utterly unwarrantable, and cannot be defended; wait on, for I am perswaded there is somewhat coming upon this Church, that will pull you out of Doubts of withdrawing from the most Part.¹⁸³

Having considered the evidence in favour, Hector MacPherson’s conclusions on the authorship of *Church-Communion* are well worth quoting.

There seems no reason to doubt the genuineness of the “Enquiry into Church Communion”, or to suspect Lining of tampering with his friend’s manuscript. Although Shields was dissatisfied with the Revolution settlement, he vehemently denied that he had betrayed any fundamental principle in entering the reconstituted Church.¹⁸⁴

9. THE MOTIVATION FOR CHURCH-COMMUNION ENQUIRED INTO

The motives and context for publication of the treatise by Thomas Lining have been discussed above. He states in signing his name at the conclusion of the

preface that he “*desires to see Peace and Truth flourish in the Church of Christ.*”¹⁸⁵ Allusion has also been made to the likelihood that Shields completed the manuscript against the context of a growing movement of separatism in the late 1690s. At the conclusion of the book, Shields opens up the motivation and spirit in which it was written. He reveals a pastoral spirit as one that formerly ministered to the Hamiltonians together with a genuine concern for their spiritual profit as sheep scattered without a shepherd.¹⁸⁶ The book concludes with a pleading and passionate address containing an earnest offer of spiritual benefit to their souls.

Dearly Beloved, our Witness is in Heaven, that the Design of what is here said, is neither to Irritate nor Expose you, but out of sincere Love to your Souls Welfare, to Undeceive you, and Reclaim you from your sad Mistakes. We do therefore Beseech, Exort, and Obtest you, as you Love your Souls, and the Church’s Peace, consider without prejudice, what is here offered to you.¹⁸⁷

Shields was also concerned for the land and the Church as a whole in that continued division is both a symptom and a provocation of the wrath of God. “Be not stiffnecked, but yield your selves unto the Lord, and enter into his Sanctuary, which he hath Sanctified for ever, and serve the Lord your God, that the Fierceness of his Wrath may turn away.” This is the theme taken up in the striking lament with which *Church-Communion* opens.

181. Quoted by Hector Macpherson, p. 225. It seems likely that Macpherson was quoting from the manuscript copy rather than the published version (p. 37). The letter was printed in 1726 as *A letter concerning the due boundaries of Christian fellowship: specially, with whom ’tis lawful to join in divine worship, and from whom ’tis duty to withdraw: written to the prisoners for conscience, in Dunnottar-Castle, who then were many, in Summer 1685.*

182. *A Hind let loose, or an historical representation of the testimonies, of the Church of Scotland ... with the true state thereof in all its periods: together with a vindication of the present testimonie, against the popish, prelatical, & malignant enemies of that church ... wherein several controversies of greatest consequence are enquired into* (Utrecht, 1687), 228, 232.

183. Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 1.256.

184. Hector Macpherson, p. 218.

185. *Church-Communion*, p. v.

186. Many sadly acknowledged that this was their condition. In 1697 some Separatists in Hamilton mentioned in their correspondence with the Kirk Session, their “sighing over our silent Sabbath as sheep without a shepherd,” but were committed to withdrawing due to what they regarded as the defections of the ministry. NLS, Separatists’ papers, c.1697, Wod. Fol. XXXIV, ff. 137–40, quotations at ff. 137r., 139r., quoted by Raffae, p. 165.

187. *Church-Communion*, p. 77.

In such a Day of Trouble and Perplexity in the Valley of Vision, they must be blind that do not see, and very brutish that have not the sense of the Wrath of an Holy GOD, so many ways evidenc'd and threatned against this Sinful Church and Nation.¹⁸⁸

This wrath could be felt in the “Withdrawings of the Shinings of his Power and Glory, that used to be seen and felt in his Sanctuary Solemnities” and “in Plaguing this Land more sensibly than any other, with pinching Penury and Want.” Previously the fires of persecution had been endured but now, although these had been extinguished, the wrath of God “hath set us on fire round about, yet we know not it burns us, yet we lay it not to Heart.” The evidences of this could be witnessed clearly in abounding sin, error and lukewarmness.

Shields highlights the aspect of this which occasioned greatest grief and pain to the godly. “But the most affecting Symptom, and most astonishing Prognostick of Wrath imminent, is this woful Division and Schism still continuing” not only between the Presbyterians and Episcopalians “but now among them that were United before, in Adhering to, and Contending for the first established and Covenanted Work of Reformation ... For all this, his Anger is not turned away, but his Hand is stretched out still ... The Anger of the Lord hath Divided them, and if it be not Appeased, he threatens no more to Regard them.”¹⁸⁹ An aggravating feature of these divisions was the “Unseasonable” timing of it and its potential to hinder and harm the work of Reformation when the Church was at an infant stage. It was an ungrateful response to the merciful providence of God in the deliverances bestowed upon the land at the Revolution. The danger was that things had come to such a “Shock and Crisis, that if there be not present Endeavours used for Union, the Breach in all probability, will grow Wider and more Incurable.”¹⁹⁰

These references seem to further date the manuscript to the later 1690s when the famine of 1694–99 was

188. *Church-Communion*, p. 1.

189. *Church-Communion*, pp. 1–2.

190. *Church-Communion*, p. 2.

191. Karen J. Cullen, *Famine in Scotland – the “ill Years” of the 1690s* (Edinburgh, 2010), 13. Cullen states that it was “one of the most serious famines to occur in Scotland since the medieval period” (p. 30). Between 5 and 15 per cent of the population was lost (pp. 1–2).

192. NAS PC1/51, Privy Council Register of Acts 1696–9, 6 May 1698, quoted by Cullen, p. 102.

193. Iain H. Murray states that this is “an aspect of the church question which appears to have received less attention, namely, what is the relation between the churches, considered as denominations, and the unity of the church universal?” *A Scottish Christian Heritage* (Edinburgh, 2006), 279. We discuss this subject below.

most severe and when the threat from separatism was growing. Karen Cullen observes that “the worst years of mortality and high prices occurred in 1697 and 1699 after the poor harvests of 1696 and 1698.”¹⁹¹ In language similar to that used by Shields, the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale traced it to God’s wrath against:

a great Contempt of the Gosþpell, much ignorance and ungodliness in the land, and self-seeking, and luke-warmness in the matter of God among all Ranks of persons and profaneness and wickedness grow. The shamefull sins of Drunkenness and uncleanness swearing, sabbath breaking The total neglect by some and superficial performing by others, of the worship of God, Both in secret and in families, abound in City and Countrey, and by frequent murders Blood Toucheth Blood ... That for these and other sins The wrath and displeasure of God is visible against us in the unkindly cold and winter-like spring, wherby God blast our expectations and hopes, of the fruits of the Earth, and cutt off man and beast by famine and That already a great dearth arisen.¹⁹²

Destitution was therefore greatly increased and a very serious stage was reached in the spring of 1698. We may not be dogmatic in dating the completion of the manuscript of *Church-Communion*, but it seems likely from these references that it was after Shields was settled at St Andrews and possibly as late as 1698, when the Commission of Assembly decided to publish its pamphlet refuting separatist arguments. The reference that Shields makes to imminent wrath also seems to anticipate the virtual ruin of the nation following the Darien venture in which Shields himself was to take part in 1699.

10. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH-COMMUNION ENQUIRED INTO

Church-Communion rises above its immediate historical context in a number of respects. It is sometimes said that it is difficult to know how to apply the principles outlined by James Durham in *A Treatise Concerning Scandal* regarding the unity of the visible Church and schism to a denominational setting. This is because the latter was written in the context of a single national established Church.¹⁹³ It is a questionable claim since any writing on the subject of the unity of the visible Church and schism after Durham was published in the context of a broken state of church association. Thomas Boston and Thomas M’Crie have made significant contributions in particular. Although James Walker describes *Church-Communion* as influential

and widely read in subsequent generations, it has been comparatively neglected in the more recent past. It has its own significance, however, as the first treatment to arise from a context where some Presbyterians were formally separate from a national established Presbyterian Church.

The major principles outlined and emphasised in *Church-Communion* may be summarised as follows: (1) union is an absolutely essential duty; (2) division, contention and schism are great evils; (3) the causes of division need to be addressed in order to bring about union; (4) separation is only warranted when union would require one to sin.

As both Walker and John Macleod note, Shields summarises and restates the general principles formulated most notably by Durham. Shields refers frequently to these as principles that were commonly accepted amongst Scottish Presbyterians. Writers such as Robert McWard and John Brown of Wamphray had restated and elucidated them further in the intervening decades of the Restoration. The contribution made by Shields is to apply these principles to a specific situation. Shields also elaborates very fully and clearly the scriptural basis for the principles laid down by Durham.

It is notable, however, that in contrast to Durham, Shields eschews learned references to noted or international writers and to the Church Fathers. This is in itself remarkable since the situation after 1690 was entirely similar to the Novatian and Donatist schisms.¹⁹⁴ Perhaps this was due to the circumstances in which Shields wrote the treatise, without access to many books. A more likely explanation is that the target audience was the ordinary members of the Hamiltonian party, with whom scriptural arguments would be the only significant consideration.¹⁹⁵ Perhaps with this partly in mind, Patrick Walker said of *Church-Communion* that “no humane Writing strikes more directly against the Measures and Methods they [the Hamiltonians] have taken since the Revolution, particularly the 80, 81, 82, 83, 84 Pages, which they look upon as insufficient Grounds of Withdrawing from either Ministers or Members of this Covenanted Church.”¹⁹⁶

The principles of Church unity and schism that Shields restates were widely acknowledged, but a “solid and practical impression” of them that was lacking at that time.¹⁹⁷ The first principle is that there is an absolute duty of unity where division exists, and that this duty cannot be disputed any more than other commanded duties in Scripture, such as praying, preaching and keeping the Sabbath. Shields then proceeds to show exactly more extensively how Scripture commands

this duty than had Durham on this point in *Concerning Scandal*.

Firstly, he notes that certain other duties that are commanded among Christians necessarily infer and require this duty of uniting. These are (1) Love; (2) Reconciliation; (3) Peaceableness.¹⁹⁸ Secondly, he shows how “Oneness of Interest, Affection, Judgment and Practice, Profession and Worship, is more expressly commanded and commended in Scripture” in relation to: (1) the Christian’s calling; (2) the brotherly relationship between Christians and the oneness of the visible Church; (3) the promised blessing of unity under the

194. Novatianism concerned whether those who had avoided persecution under Decius in 250 A.D. by offering sacrifice to pagan deities could be restored to communion. Novatianus was consecrated as a rival bishop of Rome and his party claimed to be the true holy Catholic Church. Donatism focused upon those bishops who handed over copies of the Scriptures to the civil authorities for destruction under the Diocletian persecution in 303 A.D. It was maintained that the ministerial acts of such bishops were invalidated by their guilt and that the whole Catholic Church, by tolerating them, also contracted guilt and ceased to be the Church. Rival bishops were therefore appointed and schism took place. The separation lasted until around the middle of the sixth century.

195. John Stevenson of Daily has left a first-hand account as an ordinary member of the Societies who had suffered during the times of persecution and now wrestled with his duty at the Revolution. The only arguments that weighed with him were from Scripture. “After it pleased Zion’s God to bring back our captivity, and Presbytery was established in this Church, I had great difficulty about my joining in communion with her, and that because I thought our covenants were not renewed, and all guilty of sad defection not duly censured; it was difficult to me what to determine, therefore I set apart a day to ask counsel of the Lord, and went at some distance to the fields both to pray and think on what I should do ... I consulted my Bible, to see what had been the practice of the Church of God in the like case, both under the Old and New Testament dispensation.” He considered chiefly the example and teaching of Christ, citing various examples, “from all which I concluded, that it was my unquestionable duty to join in communion with the Church of Scotland, though our covenants were not renewed, seeing she had all the essentials of a true Church, her doctrine pure and uncorrupt, her government, discipline, and worship, according to the word of God, and the sacraments administered according to the pattern shown in the mount.” He states that he never regretted this decision. “A Rare Soul-Strengthening and Comforting Cordial for Old and Young Christians by John Stevenson, Land-Labourer in the Parish of Daily in Carrick, who died in the year 1728,” *Select Biographies*, ed. W. K. Tweedie, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1845–7), 2.447–9. See also the experience of James Nisbet of Hardhill as related in Edwin Nisbet Moore, *Our Covenant Heritage*, 155–164, or James Nisbet, *Private Life of the Persecuted: or memoirs of the first years of James Nisbet, one of the Scottish Covenanters. Written by himself* (W. Oliphant, 1827), 230–242.

196. *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 1, p. 231.

197. *Church-Communion*, p. 3.

198. Shields says strikingly: “The want of Peaceableness, as well as the want of Truth, will make our Salt to lose its savour.” *Church-Communion*, p. 5.

New Covenant; (4) the frequency with which it is a subject of prayer. "If all these Scriptures were considered, pressing Union as much as any Duty, the endeavours of Establishing it would be very easy and pleasant, and Debates would soon be composed."

Secondly, Shields establishes that "Division, Contention, and Schism in the Church are great Evils, concerning which the Scriptures clearly hold forth" that they are: (1) exceedingly sinful; (2) foolish; (3) the cause and effect of the Lord's wrath; (4) the cause of the saddest effects, such as "spoiling the Church of its Purity and Peace, Government, Order and Beauty of Ordinances, marring the Gospel's Success, bringing the Ministry into Contempt, jumbling, torturing and racking the Minds and Consciences of those that are engaged in the Contest, obstructing the Power, diverting the Practice and Spiritual Exercise, and wearing out the Life of Religion, making Christians Carnal."¹⁹⁹

Thirdly, it is necessary to identify the causes of division in order that they may be removed. These generally are: (1) the holy cause of God's sovereign use of it for chastisement; (2) the sinful cause of defection on the right hand or left; (3) fomenting causes that protract and strengthen division such as ignorance or blindness to faults, factious party spirit, unwillingness to lose face, pride, intemperate language, suspicion and refusing to condescend where it is possible without sinning.

The second key principle advanced by Shields contains some necessary qualifications of the absolute duty of uniting. (1) It is not a union upon any terms whatsoever; union cannot be contemplated where it would require one to sin by approving what is sinful, relinquishing any truth, or being obstructed from duty.²⁰⁰

199. "For, in experience it is alwise found, and in our Day sadly felt, to have produced many Disorders, spoiling the Church of its Purity and Peace, Government, Order and Beauty of Ordinances, marring the Gospel's Success, bringing the Ministry into Contempt, jumbling, jarring, torturing, and racking the Minds and Consciences of those that are engaged in the Contest, obstructing the Power, diverting the Practice and Spiritual Exercise, and wearing out the Life of Religion, making Christians Carnal." These things grieve the Holy Spirit into withdrawing "his gracious Presence and Countenance from Ordinances." "It is inconsistent with the Thriving, yea or Standing of the Church or Kingdom, where it continues long." It produces blind zeal on one hand and lukewarmness on the other and inevitably after it is established leads to errors (*Church-Communion*, pp. 9–10).

200. Shields emphasises of course that none of these obtain in relation to the Revolution Church of Scotland.

201. These include arguments about implicit aspects of the Revolution Settlement such as whether the process for settling the Church was Erastian, failed to include the Covenants explicitly, etc. The defects of the Revolution Settlement have frequently been acknowledged by those who nevertheless did not believe that it was sinful.

(2) Confessing faults is the best way of removing division, though not the only way since offences may cease to be a valid cause of division when circumstances change and because union is more likely to pave the way for later confession. (3) There are some general grounds for lawful separation, in part at least, such as heresy in doctrine, idolatry ("Breach of the second Command in the Matter and Manner of Worship"), intrusion or tyranny of government and schism. One cannot contemplate communion that obliges us to sin or to homologate the sins of others.

(4) Although these may be lawful grounds of separation at one time, there may not continue to be a necessity of separation when the circumstances change. He notes that as opposed to the Hamiltonian active separation from the Church after the Revolution, the former separation during the Killing Times was passive and negative in simply refusing to follow a course of defection when the Church was not settled but in a broken and declining condition.

(5) It is also important to distinguish between our duty in different times and conditions of the Church. When a Church is in its infancy and not yet mature in Reformation (as Shields regards the Revolution Church to be) certain things can be borne with that would be serious in a more mature state. Likewise distinctions are to be made if the Church is reforming or backsliding; if it is settled or in a broken and persecuted state. Reformation is best advanced by different means at different times and the rules and practices of one time and set of circumstances are not to be taken as absolute rules for all time coming.

11. STATING THE QUESTION

Various arguments for rejecting the Revolution Settlement have been made in subsequent generations on behalf of the Hamiltonian party.²⁰¹ It is evident from the records of the time (including Shields' book *Church-Communion*), that dissent was focused upon the Separatist conviction that uniting with the Church of Scotland would entail partaking of the guilt of those who had in some way complied with the royal supremacy over the Church claimed by the Stuarts. The essential case made by Hamilton against joining the Revolution Church of Scotland in 1690 was that it would involve union and communion with those guilty of various degrees of defection during the persecuting times and, by implication, put an end to the testimony maintained by the United Societies during the times of persecution. Hamilton believed that those who were thus guilty should confess their defection before any union or communion could be considered.

The object of *Church-Communion* is not simply to state these principles in the abstract, but to apply them to these arguments sustaining the current situation of division. In the third section of the treatise, Shields therefore comes to state the question under debate, initially defining what it is not. Firstly, it was not being debated whether or not to have “Union or Communion with Hereticks, Idolaters, or such Apostats as oppose our Common Confession of Orthodox Principles.” The question was rather, whether or not to have “Union and Communion with Presbyterian Ministers, whom we love in the Lord, and acknowledge to be Ministers of this Church of Scotland, with whom we sometimes had sweet Fellowship, And with whom again we would desire to have Communion in Ordinances, if our Exceptions were removed.” Here Shields is quoting from *An Informatory Vindication*. The difference with these ministers was whether they would now own all of the testimony of the United Societies in relation to matters of compliance that were now past.

Secondly, the question was not whether there could be union or communion with those actively “carrying on Courses of Compliances and Defections, Involving all in Sin.” This justified withdrawing communion during the time of persecution, but now the Church was reforming. Shields refers to the Engagement to Duties entered upon when the Covenant was renewed at Lesmahagow where the Societies had sworn to “guard against all Schism, or sinful Separation from any part of the true Reformed Covenanted Church of Scotland” holding its former doctrine, worship, discipline and government and positively “maintain Union and Communion” with all that did so.

Thirdly, it was not under debate whether there should be union with the Church of Scotland on the condition that the Societies would approve of former defections or condemn their own former testimonies. “[I]f it were,” says Shields, “I should be yet as much for Separation as ever.” The question was whether they would unite with those who while not confessing or condemning the defections, would permit the Society men to keep their “Opinion, and to Protest against them.” He notes that *An Informatory Vindication* maintains the lawfulness of James Renwick seeking ordination from a Dutch Classis since the Classis did not “object against our Testimony,” while they were aware of the differences and Renwick and the Societies were protesting against certain defections. Shields regards the situation in 1690 as identical with this set of circumstances under which Renwick obtained ordination.

Fourthly, the question was not whether or not they

would “continue to Condemn and Testify against” former defections, but rather continuing this protest either in communion or total separation from all of the other ministers.

Fifthly, the question was whether there could be union and communion with those who would not confess the sinfulness of former defections or else with those who condemned such defections but did not think them a sufficient ground for separation because they could continue to protest within the Church.

After this careful distinction and clarification, Shields was ready to define the “Hinge of the Controversie” and outline the “Complex Question” under dispute with the Hamiltonians, which is certainly not summarised easily.

Whether or not may we have so much Respect to the Ordinances and Peace of the Church in the Present Circumstances, as no longer to withdraw from, but join in Union and Communion with the Presbyterian Ministers of the Church of *Scotland*, that do own and adhere unto the true received Principles of the said Church, in Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government, grounded upon, and consonant unto the Written Word of God; who being guilty of Defections in times of Tentation, will not now acknowledge the same, or acknowledging and Condemning them, will not separate themselves from the rest that will not Confess them, thinking this no Ground of Withdrawing at such a Time, and in such a Case, when these Defections and Corruptions are not in the Constitution of the Church, and do not continue to be Snares, when none are required to Justifie them, nor to Condemn any Testimonies against them, And Liberty is granted to Protest against them, and to continue to plead for Confessing and Condemning them; When also several Guilty of the grossest Degrees of Defections are excepted from being United with?²⁰²

Shields supports the case for affirming this question by reverting to the “common Rules of Union approved of all, and confirmed at length by Mr. *Durham* on *Scandal, Part 4. Chap.7*.” These principles relating to union and schism distinguish between sufficient and warrantable grounds for lawful separation and insufficient grounds which in turn constitute schism.

Firstly, it is both possible and required to have union and communion between differing parties where this does not entail sin, and where the differences are not about “Pernicious” and dangerous errors. Such union must be achieved by “Mutual Condescension” or

202. *Church-Communion*, p. 29.

“mutual forbearance in things Controverted.” Shields points to the way in which differences were settled at the Synod of Jerusalem in Acts 15 by mutual condescension without division and the counsel of Paul in Romans 14:1 and 15:1, 7. The significant problems and differences of opinion and practice among the Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians and Hebrews were to be managed by faithfulness and forbearance but never by separation. These points are made by the *Informatory Vindication*. He lays down the significant principle: “If Differences in Judgment and Practice were a sufficient Ground of Withdrawing, then there shall never be Unity in the World in any Church.”²⁰³

The Question is, whether we may join in Union and Communion with others, besides these that either will not (because they cannot be Convinced of the Guilt of them) *Confess* and *Condemn* the sinfulness of the former Defections of the Times; Or will *Confess* and *Condemn* the sinfulness of them, but in an united way, not in a separat way, *not separating from the rest*, because they do not think it a Ground sufficient for withdrawing?²⁰⁴

Secondly, there may be union with ministers and members who are subject to various personal faults and infirmities where these have not been confessed. Though this may cause dissatisfaction it is not a valid ground for separation since there is no requirement to approve of them. There will always be personal faults on both sides in times of division. Union is to be effected “by leaving these doubtful Faults to God and their own Conscience; To obtain Peace in Meekness, Tenderness, Condescending and Forbearing.” The question is not whether they are guilty of scandalous defections or “an *Official* or *Ministerial* Sin, affecting the Exercise of their Ministry . . . but now only *Personal*” in not confessing former defections.

Thirdly, there may be union with ministers and members who are not only guilty of past failings but “*many Scandals* even not confessed.” There are indeed some instances where there must be separation due to the dangerous nature of scandals, but in general Shields seeks to establish from Scripture the point previously advanced by Durham that union is not to be deferred until unfaithful men have been censured, but that this should follow union.

Fourthly, there may be union with ministers and members where there is toleration and not reformation

of many corruptions in doctrine, worship and government. This is not possible where it would clash with the four lawful grounds of separation mentioned above or where there is a requirement to sin or homologate the sins of others. There may, however, be differences of mind and dissatisfaction with other aspects and yet uniting is a duty to be pursued.

In the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth places, Shields indicates that Christ and His disciples did not follow a course of absolute separation from the Jewish Church of their day despite the fact that it was “a most Perverse and corrupted Church.” The Church of Corinth remained a true Church despite its evident “many gross Corruptions,” as was the case with the Church of Galatia and some of the seven Churches of Asia. No one was, however, commanded to separate from these Churches.

12. COUNTERING DISSENTING OBJECTIONS

In the fourth and final section of the treatise Shields answers fifteen distinct objections against union with the Revolution Church of Scotland relating to this central question under debate; to these he adds answers to three further objections arising from the nature of the Settlement. Many of the objections make use of arguments drawn from *An Informatory Vindication* — a document that Shields himself authored alongside Renwick. He maintains that these arguments remain valid for the context in which they were written but no longer apply to the new circumstances of a settled Presbyterian Church. Shields is therefore able to reconcile the principles stated in *An Informatory Vindication* with his joining in communion with the Church of Scotland as settled after the Revolution.

The objections centre upon the failure to confess past faults on the part of some ministers in the Revolution Church. Shields emphasises that while there were valid reasons to separate in the past, there was now no basis for separating since there was no corruption in the constitution of the Church or in the exercise of the ministry within its bounds. The objectors believed that it was possible to be defiled through partaking of ordinances from those they judged guilty of past defection. Shields counters the scripture texts advanced to support this and denies that there is such a thing as ceremonial defilement under the New Testament. The Donatists made an identical case which was answered by Augustine: “He is Sinfully joined with them, whose commits any Evil with them, or Favours and Connives with them that do commit it, but if he do neither, he is no way Sinfully joined.”²⁰⁵ Shields goes on to outline ten ways that individuals can be guilty of participating

203. *Church-Communion*, p. 32.

204. *Church-Communion*, p. 29.

205. *Church-Communion*, p. 64.

in sin. He does this in the context of arguing that no divine judgement could be expected from being associated with those guilty of past compliances. Uniting with them would not necessarily harden them in their sin because those uniting should still plead and protest against those defections in order to urge them to consider their ways.

A significant concern on the part of dissenters was that the former testimony would be buried. Even though circumstances had changed, there was a reluctance to be seen to abandon anything that had been testified against during the time of persecution. Shields shows that there was no real concern of the testimony being buried since it had been recorded formally in Church records and the essence of it continued to be maintained; the manner of defending a testimony must change as circumstances alter. “Let us have a care,” he warns, “least a contending for Keeping up our Testimony against Defection in Unadvised ways, we do not Bury our Testimony against Schism.”²⁰⁶

Patrick Walker refers to the fact, frequently emphasised by Shields, that in focusing upon certain issues that were no longer active, the Hamiltonians were failing to assess the changed circumstances after the Revolution. Walker demonstrates how they were using such issues as terms of communion and as a basis for separation.

It is a Piece of dimented Infatuation, to make little or no Difference betwixt that Period and this, and to follow the same Methods that the Lord's People were obliged to take against Tyranny and Defections. Let all who desire to be truly informed of the Beginning, Rise, Height and Length, of the Tyranny of that 28 Years Persecution, read the Sufferings and Grievances of Presbyterians, especially those of them nicknamed *Cameronians*, written by famous Mr. *Shields*; he sometimes said since the Revolution, That he was as clear and free to write and preach in the Defence of the Lawfulness of paying the Cess to this Government, as ever he was to write or preach against the Unlawfulness of Paying of it, under the former Reigns; notwithstanding I can instruct Place and Persons, where Mr. *M'millan* refused Baptism to an honest Man's Child, asking no other Question, but, If he paid the Cess? He said, It was not required of him: Mr. *M'millan* said, If it were, would you pay it? He answered, He would, for he did not look upon the Paying of it now, as in the Time of Persecution: He said, He would administer Church-Privileges to none who were of that Judgment. Disowning, Disowning of the State; Separation, Separation, Separation, is their Testimony, even amongst themselves from one another,

and from all who dare not go their unheard-of Lengths, both Ministers and Professors, who are as free of the Defections of the Day as any of them can pretend to. I wish from my very Heart, that all of them would be-think themselves, and consider the Sins, Snares, and Dangers of these disowning, dividing Courses, and what may be their sad Effects and Consequences to themselves and others.²⁰⁷

It was the question of such consequences that arose in relation to the last objection that Shields countered, which spoke of the apparent inconveniences of union. Would it really work and last or would there not still continue to be distinct and divided parties within the Church of Scotland? Shields responds with one of the commonly accepted rules concerning unity and schism, that when the disadvantages or inconveniences of division are greater than those of uniting, then the lesser disadvantages ought to be embraced. Although there were some disadvantages in uniting, conscience could be at rest that the way for greater advantages to edification had been chosen. The disadvantages of separation were certainly greater. “Can we live without Ordinances to our selves, and Baptism to our Children? Shall they be as Heathens within the visible Church, as if they were without?”²⁰⁸

At the conclusion of the treatise Shields addresses three further objections that need to be considered which draw upon events following the Revolution. Shields denies that the Church of Scotland is “under the Bondage of an Eraſtian Yoke.” “It is our Mercy, that we are required to submit to nothing, but what our Fathers, and all the Reformed Churches would have gladly yielded unto.” He goes on to show that the power of the civil magistrate to call General Assemblies has never been considered Eraſtian.²⁰⁹

The second objection related to the admission of former curates under Episcopalianism into the ministry of the Church of Scotland. Shields shows that the worst of these men were censured and removed from office. There were, however, many good and able men who had conformed but were now willing to embrace a restored Presbyterian Church. Even if it could be shown that the

206. *Church-Communion*, p. 66.

207. Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 1.123.

208. *Church-Communion*, p. 67.

209. Shields echoes the document published by the Commission of the General Assembly in 1698 entitled *A Seasonable Admonition*. In response to Hamiltonian accusations, this document asserted the headship of Christ over the Church, the divine right of Presbyterian Church government and the intrinsic powers of the Church independent from the civil power.

Church had been defective in not removing unfaithful men, this was not accepted grounds for separation.

The last objection related to the controversial oath of allegiance which was to become still more controversial under Queen Anne. Although clearly Shields had evident misgivings about some aspects of this, he argues at length that the oath only related to civil allegiance to the king and that it was lawful to require it from ministers. In any case, it did not constitute grounds for separation from the Church.

Divisions can be accompanied by a carnal spirit that is obsessed with witness-bearing for one's own party and diminishes a focus upon the matters of first importance. These issues were becoming increasingly intertwined with questions of national and political significance which were rapidly moving to a boiling point. Shields could discern a growing spirit of zeal for these outward points that was not balanced with spiritual concerns. In his last few paragraphs, he counsels separatists in relation to this.

Be more Spiritual and Exercised in the Pursuit of Communion with God, and you shall have a greater Desire to entertain Communion with the Church. If you would know where he Feeds, and makes his Flocks to rest at Noon, you must go to the Shepherds Tents ... Get more Love to Christ and his People and this will natively lead you to Union and Communion, with all that keep his way, and will remove that Spirit of Factionousness, and Prejudice, and Jealousie that nourishes Division. Keep your Zeal lively against all sin, but let it have two Edges, to resent the Dishonour done to God, by Schism as well as Defection; let it be balanced with Charity and managed with Discretion. And we request you, that you study Uniformity in your Zeal, that you be not live Cakes unturned, hot for some lesser Points in Religion, and cold for others that are greater and more weighty. Be fervent for all Truths, and in all Duties, but

with a regular Proportion to their Concern in the Vitals of Religion. Let Religion be more in your Heart than Head, in Practice than in Controversie.²¹⁰

13. MODERN RELEVANCE

Although the central issues of *Church-Communion* are specific to debates about the Revolution Church of Scotland and historical events which followed in subsequent decades, this treatise has continued significance and value in the way that Shields draws his treatment of the various questions at stake back to key principles of Church unity. In this way, the circumstances to which the questions relate serve as concrete examples of the principles. The separate meetings for worship, government and discipline that Shields witnessed were to widen into denominational separation; a process that has intensified in recent decades in Scotland. As James Walker put it in 1872, "this whole question of the visible Church ... seems to demand our earnest study ... Is there such a thing as schism? If so, what does it mean or imply?"²¹¹

The key principles that Shields advances have, however, come under assault recently in an essay by Iain H. Murray entitled "The Churches and Christian Unity in Scottish History."²¹² Murray's essay does not refer to Shields but seeks to consider the view of the unity of the visible Church maintained by the older Scottish divines. As we have already quoted, Murray gives his opinion that there is "an aspect of the church question which appears to have received less attention, namely, what is the relation between the churches, considered as denominations, and the unity of the church universal?"

This is highly relevant to our subject since *Church-Communion* may be considered as the very first work to address some aspects of this in depth. Although the Societies dissenting from the Revolution Settlement were not constituted as congregations or Presbyteries within a denomination, they nevertheless called themselves "the true Presbyterian church of Christ in Scotland" and the principle of separation was the central issue which led to separate denominations at a later stage when this became possible due to the accession of ministers.²¹³ Shields is emphatic that an independent Church, gathered and constituted and "not Subordinate unto the National Church" with its own officers and "invested with all Church Power" is "Schism, if ever there was any in the World." "For then, what shall become of Presbyterian Government and our Testimony for that against Independency, Sectarianism and Schism?"²¹⁴

Of the same period is the sermon by Thomas Boston on "The Evils of Schism" which addresses the same

210. *Church-Communion*, pp. 77–8.

211. James Walker, *The Theology and Theologians of Scotland: Chiefly Of The Seventeenth And Eighteenth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1888), 116.

212. Murray, pp. 277–310.

213. Cf. the Sanquhar Declarations of 1692, 1695, 1703 and 1707; see Matthew Hutchison *The Reformed Presbyterian Church: Its Origin and History 1680–1876* (Paisley, 1893), 116, 160. Cf. also Jeffrey Stephen, *Scottish Presbyterians and the Act of Union 1707*, p. 5.

214. *Church-Communion*, p. 68. It is not unfair to say that Murray considers the subject from a congregational level, with denominations being mere "parachurch structures" which are at best voluntary associations for individual congregations. The Scottish doctrine of the unity of the visible Church presupposes that as an organic body, the visible Church is originally one with a common government appointed by Christ as Head.

point. An equally well-known treatment of the subject from a century later is *Two Discourses on the Unity of the Church, her Divisions and their removal* by Thomas M'Crie. Murray notes that as "a historical subject the matter is interesting but it might scarcely warrant time and renewed thought if it was not also relevant to present problems." He believes that the subject is therefore "both relevant and important."²¹⁵

Murray implies that the older writers distinguished between the Church as visible and the Church as invisible as though they were separate entities.²¹⁶ It is worth noting, however, that seventeenth-century Scots did not believe that these were two separate entities but rather "a distinct uptaking of the same whole, (viz. the Church) under two considerations."²¹⁷ Durham notes that scripture frequently and ordinarily conjoins these two aspects, "as when an epistle is written to a church, some things are said of it, and to it, as visible, some things again are peculiarly applicable to believers, who are members of the invisible church in it."²¹⁸ Durham speaks of the visible Church as one in the New Testament in the same way as it was under the Old Testament because Romans 11 demonstrates that the "Jewish Church, and the Gospel-church, materially and in essential things are one."²¹⁹ Shields maintains that "as the Church Triumphant is but one in Heaven, so the Church Militant is but one in Earth; Therefore all the true Members thereof should study Unity, This Truth of the Oneness of the Catholick Visible Church, being the Ground of all the Union and Communion in the Ordinances thereof . . . If the Church be One, Divisions and divided Communions in her must either infer that this one Church is many, made up of Heterogenous parts, or that the Church divided from is not a part of that one Church, and hath broken off from that which compacts the Body together."²²⁰ It is not the case that Shields and fellow Scottish divines sharply separate the visible aspects of the Church from its invisible aspects. On the contrary, it is those that believe that the unity of the invisible Church can be a replacement for visible unity that are imposing a dislocation. For Shields, lack of visible unity undermines the reality of belief in the unity of the invisible Church.²²¹

Schism is also sometimes incorrectly defined as a breach of charity. The Scriptural use of the word is, however, objective and refers to a breach of unity in practice, government and worship. Dishonesty and uncharitableness are not essential qualities of schism, but things that make it far worse when they are associated with it. To make schism only a breach of charity leaves it as a matter of individual perception as to whether uncharitable behaviour and therefore schism exists.

Murray believes that "the argument" for a single united visible Church within a nation inevitably "failed."²²² It failed by "upholding the wrong priority", "because it elevated the form of church government as a truth of primary importance." This might of course be challenged. The truth of primary importance for the older divines was the Headship of Christ. Any attempt to introduce anything other than what He had ordained in His own Church was an assault upon that Headship. The logic of Murray's assertion would extend to dismissing noble contentions made by the Covenanters and those who made sacrifices at the time of the Disruption, since these were also related to church government, which he does not suppose to be of primary importance.²²³ This distinction between truths of primary and secondary importance may easily be challenged as unbiblical. As Thomas M'Crie indicates, while there are truths highlighted by Scripture as foundational, their "priority or posteriority in point of order, in conception or instruction, does not determine the relative importance of doctrines, or their necessity in order to salvation, far less does it determine the propriety of their being made to enter into the religious profession of Christians and Christian churches."²²⁴

Further, it is not necessarily the case that the Scottish

215. Murray, p. 279.

216. Murray, p. 287.

217. James Durham, *An Exposition of the Song of Solomon* (Edinburgh, 1982), 37.

218. Durham, *An Exposition of the Song of Solomon*, p. 38.

219. James Durham, *A Commentary on Revelation*, introduction by David C. Lachman (Willow Street PA, 2000), 685.

220. *Church-Communion*, p. 7.

221. John Murray writes that "the unity of the body of Christ is not a tenet that may be relegated to the transcendental realm of invisible, spiritual relationship, but a truth that governs, regulates and conditions the behaviour of the people of God in that communal, covenant relationship which they sustain to Christ in the institute of the church." ("The Nature and Unity of the Church," in *Collected Writings*, volume 2 [Edinburgh; Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1977], 331-32).

222. Iain Murray, p. 288. It is not clear from the essay exactly how and when this "failure" took place. Presumably it was at some point following the Glorious Revolution where it was no longer the goal to "bring all the Christians of a nation under one common church government," p. 302.

223. p. 289. It is possible that Murray's view of unity approximates to that of Martyn Lloyd-Jones who envisaged an association of evangelical churches rather than real organic unity. Association without embodiment is not a biblical idea, however, "to maintain that the unity belonging to the church does not entail ecumenical embodiment, is to deny the catholicity of the church of Christ. If the church is catholic, then unity is catholic" (John Murray, "The Nature and Unity of the Church," pp. 332-33).

224. Thomas M'Crie, *Two Discourses on the Unity of the Church, her Divisions and their Removal* (Edinburgh, 1821), 90.

doctrine took “its starting point at the organizational and institutional level.” Shields, in fact, begins his discussion by speaking of the duties of love, forgiveness and peace. The motivations expressed in *Church-Communion* reveal that the Scottish doctrine of the visible Church had spiritual realities in view, such as the Headship of Christ; it also had the gospel and principles relating to the gospel in view in regarding the purpose of the Church visible as the gathering and perfecting of the elect. Shields, together with the other divines of his era, believed that there must be a visible unity because this was the way in which Scripture itself defines unity.²²⁵ “Union, Unity and Oneness in Interest, Affection, Judgment and Practice, Profession and Worship is more expressly commanded and commended in Scripture.”²²⁶

Murray also believes that the “argument” “had to fail” due to an impossible deduction. The impossible deduction is that if “only one church can claim to represent the unity of the body of Christ then those who remain outside her fellowship have to be regarded as in a condition of schism and so public cooperation with them is not to be permitted or encouraged. Before there can be communion between two parties thus divided the side at fault has to acknowledge their error. This is not a theoretical possibility.”²²⁷ As noted in the first part of this article, reconciliation of the majority of the Societies to the Church of Scotland took place in 1690; thus what Murray describes as impossible took place expressly upon the principles of visible Church unity that he is attacking. It happened because this view of Church unity does not in fact demand that in every circumstance either side has to acknowledge fault: it asserts that both sides must condescend as far as possible without sinning and that no one should be pressed to condemn their convictions. This is a theoretical and scriptural possibility that Shields had himself experienced in reality and was encouraging in *Church-Communion*.

It is true that for Shields and Durham, full communion was predicated upon organic union, but it is also interesting that in at least four separate publications Shields distinguishes the different kinds and levels of

unity that one can have in ever decreasing circles of fellowship.²²⁸ *An Informatory Vindication* outlined the distinction “betwixt a Joining, which we may call Catholick or Universal among Christians, considered as such, and an Ecclesiastical joining among Members of one particular Organical Church, considered as Members of that Church.” Shields qualifies what he means by “Communion Catholick in its several degrees.” It might mean joining in a united testimony with other Christians, Protestants, and Reformed believers if one was to be in other lands, though not with heretics.²²⁹ Contrary to Murray’s claims, it should be clear that these divines were able to distinguish between the communion of saints on the personal level and ecclesiastical organic union and communion.²³⁰ This does not betray “an exclusiveness contrary to the spirit of the gospel” but rather inclusiveness governed by discernment.²³¹ The various levels are best defined as follows in *A Hind let loose*.

1. Universal. There is a “*Catholick*. Communion with all Christian Ministers & Members Of the Catholick Church, considered as such; holding the Head Christ, and the foundation sure” (not heretics) in order to meet for worship with them in other lands.
2. Protestantism. There is “Communion with all *Protestant* Ministers & members of the *Reformed Church*” holding “the General Testimony of *Protestants*” provided that they maintain “the Protestant Testimony, against *Poperie* & all Herefie” and are not “declining from their own Reformation, by Defection or Schisme.” “But with the *Sectarians* or *Schismaticks* or *apostates* among them, we cannot oune that special Communion.”
3. Covenanted Nations. “We may have a more *Particular* Communion upon yet stricter conditions, with all our *Covenanted Brethren*, Ministers & Members of the Churches of *Britain & Ireland*” provided that they maintain “the *Covenanted Testimony* for the Reformation in Doctrine, Worship, Discipline, & Government, against *Poperie*, Prelacy, Superstition, Heresie, Schisme, & Profaneness, according to the *Covenant*.”
4. National. “We may have yet a nearer *Organical* Communion, upon stricter conditions still, with all the Ministers & Members of the *National Church of Scotland*, constitute & confederate under one Reformed Government” provided that they maintain “the *Presbyterian Testimony* as stated in the Ecclesiastical Constitutions, and sworn to in the National Covenants & Engagements

225. Shields points to 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 3:16; 1 Peter 3:8; Ephesians 4:3; Jeremiah 32:39; Romans 15:5, 7; Ezekiel 11:19. *Church-Communion*, pp. 6–7.

226. *Church-Communion*, p. 6.

227. Murray, p. 294.

228. *Church-Communion*, pp. 25–6; *A letter concerning the due boundaries of Christian fellowship*, pp. 6ff (see quotation above); *Informatory Vindication*, Head 7; and *A Hind*, pp. 224–5.

229. *Church-Communion*, pp. 25–6.

230. Cf. Murray, pp. 295–6.

231. Cf. Murray, p. 294.

of that Church, founded upon the Word of God, against Poperie, Prelacy, Eraſtianisme, Sectarianisme, Toleration, Schisme & Defection.”

5. Congregational. This relates to the ministry and individual members with which one has closest communion. It was at this level alone that the Societies maintained a temporary separation during the times of persecution when others were contravening the testimony by complying with some of the evils outlined above which the National Church had been committed to resist.

14. CONCLUSION

It is important to acknowledge the real achievements of the legacy left by Alexander Shields. John Macleod well describes Shields as “one of the most striking figures of his epoch” and notes that Thomas Halyburton looked back upon the ministry exercised by Shields as having a particular glory.²³² His skills as a writer are assessed briefly below, but his influence and example together with the principles for which he contended are worth our close consideration. Patrick Walker records the following highly relevant quotation from Alexander Shields: “I have sometimes heard the never to be forgotten Mr. Shields say, *We are much obliged to our worthy Ancestors: And shall none be the better of us? If we have no Precedent or Example, let us be good Ones to them who come after us.*”²³³

In Shields we have an admirable balance of faithfulness in principle combined with an irenic spirit towards fellow brethren with whom he differed. While it is evident that they proceed from the same pen, it is notable that the spirit of denunciation of tyranny and frequent sarcasm that characterise *A Hind let loose* do not appear in *Church-Communion*. It is a very relevant example for those that find themselves in the midst of controversy.

Shields left writings that had been produced under the most difficult and challenging of circumstances. In them he has left to this generation as well as others that have intervened, the biblical basis for the Scottish view of the unity of the visible Church within the nation and the evil of schism. Rather than skewing the discussion on these matters, they represent a standard of careful understanding and principle that we need to recover in our own day more than ever. What is certain to “skew” discussions in this area is indefinite views that do not cohere with Presbyterianism. We will only be the better of both his example and work if we put them to practical use.

Sadly, the nature of the Revolution Settlement still divides after all these years, but is only one of many reasons for continuing divisions in our own day. At present there are nine different Presbyterian bodies in Scotland, while the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) has thirteen members with at least a further half dozen Reformed or Presbyterian Churches outside. Does this level of division matter or is it merely a circumstance of history and the natural consequence of different perspectives and distinctives? Is it merely regrettable or is it in fact a sinful state of affairs? Everyone acknowledges that Presbyterianism is connectional but the question is how connectional?

National established churches were only an aspect of the way that the older Scottish divines understood the unity of the visible Church.²³⁴ Their view did not depend on that point, it went further to the very essence of Presbyterianism itself. It also reached back to the early Church confession of “one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church.” Durham notes that the “truth of the unity of the catholic visible church is the main ground of all church-union and communion.” It is the foundation of Presbyterian government. Those who are comfortable with and seek to defend a plurality of denominations base their arguments on a Congregational rather than a Presbyterian view of the Church. Congregationalists believe that the Visible Church is essentially confined to the local congregation and that there is no necessary connection or government beyond it.

Presbyterianism has drifted very far from the true concern of the Westminster Divines and the Second Reformation (represented by James Durham, Samuel Rutherford and George Gillespie) for the unity of the visible Church. Merely exchanging greetings amongst competing denominations would not have satisfied these men because it is a practice that avoids any confrontation with the fact of schism and never seems to work towards genuine unity. The Westminster Divines were of an entirely different view. They proposed to accommodate the Congregationalists and their opinions within a national Presbyterian Church. The Congregationalists at the Westminster Assembly proposed a friendly co-existence and occasional communion with the Presbyterians which, while separate in government, would they claimed be a “plain and total separation.”

232. *Scottish Theology in relation to Church History since the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1943), 109.

233. *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 1, p. 254

234. New Testament national Churches are clearly referred to in Scripture (Isaiah 55:5; Psalm 22:27; Psalm 72:11; Psalm 86:9; Matthew 28:19; Revelation 11:15).

This was resolutely declined with an explanation that might easily have come from Durham:

So, might the Donatists and Novatians have pled, and indeed almost all the separatists who have figured in the Church's history. Such separation was unknown in the apostles' time, unless it were used by false teachers: all who professed Christianity then held communion together as one Church. If you can join with us occasionally in acts of worship, you ought to act with us in joint communion, not in separated congregations. God's way of revealing truth to such as are otherwise minded, is not by setting men at a distance from each other. That you should be a distinct Christian organization, taking members from our Churches who may have scruples of conscience, is schism undoubted in the body of Christ.²³⁵

Congregationalism was regarded as a schismatic principle. This is the view that the Presbyterians at Westminster had in mind when they confessed the catholic visible church and formulated Presbyterian Church government.

Thomas M'Crie goes so far as to assert that to regard a variety of denominations as acceptable is to adopt "a principle of difformity which, however congenial to the system of polytheism, is utterly eversive of a religion founded on the unity of the divine nature and will, and on a revelation which teaches us what we are to believe concerning God and what duty he requires of us."²³⁶ Presbyterianism is antithetical to the idea of competing denominations side by side in the same villages, towns and cities. Durham spoke of "diverse supreme and independent governments" side by side as a schismatical situation, "where there ought to be one Church, it becometh as it were two."²³⁷

235. James Walker, *The Theology and Theologians of Scotland*, 98. See also *The Grand Debate: The Reasons Presented by the Dissenting Brethren against Certain Propositions Concerning Presbyterian Government*, ed. Chris Coldwell (Dallas, 2014), 331, 345 and 375

236. M'Crie, *Two Discourses*, 89. There is a view that champions "pluriformity" over against uniformity and so disregards the idea of schism as sinful. This view is particularly associated with the Dutch leader Abraham Kuyper. It maintains that Church differences and competing distinctions are a good thing and that divisions based upon differences are not to be viewed as negative because diversity is a strength. Yet the New Testament emphasises uniformity very strongly (1 Corinthians 11:1, 16; 14:29, 33, 34, 35, 40; 16:1, 2) and exhorts us to "walk by the same rule" (Philippians 3:16) and to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me" (Jeremiah 32:29).

237. Durham, *Scandal* (1659), 273; (1990), 226.

Shields approached the vexed problem of division with deep concern. It is easy to become indifferent to the scandal of division or to belittle it as unimportant. He also demonstrated humility. There is no place for pride if these matters are truly appreciated. Yet Shields also acted without compromise, he sought a way to clear his conscience but also to heal division without sinning. He was prepared to accept certain things in a Church that was in process of reforming. Despite our desire for genuine unity, we ought to beware of the danger of schemes of unity which compromise the truth. Scripture will never justify us in abandoning truth for the sake of unity.

What practical steps could be taken in relation to these principles in our generation? The following arise from Durham's principles. First, we need a firm understanding of the absolute duty of union and the sinfulness of schism and the evils it brings. Second, we need to understand the various reasons that there may be for ongoing division; they need to be stated clearly. Third, we need to be persuaded that the only lawful reasons for separation are if union would entail sinning. Fourth, we are not to expect one side to concede everything. Fifth, we are not to expect perfection in the process. Coming to appreciate the importance of this matter is a vital initial step.

We can conclude with a particularly beautiful passage in *A Hind let loose* that commends the doctrine of the unity of the visible Church for which Shields contended in a balanced manner, yet also in a way that ought to attract us strongly to be of one mind with his principles and pursue them earnestly.

The Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, ought to be the Endeavour of all that are members of the *One Body* of Christ, Partakers of his *Spirit*, called in *One Hope*, Professing *One Lord*, Confessing *One Faith*, sealed with *One Baptisme Eph. 4.3. &c.* And for *Brethren* to dwell together in *Unity*, is good & pleasant, and like the precious Oyntment upon the head, that ran down upon *Aarons* beard *Psal. 133. 1, 2.* A fragrant Oyntment indeed, if it be composed aright of *Gospel-simples*, according to Divine art, and the Wisdom that is from above, which is first pure & then peacable; and not made up of *Adulterate Politicks*: that Union that hath the Spirit for its Author, the Scripture for its Rule, Peace for its bond & beauty, love for its Cement, Faith for its foment, Christ for its foundation, and Truth & holiness for its constant Companions, cannot but be intensely desired, enixely endeavoured, and fervently followed, by all the Professors of the Gospel of Peace, & Subjects of the

Prince of Peace: Which makes *Division & Schisme* not only a great Miserie, but a Grand sin. But it must be in the way of Truth & Duty, and consistent with holiness & the honour of Christ, otherwise if it be in the way of Apostasie & defection, it is but a Confederacy & Consp̄iracy against the Lord. And true Union can neither be attained, nor retained, nor recovered; except the sinful Cause of Division, *Defection*; and the holy overruling Cause, the *Anger of the Lord* be removed, in turning to & following him.²³⁸

POSTSCRIPT - ALEXANDER SHIELDS AS AN AUTHOR

In his preface to *Church-Communion*, Thomas Linning hints at the possibility of publishing other manuscript works by Shields. “Only if the Work be well Entertained, any other Papers, which are in my hand, left by the Worthy Mr. Alexander Shields, for the use of the publick, shall not be concealed, when it shall be thought needful that they see the Light.”²³⁹ It is likely that Linning was thinking of the letter to the prisoners at Dunottar, as well as the biography of Renwick written by Shields and the account produced of his own sufferings, for it is difficult to confirm that there are many other works left unpublished in manuscript besides various sermons and letters.

Undoubtedly, Shields was the most significant and prolific author among the Covenanting field-preachers. His abilities as a preacher can only be judged from sermons constructed from the notes taken down by hearers, while his writings can speak for themselves. As Hector Macpherson observes, “there is considerable difficulty in estimating Shields’ style as a preacher.” He notes, however, that Robert Wodrow’s assessment of him as a “successful, serious and solid preacher” does not appear to emphasise an extraordinary gift in preaching. Wodrow does speak of Shields as “a minister of extraordinary talents and usefulness . . . well seen in most branches of valuable learning, of a most quick and piercing wit.”²⁴⁰ This seems to be reflected in his commendation of Shields’ writings for their “strong reasoning, and quickness in argument.”²⁴¹ Howie summarises similar points acutely, saying that in “The Hind Let Loose,” and other treatises, Shields left behind him the marks of his varied acquirements, ability, zeal, and public-spiritedness.”²⁴² Walker describes him as famous and learned.

The scurrilous Episcopalian tract *The Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence Displayd* is scarcely a reliable and commendable source of information, but the author describes Shields as “One of their [i.e. the Presbyterians] honestest and best Writers.”²⁴³ This is a very telling

assessment and high praise considering the source from which it emanates, which was intent on undermining Presbyterian preachers as unlearned. An equally high compliment was paid from an unfriendly source when the authorities ordered that *A Hind let loose* be publicly burned. Macpherson was of the opinion that this reveals that they regarded its author as “in the front rank of thinkers and propagandists.”²⁴⁴

Macpherson believes that *A Hind let loose* may have contributed to changing the course of history and “had no small influence in Holland” and the future King William III.²⁴⁵ Shields opens up the relevance of the imagery of the title selected for the book in a strong and at times lyrical manner.²⁴⁶ The persecuted Covenanters are appropriately compared to the hind let loose

being a *hind* (called *wild* by nick-name in the scorn of them that are at ease, but) truly *weak* in their present wilderness Condition, to *wrestle* against the force & fraud of their Cruel & cunning *hunters*, who cease not (when they have now got the rest of the *Roes and hinds of the field* made fast asleep, under the bondage of the *Lions dens & Mountains of Leopards*, by a pretence of a falsely so called *Liberty of Conscience*) to seek and pursue the chase of them for a prey; Yet, really they are *let loose*, and not only suffered to run loose, as a prey to the hunters by the unwatchfulness of their keepers, but made to escape loose, by the mercy of the *Mighty one of Jacob*, from the nets of the hunter, and snares of the foulers and from the yoke of the bondage of these beasts of prey to whose *Authority* they will not *oune* a willing subjection: And being such *hinds*, so *let loose*, they make it their work, to *give goodly words*, for the worth and honour and Royalties of their Princely Master, and for the precious Liberties wherewith he hath endoted and entrusted his

238. *A Hind*, p. 224.

239. *Church-Communion*, p. v.

240. Robert Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, 4 vols. (Glasgow, 1833), 4.233.

241. *The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow*, ed. Thomas M’Crie, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1842–3), 1.87.

242. *Sermons Delivered in the Times of Persecution in Scotland By Sufferers For The Royal Prerogatives of Jesus Christ*, p. 580.

243. *The Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence Displayd* (London, 1693), 34.

244. Hector Macpherson, p. 157. In a characteristically vivid paragraph Shields anticipates the book being “sent to the flames to be confuted; and to enflame the fury of these firebrands, already hell-hot, into the utmost extremity of rage against the Author.” *A Hind*, p. iv.

245. Hector Macpherson, p. 215.

246. The poetic elegy that Shields penned on the death of James Renwick reveals that his gifts went even beyond spirited prose.

Spouse and Children, and to keep *the goodly -words* of his patience, untill he return a *Roe or a young Hart*, upon the Mountains of Bether.²⁴⁷

There is a vivid, impassioned power in the style that Shields frequently employs in the book which brings a peculiar immediacy to the reader in relation to the times. In one passage he says, “O Heavens be astonished at this, & horribly afraid! for Scotland hath changed her Glory, and the Crown hath fallen from off her head, by an unparalleled Apostasie, a free & voluntary, wilfull & deliberate Apostasie, an avoued & declared & Authorized Apostasie, Tyrannically carried on by Militaric violence & cruelty, a most universal & every way unprecedented Apostasie!”²⁴⁸ Later he describes the climax to which this apostasy reached:

the Blasphemous Supremacy was now advanced to its summit; the Churches Priviledges all overturned; Religion and the Work of Reformation trampled under foot; the Peoples Rights & Liberties destroyed, and Lawes all subverted; and no shadow of Government left but arbitrary Absoluteness, obtruding the Tyrants will for Reason, and his Letter for the Supreme Law.²⁴⁹

From these few brief quotations it is possible to see the evidence of Howie’s observations on Shields’ particular skills as an author: “pretty well seen in most branches of learning, in arguing very ready, only somewhat fiery; but in writing on controversy, he exceeded most men in that age.”²⁵⁰

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Published Works

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247. *A Hind*, p. ii-iii.

248. *A Hind*, p. 97.

249. *A Hind*, p. 132.

250. Howie, *Biographia Scoticana*, 476.

ing hearing of the curats, owning of the present tyrannie, taking of ensnaring oaths & bonds, frequenting of field meetings, defensive resistance of tyrannical violence, with several other subordinate questions useful for these times. / By a lover of true liberty ([Utrecht], 1687). Reprinted 1770, 1797.

2. *March 11. 1688. Some notes or heads of a preface, lecture and sermon, preached at the Lothers in Crafoord Moor / by Mr. Alexander Shields, preacher of the gospel* (n.p., 1688).

3. *Notes or heads of a preface and of a lecture, preached at Distinkorn-Hill, in the parish of Gaaſtoun, April 15, 1688* (n.p., 1688).

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3. *An account of the methods and motives of the late union and submission to the assembly offered and subscribed by Mr. Thomas Lining, Mr. Alexander Shields, Mr. William Boyd* (London, 1691).

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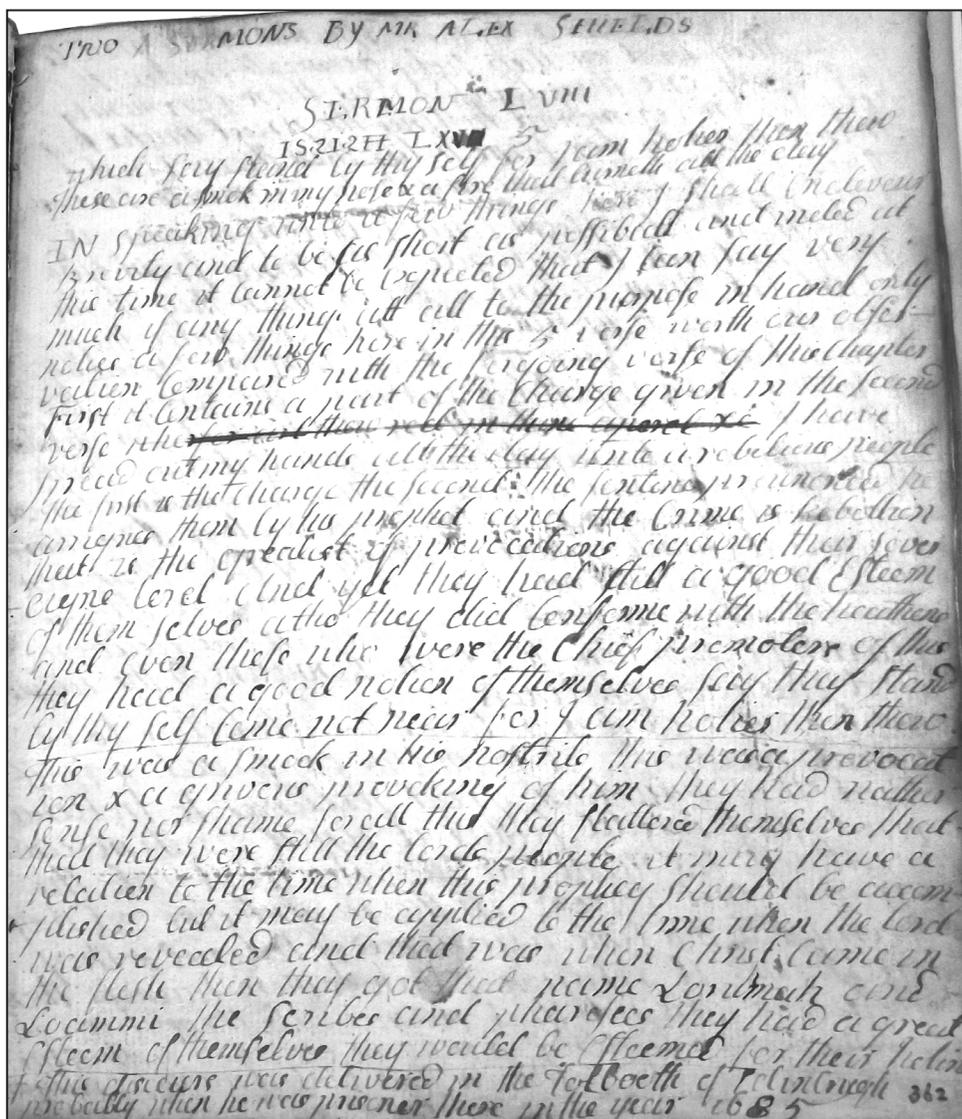
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Ms Gen 32, Sermon on 2 Sam 15:26, first page. Reproduced with permission of University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections. Photograph by Matthew Vogan.