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

MATTHEW VOGAN

PART I. HISTORY AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Alexander Shields (1660?-1700) is less well known in comparison with other field preachers such as Donald Cargill, Richard Cameron and James Renwick. 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 little attention.”¹ His life is uniquely interesting, however. One of the last of the field preachers and a close associate of James Renwick, he was also a prisoner on the Bass Rock. After the Revolution, he was the chaplain to the Cameronian regiment fighting in the Low Countries against France in defence of Holland and the Protestant cause. 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. He died and was buried in Jamaica in 1700 at the age of forty.²

¹ Mark Jardine, *The United Societies: Militancy, Martyrdom and the Presbyterian Movement in Late-Restoration Scotland, 1679 to 1688*, University of Edinburgh, PhD Thesis, 2009, p. 165.

² 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 University Press, 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* (Edinburgh, 1827), Vol. 1, p. 251, cf. pp. xxi, 34. Sadly, however, the intention was never realised.

John Macleod well describes him as “one of the most striking figures of his epoch”.³

This article and its sequel give 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. This article focuses on the events leading up to the Revolution Settlement and the period following 1690 until Shields’ death in 1700. In particular, it considers the ways in which the various parties engaged in the discussions concerning uniting fragmented Presbyterians 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 union deliberations in 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 it requires separate consideration, which will be given in a future article (D.V.).⁴

1. Alexander Shields and the United Societies

After his escape from prison in 1686, 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”.⁵ 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 Renwick were hunted by the government.⁶

In 1687 Shields went to Utrecht to ensure the publication of *An Informatory vindication* together with his own book, *A Hind Let Loose*.⁷ *An*

³ *Scottish Theology in relation to Church History since the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1943), p. 109.

⁴ The treatise is sometimes referred to as *Enquiry into Church Communion* since this was its published title in 1747.

⁵ Macpherson, *The Cameronian Philosopher*, p. 52.

⁶ Macpherson, *The Cameronian Philosopher*, p. 65.

⁷ *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 4th March 1687, published in Utrecht in July 1687 and available in Scotland by the end of that year.

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 the law and in separating 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. 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”.⁸

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*.⁹ *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 when 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”.¹⁰ 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.¹¹

⁸ 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, p. 176.

⁹ *op. cit.*, p. 215.

¹⁰ M. Hutchison, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland; its origin and history 1680-1876* (Paisley, 1893), p. 109.

¹¹ 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.

After his return to Scotland, Shields was also involved in the publication of *The Testimony Against Toleration*.¹² Although authored by James Renwick, it was evidently a combined effort and Shields wrote the preface after Renwick's death. Shields was one of the two friends with James Renwick when the latter was captured and arrested, and after Renwick's execution at the Grassmarket, Edinburgh, on 17th February 1688, the mantle of leader and preacher fell upon him. At Crawford moor on 11th 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.¹⁴ 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*, which was complete by September 1688.¹⁵

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."¹⁶ The

¹² *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.*

¹³ *The Letters of James Renwick, the last of Scotland's Covenanted Martyrs*, ed. Thomas Houston (Paisley, 1865), p. 261.

¹⁴ *Notes or heads of a preface and of a lecture, preached at Distinckorn-Hill, in the parish of Gaastoun, April 15, 1688* (n.p., 1688), p. 3.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ *Faithful Contendings Displayed* (Glasgow, 1780), p. 355. *Faithful Contendings* (hereafter *FCD*) is an account of the actions and events relating to the United Societies written by Michael Shields.

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.

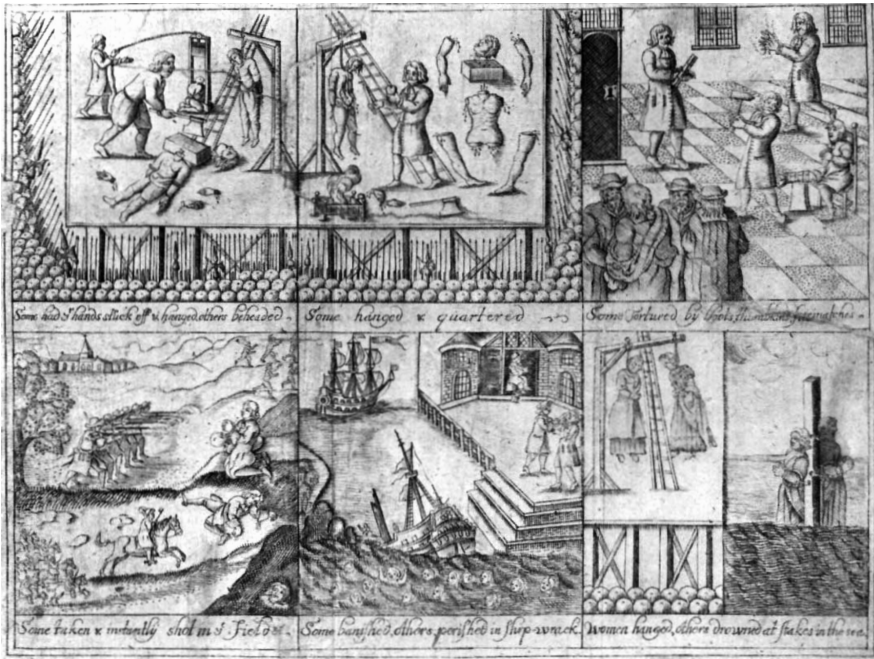
It began to be rumoured in the autumn, however, that deliverance might be possible. According to Michael Shields, the country was “full of commotions and rumours of war; everyone looking for changes and revolutions, some hoping for, and others fearing the same; and almost all were expecting the ensuing 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.¹⁷ 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 made afraid before. These are the doings of the Lord, and should be wondrous in our eyes.”¹⁸

It has been observed frequently 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, 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 25th 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.¹⁹ This declaration to the Scottish people on 10th October 1688 echoes the famous

¹⁷ *FCD*, p. 360.

¹⁸ *FCD*, p. 367.

¹⁹ 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.



The Frontispiece to A Hind Let Loose.

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 forraingers may have ane information of the state of our cause".²⁰ 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.

The Societies were also quick to respond to the political vacuum in other ways during the interregnum, when King James VII had fled the

²⁰ Robert Wodrow, *Analecta* (Glasgow, 1842-3), Vol. 1, p. 186; *FCD*, pp. 375, 380, 386-7.

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”.²¹ 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 27th 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.²² A meeting of the Societies on 13th February agreed the form of a letter that could be given to the curates giving them notice to quit under threat of force.²³

On 4th 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.²⁴

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

²¹ *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 1, pp. 279-80.

²² Wodrow, *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 186.

²³ Instances of “rabblings” are discussed more fully by Jardine, pp. 236-8.

²⁴ *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 1, p. 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.

to “espouse” it “so abruptly” as their declaration, when it made no mention of the Covenants, was “lame and defective”.²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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 Society 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.²⁷ At a General Meeting of the Societies in Douglas on the 29th 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 2nd March 1689, a day of humiliation and preparation was observed at Boreland Hill or the Black

²⁵ *FCD*, p. 370

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ The Macmillanite party later vehemently condemned such support, especially in the Auchensnaugh 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”.



Douglas Kirk, where most of the General Meetings of the United Societies were held in 1689-90.

[Photograph © Kevin Rae and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Licence]

Hill, Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire.²⁸ 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 Nationall Covenant, and Solemn League and Covenant, with some short notes of explication, and apologies for some alterations of the expressions, where they [were]

²⁸ Lesmahagow provides a central location and Boreland hill gives a commanding view across the whole countryside; Shields states that it was “within sight of Lanrik”. It is possible that covenant renewal in a hillside location was intended to reflect biblical precedent (Deuteronomy 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 24th 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), pp. 209-56 (see p. 228).

accomodate to [the] times”.²⁹ William Boyd preached on Jeremiah 50:5 after which Thomas Linning³⁰ 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, and taking the Oath of Abjuration. This was done with notable expressions of grief.³¹ 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.³²

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”.³³ Hector Macpherson considers that the event was a way of demonstrating publicly the strength of the Societies to William of Orange.³⁴ 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

²⁹ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 187.

³⁰ 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 Scotticae: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*, eds. Hew Scott and Donald Farquhar Macdonald (Edinburgh, 1915), Vol. 3, p. 314. There are manuscript sermons in Glasgow University Library: MŠ Gen 938 Item 48/2, Sermon at Kirkintilloch, 2nd August 1714, Song 3:4; and MS Gen 938 Item 29/4, Sermon at Provan, 2nd July 1705, 1 Corinthians 9:24.

³¹ 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 in this volume (pp. 85-108) and Maurice Grant, *No King But Christ: the Story of Donald Cargill* (Darlington, 1988), pp. 158-64.

³² *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 188.

³³ *FCD*, p. 382.

³⁴ Macpherson, *The Cameronian Philosopher*, p. 83.

Revolution Church.³⁵ While the connection between those two events might not appear to be very obvious, it becomes clearer on closer consideration. In his book (posthumously published) *Church-Communion enquired into*, 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.”³⁶ 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 13th May 1689 was that “without acknowledgment of these defections, there could be noe communion”. Further questions were put to the objectors in debate in order to understand the full implications of their position.

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 suspend 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 with-out 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.

³⁵ Thomas Linning, Alexander Shields, William Boyd, *An Account of the Methods and Motives of the late Union and Submission to the Assembly* ([London?], 1691), p. 11.

³⁶ *Church-Communion enquired into* (Glasgow, 1706), pp. 27-8.

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 continued 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.³⁷

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.”.³⁸ 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 in on 22nd July 1689, Presbyterian union was becoming a live issue. In the General Meeting on 25th September 1689, Thomas Linning informed the meeting that he, together with Shields and William Boyd, had met with some other Presbyterian ministers on 16th August in order to discuss union.³⁹ 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

³⁷ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 194.

³⁸ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 192.

³⁹ 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, *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 191.

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.⁴⁰

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, remonstrate and protest against everything sinful.”⁴¹ 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.”⁴² 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 setle 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’ freedome 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 defection; 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

⁴⁰ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 193.

⁴¹ *FCD*, p. 415.

⁴² *Analecta*, Vol. 1, pp. 194-5.

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. . . .⁴³

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.⁴⁴ Things took a different turn at the General Meeting on 6th November 1689, however, when Hamilton 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.

⁴³ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 195.

⁴⁴ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 193.

The next day the Meeting reconvened “but came to noe better conclusion”.⁴⁵ 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, 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 hardern 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”.⁴⁶

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

⁴⁵ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, pp. 195-6.

⁴⁶ *FCD*, pp. 421-2.

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.⁴⁷

According to Michael Shields, this helped in “the allaying and hindering of heats and debates, that otherways might have fallen out”.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹ Ironically, however, there was a majority at the meeting who opposed reading the letter from Shields.

⁴⁷ *FCD*, p. 424.

⁴⁸ *FCD*, p. 423.

⁴⁹ *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.

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 to renew the Covenants. Parliament was proceeding with some of these matters, establishing 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”.⁵⁰ 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”.⁵¹ 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 1st 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 9th 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”.⁵² This could not be acceptable and created some unease.

⁵⁰ *FCD*, p. 439.

⁵¹ *FCD*, p. 440.

⁵² *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 198.

Linning, Shields, and Boyd submitted a long paper of their grievances to the Committee of Overtures on 16th 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.⁵³

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 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 17th October where they were “pressed to forbear”.⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵

Both papers were transmitted to the Assembly on the 25th October. The overtures of the Committee were read together with the

⁵³ *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1638-1842* (Church Law Society, Edinburgh, 1843), p. 225.

⁵⁴ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, pp. 198-99.

⁵⁵ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 199.

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, *nemine contradicente*.⁵⁶

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.”⁵⁷ Shields, Linning and Boyd were called back into the Assembly and addressed by the Moderator.

The Moderator had ane exortation to us to live orderly; and, reflecting on our extravagancys, exorted us to be as instrumentall in healing as we had been in breaking. Mr Linning gave a short answer, disouning the injuriouse 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

⁵⁶ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 199.

⁵⁷ *Church-Communion enquired into*, pp. iv-v.

submitt. 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.⁵⁸

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 28th 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 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”.⁵⁹

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 sub-committee “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 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.⁶⁰

There was a General Meeting of the United Societies at Douglas on 3rd December when these events and the various documents were

⁵⁸ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 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* (London, 1901), Vol. 1 p. 260.

⁵⁹ *FCD*, p. 455.

⁶⁰ *FCD*, p. 456.

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”.⁶¹ 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”.⁶² 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 contendings, 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”.⁶³ Alexander Shields noted that while the “most part refused; some accepted, and made use of it”.⁶⁴

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”.⁶⁵ They did so using the paper drawn up

⁶¹ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 202.

⁶² *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 202.

⁶³ *FCD*, p. 460.

⁶⁴ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 202.

⁶⁵ *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 1, p. 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

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.⁶⁶

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.”⁶⁷ 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”.⁶⁸

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 a paper denouncing the “defection” of Shields, Linning and Boyd.⁶⁹ 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”. 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.⁷⁰ They were also forbidden from appearing at civil courts and applying for licences. Still

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*, Vol. 1, p. 260.

⁶⁶ NLS, Societies members’ statement on entering communion with the Church of Scotland, Dec. 1690, Wod. Fol. XXVIII, fos. 144-5, cited Alasdair Raffé, *Religious Controversy and Scottish Society, c.1679-1714*, University of Edinburgh, PhD Thesis, 2007, p. 167.

⁶⁷ *Church-Communion enquired into*, p. ii.

⁶⁸ *A Fair and Impartial Testimony* (Glasgow, 1765), p. 26.

⁶⁹ *Faithful Contendings Displayed*, first part, pp. 467-8.

⁷⁰ The Hamiltonian General Meeting also condemned those who worshipped or obtained marriage under David Houston or Hugh McHenry, the suspended minister of Dalton, Dumfries-shire, cf. NAS, Conclusions of the United Societies’ general meeting,

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.⁷¹

McMillan reckons that a “considerable portion of the body” must have been purged due to these terms of communion.⁷² 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.⁷³ After Hamilton died at Bo’ness on 21st 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.⁷⁴

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

1681-1724, CH3/269/1, pp. 3, 5-6, 11, cited 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.

⁷¹ Hutchison, p. 127.

⁷² William McMillan, “The Covenanters after the Revolution of 1688”, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 10 (1950), pp. 141-53 (quotation p. 146).

⁷³ NAS, Collection of Sir Robert Hamilton’s letters, 1682-1701, CH3/269/16/3, pp. 7-8, quoted Raffe, p. 127.

⁷⁴ 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*, Vol. 1, p. 242. William Wilson left his “witness and testimony against the sinful intrusion of John and Andrew Harlows, once in Cotmuir, who, after they had fallen into several doting 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), pp. 375-76.

identifiable parties were to be found by 1725.”⁷⁵ 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 Russelites.”⁷⁶

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*.⁷⁷ In their second edition of *An Informatory Vindication*, updated to reflect their grievances, the Hamiltonians in turn accused the Hebronites or followers of John Hepburn of seeking to bring division among the ranks of those who rejected the Revolution Settlement.⁷⁸ 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”.⁷⁹

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

⁷⁵ Ian B. Cowan, *The Scottish Covenanters: 1660-1688* (London, 1976), p. 145.

⁷⁶ William McMillan, op. cit., p. 146. Patrick Walker runs the names of the various groups together frequently as if to emphasise the number of them.

⁷⁷ *The Ravished Maid in the Wilderness, or, A True Account of the Raise, Causes and Continuence 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), pp. 2-5, 35-6, quoted 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*, Vol. 1, p. 272).

⁷⁸ *An Informatory Vindication of a Poor, Wasted, Misrepresented Remnant* ([Edinburgh?], 1707) sig. [para. 3]v, quoted Raffe, p. 170.

⁷⁹ *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), p. 9, quoted Raffe, p. 252.

ministers such as Thomas Linning and other former Society men such as Patrick Walker.⁸⁰ 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*”.⁸¹ 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 an additional chapter to his *Essay concerning Human Understanding* in 1699 dismissing enthusiasm. The General Assembly had previously warned in January 1696 that 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”.⁸² 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 Erastianism 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

⁸⁰ It is worth noting that all Presbyterians, whether separatists or within the Revolution Church were firmly committed to the abiding obligations of the Covenants.

⁸¹ *A Seasonable Admonition and Exhortation to some who Separate from the Communion of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1699), p. 23.

⁸² *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1638-1842*, p. 253. In addition, there were also growing concerns that in some instances the philosophy curriculum in the universities was becoming infected with rationalism and heterodox opinions (cf. Raffe, pp. 232-33).

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.⁸³ 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.

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), which 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 enquired into*, 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*.⁸⁴ *An Informatory vindication* alludes to some of Durham’s points under Head

⁸³ *Church-Communion enquired into*, p. 3.

⁸⁴ 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

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.”⁸⁵ 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. 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”.⁸⁶ 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

⁸⁵ *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 1, p. 255.

⁸⁶ 1659 edn., p. 283; *Concerning Scandal*, edited by Christopher Coldwell with an Introduction by David C. Lachman (Dallas, TX, 1990), p. 235.

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.

2. 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 Church-men have been too much taken up and occupied about such things, but it hath had such a consequent”.⁸⁷

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?”⁸⁸ 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.

3. 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

⁸⁷ 1659 edn., p. 289; 1990 edn., p. 239. Sometimes the civil government may be seeking the Church to adopt a certain position or declare their mind on a specific matter. This is in line with the *Westminster Confession* (31:5) view of the relationship of Church and State, yet such “extrinsic” matters have the potential to introduce significant division, if mishandled, as was the case in the Resolutioner-Protester divisions of the 1650s.

⁸⁸ Hutchison, p. 123.

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 September 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”.⁸⁹ 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”.⁹⁰ 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”.⁹¹

4. 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

⁸⁹ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 194.

⁹⁰ 1659 edn., p. 277; 1990 edn., p. 229.

⁹¹ 1659 edn., p. 320; 1990 edn., p. 266.

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”.⁹² 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 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”.⁹³ 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.⁹⁴

5. 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.*”⁹⁵ Durham had earlier observed that division is “often a great snare to many carnal

⁹² 1659 edn., pp. 281-2; 1990 edn., pp. 232-3.

⁹³ 1659 edn., p. 427; 1990 edn., p. 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.”

⁹⁴ 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.” 1659 edn., p. 430, cf. also p. 350; 1990 edn., p. 291.

⁹⁵ *Church-Communion enquired into*, p. 10.

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. 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.”⁹⁶

6. 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”.⁹⁷
7. 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

⁹⁶ 1659 edn., 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.” 1659 edn., p. 426; 1990 edn., p. 355.

⁹⁷ 1659 edn., p. 314; 1990 edn., p. 325.

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 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”.⁹⁸

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”.⁹⁹

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

⁹⁸ *Analecta*, Vol. 1, p. 193.

⁹⁹ 1659 edn., p. 363; 1990 edn., p. 302.

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; arid 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.”¹⁰⁰ 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.¹⁰¹

8. 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.¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³
9. Shields emphasised mutual forgiveness. “As long as there are differences and distances between us and our Brethren not

¹⁰⁰ 1659 edn., pp. 318-9; 1990 edn., p. 264.

¹⁰¹ 1659 edn., pp. 405-8; 1990 edn., pp. 335-38.

¹⁰² 1659 edn., p. 415; 1990 edn., p. 346.

¹⁰³ 1659 edn., p. 416; 1990 edn., p. 346.

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."¹⁰⁴ 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." It is 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."¹⁰⁵ 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.¹⁰⁶ 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 peremptoriness where there may be some condescending, hath much hand in this; when men become not all things (so far as is lawfull) unto others."¹⁰⁷ 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."¹⁰⁸

10. 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

¹⁰⁴ *Church-Communion enquired into*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ 1659 edn., p. 367; 1990 edn., p. 306 and 1659 edn., p. 324; 1990 edn., p. 269.

¹⁰⁶ 1659 edn., pp. 309-10; 1990 edn., p. 256.

¹⁰⁷ 1659 edn., p. 288; 1990 edn., p. 239.

¹⁰⁸ *Church-Communion enquired into*, p. 14.

somewhat fiery”.¹⁰⁹ 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 enquired into* manifests an irenic spirit. David Allan describes him rather inappropriately as “the irascible Covenanter”.¹¹⁰

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 Christs’s Publick Glory, the Churches publick good, the Saints publick Comfort, having a publick Concern for all Christs Interests, Publick Sympathie for all Christs Friends, and a Publick declared Opposition to all Christs Enemies”.¹¹¹

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. 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 conscienciously ponder the same, we leave him to consider that he must reckon to God therefore, and 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

¹⁰⁹ J. Howie, *Biographia Scoticana: or a brief historical account of the lives, characters, and memorable transactions of the most eminent Scots Worthies, noblemen, gentlemen, ministers, and others* (Glasgow, 1781), p. 476.

¹¹⁰ D. Allan, *Virtue, Learning, and the Scottish Enlightenment: Ideas of Scholarship in Early Modern History* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 36.

¹¹¹ *A Hind Let Loose* (1687), p. 554.

divisions; and that he would withall construct well of the essays of others, till we come all before the common Judge, who, we are persswaded, loveth the Truth in peace, and hath joyned these together, which therefore ought by no man to be put asunder.¹¹²

Conclusion

Mark Jardine aptly describes the United Societies as “one of the midwives of the Revolution”.¹¹³ 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”.¹¹⁴ 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”.¹¹⁵ 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.”¹¹⁶ 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,

¹¹² 1659 edn., p. 430; 1990 edn., p. 360.

¹¹³ Jardine, p. 244.

¹¹⁴ Cowan, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

¹¹⁵ Jardine, p. 243.

¹¹⁶ Christie, pp. ii-iii.

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”.¹¹⁷ 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.

¹¹⁷ William Fraser, *The Melvilles Earls of Melville and Leslie Earls of Leven* (Edinburgh, 1890), Vol. 2, pp. 115-6, cited Jardine, p. 231.