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

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PART II. *CHURCH-COMMUNION ENQUIRED INTO*

The first part of this article (*SRSJ* 2) 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. There we followed the events relating to these differences up to around 1703.¹ This sequel resumes from that point in time in considering the treatise *Church-Communion enquired into* that 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.² 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

¹ M. Vogan, “Alexander Shields, the Revolution Settlement and the Unity of the Visible Church: Part I. History and General Principles”, *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 2, 2012, pp. 109-146.

² *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.

Church which continues the work of James Durham (referred to in *SRSJHJ 2*) in defining and applying the principles codified in *A Treatise on 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.

1. 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 more especially from the discussions surrounding the proposed Anglo-Scottish Union that eventually took place in 1707. 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 which was 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).³

This is the context for the publication of *Church-Communion enquired into* 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.⁴ He dates the preface to *Church-Communion* only a day or two before the meeting of the General Assembly on 4th-16th April 1706. Immediately following the Assembly, on 18th April, treaty negotiations began in London.⁵ 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

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

⁴ Jeffrey Stephen, “Defending the Revolution: The Church of Scotland and the Scottish Parliament, 1689-95”, *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 89:1, April 2010, pp. 19-53 (see pp. 22, 30, 32).

⁵ Jeffrey Stephen, *Scottish Presbyterians and the Act of Union 1707* (Edinburgh, 2007), p. 226.

minister, advancing a robust Covenanting viewpoint on the matters in hand.⁶ 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.⁷

In a printed address to the High Commissioner and Parliament from “a Considerable Number of People of 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.⁸ Other separatist pamphlets were promoting “collective action against the treaty, often in violent terms”.⁹ 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”.¹⁰ Other such pamphlets published in 1706 include one, probably by the Harley brothers, entitled *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*

⁶ 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), p. 235.

⁷ 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), p. 7; quoted Richard Holmes, “James Arbuckle and the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707”, *Journal of Irish Scottish Studies*, Vol. 1:2, March 2008, pp. 45-57 (see p. 45).

⁸ 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 Fry, p. 236.

⁹ Bowie, pp. 147-8, 152-3.

¹⁰ Bowie, p. 101.

*and England, and We heard that the parliament is sitting at Edinburgh . . . A word to the Unioners and their confederats thee parliamenters.*¹¹

The Presbytery of Dumfries complained that before “long we shall have independencie set up in these bounds”.¹² 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”.¹³ 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”.¹⁴ Alasdair Raffe notes considerable disquiet 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”.¹⁵ James MacDougal, minister of Mearns, related his concerns to Robert Wodrow that “instead of union with our nighbours we are like to have sad divisions among ourselves”.¹⁶ Later in 1706, James Forrester, moderator of Biggar Presbytery, wrote to the Commission of the General Assembly requesting “a suitable expedient for the preservatione of unity and concord in this Nationall Church [so] that separate courses” could be avoided.¹⁷

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

¹¹ Bowie, p. 101. See also Alasdair Raffe, *Religious Controversy and Scottish Society, c. 1679-1714* (University of Edinburgh, PhD Thesis, 2007), pp. 166, 257-9.

¹² National Archives of Scotland [NAS], Letter of Dumfries Presbytery to the Commission of the General Assembly, 1706, CH1/2/26/1, fo. 85r; quoted Raffe, p. 174.

¹³ NAS, Penpont Presbytery instructions to the General Assembly, 1705, CH1/2/5/1, fo. 34r, quoted Raffe, p. 177.

¹⁴ NAS, Penpont Presbytery letter, 22nd January 1707, CH1/2/5/4, fo. 255r; quoted Raffe, p. 189.

¹⁵ [J. Bannatyne], *Some Queries proposed to Consideration relative to the Union now intended* ([Edinburgh], [1706]), p. 3; quoted Raffe, p. 188.

¹⁶ National Library of Scotland [NLS], James MacDougal to Robert Wodrow, 30th November 1706, Wodrow Letters, Qu. IV, fo. 160r.

¹⁷ NAS, Biggar Presbytery letter to the Commission, 28th November 1706, CH1/2/5/4, fo. 228r; quoted Raffe, p. 188.

but received no more severe disciplinary action from the Commission of the General Assembly.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹

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 formally accepted and called to 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 Countrey”.²⁰ The success of this preaching tour was no doubt viewed in the light of the militaristic threat that the group posed. By 27th 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”.²¹ 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.²² 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).²³ Handbills were circulating in Lesmahagow (where Linning ministered) and the area around summoning Presbyterians to arms.

¹⁸ Raffe, pp. 171, 175-6.

¹⁹ Cf. A. Ian Dunlop, *William Carstares and the Kirk by Law Established* (Edinburgh, 1967), p. 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.

²⁰ NAS, Register of the Commission, CH1/3/9, p. 72; quoted Raffe, p. 189.

²¹ 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 25th October 1706 and 29th November 1706.

²² Bowie describes fully 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.

²³ C. A. Whatley and D. J. Patrick, *The Scots and the Union* (Edinburgh, 2006), p. 294.

had been rioting in Edinburgh in October followed by riots in Glasgow, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries and other areas in November and December 1706.²⁴ On 20th November 1706, three hundred armed separatists, probably Macmillanites, entered Dumfries, ceremonially burnt the articles of union as “utterly destructive of the nation’s independency, 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”.²⁵

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.²⁶

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,

²⁴ Cf. Fry, p. 244.

²⁵ William Ferguson, *Scotland’s Relations with England: A Survey to 1707* (Edinburgh, 1977), pp. 267-8. The Scottish Parliament responded on 30th 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 12th 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>.

²⁶ 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.), p. 285, quoted Valerie Wallace, “Presbyterian Moral Economy: The Covenanting Tradition and Popular Protest in Lowland Scotland, 1707-c. 1746”, *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 89:1, April 2010, pp. 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, 1948-50, 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: or Materials for a history of remarkable providences mostly relating to Scotch ministers and Christians* (4 vols., Glasgow, 1842-3), Vol. 3, p. 337.

these now rejoined the Societies after the admission of Macmillan and quickly availed themselves of the privilege of baptism for their children.²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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 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.²⁹

²⁷ McMillan, “The Covenanters after the Revolution of 1688”, pp. 145-6.

²⁸ Thomas Boston, *Memoirs of the life, times and writings of the Rev. Thomas Boston of Ettrick* (Aberdeen, 1852), pp. 197-8.

²⁹ Boston, *Memoirs*, p. 419.



Rev. Thomas Boston

On 12th 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”.³⁰

Boston establishes several key doctrines.

1. That schism and division is an evil incident to the churches of Christ while in this world.
2. That professors ought to beware of schism and division, as they tender the authority and honour of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. 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.
4. That however hard it be, yet it is possible to get a rent church healed.
5. 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

³⁰ 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.

the duty of disjointed members to take their own places in the body again.

6. 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.³¹

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. After he had transcribed it, the sermon was “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.³²

Church-Communion enquired into 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.

³¹ Samuel M’Millan (ed.), *The Whole Works of the late Reverend Thomas Boston of Ettrick* (12 vols., Aberdeen, 1850), Vol. 7, pp. 593-613.

³² 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”, Christopher Coldwell (ed.), *Anthology of Presbyterian & Reformed Literature*, Vol. 5, (Dallas TX, 1992), pp. 126-197 (p. 165).

In acknowledging (together with all “who truly Fear God”) the mixed character of the Church of Scotland after 1690, Linning makes use of the parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 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 Corinthians 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 second degree 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.”³³ 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

³³ McWard, *Epagonismoï; 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), pp. 369-74, cf. also pp. 375-84.

their practice were owned, it would not only infer the dissolution of the united visible church, but also of all Christian society.³⁴

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.³⁵

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 obtested 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

³⁴ McWard also says that he was “brought to the gates of death” by these “cause-destroying excesses”, quoted Maurice Grant, *No King but Christ: the story of Donald Cargill* (Darlington, 1988), p. 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.

³⁵ *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), Vol. 1, p. 254.

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.³⁶

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.”³⁷ 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.³⁸ 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.

2. The Authorship of *Church-Communion enquired into*

There does not appear to have been a direct response to *Church-Communion enquired into* in terms of a publication refuting its claims.³⁹ 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

³⁶ *Church-Communion*, pp. ii-iii.

³⁷ Quoted 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).

³⁸ 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.

³⁹ 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: breiflie examined. . . . In a letter from the countrie-man his surveyer* (Edinburgh, 1712).

author of *Church-Communion* but that Thomas Linning himself had written the work and published it under the name of 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,⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹

⁴⁰ A verbal pun on Linning (Linen). According to Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanæ: The Succession of Ministers in the Church Of Scotland from the Reformation* (2nd edn, 7 vols., Edinburgh, 1915-28), Vol. 3, p. 314, he wrote his own name as Linen in 1691. The material linen was also sometimes spelt "linning".

⁴¹ 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: Peden, Semple, Welwood, Cameron, Cargill and Smith* (2 vols., London, 1901), Vol. 2, p. 151. This seems to be the same as the source described by Hector Macpherson as "Pamphlets bound up with *Informatory Vindication*", p. 231; see *The Cameronian Philosopher: Alexander Shields* (London and Edinburgh, 1932), p. 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*.

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 flight that would be difficult to imitate. The preface, authored by Linning, is manifestly in 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 especially 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 enquired into*].⁴²

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 upbraided 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,

⁴² Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 1, pp. 125-7.

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.⁴³

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

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 6th November 1689 when Hamilton delivered a protest that Shields promised to answer.⁴⁴ Walker notes that Shields proceeded to work upon this immediately and that this was the commencement of *Church-Communion enquired into*. “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 enquired into*: “being under the bond of a Promise, extorted from me some years ago at a Meeting at *Douglas*, so here I shall essay to give my poor Thoughts upon this Subject.”⁴⁵

⁴³ 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 ingeniously 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.

⁴⁴ See Vogan, “Alexander Shields, the Revolution Settlement and the Unity of the Visible Church: Part I. History and General Principles”, pp. 122-3.

⁴⁵ *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

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 have either satisfaction in them nor success in endeavours to heal them”.⁴⁶

Shields has an aside in *Church-Communion enquired into* 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”.⁴⁷ 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 south west.

Frequently, the successors of the Macmillanites in the Reformed Presbyterian Churches either imply or state without justification that

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.

⁴⁶ D. Hay Fleming, “Alexander Shields and his five calls in 1696”, *Original Secession Magazine*, Vol. 29, 1931, pp. 363-71 (see p. 369).

⁴⁷ *Church-Communion*, pp. 2-3.

Shields repented of entering the Revolution Church of Scotland.⁴⁸ It is evident in the extracts from the diary left by Shields (reproduced in Wodrow's *Analecta*), however, that *Church-Communion enquired into* does indeed reflect his views accurately in relation to union with the Revolution Church of Scotland.⁴⁹ 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".⁵⁰ 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).⁵¹

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

⁴⁸ "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), p. 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), p. 580 .

⁴⁹ "Alexander Shields' Memoires" in Wodrow, *Analecta*, Vol. 1, pp. 177-205 (extracts from Shields' private diary).

⁵⁰ *Church-Communion*, p. 2. This was a point also emphasised in the answer to Hamilton's protestation. It is worth noting that Linning never abandoned his views but continued to protest from within the Revolution Church against the sins that were epidemic during the times of persecution. 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", NAS, Copy of George Home of Kimmerghame's diary, 1694-1696, GD1/649/1, pp. 147-8, quoted Raffe, p. 150.

⁵¹ *Church-Communion*, p. 3.

Societies. In a phrase that was to reappear in *Church-Communion enquired into*, 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, Sectarianism, tyranny and malignancy . . . having liberty withal to protest against their former defections and offices, 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”.⁵² This is the essential argument of *Church-Communion enquired into*.

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 enquired into*. 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.⁵³

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

⁵² Quoted 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*.

⁵³ *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), pp. 228, 232.

perswaded there is somewhat coming upon this Church, that will pull you out of Doubts of withdrawing from the most Part.⁵⁴

Having considered the evidence in favour, Hector MacPherson's conclusions on the authorship of *Church-Communion enquired into* 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.⁵⁵

3. 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*".⁵⁶ 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 has been 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.⁵⁷ 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

⁵⁴ Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 1, p. 256.

⁵⁵ Hector Macpherson, p. 218.

⁵⁶ *Church-Communion*, p. v.

⁵⁷ 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 Raffé, p. 165.

Obtest you, as you Love your Souls, and the Church's Peace, consider without prejudice, what is here offered to you.⁵⁸

Shields is 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.

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.⁵⁹

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."⁶⁰ 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

⁵⁸ *Church-Communion*, p. 77.

⁵⁹ *Church-Communion*, p. 1.

⁶⁰ *Church-Communion*, pp. 1-2.

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”.⁶¹

These references seem to further date the manuscript to the later 1690s when the famine of 1694-99 was 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”.⁶² 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 Gospell, 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.⁶³

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 enquired into*, 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.

⁶¹ *Church-Communion*, p. 2.

⁶² Karen J. Cullen, *Famine in Scotland – the “ill Years” of the 1690s* (Edinburgh, 2010), p. 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.

⁶³ NAS PC1/51, Privy Council Register of Acts 1696-9, 6th May 1698, quoted Cullen, p. 102.

4. The General Principles of *Church-Communion enquired into*

Church-Communion enquired into 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 on Scandal* regarding the unity of the visible Church and schism to a denominational setting.⁶⁴ This is questionable since all of the writing on the subject of the unity of the visible Church and schism since Durham has been published in the context of a broken state of church association. In addition, significant contributions have been made by Thomas Boston and Thomas M'Crie. *Church-Communion enquired into* may well have been the most significant, however, as well as being the first treatment of this area. James Walker certainly describes this book as influential and widely read in subsequent generations.

The major principles outlined and emphasised in *Church-Communion enquired into* 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 situation of competing Presbyterian associations. 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.⁶⁵ Perhaps this was

⁶⁴ 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), p. 279. We discuss this subject below.

⁶⁵ Novatianism concerned whether those who had avoided persecution under Decius in A.D. 250 by offering sacrifice to pagan deities could be restored to communion.

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.⁶⁶ 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”.⁶⁷

The principles of Church unity and schism that Shields restates were widely acknowledged, but it was the “solid and practical impression” of them that was lacking at the present time.⁶⁸ 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.

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 A.D. 303. 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.

⁶⁶ 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”, W. K. Tweedie (ed.), *Select Biographies* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1845-7), Vol. 2, pp. 447-9.

⁶⁷ *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 1, p. 231.

⁶⁸ *Church-Communion*, p. 3.

Shields then proceeds to show exactly how Scripture commands this duty, in a way that Durham did not follow through.

Firstly, he notes certain other duties that are commanded among Christians necessarily infer and require this duty of uniting. These are (1) Love; (2) Reconciliation; (3) Peaceableness.⁶⁹ 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 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”.⁷⁰

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

⁶⁹ 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.

⁷⁰ “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).

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, relinquish any truth, or to be obstructed from duty.⁷¹ (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.

⁷¹ Shields emphasises, of course, that none of these obtain in relation to the Revolution Church of Scotland.

5. Stating the question

Various arguments for rejecting the Revolution Settlement have been made in subsequent generations on behalf of the Hamiltonian party. It is evident from the records of the time, (including Shields' book *Church-Communion enquired into*) 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 enquired into* is not simply to state the principles concerning union and schism 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 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



Lesmahagow Old Church, built in 1804. There are many Covenanter graves in the churchyard, including memorials to Thomas Linning, who was minister of the parish (see <http://www.covenanter.org.uk/ThomasLinning>).

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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 that 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 not whether they were obliged to unite with all of the ministers who were guilty of the worst degrees of defection and compliance during the times of persecution.

After this careful distinction and clarification, Shields is 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?⁷²

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,

⁷² *Church-Communion*, p. 29.

and where the differences are not about “Pernicious” and dangerous errors. Such union must be achieved by “Mutual Condescension” or “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.”⁷³

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?⁷⁴

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

⁷³ *Church-Communion*, p. 32.

⁷⁴ *Church-Communion*, p. 29.

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.

6. 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."⁷⁵ Shields goes on to outline ten ways that individuals can be guilty of participating in sin in showing 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."⁷⁶

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 dmented 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

⁷⁵ *Church-Communion*, p. 64.

⁷⁶ *Church-Communion*, p. 66.

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.

Printed in the Year 1706.

The title page of Church-Communion.

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 bethink 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.⁷⁷

These consequences were raised by Shields in countering a final objection 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 they 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?"⁷⁸

As the treatise concludes, there are 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. And yet we have not submitted to every thing has been

⁷⁷ Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 1, p. 123.

⁷⁸ *Church-Communion*, p. 67.

required.” He goes on to show that the power of the civil magistrate to call General Assemblies has never been considered Erastian.⁷⁹

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

The last objection relates to the controversial oath of allegiance which was to become still more controversial under Queen Anne. Although 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.

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. 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. 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 Factiousness, 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

⁷⁹ 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.

balanced with Charity and managed with Discretion. And we request you, that you study Uniformity in your Zeal, that you be not like 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.⁸⁰

7. Modern relevance

Although the central issues of *Church-Communion enquired into* 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.”⁸¹

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”.⁸² 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 enquired into* may be considered as the very first work to address some

⁸⁰ *Church-Communion*, pp. 77-8.

⁸¹ James Walker, *The Theology and Theologians of Scotland, 1560-1750* (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 118.

⁸² Murray, pp. 277-310.

aspects of this in depth.⁸³ 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.⁸⁴ 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?”⁸⁵

Iain Murray appears to reject a distinction between the Church as visible and the Church as invisible. It is worth noting 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”.⁸⁶ 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”.⁸⁷ 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”.⁸⁸ Shields maintains that,

⁸³ Of the same period is the sermon by Thomas Boston on “The Evils of Schism” which addresses the same 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.

⁸⁴ 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), pp. 116, 160. Cf. also Jeffrey Stephen, *Scottish Presbyterians and the Act of Union 1707*, p. 5.

⁸⁵ *Church-Communion*, p. 68. It is not unfair to say that Murray considers the subject from a congregational level and affirms Congregationalist principles, with denominations being mere parachurch organisations 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.

⁸⁶ James Durham, *An Exposition of the Song of Solomon* (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 37.

⁸⁷ Durham, *An Exposition of the Song of Solomon*, p. 38.

⁸⁸ James Durham, *A Commentary on Revelation*, introduction by David C. Lachman (Willow Street PA, 2000), p. 685.

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.⁸⁹

It is not the case that Shields and fellow Scottish divines are sharply separating 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.

Murray believes that “the argument” for a single united visible Church within a nation inevitably “failed” (it is not clear from the essay how and when this failure took place).⁹⁰ 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. This distinction between truths of primary and secondary importance may also 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”.⁹¹

⁸⁹ *Church-Communion*, p. 7.

⁹⁰ Murray, p. 288.

⁹¹ Thomas M’Crie, *Two Discourses on the Unity of the Church, her Divisions and their Removal* (Edinburgh, 1821), p. 90.

Further, it is not necessarily the case that the Scottish 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 enquired into* 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.⁹² “Union, Unity and Oneness in Interest, Affection, Judgment and Practice, Profession and Worship is more expressly commanded and commended in Scripture.”⁹³

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.”⁹⁴ 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 enquired into*.

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

⁹² 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.

⁹³ *Church-Communion*, p. 6.

⁹⁴ Murray, p. 294.

levels of unity that one can have in ever decreasing circles of fellowship.⁹⁵ *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.⁹⁶ 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*, & *Profanness*, 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 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

⁹⁵ *Church-Communion*, pp. 25-6; *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*, pp. 6ff. (see quotation above); *Informatory Vindication*, Head 7; and *A Hind*, pp. 224-5.

⁹⁶ *Church-Communion*, pp. 25-6.

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 to which the National Church was committed to resist.

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.⁹⁷ This does not betray "an exclusiveness contrary to the spirit of the gospel" but rather inclusiveness governed by discernment.⁹⁸

8. Conclusion

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".⁹⁹ It is sadly true that 320 years on, the issues that are under debate in *Church-Communion* continue to perplex and generate contention, but it is still worth acknowledging 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.¹⁰⁰ 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.*"¹⁰¹

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

⁹⁷ Murray, p. 279.

⁹⁸ Cf. Murray, pp. 295-6.

⁹⁹ Cf. Murray, p. 294.

¹⁰⁰ *Scottish Theology in relation to Church History since the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1943), p. 109.

¹⁰¹ *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 1, p. 254.

pen, it is notable that the spirit of denunciation and frequent sarcasm that was required in opposing tyranny in *A Hind let loose* does not appear in *Church-Communion enquired into*. It is a very relevant example for those that find themselves in the midst of controversy. Shields left writings from 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, however, if we put them to practical use. It is fitting to 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 & Conspiracy 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.¹⁰²

Postscript – Alexander Shields as an author

In his preface to *Church-Communion enquired into*, 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 the see the Light.”¹⁰³ It is likely that Linning was thinking of the letter to the prisoners at Dunnottar, as well as the biography of Renwick written by Shields and the account produced of his own sufferings, for it is difficult to see that there are any other works left unpublished in manuscript.

The “Whigs’ Vault” at Dunnottar Castle where over a hundred Covenanters were imprisoned in 1685.



¹⁰² *A Hind*, p. 224.

¹⁰³ *Church-Communion*, p. v.

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”.¹⁰⁴ This seems to be reflected in his commendation of Shields’ writings for their “strong reasoning, and quickness in argument”.¹⁰⁵ 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”.¹⁰⁶ 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”.¹⁰⁷ 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. As Macpherson says, this reveals that they regarded its author as “in the front rank of thinkers and propagandists”.¹⁰⁸

Macpherson believes that *A Hind let loose* may have contributed to changing the course history and “had no small influence in Holland”

¹⁰⁴ Robert Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (4 vols., Glasgow, 1833), Vol. 4, p. 233.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas M’Crie (ed.), *The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow* (3 vols., Edinburgh, 1842-3), Vol. 1, p. 87.

¹⁰⁶ *Sermons Delivered in the Times of Persecution in Scotland By Sufferers For The Royal Prerogatives of Jesus Christ*, p. 580.

¹⁰⁷ *The Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence Displayd* (London, 1693), p. 34.

¹⁰⁸ 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.

and the future King William III.¹⁰⁹ Shields opens up the relevance of the imagery of the title selected for the book in a strong and at times lyrical manner.¹¹⁰ 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 unwatchfullness 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 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 Bethel*.¹¹¹

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 Militarie violence & cruelty, a most universal & every way unprecedented Apostasie!”¹¹² Later he describes the climax to which this apostasy reached:

¹⁰⁹ Hector Macpherson, p. 215.

¹¹⁰ The poetic elegy that Shields penned on the death of James Renwick reveals that his gifts went even beyond spirited prose.

¹¹¹ *A Hind*, pp. ii-iii.

¹¹² *A Hind*, p. 97.

... 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.¹¹³

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."¹¹⁴

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Provisional Bibliography of Writings by Alexander Shields

Published Works

1. *A Hind let loose, or An Historical Representation of the Testimonies, of the Church of Scotland, for the interest of Christ, 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, . . . and liberties of mankind, and sealed by the sufferings of a reproached remnant of Presbyterians there, witnessing against the corruptions of the time. Wherein several controversies of greatest consequence are enquired into, and in some measure cleared; concerning 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 p̄face, 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 p̄face and of a lecture, preached at Distinckorn-Hill, in the parish of Gaastoun, April 15, 1688* (n.p., 1688).

¹¹³ *A Hind*, p. 132.

¹¹⁴ 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.

4. *Antipas, or, The dying testimony of Mr. James Renwick & An elegy upon the death of that famous and faithful minister and Martyr, Mr James Renwick composed immediately after his execution at Edinburgh, 17th Feb, 1688* (n.p.,1688). Reprinted by George Morison (Glasgow, 1760).
5. *The Scottish Inquisition; or, a Short Account of the Proceedings of the Scottish Privy Counsel* ([Edinburgh?], 1689). This pamphlet was republished with additional material under Shields's name as *The Scots Inquisition* (Edinburgh, 1745).
6. *The Renovation of the Covenant at Boreland* (Edinburgh, 1689).
7. *A Short Memorial of the Sufferings and Grievances, Past and Present, of the Presbyterians in Scotland, Particularly of those of them called Nick-name Cameronians* ([Edinburgh], 1690).
8. *A Letter from Alexander Shields, Minister to the Regiment whereof the Late Noble Earl of Angus was Colonel . . . Directed to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland which was to have met at Edinburgh in December 1693* ([Edinburgh?], 1693).
9. *A Sermon preached by Mr Alexander Shields in the Cannongate Meeting House, February 10, 1691, being his last public sermon before going to Flanders* ([Edinburgh?], 1702).
10. *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). Reprinted by William Gray (Edinburgh, 1747).
11. *A true and faithful relation of the sufferings of the Reverend and learned, Mr. Alexander Shields, minister of the Gospel. Written with his own hand. Containing an account of his examinations and imprisonment at London; his being sent down to Scotland; . . . Together with a large and elaborate defence of the doctrine of resistance, . . . Never before published* ([Edinburgh], 1715).
12. *The life and death of that eminently pious, free and faithful minister and martyr of Jesus Christ, Mr James Renwick.; written by . . . Mr Alexander*

Shields. Whereunto is subjoined, the manner of admission, or ordaining of ruling-Elders, by Mr James Renwick.; and some few of his many religious letters (Edinburgh, 1724).

13. *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. By Mr. Alexander Shields, Preacher of the Gospel, then prisoner at Edinburgh. Diligently compared with the best manuscripts (Edinburgh, 1726).*
14. "The Perpetual Obligation of our Covenants" in R. Ward (ed.), *Explanation . . . of the Solemn League* (n.p., 1737).
15. John Howie (ed.), *Collection of lectures and sermons, preached upon several subjects, mostly in the time of the late persecution. Wherein a faithful doctrinal testimony is transmitted to posterity for the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the Church of Scotland against popery, prelacy, erastianism, &c. By these faithful and eminent servants of Jesus Christ; Messrs. William Guthrie, Michael Bruce, John Welwood, Richard Cameron, Donald Cargill, Alexander Peden and Alexander Shields. To which are added, some sacramental discourses by Mr. John Livingston and Mr John Welch, and a sermon on the breach of covenant, by Mr John Guthrie. Carefully collected and transcribed from several manuscripts by J.H.; and now published at the desire of the owners of that cause, which some of the worthy authors sealed with their blood (Glasgow, 1779);* reprinted as John Howie and James Kerr (eds.), *Sermons Delivered in the Times of Persecution in Scotland By Sufferers For The Royal Prerogatives of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh, 1880), Shields' sermon on 2 Corinthians 5:11, preface and lecture on Revelation 2:12-13, and sermon on John 3:3-5, pp. 580-618.
16. Alexander Shields' Letter to his Mother, 1700 (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), Vol. 1, p. 234.
17. *A serious inquiry into the nature and method of praying for tyrants, kings, or magistrates, that are anti-covenanters, not constitute according to the preceptive will of God, or contrary thereto.* (Glasgow, 1770) reprinted for Adam Bapty.
18. "Alexander Shields' Memoires" in Robert Wodrow, *Analecta: or Materials for a history of remarkable providences mostly relating to Scotch*

ministers and Christians (4 vols., Glasgow, 1842-3), Vol. 1, pp. 177-205 (extracts from Shields' private diary).

Collaborative Writings

1. *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* ([Utrecht], 1687) co-authored with James Renwick, Michael Shields, and William Boyd. Reprinted Edinburgh, 1707 and 1744.
2. *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* (n.p., 1688). This was authored by James Renwick but was evidently a combined effort and Shields wrote the preface after Renwick's death.
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).
4. 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), Vol. 1, p. 232.

Unpublished Manuscripts

New College, Edinburgh

1. "Letter of Alexander Shields to Monsieur Rosin, minister at Emden. [1687]", Box 4.2.13.

Laing Collection, University of Edinburgh Library

2. EUL MSS. La.III.344 and 350. Correspondence and manuscripts 1681-1686.

Glasgow University

3. Ms Gen 32, 1009 Societies' letters.

National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh

4. JC39/73 Papers relating to Alexander Shields, 1685.
5. GD184/11/3 Sermon notebook apparently containing notes of a sermon preached in Edinburgh in April 1698 by Alexander Shields.

National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh

6. “Manuscripts of Alexander Shields’s *A True and Faithful Relation of the sufferings of Mr Alexander Shields* (1715) and *Life of James Renwick* (1724)”, Wod. Qu. LV.
7. “Alexander Shields’s answer to Sir Robert Hamilton’s protest”, Wod. Qu. XVI, ff. 99r-113r.

Disputed attributions

1. *A Proper Project for Scotland* ([Edinburgh], 1699). Adam Blackadder is identified as the author on the title-page of NLS 1.445(13). The work has often been attributed to both Alexander Shields and George Ridpath.
2. *The History of Scotch-Presbytery: Being an Epitome of The Hind Let Loose by Mr Shields* (London, 1692). James Canaries published these extracts from *A Hind let loose*. It is likely that the preface was authored by Alexander Monro.

