

**The United Societies:
Militancy, Martyrdom and the Presbyterian
Movement in Late-Restoration Scotland,
1679 to 1688**

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FOR
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& Roselyn Bremner

The waves of their purposefulness go flooding through me.
This religion is simple, naked. Its values stand out
In black and white. It is the wind of God;
Like standing on a mountain top in a gale
Binding, compelling, yet gloriously freeing.
It contains nothing tawdry or trivial.
Its very ugliness in compelling,
Its bleakness uplifting.
It holds me in a fastness of security
Hugh MacDiarmid, 'The Covenanters'.¹

1. Hugh MacDiarmid, *Selected Poems* (1992), 200.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed by the candidate and is the candidate's own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Mark Jardine

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M. H. J.

Abbreviations & Common Contractions

Campbell, <i>SW</i>	Thorbjörn Campbell, <i>Standing Witnesses: An Illustrated Guide to the Scottish Covenanters</i> (Edinburgh, 1996)
Carslaw, <i>Letters</i>	James Renwick, <i>The Life and Letters of James Renwick the Last Scottish Martyr</i> , William Henderson Carslaw ed., (Edinburgh and London, 1893)
<i>CW&N</i>	<i>The Cloud of Witnesses being the last speeches and testimonies of those who suffered for the truth in Scotland since the year 1680. And Naphtali being the last words and dying testimonies of the Scots worthies, colated from many rare, valuable historical documents and original manuscripts. The whole accompanied by notes explanatory and corrective, by a clergyman of the Church of Scotland</i> (Glasgow and London, 1862)
Erskine, <i>Journal</i>	John Erskine, <i>Journal of the Honourable John Erskine of Carnock, 1683-87</i> , W. MacLeod ed. (SHS, 1 series, XIV, 1893)
<i>EUL</i>	Edinburgh University Library
Greaves, <i>SK</i>	Richard L. Greaves, <i>Secrets of the Kingdom: The British Radicals from the Popish Plot to the Revolution of 1688-1689</i> (University Stanford, CA., 1992)
<i>GUL</i>	Glasgow University Library
Houston, <i>Letters</i>	James Renwick, <i>The Letters of James Renwick, The last of Scotland's Covenanted Martyrs</i> , Thomas Houston ed., (Paisley, 1865)
Howie ed., <i>Sermons</i>	<i>Sermons Delivered in the Times of Persecution in Scotland By Sufferers For The Royal Prerogatives of Jesus Christ</i> , John Howie of Lochgoin and James Kerr eds. (Edinburgh 1880)
<i>Informatory Vindication</i>	James Renwick, [Alexander Shields, Michael Shields and William Boyd], <i>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</i> ([Utrecht], 1687)
Kirkton, <i>History</i>	James Kirkton, <i>The Secret and True History of the Church of Scotland, from the Reformation to the Year 1678: To which is added An Account of the Murder of Archbishop Sharp, By James Russell, an actor therein.</i> , C. K. Sharp ed. (Edinburgh, 1817)
M'Crie (ed.), <i>MV</i>	Thomas M'Crie ed., <i>Memoirs of Mr. William Veitch, and George Brysson, written by themselves: with other narratives illustrative of the history of Scotland, from the Restoration to the Revolution</i> (Edinburgh and London, 1825)
<i>NAS</i>	National Archives Scotland, Edinburgh
<i>NLS</i>	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh

- Oxford DNB Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Online
- Renwick, *A Choice Collection* James Renwick, *A Choice Collection of Very Valuable Prefaces, Lectures and Sermons Preached Upon the Mountains and Muirs, &c. of Scotland, In the hottest Time of the late Persecution*, William Wilson ed. (Glasgow, 1776)
- Shields, *FCD* Michael Shields, *Faithful Contendings Displayed: being An historical relation of the State and Actings of the Suffering Remnant in the Church of Scotland, who subsisted in Select Societies, and were united in general correspondencies during the hottest time of the late Persecution, viz. From the year 1681 to 1691*, John Howie of Lochgoin ed. (Glasgow, 1780)
- Shields, *LoR* Alexander Shields, *Life of Renwick* in Walker, P, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1827)
- Simpson, *Traditions* Robert Simpson, *Traditions of the Covenanters; or Gleanings among the Mountains*, New Edition (Edinburgh and London, no date)
- Sprat, *Copies* Thomas Sprat, *Copies of the Informations and Original Papers Relating to the Proof of the Horrid Conspiracy Against the Late King, His Present Majesty, and the Government: As they were Order'd to be Publish'd by His Late Majesty* (London, 1685)
- Thomson, *MGoS* John H. Thomson, *The Martyr Graves of Scotland*, Matthew Hutchison ed. (Edinburgh and London, no date)
- Thomson (ed.), *CW* John H. Thomson ed., *A Cloud of Witnesses for the Royal Prerogatives of Jesus Christ: Being the Last Speeches and Testimonies of Those Who Have Suffered for the Truth in Scotland Since the Year 1680* (Edinburgh, 1871)
- Walker, *BP* Patrick Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1827)
- Wodrow, *History* Robert Wodrow, *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, from the Restoration to the Revolution*, Robert Burns ed., 4 vols. (Glasgow, 1828-30)

Abstract

This thesis examines the politics, plots and strategies of the militant presbyterian radicals of the United Societies, or later Covenanters, in their confrontation with the Restoration regime of Charles II and James VII in Scotland, and with the presbyterian movement between 1679 and 1688.

Chapter one analyses the correlation between the Societies' lay network and the pattern of militant presbyterian dissent. It outlines their core platform defined by their declarations and strict adherence to the Covenants. It discusses the formation of the United Societies out of the fragmentation of the presbyterian movement from the Bothwell debates to the creation of a coherent Cameronian platform and militant network in 1681.

Chapter two analyses the Societies' schisms, persecution and martyrdoms between 1682 and 1684 and argues that the origins of their apocalyptic war against their persecutors lay in their political isolation and persecution from both the regime and their former moderate brethren.

Chapter three looks at the Societies' embassies to England and Friesland which redefined their relationships with other presbyterians factions. It examines their role in the Rye House Plots with English Whigs and argues that they were a turning point which isolated them from the British radical underground. It also explores their contacts with the *Nadere Reformatorie* in the United Provinces which led to the ordination of James Renwick who hardened the Societies' platform, and how the handling of the embassy led to the collapse of their European network.

Chapter four examines the targeted persecution of the Societies in the Killing Times and the Societies' role in the Argyll Rising of 1685 that led to further schisms over their separation from the moderate presbyterian ministry which undermined Renwick's leadership.

Chapter five traces the revival in the Societies' fortunes to 1688. It examines the internal struggles over the Societies' platform and the broadening of their ministerial cadre to include Alexander Shields and others; their relations with Irish presbyterian militants; their confrontation with moderate presbyterians caused by James VII's toleration scheme; the context and impact of Renwick's martyrdom and the reunification of the militant factions.

Chapter six surveys the Societies' world view and their attempts to construct a Calvinist international through their attitudes towards other Calvinists in the Friesland, Bremen and Switzerland, Lutheran Prussia and Sweden, Catholic France under Louis XIV and the Holy Roman Empire, and the Muslim Turks. It also compares their views of the Huguenots, Waldenses of Piedmont and Kurucs of Hungary, and the experiences of those banished to Barbados and the North American Colonies.

It concludes that the Societies played a more significant and distinct role in the conflict between the presbyterian movement and the Stuart monarchy than previously thought; that their struggle

and militancy were shaped by different political contexts, as demonstrated in their response to the Revolution in Scotland of 1688 to 1689, rather than simply religious conviction; and that the legacy of their martyrs, quickly subsumed into presbyterian tradition, became a justification for the Revolution settlement and a source of contention between radical and reactionary traditions.

Introduction

Is it then any wonder...that true *Scotsmen* (though we have always and even to extremity some times Loyal to our Kings) should after twenty Years tyrannie break out at last, as we have done, and put in practice that power, which God and Nature hath given us, and we have reserved to our selves. As our Engagement with the Princes, having been always Conditional, as other Kingdoms are implicitly, but ours explicitly?

*The Lanark Declaration, 1682.*¹

The road to the formation of the United Societies began on 29 May 1679 when sixty armed militant presbyterian horsemen entered Rutherglen, the head burgh of the lower ward of Lanarkshire, where, after their preacher Thomas Douglas had harangued the crowd assembled to celebrate thanksgiving for Charles II's restoration, their leader Robert Hamilton proclaimed the Rutherglen Testimony.

It added the militants' testimony to those 'who have suffered imprisonments, finings, forfeitures, banishment, torture, and death from an evil and perfidious adversary to the Church and Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ' in Scotland since the beginning of the disintegration of the Covenanters' regime in 1648 and especially since 1660. While stressing the continuity of the struggle between presbyterians and the Crown, it also pointedly referred to their present persecution: since they were now being 'pursued by the same adversary for our lives' for upholding the Covenanted reformation of 1638 to 1649, it was now their duty to witness against all things publicly done against Christ's interest since the Restoration. In particular, the testimony singled out several acts of Parliament and the Privy Council which had overturned the Covenanted reformation and made persons in public positions renounce the Covenants of 1638 and 1643; which had restored episcopacy to, and ejected 'faithful' presbyterian ministers from, the Church of Scotland; which had granted the King, rather

1. James Renwick, [Alexander Shields, Michael Shields and William Boyd], *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* (1687), 183.

than Christ, supremacy over the Church and introduced indulgences and other sinful acts for promoting the King's 'usurped supremacy'. In short, the Testimony was a complete rejection of the Restoration settlement of Scotland. To underline that message the militants usurped the theatre of royal proclamations by burning the offensive acts at the mercat cross just 'as they have unjustly, perfidiously, and presumptuously burned our sacred Covenants'.² The militants' Testimony was designed to challenge the Crown's authority and to provoke a confrontation with government forces. It signalled the beginning of a presbyterian insurrection in the West of Scotland.

The Rutherglen Testimony saw the emergence of distinct militant presbyterian platform within the presbyterian movement, which, in just over two years, would lead to the formation of the United Societies.

* * *

The United Societies were a secretive lay network of militant presbyterians formed in late 1681 under the direction of a general convention, which drew delegates from individual prayer societies. They could muster about three to six thousand men and were mostly small producers - farmers, weavers, tailors, litsters, brewers, shoemakers, chapmen, and their dependents - primarily from the upland parishes of the western shires of Scotland and were mainly led by graduates of Glasgow and Edinburgh. They were the most uncompromising opponents of the Restoration regime in Scotland. Their platform was defined by a series of declarations in the early 1680s which rejected the authority of the King, the Privy Council and Parliament, and by their adherence to the Covenants, which they viewed as a Scottish 'Magna Carta' and an eternally-binding obligation of apocalyptic significance.³ They were also a protest movement against their former brethren, the presbyterian ministry, due to the ministers' abandonment of what they regarded as true testimony and field preaching after the disastrous Bothwell rising of 1679.

The Societies were not the only dissenting movement in Restoration Scotland or Britain to face persecution by the Restoration state. Their moderate presbyterian brethren, Catholics, the Quakers and other English sects also suffered repression after the end of the mid century British Civil Wars, but the violence and intensity of the persecution directed against the Societies has set their struggle

2. James King Hewison, *The Covenanters, A History of the Church in Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution* (Glasgow, 1908), II, 292; Robert Wodrow, *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, from the Restoration to the Revolution*, Robert Burns ed., (Glasgow, 1828-30), III, 66-7.

3. Alexander Shields, *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* (Glasgow, 1797), 123.

apart.⁴

The legacy of the Societies' struggle on Scottish politics and culture lasted for centuries. As Gordon Pentland has shown, the Societies' martyrs were commemorated by Radicals and Reformers of the early nineteenth century as martyrs for political and religious liberties in the face of arbitrary and tyrannous power. The Reformers carried the Societies' banners and swords in their protests, and they renewed or erected many of the monuments and graves dedicated to the Societies' martyrs.⁵ The Reformers were able to tap into a rich vein of local traditions which surrounded the Societies' martyrs. From their prisons on the Bass Rock and the Whig's Vault in Dunnottar Castle, to the martyrs' graves and conventicle monuments, which are a feature of many parishes from Lanarkshire to Galloway, the Societies' struggle has been imprinted on the historical landscape of the Scottish imagination. The Societies' sufferings also inspired the gathering of local traditions surrounding their martyrs and sufferers, from writers such as Patrick Walker, Daniel Defoe and the Reverend Robert Wodrow in the early eighteenth century, to the Reverend Robert Simpson and many others in the nineteenth century and beyond.⁶ Their works, which were initially intended as repositories of traditions, became the bearers of the traditions to the future and informed a substantial literary legacy, discussed at greater length in the conclusion. In particular, the Societies' struggle influenced two of the greatest novels of Scottish literature, Sir Walter Scott's *Old Mortality* (1816), which is based on the Bothwell Rising and its aftermath, and James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1823). The central protagonist of *Confessions*, Robert Wringham, is clearly derived from the Society people, and his lonely suicide grave on Fall Law above St Mary's Loch bears an acute resemblance to the graves of the Societies' martyrs. The character of Wringham is probably partly based on James Harkness, a particularly violent leading member of the United Societies who assaulted episcopal ministers and ransacked Catholic houses. Hogg did

4. Gordon DesBrisay, 'Catholics, Quakers and Religious persecution in Restoration Aberdeen' in *The Innes Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (1996), 136-68. For the Quakers across Restoration Britain, see also Richard L. Greaves, 'Shattered Expectations? George Fox, the Quakers, and the Restoration State, 1660-1685' in *Albion*, 24, 2 (1992), 237-59 & 'The "Great Persecution" Reconsidered, Irish Quakers and the Ethic of Suffering' in Muriel McClendon, Joseph P. Ward and Michael MacDonald eds., *Protestant Identities: Religion, Society, and Self-fashioning in Post-Reformation England* (Stanford, CA, 1999), 211-33, 335-40 & 'Seditious Sectaries or "Sober and Useful Inhabitants"? Changing Conceptions of the Quakers in Early Modern Britain' in *Albion* 33, 1 (2001), 24-50.

5. Gordon Pentland, *Radicalism, Reform and National Identity in Scotland, 1820-1833* (Woodbridge, 2008), 44-5, 142-6.

6. Patrick Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1827); Daniel Defoe, *Memoirs of the Church of Scotland*, (London, 1717); Wodrow, *History*, Robert Burns ed., 4 vols. (Glasgow, 1828-30); Robert Simpson, *Traditions of the Covenanters; or Gleanings among the Mountains* (Edinburgh and London, No date). See also J. Wood Brown, *Covenanters of the Merse, Their History and Sufferings as found in the Records of that Time by the Rev. J. Wood Brown, M.A.*, Gordon (Edinburgh and London, 1893); Alexander Smellie, *Men of the Covenant* (London, 1911); A. B. Todd, *The Covenanters, Their Homes, Haunts and Battlefields* (Allegheny, PA, 1893); James Barr, *The Scottish Covenanters* (Glasgow, 1947).

have a connection to Harkness's descendants. In his time as a shepherd, Hogg worked at the Harkness family farm at Locherben in Closeburn parish, where he probably would have learnt of the traditions surrounding Harkness.⁷

Another legacy of the Societies is perhaps the strangest relic of the later covenanting era, the mask of the field preacher Alexander Peden, one of the most celebrated figures of the era.⁸ Since its discovery in the mid-nineteenth century with Peden's weapons, its purpose has remained an enigma. However, its use is revealed by a tradition handed down through the Laings of Blackgannoch of how the Societies' preacher James Renwick escaped from government forces during the Killing Times. Prior to a Societies' meeting, Laing dressed in Renwick's 'clerical habiliments' to distinguish himself, and Renwick in the clothes of a shepherd. When dragoons approached to attack the meeting, Laing then 'rendered himself as conspicuous as possible' to lure the dragoons into pursuit. Peden's Mask was probably used for a similar function. During the Killing Times, Peden was an old man and his mask was probably designed to disguise a younger and fleet individual when he was preaching to fool pursuing dragoons at a distance and allow Peden time to escape. As such, the mask almost certainly bears some resemblance to Peden.⁹

Despite their legacy, the Societies as a distinct entity have attracted little attention in both presbyterian and modern historiography, due to their being swept up into the wider presbyterian tradition of the Covenanters, and in presbyterian tradition, due to their unedifying reputation for fanaticism and violence. Although later presbyterian tradition was relatively uncritical of the Societies, it nonetheless left invaluable printed collections of source materials relating to them for future generations. In the twentieth century, the Societies fared little better. British Marxist historiography's enthusiasm for the radical sects of the Civil Wars was not transferred to the Societies. In the view of Victor Keirnan, these later Covenanters, meaning the Societies, could 'only float up in the clouds of theology, or sink into doctrinal quicksands deeper than any of their bogs' and were 'in the grip of a destiny of another kind, fashioned for them by all Scotland's past history' which led them to defend 'the dead letter of a treaty with God' and 'holding aloft a banner with a

7. James Hogg, *The Collected Letters of James Hogg: Volume I 1800–1819*, Gillian Hughes ed., (Edinburgh, 2004), 50, 60, 75, 79. The hills near Locherben are also the setting for Hogg's novel of the Societies in the Killing Times *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (1818).

8. Peden's Mask is held in the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. For 'Prophet' Peden's popular appeal in the nineteenth century see A. M. Brown, *Peden the prophet: a tale of the Covenanters: founded on fact* (London, 1859); John C. Johnston, *Alexander Peden, the Prophet of the Covenant: An Appreciation* (Glasgow, 1902); Kirkwood Hewat, *Peden the Prophet: Being some account of the Life and Times of Alexander Peden* (Ayr, 1911).

9. Simpson, *Traditions*, 19–21.

strange device whose meaning ... [they] had forgotten'.¹⁰ In mid-twentieth Scottish history, too, the Societies were viewed as a disruptive distraction from the importance of the conflict between episcopacy and presbytery. For Ian Cowan, the fanaticism of the 'small and insignificant sect' of the Societies existed in 'isolation from political and ecclesiastical realities' and they were a convenient 'excuse' for repression; while Gordon Donaldson thought that they were the misguided heirs to Andrew Melville's doctrine of the two kingdoms and of little more than 'nuisance value'.¹¹ Recently, however, interest in the Societies had begun to reawaken. David Stevenson has pointed to the significance of their legacy in eclipsing the legacy of the earlier Covenanters and found in the Societies the seeds of the ability of ordinary people to challenge the views of the Scottish secular and ecclesiastical elites. Richard L. Greaves and Clare Jackson have reopened the issue of the impact of the Societies' extreme views and violent deeds: for Greaves, the Societies' assassinating principles were the distinguishing feature which set them apart from other Restoration radical movements; while Jackson has pointed towards the impact of their extreme views and violent deeds on moderate presbyterian politics.¹² At the same time, there has been some interest in the political ideas and intellectual thought of the later Covenanters in the work of Caroline Erskine and Iain B. Smart.¹³

In part, this thesis aims to recover the Societies from the sanitising influence of presbyterian tradition and their sidelining by the Reverend Robert Wodrow into Covenanter tradition. It also reexamines their role in some of the significant events in Restoration Britain, such as the Rye House Plots, the Argyll and Monmouth Risings, and the Revolution of 1688 to 1689. It also hopes to provide a context in which the political ideas, violence and extreme views of the Societies were developed.

The Societies' international connections were generally ignored in a presbyterian historiography

10. Victor G. Keirnan, 'The Banner with the Strange Device: The Later Covenanters' in Terry Brotherstone ed., *Covenant, Charter and Party* (Aberdeen, 1989), 45. For another Marxist perspective see Willie Thompson, 'The Kirk and the Cameronians' in Anon. ed., *Rebels and their Causes, Essays in honour of A. L. Morton* (London, 1978), 93-106. The classic of the genre is Christopher Hill, *A World Turned Upside Down, Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London, 1972).

11. Ian B. Cowan, *The Scottish Covenanters, 1660 to 1688* (London, 1976), 107, 110, 129, 132; Gordon Donaldson, *Scotland, James V to James VII* (Edinburgh, 1990), 372, 381.

12. David Stevenson, *The Covenanters: The National Covenant and Scotland* (1988), 64-84; Richard L. Greaves, *Secrets of the Kingdom: The British Radicals from the Popish Plot to the Revolution of 1688-1689* (Stanford, CA., 1992), 69-75; Clare Jackson, *Restoration Scotland, 1660-1690, Royalist Politics, Religion and Ideas* (Woodbridge, 2003), 124-8.

13. Iain M. Smart, 'The Political Ideas of the Scottish Covenanters 1638-1688', *History of Political Thought*, 1 (1980), 167-93; Caroline Erskine, 'The Political Thought of the Restoration Covenanters' in Sharon Adams and Julian Goodare eds., *Scotland in the Seventeenth Century*, (forthcoming).

devoted to the sufferings of the Covenanters or their struggle for civil and religious liberties.¹⁴ As a result, perceptions of the Societies were confined to a Scottish, rather than a British or European context, and they have been perceived as a narrow-minded minority isolated from European trends and movements. Recently, Richard L. Greaves and Ginny Gardner have touched on their involvement in the 'British radical underground' and the Scottish exile community in the United Provinces, and this thesis hopes to deepen and extend that work to include the Societies' connections to, and views on, Dutch and Swiss Calvinists, the Waldensians of Piedmont, Hungarian Kurucs, French Huguenots, the Lutheran, Catholic and Muslim powers, the English North American colonies and slavery in Barbados.¹⁵

The Societies' story also has contemporary relevance. This thesis was begun prior to the public awareness of the 'War on Terror' and 'global jihad'. It is not intended as a contribution to that debate, but as recent events have unfolded, some of the parallels seem unavoidable.

This thesis is primarily a study in the politics and development of the Societies from the creation of a coherent militant platform after 1679 to the Revolution. It is concerned with how the Societies perceived their own struggle and primarily employs Societies' sources, rather than government sources, to explore the Societies' politics and world view. It aims to reassess Societies' place in the Restoration era and recover them from the simplistic stereotypes of them generated by presbyterian tradition and its opponents. It is also a simple nuts and bolts exercise: beyond the Societies' declarations, sufferings and political thought, little is known of the development of the United Societies which produced them.

This thesis is not a study of the presbyterian movement as a whole or of the Restoration regime, although it touches on both of them in relation to the Societies. It is not a study in persecution, although it does discuss it. It is also not a study in the theological or political thought of the Societies, but hopes to put its development in context.

Before continuing, a brief word on the primary sources, methodological issues and on the terminology used is required. The three main primary sources used to give an insight into the Societies are Michael Shields's *Faithful Contendings Displayed* (1780), James Renwick's letters and

14. Two limited exceptions are W. H. Carslaw, *Exiles of the Covenant*, (Paisley, 1908) and W. Steven, *The History of the Scottish Church*, Rotterdam (Edinburgh, 1832).

15. Greaves, *Secrets of the Kingdom* (1992); Ginny Gardner, *The Scottish Exile Community in the Netherlands 1660-1690* (East Linton, 2004).

Patrick Walker's Lives.¹⁶ Each presents significant methodological challenges.

Faithful Contendings Displayed is a narrative history and vindication of the United Societies between 1681 and 1690 compiled in the 1690s. Shields was the clerk of the Societies' convention from December 1682 and his narrative contains a substantial selection of Societies' official correspondence drawn from his letter collection held in Edinburgh University Library.¹⁷ Shields's carefully-constructed narrative frequently conceals unedifying or embarrassing information and has to be interpreted with care.

Renwick's contemporary letters cover from 1682 to 1688 and were collected and published in the later nineteenth century. Most of his letters are private correspondence directed to Robert Hamilton, the Societies' influential commissioner in the United Provinces. As the Societies' effective leader for much of this period, Renwick's correspondence provides an invaluable insight into the politics of the Societies and serves a useful counterpoint and corrective to Shields, who did not use them as a source.

Unravelling and understanding the meaning of the Societies' correspondence is a fundamental building block of this thesis. The surviving correspondence is substantial, but selective, as what remains of it is that which the clerk of the convention or those who saved Renwick's letters considered important. Nearly all of the surviving correspondence is between the Societies' leadership, which was sent across the North Sea, to and from the United Provinces, rather than between correspondents in Scotland. Thus, it offers a partial, but high level, insight into the Societies. It is also fragmentary, as often only one side of the correspondence survives, especially in the case of Renwick's letters.¹⁸

Familiarity between correspondents presents another obstacle. In most cases, the authors of the letters knew that the recipients would immediately grasp the meaning of short phrases or a set of initials. To make matters worse, their letters were often carried by a courier from the Societies' convention who could elaborate on their contents.¹⁹ Nonetheless, by careful cross-referencing,

16. Michael Shields, *Faithful Contendings Displayed: being An historical relation of the State and Actings of the Suffering Remnant in the Church of Scotland, who subsisted in Select Societies, and were united in general correspondencies during the hottest time of the late Persecution, viz. From the year 1681 to 1691*, John Howie of Lochgoin ed. (Glasgow, 1780); James Renwick, *The Letters of James Renwick, The last of Scotland's Covenanted Martyrs*, Thomas Houston ed., (Paisley, 1865). & *The Life and Letters of James Renwick the Last Scottish Martyr*, William Henderson Carslaw ed., (Edinburgh and London, 1893); Patrick Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1827).

17. Michael Shields's letter collection is held in three volumes in Edinburgh University Library. EUL MSS. La. III. 344 & 350. They were formerly volume XXIV of the Wodrow Collection, now mostly held in the National Library of Scotland.

18. For a list of the surviving Societies' correspondence between 1682 and 1688, see Appendix 7.6.

19. Shields, *FCD*, 80, 82, 96, 98, 99, 170, 184, 219, 255, 262. Letters sent across the North Sea were often carried by Society people sent by the convention to the United Provinces, probably via the ports of Bo'ness and Newcastle. They may have had orders to destroy them in order to prevent them falling into government hands, as Earlstoun threw his letters overboard when he was captured. Greaves, *JK*, 89.

establishing an accurate chronology, discourse analysis and familiarity with the correspondence, the vast majority of the correspondence can be easily interpreted.

The same issues apply to the few Societies' letters in cant. The Societies' well-founded fears that their letters would be intercepted by the authorities sometimes led them to write their letters or sections of them in cant, a form of writing in which the author disguised the true meaning of their letter by concealing it behind a discussion of seemingly innocuous matters. Fortunately, the Societies invariably used a fairly logical set of trading metaphors to conceal insurrectionary activity, but it still requires careful interpretation.²⁰

Patrick Walker's lives of Richard Cameron, Donald Cargill Walter Smith, John Wellwood and Alexander Peden, who were all influential on the Societies' development, were initially published separately in chapbook form in the 1720s and 1730s and later published in a collected form in the nineteenth century.²¹ Walker was an activist within the Societies in charge of their finances.²² The strength of Walker's rambling hagiographies for this thesis lies in the wealth of details and traditions he collected from obscure figures within the Societies ranks, as it gives rare glimpses into the social networks and complex politics of the Societies, which often contradict Shields or Renwick.

Walker's Lives highlight a key methodological approach adopted. This thesis follows a bottom-up approach to the Societies, rather than a top-down interpretation of them. A substantial database collating information on possible members of the Societies has been used to identify key Society people, place them in a local context and link them to the primary sources. This has allowed a broader approach to be taken in the interpretation of the Societies' politics and activities, as the focus is on the Societies' lay membership, rather than only Renwick's ministerial leadership.

In regards to terminology. The terms 'party' and 'faction' have been deployed to describe the divisions within the presbyterian movement as a whole. 'Party' has been used when a body of presbyterians consciously defined themselves as separate from other presbyterians, usually in the sense of one party withdrawing from a body of presbyterians to maintain 'true' presbyterian testimony. 'Faction' had been used to describe internal political divisions within a presbyterian body or party, such as the United Societies. The terms do not have any high-political connotations in

20. For an intriguing discussion on government espionage in the Restoration, including postal interception, see Alan Marshall, *Intelligence, and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660–1685* (Cambridge, 1994). For examples of Societies' letters in cant, see Carslaw, *Letters*, 119-23; Thomas Sprat, *Copies of the Informations and Original Papers Relating to the Proof of the Horrid Conspiracy Against the Late King, His Present Majesty, and the Government: As they were Order'd to be Publish'd by His Late Majesty* (London, 1685), 159-61.

21. Walker's lives were also later published as *Six saints of the Covenant: Peden, Semple, Welwood, Cameron, Cargill, Smith / by Patrick Walker ; edited with illustrative documents, introduction, notes, and a glossary by D. Hay Fleming and a forward by S.R. Crockett*, D. Hay Fleming ed. (London, 1901).

22. Walker, *BP*, I, 126.

relation to the formation of political parties.²³ Throughout the period under consideration, the Societies never fully resolved the issue of whether they were a separate party or a faction, despite the Societies being a distinct body within the presbyterian movement. However, based on the tone of the Societies' rhetoric, the transition from faction to party for the majority of the Societies occurred in mid 1683.

Modern analytical terms have also been used as a useful short-hand to describe the shifting landscape of late Restoration presbyterian factions or parties, rather than labels they would have recognised. After 1679, the presbyterian movement effectively divided into two general categories, 'moderate' and 'militant', which reflect the political differences between the factions. The boundary between them was not fixed, individuals moved between the factions, particularly before the appearance of a coherent militant platform in 1680, but between 1683 to 1687 the party lines were relatively rigid.

The moderates included the vast majority of the presbyterian ministry, including those who had accepted indulgence and those who did not, but were unwilling to break with their indulged brethren. The moderates had a popular base, but its leadership came from the secular and ecclesiastical social elites. They wanted a presbyterian settlement of the Church and a limited monarchical settlement, supported royal authority and generally favoured constitutional methods to resolve their dispute with the Restoration regime. However, in moments of political crisis, the moderate leadership were willing to resort to arms to achieve their goals.

The militants were a very small minority of the presbyterian ministry or social elite, but did have significant popular support among the lay conventicle network. For them, the Covenants were both a binding obligation to God and fundamental constitutional documents whose authority must be restored. In their view, the breaking of the Covenants had led to the Lord's wrath with Scotland. Thus, they rejected compliance in the sins of the land which breached their Covenanted obligations and would not join with those who complied with the sins of the land, such as those who joined with the indulged ministry, paid the Cess tax or took bonds, unless they publicly acknowledged their error. They, too, demanded a presbyterian church settlement, but specifically sought a Covenanted settlement of Church and State. After the formation of a coherent militant platform in 1680, they comprehensively rejected royal authority as established in the Restoration and the constitutional mechanisms of an ungodly state, and opted for armed confrontation with the Restoration regime.

23. For a debate on faction and party see Richard L. Greaves, 'Great Scott! The Restoration in Turmoil, or, Restoration Crises and the Emergence of Party', Jonathan Scott, 'Restoration Process. Or, If This Isn't a Party, We're Not Having a Good Time', Gray S. De Krey, 'Party Lines: A Reply', Tim Harris, 'Sobering Thoughts, But the Party is Not Yet Over: A Reply', James Rosenheim, 'Reply to Richard Greaves and Jonathan Scott' in *Albion* 25, 4 (1993), 605-51.

However, from 1683, militants were generally unwilling to participate in insurrections which did not aim to restore the Covenants, as discussed in later chapters.

The Societies' contemporary terms - 'left-hand' and 'right-hand' - to describe defections from what they viewed as true Covenanted testimony have also been used. They were, and are, deployed in the opposite sense to the modern political sense of left and right. For the Societies, left-hand defections ran through the moderate presbyterians to episcopalians on the extreme left, while right-hand defections ran through the Cameronian Russellites to the non-presbyterian Gibbites on the extreme right. While the position of the Societies testimony did move, sometimes revealing or concealing those on the immediate left and the right, it did not substantially shift in either direction. Nearly all of the social elite and the vast bulk of the Scottish population lay on the left hand of the Societies.²⁴

Finally, the United Societies' governing body, variously known as the 'convention of estates', 'general convention' or 'general meeting', is referred to as the 'convention' throughout to add consistency to its description and to reflect the fact that it was attended by 'delegates' or 'commissioners'. The Societies' sources are inconsistent in the names they used for the convention, but later sources seem to have shunned 'general convention' in favour of 'general meeting', probably to avoid the former's sense of the body having secular authority.²⁵ Each convention has also been numbered, even though the Societies did not number their conventions. This is to avoid confusion between different conventions held at different times at the same site and impart a sense of chronology. For instance, the Societies held eight conventions at Auchengilloch in Lesmahagow parish between 1684 and 1687. Thus, the meeting held at Auchengilloch on 12 February 1685 is called the eighteenth convention and the meeting held there on 1 June 1687 is called the thirty-fourth convention etc. A complete list of numbered conventions with their locations and dates can be found in Appendix 7.2.

* * *

The United Societies were born out of the confrontation between the Restoration state and the presbyterian movement between 1660 and 1679. The confrontation had begun with the establishment of the Restoration settlement which reintroduced episcopal governance over the

24. Carslaw, *Letters*, 31-2, 141; Shields, *FCD*, 136, 143, 202, 259, 354. See Appendix 7.1 for a chart of left- and right-hand divisions and schisms.

25. Carslaw, *Letters*, 143; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 502; Shields, *FCD*, passim; 'Resolutions from Conventions' EUL MSS. La.III.344, Vol. 2, No. 234.

Scottish church. The reimposition of episcopacy led to hundreds of ministers refusing to conform and being deprived from their parishes for their support of a presbyterian settlement of the Church.²⁶

The distribution of deprived presbyterian ministers from 1660 to 1679 offers the first window into the extent of presbyterian dissent from the Restoration settlement. In the 534 ministerial charges south of the Tay in 1679, 254, or forty-eight per cent, were deprived for not conforming to episcopacy. The deprived charges were not evenly distributed between shires. Most of the central and eastern shires, with the exceptions of Edinburgh and Fife, exhibited relatively low levels of deprivations, but in the western and south-western shires the totals rose to over fifty per cent deprived in Kirkcudbright and Dumfries shires and to seventy-five per cent or over in Ayr, Lanark, Renfrew and Wigtown shires.²⁷

The western and south-western shires represented the heart of the presbyterian problem and from early in the Restoration it had become clear that the settlement of the Church had created instability there, as presbyterians withdrew from their parish churches and took to field preachings. The initial use of military coercion to end presbyterian defiance of the Crown sparked the ill-fated Pentland Rising of 1666 in the South West and was followed by a wave of executions which further alienated presbyterian opinion.²⁸

The policy of coercion proved counterproductive and it was soon replaced by conflicting policies which confused efforts to quell presbyterian dissent. In 1669 and 1672 the regime issued royal indulgences or licenses to selected deprived presbyterian ministers to preach within designated parishes, provided that nothing seditious was preached. Its aim was to divide the moderate presbyterians who accepted royal authority away from more militant elements who rejected the expressly Erastian settlement of the Church introduced by the Act of Supremacy in 1669, but it was confused in its application.²⁹ Rather than targeting moderate-dominated areas, the indulged ministers were generally planted in the western shires where the authorities faced the greatest challenge from presbyterian dissent.

The distribution of the indulged parishes in 1679 offers a second window on presbyterian dissent. The indulged were primarily concentrated in the western shires of Ayr, Lanark and parts of Renfrew. In Renfrewshire, the indulged were generally not planted in parishes which later exhibited

26. Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 35-62.

27. See Appendices 7.7 & 7.8. Cowan counted the deprived ministers by post-Restoration synods and presbyteries.

28. Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 62-72; Charles Sanford Terry, *The Pentland Rising & Rullion Green* (Glasgow, 1905).

29. Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 79-81.

serious levels of dissent. In Lanarkshire, a similar pattern prevailed, but some were indulged in parishes which later became Societies' strongholds, such as Cambusnethan, Carluke, Shotts and Evandale. Ayrshire, too, exhibited a similar pattern to Lanarkshire with a few indulged ministers planted in what became the militant strongholds of Dalmellington, Galston, Loudon and Sorn. In the south-western shires indulged ministers were virtually unknown. They did not impact at all on Dumfriesshire or Wigtownshire and barely touched Kirkcudbrightshire, except for the parishes of Balmaclellan, Dalry and Kells in the Glenkens district which became centres of militant dissent. Beyond the western and south-western shires, the impact of indulgence was either negligible or nonexistent.

The impact of the indulgences on dissent was muted. In Ayrshire it was concentrated in areas which did not go on to become centres of militant dissent, but in eastern Ayrshire, Lanarkshire and the Glenkens it was imposed on parishes which became militant strongholds. Broadly, the indulgences were ineffective in quelling the emergence of militant dissent and, in certain areas, probably exacerbated the problem.³⁰

At the same time as the indulgences were introduced, Robert Leighton, bishop of Dunblane, also led attempts at conciliation with the presbyterians. However, Leighton's 'Accommodation', which aimed to reach a compromise settlement of the Church balancing episcopacy with presbytery, was undermined by the introduction of the royal supremacy, indulgences and further measures against field conventicles. It was met with scepticism by even his close presbyterian friends. In the words of James Stewart of Goodtrees, who dined with him, Leighton 'loved gauding abroad too much; – you hae the fate of Dinah, Jacob's daughter, for now I may say the Schekamites hae catched and defloured you'.³¹ Leighton's scheme was roundly rejected by the presbyterian laity in set-piece debates and his attempts to press his Accommodation on the indulged ministers only succeeded in uniting them with their deprived ministerial brethren.

The policies of coercion, conciliation and repression spectacularly backfired. In the early 1670s, field preaching exploded out of its western strongholds and spread east into Fife and the Lothians, north into Perthshire and even beyond into shires from Aberdeen to Ross. House conventicles, too, spread through the burghs and into the homes of prominent presbyterians in public life.³²

McNeill and MacQueen's analysis of the 159 ministers, 1901 lay individuals and 809 illegal conventicles mentioned in the registers of the Privy Council between 1666 and 1685 offers an

30. See Appendices 7.7 & 7.8.

31. Goodtrees, pronounced 'Gutters', alluded to the story of the rape of Dinah by the Schechemites in Genesis 34. Leighton is said to have wished he had 'stayed home and chewed gravell' after his dinner with Goodtrees. *Coltness Collections*, I, 23.

32. Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 73-87.

opaque window on the distribution of presbyterian dissent, as the results represent the waxing and waning of key battle grounds between the field preachers and the government, rather than the distribution of dissent. In each of the categories, the central and eastern shires represent nearly three-fifths of recorded conventicle activity, while the western and south-western shires only represent around a quarter.³³

In the face of a united and expanding presbyterian movement which threatened the Scottish Restoration settlement, the regime reached for increasingly repressive measures: fines were introduced for failing to attend church; troops were garrisoned in the houses of sympathetic presbyterians lairds; landowners were made responsible for their tenants and courts were established to tackle field conventicles. As a consequence, the prisons were rapidly filled with suspected conventiclers. Although some took bonds never to attend field conventicles to obtain their release, many others refused and remained imprisoned awaiting trial. The presbyterian field preachers were the particular target of the government's ire. Prominent field preachers were outlawed and between 1673 and 1679 over a dozen presbyterian preachers were imprisoned in the fortress on the Bass Rock, a grim and inaccessible volcanic plug in the mouth of the Firth of Forth. Nonetheless, by late 1677 with the prisons nearly overwhelmed, heritors in Lanarkshire and Ayrshire refusing to comply with the regime's demands and armed conventicles meeting in larger numbers for protection, it became obvious that more radical measures were required to quell presbyterian dissent: an array of remedies were deployed which were to set the tone for the next decade.

In January 1678, the Privy Council sent the 'Highland Host' and militia to enforce bonds on the western shires. In the short term, the quartering, threats and looting by the Host induced compliance, but at the price of greater resentment. Examples were also made. James Mitchell, a ministerial prisoner on the Bass who had attempted to assassinate James Sharp, the archbishop of St Andrews, in 1668, and James Learmont, who had attended a conventicle where a trooper was killed, were executed and sixty-nine presbyterian prisoners, including Peden, one of the Bass prisoners, were banished to Virginia. In early 1679, the supposed leaders of a future rebellion in the South West, John Welsh, the former minister of Irongray, Gabriel Semple, the former minister of Kirkpatrick-Durham, and Samuel Arnot, the former minister of Tongland, were declared traitors and leading south-western presbyterian lairds were intercommuned for their reset. At the same time, the regime also adopted long-term measures. The severity of punishments for attending

33. Peter G. B. McNeill and Hector L. MacQueen, *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707* (Edinburgh, 1996), 395-7. McNeill and MacQueen's results, which encompass all of Scotland, are organised by presbyterian synods and presbyteries, which did not exist until after the Restoration period, rather than by shire. Nonetheless, broad regional conclusions can be drawn.

conventicles were increased, a larger standing military force was raised, permanent garrisons were established in the West and in 1678, the Convention of Estates agreed to a Cess tax of £1,800,000 Scots to pay for the suppression of the presbyterian movement.³⁴ By early 1679, the government's repression began to bite and the size and number of conventicles rapidly declined. The presbyterian movement faced the stark choice of either quitting field preaching or confronting the government forces. It was in that context in which the Rutherglen Testimony and a distinct militant presbyterian movement emerged.

34. Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 87-93; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 275, 559; *RPCS*, VI, 96, 119-20, 159-60.

‘The Fallen Standard’

ONE

The Formation of the United Societies, 1679–1681

The publick standard of the Gospel is fallen in Scotland; and if I know any thing in the mind of the Lord, ye are called to undergo your trials before us, and go home to lift the fallen standard, and display it publickly before the World.

– Robert MacWard at the ordination of Richard Cameron in the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam, September 1679.¹

I. The Origins of the Militant Platform

The disarray in the Presbyterian movement in 1679 was not simply due to the escalating nature of its confrontation with the regime since the Restoration. It was also due to the divisive debates within the Movement, which persecution had brought to the fore between moderate and militant presbyterians. The roots of a coherent militant platform, as articulated at Rutherglen, lay in the disintegration of the Covenanting Revolution in the late 1640s when the Church of Scotland divided over whether to defend the Stewart kingship or its Covenanted revolution.

Like all presbyterians, the militants’ martyr testimonies confirm that they adhered to the National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, and to the *Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Directory of Worship* and *Form of Church Government* agreed at the Westminster assembly. However, they parted from the majority of presbyterians in their admiration of the narrowly-based Covenanter regime of 1649, popularly known as the ‘Rule of the Saints’. Of the militants’ martyr testimonies which contain a checklist of what they adhered to, three quarters adhered to the *Solemn Acknowledgement of Sins and Engagements to Duties* of 1649, which had renewed the Covenants in the wake of the divisive and disastrous Engagement of 1647, in which the majority of the Scottish nobles had abandoned the Covenants to restore the Stewart kingship in England.²

The militants’ testimonies also firmly placed themselves in the Protester tradition which had

1. Walker, *BP*, I, 197.

2. See Appendix 1.1. *The Confession of Faith; The Larger and Shorter Catechisms, with the Scripture-Proofs at Large: Together with The Sum of Saving Knowledge; Covenants, National and Solemn League; Acknowledgement of Sins, and Engagement to Duties. Directories for Public and Family Worship; Form of Church Government, &c* (Philadelphia, 1829). For a discussion of the Engagement of 1647 and the radical Covenanter regime of 1648 to 1649, see David Stevenson, *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Scotland 1644–1651* (London, 1977).

withdrawn from the main body of the Church during the Cromwellian occupation of Scotland. Over half of their testimonies explicitly laid claim to the Protester or Remonstrant tradition, which had rejected the resolution of the General Assembly which had readmitted the 'malignant' supporters of the Engagement into public life when faced with Cromwell's invasion, or adhered to the Protesters' *Humble Remonstrance* (1650) or the Protester piety of David Dickson and John Durham's the *Sum of Saving Knowledge* (1650) or James Guthrie's *Causes of the Lord's Wrath against Scotland* (1651), a Protester list of Scotland's defections from Covenanted reformation.³

At the Restoration, the divisions between Protesters and Resolutioners were quietly buried after both parties were ejected from the Church. However, it was the Protesters who were singled out for the most severe punishments by the new royalist regime. Leading Protesters were either executed or banished to the United Provinces. Among the latter category were Robert MacWard, a minister in Glasgow, and John Brown, the minister of Wamphray parish in Dumfriesshire. Both had been close to the preeminent Protester divine, Samuel Rutherford, who had died before he could be executed.⁴ Both were also enormously influential in shaping militant ideology from exile. Beyond the bounds of Scotland, MacWard and Brown waged 'opposition with the pen' against the Restoration regime. Brown's opening-salvo was *An Apologetical Relation* (1665), which has been described as 'positive call to action' in preaching defiance of the Crown.⁵ Every succeeding government initiative aimed at quelling the presbyterian movement received a response from MacWard and Brown. MacWard railed against Leighton's scheme in *The Case of Accommodation* (1670) and the Act of Supremacy in *The Poor Man's Cup of Cold Water ministered to the Saints and Sufferers for Christ in Scotland* (1678), and Brown's *History of the Indulgence* (1678) was aimed against the 'abomination' of the indulgences of 1669 and 1672. In Cowan's view, MacWard and Brown's interventions reached ever greater levels of 'hysteria'.⁶

However, the image of MacWard and Brown as merely irreconcilable to the Restoration regime is only part of the picture. In exile MacWard, Brown and other militant presbyterian ministers drew close to the *Nadere Reformatie* or 'Further Reformation' movement within the Dutch Calvinist

3. See Appendix 1.1. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 43-7, 53-5.

4. *Fasti*, II, 224-5; III, 465. For Rutherford's political thought and a discussion of Protester ideology, see John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions, The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge, 1997).

5. John Brown, *An Apologetical Relation, of particular sufferings of the faithfull Ministers & professors of the Church of Scotland, since August 1660* (n.p., 1665); Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 51, 61 & 90.

6. Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 90; Robert MacWard, *The Case of the Accommodation lately proposed by the Bishop of Dunblane to Non-conforming Ministers examined* ([Rotterdam], 1671) & *The Poor Man's Cup of Cold Water Ministered to the Saints and Sufferings for Christ in Scotland, who are amidst the Scorching Flames of the Fiery Trial* (1676). John Brown, *The History of the Indulgence Shewing its Rise, Conveyance, Progress & Acceptance: Together with a Demonstration of the Unfaithfulness thereof, And an Answer to contrary Objections: As also a Vindication of such, as scruple to bear the Indulged* (n.p., 1678).

Church. Among their close contacts were several leading lights of the *Nadere Reformatie*, such as Jacob Koelman, James Borstius and professors at the University of Utrecht, such as Gisbert Voetius.

Jacob Koelman had been ejected from his charge in Flanders for 'refusing to observe the festival days and formularies of the Dutch Church'. He was noted for favouring stricter churches, and gave considerable help to the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam, including participating in Richard Cameron's ordination, as discussed below. The Societies would look to Koelman not only as a 'great witness against corruptions' in Holland, but as 'a great sympathizer with the afflicted contenders against defections' in Scotland. From the Restoration onwards, Koelman had specialised in translating Protestant Presbyterian divines, such as Hugh Binning's *Principles of Christian Religion* (1678), Guthrie's *The Christian's Great Interest* (1680) and others works by James Durham and David Dickson, often seeking biographical details or introductions from MacWard in Utrecht. In return, Koelman was of tremendous help to MacWard and Brown in their correspondence with the States General when they were threatened with extradition to Scotland 1677. He worked closely with Brown, often translating his manuscripts into Dutch and disseminating them across Holland before their publication in English, and he translated MacWard's collection of Rutherford's letters, *Joshua Redivivus*, in 1672, which proved so popular that it ran through five further Dutch editions prior to 1688.

The minister James Borstius was also close to the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam. Borstius had probably known MacWard since MacWard's brief stint at the Scots Kirk in 1662 and provided support to him and his fellow ministerial exiles like Brown, John Nevay, the former minister of Galston, and John Livingstone, the former minister of Ancrum. Borstius, too, circulated MacWard and Brown's works and translated the works of Rutherford, Durham and Guthrie into Dutch. The Scots were grateful for his support. John Nevay provided a Latin paraphrase of the *Song of Songs* for Borstius's collected sermons and MacWard 'expressed the Scots gratitude to him' when Borstius lay dying in 1680.

MacWard and Brown also had the support of an influential circle of Dutch intellectuals. Thanks to MacWard, the United Provinces was the only European state outside of Britain where the Rutherford's theological works were published during the seventeenth century. The connection had begun in 1668, when MacWard and Livingstone had brought their edited manuscript of Rutherford's *Examen Arminianismi* to Utrecht to Matthias Nethenus, Professor of Divinity, Andreas Essenius, Professor of Theology, and Gisbert Voetius, Professor of Theology and Oriental Science. Nethenus and Voetius acknowledged MacWard's role in the preface and supervised its publication. From then on, MacWard was on an 'intimate footing' with Voetius and Nethenus and Brown's theological works garnered admirers in professors Melchior Leydecker at Utrecht and Friedrich

Spanheim at Leiden.⁷

Far from being isolated exiles, the militant torch bearers of Scotland's Covenanted tradition were made welcome and positively sought out by the highest echelons of the *Nadere Reformatorie* movement. They influenced the currents of Dutch Reformed thought and were at the heart of the debate over Protestantism's future direction in the face of the challenge from Counter Reformation and the subversive new ideas of what Jonathan Israel has termed 'Radical Enlightenment'. The development of their militant platform was not simply born in opposition to the Restoration regime, but in a wider European context. It was not only a desire to restore Scotland's Covenanted Reformation, but to further reform Scottish society, which lay behind their developing militant ideology.⁸

By the late 1670s, MacWard and Brown's base at the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam, was a 'refuge of religious and political dissidents' and the 'the unofficial headquarters' of the presbyterian movement. MacWard and Brown were part of an influential small circle of exiled presbyterians who subtly manipulated decisions affecting the Scots Kirk and in turn the course of Scottish presbyterian dissent.⁹

At the same time as their strict ideology of disengagement from the Restoration regime was being distilled in Rotterdam, it was also being smuggled back into Scotland through their books, which by the late 1670s, had radicalised a small but significant section of the presbyterian movement into seeking greater purification of the movement to assuage the Lord's wrath with Scotland.¹⁰

Their platform was an old call to arms, rekindling the Protester and Resolutioner debates. However, it was also aimed at the changing ecclesiastical and political landscape of Restoration Scotland. In the late 1670s, renewed persecution had thrown the indulged ministers submission to royal authority into sharper relief. Richard Cameron and John Wellwood challenged presbyterian unity with their anti-indulgence field preaching, but their controversial preaching was suppressed: Cameron was sent to Rotterdam as 'a mere babbler' by a presbyterian ministry determined to

7. Steven, *History*, 22, 30, 33, 53n, 72-3, 72n, 73n, 75-7, 79, 80n, 81n; Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions*, 260-71; Hector Macpherson, *Outlaws For Freedom: Sketches of the Persecuted Covenanters* (Edinburgh, 1956), 64, 73; Alexander Shields, *Life of Renwick* printed in Patrick Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1827), 128-9; John Howie of Lochgoin, *The Scots worthies: their lives and testimonies. Including many additional notes, and lives of eminent worthies not contained in the original collection / edited by J.A. Wylie, assisted by James Anderson, with an introductory sketch of the history of the period, by the editor* (London, [1875]), 382; Barr, *Scottish Covenanters*, 244.

8. Israel places Voetius at the centre of the defence of Calvinist Orthodoxy, see Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford, 2001), 25-6.

9. Keith L. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism, A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden, 1982), 432; R. A. Houston, 'Elders and Deacons: Membership of the consistory of the Scots church, Rotterdam (1643-1829)', 284; Steven, *History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam*, 66-7, 67n.

10. Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 51, 95, 104.

maintain discipline and Wellwood's illness soon led to his death.¹¹

Attempts to undermine presbyterian unity would not be tolerated by a presbyterian movement, which by 1678, had the wind in its sails. At an open-air communion in Irongray parish held by John Welsh, John Blackadder and Gabriel Semple, 14,000 attended in defiance of the King's laws. In the presbyterian tradition, the Irongray communion stands as testimony to the popularity of the presbyterian preachers and the laity's thirst after the free preaching of the Gospel, yet, field preachings did not happen in isolation.¹² Unnoticed behind the traditional image of minister-led movement lay an extensive patchwork network of committed lay activists who organised and publicised the events, who conveyed the ministers to and from them, and provided the armed escort to deter government forces, as well as a multitude of followers. As the work of McNeill and MacQueen demonstrates, by the late 1670s, the field preaching network, the backbone of the presbyterian movement, stretched from Fife and Perthshire in the East to Wigtownshire in the South West. It was those lay activists and the attenders of field conventicles and their communities, rather than the ministry, who bore the brunt of increased persecution through bonds, fines, imprisonment and the depredations of the Highland Host.¹³ It was almost certainly within that context, that MacWard and Brown's ideas and Welwood and Cameron's anti-indulgence preaching began to reach, and appeal to, a wider lay audience and initiate debate over how presbyterians should react to their increasing persecution and over how much they should cooperate with a persecuting regime and compliant ministers like the indulged who accepted its authority.

Those debates became manifest in a dispute between lay militants in Ayrshire and Lanarkshire with John Welsh, and in the willingness of those militants, and others close to them in Fife, to defend field preachings by force.

The dispute with Welsh had sprung from his attempt to form a general correspondence under ministerial control between his followers in the South West and the militants in Lanarkshire and eastern Ayrshire. Welsh's plan was rejected by William Cleland from Douglas, who later played a role in the Societies' affairs, probably over the issue of the ministry maintaining brotherhood with the indulged clergy. Since late 1678, the militants from Lanarkshire and eastern Ayrshire had regularly held armed field preachings in the hills to the south-east of Glasgow in defiance of royal authority. The militants' ambulatory conventicle was headed by Robert Hamilton, the twenty-nine year old younger son of Sir Thomas Hamilton of Preston and Fingalton, who would later become

11. Walker, *BP*, I, 198; Howie, *Scots Worthies*, 465-7; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 291, 325. Walker saw the Auchengilloch fast as fulfilling Wellwood's deathbed prediction that the last two faithful ministers in Scotland would be martyred.

12. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 276.

13. McNeill and MacQueen, *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707*, 395-7.

a key figure in the United Societies. At one of their conventicles held at Cumberhead in Lesmahagow parish, Hamilton's armed conventicle was ordered to disperse in the King's name, but Hamilton had replied that they 'farts on the King's teeth, and the Counsells, and all who sent yow, For we appear here for the King of Heaven'.¹⁴

The 'Lesmahagow Incident' was part of a pattern of increasing militancy in the face of persecution in that area, and it was emulated by their militant brethren in Fife. There, two seemingly inconsequential acts of repression, the shooting of a horse and the dispersal of a field preaching at Drumcurrow Craig, triggered a response from local societies that led to the assassination of James Sharp, Archbishop of St Andrews, on 3 May 1679. The assassins were led by two Fife lairds, David Hackston of Rathillet and John Balfour of Kinloch, who were both known to Hamilton and Cameron, and included among their number James Russell in Kingskettle, who went to found the Russellites sect.¹⁵

In the aftermath of Sharp's killing, some of the assassins sought out their Lanarkshire brethren. Following a meeting at Arnbuckle in Monklands, Rathillet, Kinloch and Russell met with Hamilton and Cleland, and the militants' field preachers, Donald Cargill, the former minister of Barony parish, John Kid, John King and Thomas Douglas. This group would form the core of the militant faction which produced the Rutherglen Testimony within a fortnight.¹⁶

Besides denouncing the Restoration settlement, as discussed in the introduction, the Rutherglen Testimony concealed a coercive challenge to the moderate wing of the presbyterian movement. In naming the indulgences among the sins of the land, the militants' testimony struck at the agreement between the ejected presbyterian ministry to maintain brotherhood with presbyterian ministers who had accepted indulgence. However, the militants were cautious enough to make it contingent on the 'consent of the rest of our suffering brethren in Scotland'.¹⁷ There is little doubt that the Rutherglen Testimony posed a significant dilemma for the moderate wing of presbyterian movement as to whether to support the militants' rising or not. If the militants won the inevitable confrontation with government forces, the Lord would be seen to have approved their testimony; if the militants lost, then their testimony would be sealed by their martyrdom. All presbyterian eyes must have turned to the militants' next field preaching at Drumclog, near Loudon Hill. Although less than a sixth of the numbers the militants had expected joined with them at Drumclog, the

14. 'A Short But True Account of the Rise of the Divisions at Bothwell', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 11; Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 93, 96; Greaves, *SK*, 58-9.

15. James Kirkton, *The Secret and True History of the Church of Scotland, from the Reformation to the Year 1678: To which is added An Account of the Murder of Archbishop Sharp, By James Russell, an actor therein.*, C. K. Sharp ed. (Edinburgh, 1817), 403-19.

16. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 421-39.

17. Wodrow, *History*, III, 67.

militants successfully swept aside the government force of dragoons led by John Graham of Claverhouse. Within a week Glasgow had fallen into the militants' hands and the infamous debates between the presbyterian factions had begun.¹⁸

II. The Bothwell Debates

And though the Lord had been graciously pleased to employ me for his cause and interest, some years before that, yet it was but like inland voyages, in comparison of that great deep of Bothwell. – Robert Hamilton's reflection on the Bothwell Debates.¹⁹

On 22 June 1679, the presbyterian rising which had followed on from the victory at Drumclog was comprehensively defeated at the battle of Bothwell Bridge. Afterwards, both the United Societies and historians would see the debates between the presbyterian factions which preceded the battle as a crucial factor in the defeat and as a decisive turning point in the fortunes of the presbyterian movement.²⁰

The Bothwell Debates have been compared to the importance of the English Leveller's Putney Debates in 1647, but their legacy was to be longer than that of Putney, as they became a symbol of the fractured presbyterian church and later of the dangers of political radicalism.²¹

In the early eighteenth century, Wodrow defined historical understanding of the debates, but his moderate bias ensured that the debates came to be interpreted as essentially a struggle between a moderate presbyterian majority, led by their ministers, and an obstinate and disorderly militant minority. However, Wodrow's moderate and minister dominated interpretation of events was based on his reading of mainly militant-derived narrative sources.²²

The militants behind the narratives Wodrow used, reached a different conclusion. For them, the Debates had witnessed the undermining and betrayal of their cause by a few moderate lairds and

18. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 439-51; Thomas Brownlie of Torfoot, *The Battles of Drumclog, Fought on the 1st June, 1679. Between the King's Troops, and the Covenanters, By the Laird of Torfoot, an Officer in the Presbyterian Army* (Glasgow, no date).

19. Shields, *FCD*, 196.

20. Shields, *FCD*, 4-5; Walker, *BP*, I, 293; Wodrow, *History*, III, 111.

21. Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History*, Revised Edition (London, 1992), 294-5. For the legacy of Putney, cf. Tim Harris, 'The Levellers legacy: from the Restoration to the Exclusion Crisis' in Michael Mendle ed., *The Putney Debates of 1647: The Army, the Levellers and the English State* (Cambridge, 2001), 219-40; Blair Worden, 'The Levellers in history and memory, c.1660-1960' in Michael Mendle ed., *The Putney Debates of 1647: The Army, the Levellers and the English State* (Cambridge, 2001), 256-81.

22. Wodrow, *History*, III, 72-111.

the majority of the ministers. They were primarily concerned with the framing of the army's testimony in the Debates and how what they perceived to be the failure to establish the correct testimony before the battle had brought down the Lord's wrath on them and led to the Rising's failure.²³ However, all the narrative sources for the Debates post date the events, either by months or, in many cases, years, and were generally written to vindicate the author in arguments relating to the later contexts of their production.²⁴ Only two documents, the Hamilton Declaration and the supplication to Monmouth, were directly produced during the Debates.²⁵ Ever since they ended, the Bothwell Debates have been a matter of interpretation, but were they the turning point which both Wodrow and the United Societies later claimed? And is either the moderate or the militant interpretation of the Debates valid?

Within a week of Drumclog, the militants' force rapidly grew to around 6,000 men: a level it broadly sustained throughout the Rising despite of the arrival and departure of numerous elements. Although smaller in size than the Covenanters' armies of the 1640s, it was twice the size of the militant presbyterian Western Association of 1650.²⁶ However, it considerably differed in its command and structure from the mid century armies. Judging from those who refused to take the bond of peace after the battle, the bulk of the presbyterian forces at Bothwell came from Lanarkshire and Ayrshire; areas which later had a severe problem with militancy. They were organised by shire or recognisable districts, rather than by regiment, with recorded contingents coming from Fife, East Stirlingshire, Lennox, Glasgow, Carrick, Galloway and Tweeddale, which were then subdivided into local companies commanded by an officer. It was also rapidly mobilised by local lay presbyterian networks, rather than by the state, which produced regional variations in its command structure: ministers and lairds raised and led the men of Carrick and Galloway, while officers were elected in East Stirlingshire. Captaincies were mainly held by lairds, but as at least two troops were commanded by the field preacher Mr Kemp and the divinity student Walter Smith.

In the pattern of its recruitment base south of the Tay and regional organisation, the presbyterian army at Bothwell bears a striking resemblance to the later structure and distribution of the United Societies. Further similarities can be found between its command structure and that of the Societies'

23. 'Rathillet's Account of the Divisions at Bothwell', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 12; 'A Short But True Account', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 11; Kirkton, *Secret History*, 447-69; Shields, *FCD*, 187, 190-6.

24. See Appendix 1.2.

25. Wodrow, *History*, III, 94n, 105.

26. The government estimated 7,000, Russel 6,000, Hamilton 5,000-6,000 and Shargarton 2000 foot and seven companies of horse. Charles Sanford Terry, *John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, 1648-1689* (London, 1905), 63-4, 68; Kirkton, *Secret History*, 451, 452; Thomas McCrie ed., *Memoirs of Mr. William Veitch, and George Brysson, written by themselves: with other narratives illustrative of the history of Scotland, from the Restoration to the Revolution* (Edinburgh and London, 1825), 456 & n; Edward M. Furgol, *A Regimental History of the Covenanting Armies, 1639-1651* (Edinburgh, 1990), 5-6.

general convention. Instead of a regimental command structure, the army was commanded by a democratic forum known as the council of war, which first assembled on 3 June. It was made up of all the company commanders of the rank of captain and above, with Hamilton appointed as its prases or president and Smith as its clerk, just as the Societies' convention was made up of elected delegates from local prayer societies and had an elected prases and a clerk.²⁷

It was in the council in which the Bothwell Debates took place, rather than throughout the army. In essence, the Debates were a power struggle for control over the Council between the militants, who were the majority on the council for most of the Rising, and more moderate elements, especially within the ministry who did not sit in the Council of War: an important structural problem considering it was the Council of War, rather than the ministry, which commanded the army.²⁸

Nearly all the accounts of the Debates came from the lay members of the council or individuals closely connected to them.²⁹ The fact that Hamilton's allegedly scandalous conduct in the course of the Debates was unknown to many, if not most, of the Societies' membership in 1685, as will be discussed in chapter four, demonstrates that the specifics of the Debates were not widely known among the rank and file of the army.³⁰ Only the disputes which arose in the army's Sabbath preachings would have been known to the ordinary foot soldiers.³¹ As the example of the Societies highlights, what came to matter was how the Bothwell Debates were recalled, rather than what actually took place. In the Societies' case, they believed in a black and white version of the Debates in which the militant cause was betrayed. The truth was far more ambiguous.

The Debates opened with a contest over the composition of the army. After their providential victory at Drumclog, the militant leadership attempted to assert the godly nature of their army, but were faced with a number of worrying setbacks. At Drumclog, Hamilton had ordered that 'no quarter' should be given to their prisoners, as 'the Lord would not honour us to do much for him in giving quarter', but his order was ignored; a fact which worried Smith, who later wrote of their 'withholding our sword' from those 'guilty of death' as a step of defection which had only brought themselves 'under that curse of doing the work of the Lord deceitfully' and led to their own ultimate destruction.³² The inclusion of so-called 'malignants', those who had complied with the

27. Appendices 1.4 & 7.8; Kirkton, *Secret History*, 447-69; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 456-7.

28. Appendices 1.3 & 1.4. Cowan and Greaves assert the militants were in the minority. Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 97-8; Greaves, *SK*, 62.

29. Appendices 1.2 & 1.4.

30. Shields, *FCD*, 184.

31. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 453-5, 459-60; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 455-6, 466-7.

32. Shields, *FCD*, 201; Walker, *BP*, II, 67.

militants' perceived sins of the land, within the army was another source of dispute. After Glasgow fell to them, 'malignants' within the rank and file had broken discipline and looted houses. In particular, the case of an officer, Thomas Weir of Greenrigg, who had fought against the presbyterian forces in the Pentland Rising, but refused to repent for it to be admitted to the council, caused tensions, as the militants blamed Weir's presence for an initial failure to take Glasgow.³³

Responding to the perceived dangers of bringing down the Lord's wrath on their enterprise by their inclusion of 'malignants' within their ranks, the first council of war discussed if those 'guilty of public sins', such as bloodshed, giving bonds, taking oaths, paying the Cess tax, and joining with the indulged ministers, should not be joined with unless they publicly repented; and on 6 June, the militants took steps to purge them by issuing the Short Declaration to the Army 'for ... removing the mistakes and misapprehensions of all', which reiterated their belief in the providence of their victory and their obligations under the Covenants and the *Solemn Acknowledgement of Sins and Engagement to Duties* that declared against Erastianism 'and all things depending thereupon', such as the indulgences.³⁴

The next day, they followed up the Short Declaration at the second council, where the majority backed proposals from Smith and Henry Hall that none 'guilty of the public sins' should be admitted to the army. However, the proposals were deftly sidelined by a handful of moderate officers who obtained a delay in the implementation of the proposals - doubtless citing the consent of their brethren in the Rutherglen Testimony - until John Welsh's arrival, which was expected later that evening.³⁵

When Welsh arrived with the Carrick men, Smith called him an 'Achan' in their camp, a reference to the Old Testament figure who had provoked the Lord's wrath and undermined Joshua's campaign after Jericho had fallen. Smith's suspicions of Welsh were based on recent events. Prior to the Rising, Welsh's attempts to unite the Lanarkshire societies with his followers in Carrick and Galloway had been rebuffed, and he and his followers had not responded to the call from the militants of Lanarkshire and eastern Ayrshire to join them at Drumclog brought to him by Hall. However, the key factor was probably Welsh's attitude towards the indulged. Although hostile to the indulgences, Welsh was unwilling to break with the indulged ministers and was described by Walker as having many 'warm blinks', meaning changes of mind, over the issue.³⁶

As Smith had clearly feared, Welsh did not confirm the council's proposals; instead, he

33. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 447; M'Crrie (ed.), *MV*, 460-1; Shields, *FCD*, 199.

34. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 449, 452; Wodrow, *History*, III, 90-1.

35. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 452-3.

36. Walker, *BP*, I, 292-3; 'Rathillet's Account', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 12; 'A Short But True Account', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 11;

immediately demanded Greenrigg's reinstatement as an officer. However, his demand was rebuffed by the council led by Hamilton, with the result that the moderate officers rejected Hamilton's authority and established a separate camp along with Welsh and the Carrick men. At the next day's Sabbath preaching, Welsh directly appealed beyond the council to the rank and file over indulgence being a sin of the land, but his preaching was publicly opposed by the anti-indulgence preaching of Douglas and Mr Kemp. At the third council on 9 June, Welsh and David Hume, the ousted minister of Coldingham, stated that the appearance of anyone for their cause demonstrated commitment to it. Welsh then went further. He urged the council to write to moderate presbyterian gentlemen to broaden their appeal and then threatened the militant officers that if they did not do so, they would have to cast off most of the ministry, who backed writing to the gentry. Welsh's gambit forced the militants to backtrack: those guilty of the sins of the land would only be barred from the council, rather than the army, unless they publicly acknowledged their sins.³⁷ The militants were keen to keep control of the rising they had initiated through the council of war which they dominated.

To break the stalemate over 'malignant' officers, Welsh, Cargill, Kid and the other ministers remained in Glasgow to reach a consensus, when the Council and army decamped to Hamilton. At Glasgow, the ministers reached an agreement, which permitted Welsh to write the gentry in return for Cargill's demand that the sins of the land or the steps of defection would be spelt out. However, on their return to camp, the militant officers refused to countenance the ministers' agreement and were declared expelled from the council by the ministry. In response to the agreement, Kemp left in disgust, and at the fourth council of war held on 12 June, the militant majority threatened to expel the moderate officers. Faced with the clash between the ministry and the council and the possible dissolution of the army, the minister John King managed to broker a deal which reinstated the militants and let Welsh write to the gentry.³⁸

The opening phase of the Debates had come to an end. Those who had complied with the sins of the land would be admitted to the council, but the militants remained in the majority on the council.³⁹

The second phase of the debates focused on Welsh's letter to the gentry, which would be the Rising's public declaration and define the testimony on which the army stood. Deep fissures had already appeared over the council's attitude towards judicial and constitutional authority over the case of a butcher accused of murder and bestiality. The ministry and moderate officers had wanted

37. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 451-7; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 455-6; Shields, *FCD*, 199; Walker, *BP*, II, 67-8.

38. M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 461-2, 482.

39. Appendix 1.4.

the butcher dealt with by the local judicial authorities, but the militant-dominated council, who feared that those authorities would let him go, had usurped royal authority and had him shot. The moderate faction did not see the army 's council as 'a parliament nor general assembly' or having any judicial function, but the militants perceived the Council of War differently, as more representative than the 'prejudged' institutions of parliament or of a future general assembly, which they feared would be filled with 'indulged folk' and malignants.⁴⁰

In that atmosphere, the contents of the Declaration proved divisive, particularly over the issues of the status of the King and the steps of defection or sins of the land. The militants would not own Charles II due to his breaking of the Covenants, while the moderates felt obliged by the Covenants to do so. At the same time, Cargill pressed for the indulgences to be included within the steps of defection, but Welsh argued that the indulgences were only a grievance and should be left to a future parliament or general assembly to decide. In the same vein, the militants also pressed for a day of humiliation for the sins of the land, while the moderates urged that the Declaration should be issued before they held a day of humiliation. There was no agreement over the contents or timing of the Declaration. Even who would draft it appears to have been in dispute, as Hamilton later claimed that Cargill had promised to draft a declaration. However, it was Welsh's declaration to the gentry and he seized the initiative. After the council failed to reach agreement, Welsh decided to pen a draft declaration after James Ure of Shargarton offered to support him in any declaration that did not meddle 'with the King or indulgence'. At the same time, Welsh also received a draft declaration acceptable to the presbyterian ministers in Edinburgh, via William Dunlop, which was designed to broaden the call to arms to the gentry. Its principal demands were that York be excluded from the succession to the throne by the English parliament and for a presbyterian settlement of the Church in Scotland, but it neither addressed the militants' demands, which went far beyond York's exclusion, nor mentioned the Covenants at all.⁴¹

Welsh faced a considerable dilemma in reconciling the divergent elements of the presbyterian movement, but he completed his draft and brought it to Hamilton, Smith and Rathillet on the morning of 13 June to negotiate over its contents. Between them, a compromise was reached in which Welsh conceded that the 'acknowledgement of sins and engagements to duty', i.e. the sins of the land, would be mentioned, but not expanded upon, and the militants conceded over the status of the King. Agreement was also reached that it would be proclaimed to the army by representatives from each faction, but that it would not be printed and published until the sins of the land were filled out in a final version. The Declaration was not put before the full Council of

40. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 457; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 460-2.

41. M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 462-4; Shields, *FCD*, 192; Wodrow, *History*, III, 96-8.

War. Of the three militants involved in the negotiation, only Rathillet 'flatly' refused to countenance the Declaration, and it was proclaimed at the mercat cross later that day.⁴² Later both Hamilton and Smith would denounce what became known as the Hamilton Declaration, but on the day, they both had agreed to Welsh's amended text.⁴³

The Declaration met the militants' basic concerns in a way that the draft from the Edinburgh ministers had not come close to. Unlike the minister's draft, the Hamilton Declaration's political focus was on Scotland, rather than on hopes for exclusion in London. It cast in the direction of Rutherglen's rejection of the Restoration settlement in its request that Charles restored all to as he had found it in 1660, which, although it did not firmly demand it, Welsh backed up with a threat that if Charles refused their request the army at Bothwell invited all to join the Rising. Specifically, it demanded a presbyterian settlement, referred to the Covenants, and sought the calling of a free parliament and general assembly without seeking to diminish the King's 'just' powers. It also objected to their persecution and the payment of the Cess for it, and asserted their right to use arms in defence of field preachings.⁴⁴

The Declaration delicately blended pacifying the militants over their demands with leaving scope for the moderates to negotiate with the regime. However, both factions disagreed over whether it was a process or an event. From the militants' perspective, the Declaration was a work in progress, similar to Rutherglen and the Short Declaration. However, for Welsh, who had wrung out of them the most moderate form of declaration he could to elucidate broader support, it was an event. From the moment of its proclamation, the council's moderate minority were determined to hold firm to it and set out to thwart the militants' demands for the inclusion of the sins of the land and a day of humiliation for them.

According to Hamilton, immediately after he heard the Declaration proclaimed he called a council of war, probably with only militant officers in attendance. It agreed to 'disannul what was done', asked Cargill, Smith and Hall craft a version of the causes of the Lord's wrath, which specifically included the Hamilton Declaration as a step of defection, and asked Cargill to draft a new declaration from the army.⁴⁵ However, it seems that Hamilton was describing a council which met in a barn at least three days after the Declaration's proclamation, as discussed below.

After the Declaration's proclamation, the army advanced into Monklands, where the council was engulfed by a militant backlash over it and arguments over preaching against indulgence and the

42. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 458; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 464-5; Shields, *FCD*, 191-2; Walker, *BP*, II, 68. Russel claims that the Declaration led many to leave the army. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 459.

43. Shields, *FCD*, 191-3; Walker, *BP*, II, 68.

44. Wodrow, *History*, III, 94n.

45. Shields, *FCD*, 192-3.

militants' day of humiliation. The immediate causes of the militants' ire were that the council had not approved the Declaration, that it had not been jointly proclaimed with the militant minister Douglas as agreed and dissatisfaction with the final version of the text.

The militants' immediate concern after the Declaration's proclamation was to get Welsh and the other ministers to explicitly declare indulgence a sin of the land at the Sabbath preaching on Shawhead Muir on 15 June. Prior to the preaching, the militants brought Hume and other ministers 'under guard' before them and insisted that they publicly preach against indulgence. Clearly, trust had broken down. The militants were seeking a demonstration from Hume that the moderate ministers would fulfil their end of the bargain over the sins of the land, but Hume stated that they had no prerogative to give 'ministers instructions what to preach' and was backed up by moderate officers who came to his aid.⁴⁶ As a result, the preachings descended into public wrangling between Hume and the militant ministers Douglas and Kid.⁴⁷ The next day, the militants' ire was further provoked when news reached them of the Declaration's printing and publication at Welsh's behest and contrary to agreement.⁴⁸ At a council meeting held on a rainy day in a barn on Shawhead Muir without the ministers present, the militant-dominated council resolved on Thursday 19 June for the day of humiliation and appointed a subcommittee to draft the 'Enumeration of the Public Defections' on the causes of the Lord's wrath with Scotland for it. Much of the Enumeration's contents reflected elements of the Declaration, however, it went on to controversially declare against the indulgences and describe Charles II as a 'usurper'. The majority approved the resolutions that overturned the agreement over the Hamilton Declaration: only Shargarton, Major Joseph Learmont and one other insisted that the council delay taking such steps until Welsh and Hume were present. Their plea was rebuffed, but Welsh finally appeared just as the Enumerations were being transcribed by Smith. Once again, Welsh threatened to sack the militant officers and attacked both resolutions, claiming that the insistence on a day of humiliation and preaching against indulgence should be listed as causes of the Lord's wrath and that the council had no right to usurp the authority of a general assembly, before he and the moderate officers departed.⁴⁹

46. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 459; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 466-7. Shargarton states that the ministers were fearful that the militants were 'set to take their lives'.

47. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 460.

48. Nearly all the sources agree that Welsh broke the agreement not to print the Declaration and dispatched it to Glasgow where it was printed. Shields, *FCD*, 193, Kirkton, *Secret History*, 458-9; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 465; Walker, *BP*, II, 68.

49. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 460-2; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 467-70; Shields, *FCD*, 187-8; Wodrow, *History III*, 92. The meeting or meetings in the barn occurred prior to the army's move to Hamilton Muir. Shargarton says it was on Monday 16 June, with the move on Tuesday, Russel says Wednesday 18 June, with the move on Thursday 19 June, and Hamilton says the move occurred on Wednesday 18 June, placing the meeting in the barn on Monday or Tuesday. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 460-1; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 467-8, 470n.

The second phase of the debates had ended in complete disarray. While Welsh had achieved his aim of broadening the Rising's public platform to maintain presbyterian unity and win the support of the gentry by acknowledging the King's 'just' authority, the militant-dominated council had undermined Welsh's public platform by rejecting the Hamilton Declaration and returning to their original hard line position which rejected indulgence and the King's authority. They had reached stalemate and both factions seem to have agreed that they must part, although both were loath to do so. With the Rising on the brink of schism and the militants still holding the majority on the council, Welsh urged the moderate officers to be patient and bide their time until the Galloway men arrived.⁵⁰

From Monklands, the army returned to Hamilton where the debates entered their third and final phase in which the militants lost control of the council due to the arrival of significant contingents from the less militant areas of Tweeddale on 15 June and Galloway on 20 June.⁵¹ At the same time, the strategic situation rapidly deteriorated and the debates were overtaken by external events. This began with the arrival of James, Duke of Monmouth and Buccleuch, the figurehead of hopes for the exclusion of York, to command the government forces in Scotland: a move which probably scotched any remaining hope of support among the gentry.⁵²

The advance of the government's army, heavily bolstered by English forces, made a confrontation inevitable and after some confusion during a night march, the rebels settled on Bothwell Brig over the river Clyde: a good defensive position where their limited firepower could be brought to bear.⁵³

The loss of strategic momentum brought about a distinct shift in the pattern of the debates: the militants appear to have quietly dropped their planned day of humiliation, while the moderates pressed to achieve a joint position around the Hamilton Declaration. Initially, the militants gave short shrift to the latter and encamped separately in protest. However, the arrival of the Galloway men from Welsh's southern power base decisively shifted the balance of power on the council towards the moderates. The militants had lost control of the Rising. Nonetheless, when they were pressed again to subscribe the Declaration and to lay all their differences aside until a free parliament and general assembly, they again refused to do so as, they claimed, the Declaration established the indulgences that the Lord had visibly disowned at Drumclog and did not elaborate on the sins of the land as promised.⁵⁴

50. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 460; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 469, 471.

51. Appendix 1.4.

52. Terry, *Claverhouse*, 69.

53. Terry, *Claverhouse*, 69; Furgol, *A Regimental History*, 6-9; Kirkton, *Secret History*, 462; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 469-70, 469n. As Goodare points out, the Scottish army was integrated into the Crown's forces after the Restoration. Julian Goodare, *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford, 1999), 322-4.

54. Appendix 1.4; Kirkton, *Secret History*, 462-3; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 471-3.

In response, the moderates took firm control of the council with the aid of the newly arrived Galloway men on 21 June, deposing Hamilton and Smith from their offices, which led to the militants withdrawing from it. For the first time, the militants had lost control over the army. Now in the majority, Welsh and the moderates were able to impose a new strategy, suggested by sympathetic presbyterian gentry in Edinburgh close to Monmouth, of drafting a supplication to Monmouth in the hope of achieving a negotiated settlement. The moderates were able to entice Hamilton and the militants to return to the council via Hamilton's brother-in-law, Alexander Gordon of Earlstoun, who had arrived with the Galloway men. However, a new dispute soon broke out over the nature of the Supplication, as the militants insisted that an information on the wrongs done to the Church should be sent, rather than a supplication, as they refused to negotiate with Monmouth. Only when Cargill persuaded them that he would have a hand in the contents of the Supplication, did they relent.⁵⁵ The militants had grudgingly accepted the reality of their situation, but from their perspective, the defeat of the presbyterian army the next day would demonstrate the Lord's displeasure with the army's moderate platform.

Monmouth's army arrived the next morning. In the parlay before the battle, the moderates' hopes of a negotiated settlement vanished, as Monmouth's terms insisted that they would have to lay down their arms and hand over known fugitives, which meant most of their leadership, including Welsh, before any negotiations. The outcome of the battle was not a forgone conclusion, as the presbyterians seem to have hoped to create an indecisive encounter by holding the bridge over the Clyde, perhaps in the hope of better terms. Even though the presbyterian factions had been bitterly divided, they had come to a form of agreement and remained together on the battlefield. However, in the delay caused by the parlay, Monmouth deployed his cannon. They eventually allowed him to force the bridge and rout the ill-equipped presbyterian army, killing or capturing a quarter of their number.⁵⁶

The Bothwell Debates were not the turning point which the interpretations of both Wodrow and the United Societies imagined. Bothwell did not see the fragmentation of the presbyterian movement. There was no schism during the Debates or in their immediate aftermath. Welsh's assertion of ministerial authority had brought the majority of the militant leadership, with the exception of Rathillet, grudgingly back into line. Nonetheless, the Rising had highlighted significant divisions within the presbyterian movement over their testimony towards the indulged and the

55. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 463-5; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 473-4; Shields, *FCD*, 193-5; Wodrow, *History*, III, 104-5.

56. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 465-9; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 474-81, 483; Shields, *FCD*, 195; Wodrow, *History*, III, 106.

King, and over the interpretation of the Covenants. It had also left a legacy of bitterness and betrayal between the leadership of both factions. The Debates were also not fundamental to the Rising's defeat. To the seventeenth-century presbyterian mind, the Lord's pleasure or displeasure with their testimony mattered a great deal, but it was primarily strategic political and military factors which led to the Rising's demise, rather than the factional divisions. As both factions fled the field together, Welsh hoped that the Rising would continue in the hills of the South West.⁵⁷ However, all the fugitive leadership from Bothwell were about to be surprised by the actions of the presbyterian ministry and gentry.

III. The Monmouth Settlement and Presbyterian Divisions in Rotterdam, 1679 to 1681.

In the months after Bothwell, Monmouth's negotiations for a settlement to the presbyterian problem with the moderate presbyterian ministry further divided the presbyterian movement, already riven by the experience of Bothwell.⁵⁸ Over the summer, Monmouth produced some clever political alchemy which balanced the suppression of militant dissent at Bothwell, while encouraging the English Whigs' moderate Scottish presbyterian brethren. Immediately on his return from Bothwell to Edinburgh, he was supplicated by the moderate presbyterian ministry and the outline of a new settlement to the presbyterian problem emerged. On the one hand, Monmouth made execution the penalty for field preaching, but on the other, he also freed seventeen imprisoned presbyterian ministers, including Robert Fleming, the minister of the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam, under the conditions that they ceased field preaching and refused to ordain anyone who would take up field preaching. The presbyterian movement's campaign of field preaching was to stop, but Monmouth also offered a way forward for the outed ministry - a third tranche of indulgences. At a general meeting in Edinburgh in early August, the presbyterian ministers accepted his offer and on 14 August the Privy Council published a general settlement which included an indemnity for those who took a bond of peace, which accepted royal authority and renounced defensive arms, established circuit courts to administer the bond and formally issued the Third Indulgence. Monmouth's settlement specifically excluded the ringleaders behind Bothwell who had refused his

57. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 471.

58. For the development of moderate presbyterianism, see Colin Kidd, 'Religious Realignment between the Restoration and Union' in John Robertson ed., *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the British Union of 1707* (Cambridge, 1995), 145-70.

terms on the battlefield, including Welsh and his moderate supporters. From the viewpoint of the moderate presbyterian ministry, Monmouth's terms were lenient and broadly favourable towards the presbyterian ministers who recognised royal authority, as the third indulgence further diluted the episcopal settlement of the Church, but for the militant leadership, then gathering in Rotterdam after fleeing Scotland, the decision by what MacWard termed an 'Erastian synagogue', meaning the ministers' general meeting, was a complete betrayal of Christ's cause that 'barred the door upon all who desired to be found faithful in declaring the whole counsel of God'.⁵⁹

The decision to accept Monmouth's settlement was fought out over the twelve-hundred prisoners from Bothwell held in Edinburgh. On the same day as the settlement was proclaimed, Monmouth offered the prisoners their liberty if they agreed to take the bond of peace. In 1666, the Pentland Rising had been followed by wide scale executions, but Monmouth's terms were lenient: only two captured ministers from among the prisoners, Kid and King, were to be executed as examples on the day the settlement was proclaimed. For the moderate presbyterian ministry, it was important that the two ministerial martyrs avoided damaging testimony, especially over the new settlement. Fleming, who almost certainly knew Kid and King, was sent to secure 'healing testimony in favour of the indulged' from them prior to their execution, but he failed abysmally, as Kid's public testimony abhorred the indulged and King rejected the 'horrid bond' of peace, testified against the indulged and 'such as countenance them', and called on all ministers not to be silent, as God called on them to speak 'even upon the peril of life'.⁶⁰ It was a call to reject the settlement and keep field preaching.

The moderate ministry had greater success among the rank and file prisoners. Around a third initially rejected the bond, but over several months they were whittled down to a hard core group of dissenters who refused to worship with the moderate ministers. In the end, 240 were banished aboard *The Crowne of London* to Barbados, but they were shipwrecked off Orkney with great loss of life. Five prisoners who rejected the bond were also singled out for special treatment. They were executed for the assassination of Sharp, even though they were entirely innocent of the assassination. A few others were also retained, such as the blacksmith Robert Garnock, the

59. Wodrow, *History*, III, 118, 127, 140, 148-9, 151-3; Walker, *BP*, I, 196, 271-3; *Fasti*, III, 236-7; Robert MacWard, *Epagounismoï; 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), 174, 323.

60. Wodrow, *History*, III, 453-4, 480-90; *Scots Worthies*, 486-90; Walker, *BP*, I, 248.

ringleader of the militant prisoners, who was eventually executed in October 1681⁶¹

For MacWard and others who had been at Bothwell, the presbyterian ministers' submission marked a complete betrayal of the presbyterian movement. However, the militant leadership had been nigh on vanquished from Scotland. Only in the United Provinces did it remain a potent force.

Around mid August, Hamilton, Cargill, Smith and Earlstoun had arrived in Rotterdam and informed MacWard of the divisions at Bothwell. In response, MacWard wrote to the laird of Barscobe, one of Welsh's leading lay supporters who remained in Scotland. However, MacWard's letter was relatively unconcerned with the divisions at Bothwell: he only referred to the 'tedious story' of Bothwell in a 'digression' to refute a report from William Dunlop that Lady Kersland had participated in the council of war with the intention of demonstrating how the moderates were misrepresenting the militants to make them look like 'knaves and fools'. Instead, MacWard was outraged at the actions of the Edinburgh meeting. He urged Barscobe and others to be 'fixed and faithful' when 'all seems lost' and to disown the presbyterian ministers' betrayal of Christ's interests in their acceptance of the new settlement. He also objected to the moderates concealment of their actions to the People by using terms such as 'healing' and 'union' when they had created 'a new division' which had made the 'old' division over indulgence 'incurable'. According to MacWard, if their defection was to 'have a real and effectual stop put to it ... it must be by the People'.⁶²

MacWard's letter was the first indication of a new militant strategy to bypass the ministry and organise a protesting party among the laity. Bothwell was not the paramount reason for lay protest; it was the perceived defection of the majority of the presbyterian ministry. MacWard did not intend to create a separate party; rather, he aimed to harness popular protest to pressurise his ministerial brethren back into the fields. It was the key decision which would ultimately lead to the formation of the United Societies.

Soon after, MacWard and Brown deliberately set out to break the settlement's terms by ordaining Richard Cameron, the firebrand anti-indulgence field preacher. In early September, Cameron was ordained at the Scots Kirk in the presence of John Hogg, the minister of the Scots Kirk, and two eminent Dutch divines, Jacob Koelman and James Borstius, a sign that MacWard's stance against the moderate presbyterians had support among the *Nadere Reformatie*. MacWard charged Cameron

61. Walker, *BP*, I, 46, 47, 283. See Appendix 1.5. Thomas Brown, Andrew Sword, John Waddell, John Clyde and James Woods were executed on 18 November 1679 at Magus Muir. Wodrow, *History*, III, 137-8; Anon., *The Cloud of Witnesses being the last speeches and testimonies of those who suffered for the truth in Scotland since the year 1680. And Naphtali being the last words and dying testimonies of the Scots worthies, colated from many rare, valuable historical documents and original manuscripts. The whole accompanied by notes explanatory and corrective, by a clergyman of the Church of Scotland* (Glasgow and London, 1862), 213-4. James Renwick witnessed Garnock's execution. Walker, *BP*, I, 282.

62. Kirkton, *History*, 477, 481; Shields, *FCD*, 188; MacWard, *Earnest Contendings*, 313-31.

to return to Scotland and lift the fallen standard of the Gospel. Specifically, he instructed him that 'before ye put your hand on it, ye shall go to as many of the field ministers ... as ye can find, and give them your hearty invitation to go with you: and if they will not go, go you alone, and the Lord will go with you'. MacWard had little expectation that many presbyterian ministers would break ranks and he warned Cameron that his mission to Scotland would end with his martyrdom.⁶³

Cameron's ordination was a public signal that the militants intended to take their protest to the people of Scotland by resuming field preaching. However, in using the Scots Kirk to launch his campaign against the moderate ministry, a struggle quickly ensued for control of it.

In mid September, Rathillet also fled to MacWard's side.⁶⁴ Soon after his arrival, the elders at the Scots Kirk barred him from communion. Rathillet had been the only officer to consistently oppose the Hamilton Declaration and on arrival at Rotterdam he delivered a vociferous defence of the militants' actions at Bothwell in his reply to Barscobe's letter to MacWard which had attacked the role of the militants in the Debates. It was probably the extremity of his views which led to a confrontation with the moderate elders. MacWard, Cargill and Hamilton resented the elders action, 'yet could not determine on such a sudden withdrawal' from the Scots Kirk since it had 'joined with us in all the testimonies that ever had been given in our land'. In an attempt to circumvent the debarring, Hogg and Douglas issued Rathillet with a communion ticket, but Rathillet refused to accept it. Even Hamilton, who soon withdrew from the Scots Kirk, admits that at that time he and others could not see grounds for withdrawing from communion with their presbyterian brethren. However, retrospectively, he saw Rathillet's barring as 'the first step' of the moderates 'ever appearing against us'.⁶⁵

It was soon followed by other steps. When Fleming reached Rotterdam in October, he approved of Rathillet's debarring and then drove a further wedge between the militants and the moderates when he invited the indulged preacher James Veitch to preach with him at the Scots Kirk: a gesture of presbyterian of unity and an assertion of the Scots Kirk's support for the indulged. 'Many' of the militants refused to hear Veitch, including MacWard, Douglas and Smith, but they continued to converse with Fleming. However, a small group of militants, which included Hamilton and James Boig, 'would not [then] look on' MacWard, Douglas and Smith and separated from them, Fleming, the Scots Kirk and the 'Monmouthian party', as they termed the presbyterian ministry. The dispute also spread to Utrecht, where offence was taken to Douglas's still hearing Fleming preach.

63. Steven, *History*, 73n; Walker, *BP*, I, 197, 206; Macpherson, *Outlaws for Freedom*, 72.

64. Kirkton, *History*, 480-1.

65. Shields, *FCD*, 218; Michael, Shields, *The Protestation of the Antipopish, Antiprelatick, Antierastian, true Presbyterian, But poor and persecuted Church of Scotland, against the Scottish Congregation at Rotterdam in Holland (Leeuwarden?, 1684)*, 4. Many of the elders involved in barring Rathillet had been elders since MacWard had held the charge in 1676. See Steven, *History*, 368-70.

According to the later leader of the United Societies, James Renwick, who was not present in Utrecht, the withdrawal in Utrecht marked the 'first clear stating of our testimony in our later times, against the daubers and plasterers of defection'. However, Alexander Shields, who was a participant in the Utrecht dispute and also later led the Societies, refused to withdraw and remained very close to MacWard.⁶⁶ According to Walker, 'the wild-fire of bastard-zeal' kindled by Boig's 'groundless unwarrantable separation' from MacWard, Cargill and Douglas was 'quenched' in mid 1681.⁶⁷ However, Walker ignores the tremendous importance of that division for the future testimony of the United Societies, as Hamilton and Boig's hardline stance significantly influenced both Renwick's and the Societies' testimonies especially after mid 1683, as will be discussed in chapter two.

However, at the time, MacWard saw Hamilton and Boig's right-hand defection as a dangerous precedent and in late 1679, he sent a letter to Scotland regarding the matter.⁶⁸ In it, he warned the godly that they 'should not be ignorant' 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'. In his view, Hamilton and Boig's right-hand withdrawal from all ministers was similar to, but more dangerous than, the example of the indulged ministers. While the work of the 'godly men' of the indulged had proved more prejudicial to Christ's interests than that of the prelates, he worried that through Hamilton and Boig's withdrawal 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', by which he meant the launch of popular protest in Scotland.⁶⁹

Despite MacWard's worries over right-hand defections, he devoted most of his attention to the left-hand defection of the moderate ministry. For the next year-and-a-half MacWard conducted a pamphlet debate with Fleming over the issue of union with the indulged until his death in May 1680⁷⁰

At stake was the future position of the Scots Kirk, 'the only remaining modell of the Church of

66. Steven, *History*, 87; Walker, *BP*, I, 247-8; Shields, *FCD*, 218; Renwick, *A Choice Collection of Very Valuable Prefaces, Lectures and Sermons Preached Upon the Mountains and Muirs, &c. of Scotland, In the hottest Time of the late Persecution*, William Wilson ed. (Glasgow, 1776), 597; Wodrow, *History*, III, 204; Houston, *Letters*, 224.

67. Walker, *BP*, I, 249-50.

68. There has been considerable confusion over which defection MacWard's letter of late 1679 addressed. Wodrow erroneously claimed it was directed against Cameron and Cargill, and others thought it was against the Gibbite sect which appeared in late 1680. However, it clearly dealt with the splits in Rotterdam and Utrecht caused by Hamilton and Boig. Wodrow, *History*, III, 204; Walker, *BP*, I, 245-8; MacWard, *Earnest Contendings*, 373-4, 375-84.

69. MacWard, *Earnest Contendings*, 369-74.

70. Steven, *History*, 82n, 91, 93, 111n; Morrison, *Scots on the Dijk*, 14-15; Shields dates MacWard's death to 26 May 1681. 'Letter from Utrecht by Mr Alex[ande]r Shields, 1681', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 25.

Scotland famous for the many faithfull testimonies witnessed in it against all the steps of defection' in Scotland. The debate was initiated by Fleming. He attacked MacWard and Brown's anti-indulgence views and advocated union with the indulged in two papers in late 1679 and early 1680 and continued the theme in *The Church Wounded and Rent by a Spirit of Division* (1681). MacWard responded with a series of attacks on Fleming, the indulged and the Monmouth settlement. In 1680, he and his secretary Alexander Shields, another graduate of Utrecht, reprinted and circulated Brown's *The History of the Indulgence*, which drew a lengthy refutation from William Vilant, the indulged minister of Cambusnethan, in 1681. They also reprinted James Stewart's *Naphtali* in 1680, which justified resistance to Charles II. However, due to MacWard's declining health, his and Shields' response lacked momentum. Although the two works were published in 1681, most of their output were either reprints or editions of old works or new works which remained unpublished until a long time after the dispute. While they were reprinting *Naphtali*, they were working on an expanded edition of it that included the testimonies of the Bothwell martyrs, but it remained unpublished until 1693. MacWard and Shields' reply to Fleming's first paper, which was underway in mid 1680, was not published until 1681 and a second paper on both of Fleming's papers languished in manuscript until 1723. With the posthumous publication of Brown's *The Banders Disbanded* (1681), they succeeded in placing a critique of the Monmouth's settlement in print. According to Alexander Shields, MacWard also wrote a 'History of the Defections of the Church of Scotland', but it was suppressed by MacWard's opponents after his death.⁷¹

MacWard and Shields' difficulties were symptomatic of the militants' fortunes in the United Provinces. Brown's death soon after Cameron's ordination was described by MacWard as 'a greater stroke against the Church of Scotland than the removal of anyone alive' as Brown had 'withstood the present course of defection'. MacWard vowed he would continue until he was in his grave rather than 'concur with the courses carried on ... at present'. However, Brown's death was followed by that Borstius in 1680 and MacWard eventually succumbed to his long illness in mid 1681. The loss of such powerful dissenting voices and prominent militant ideologues effectively severed the connections between the militants in Scotland and the Scots Kirk and the *Nadere Reformatorie*. Fleming and the moderates retained control of the Scots Kirk, although some sporadic dissent

71. 'Letter from Alexander Shields in Holland to his brother Michael [Shields]', [Dated May 20 1680]. EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 15. Steven, *History*, 94n; William Vilant, *A Review and Examination of A Book, bearing the Title of the History of the Indulgence* (London, 1681). MacWard, *Earnest Contendings*, ix, 1-301. Robert Fleming, *The Church Wounded and Rent by a Spirit of Division, Held forth in a short account of some sad differences bath been of late in the Church of Scotland* (Rotterdam?, 1681). John Brown and Robert MacWard, *The Banders Disbanded or An Accurat Discourse Solidly and Plainly Demonstrating How inconvenient, scandalous & sinfull it is, in the present Circumstances of the Church of Scotland* (Rotterdam?, 1681); Walker, *BP*, I, 196; MacWard, *Earnest Contendings*, ix, 64.

72. MacPherson, *Outlaws for Freedom*, 64; 'Letter from MacWard to a friend' printed in Wodrow, *History*, IV 500-1. Howie, *Scots Worthies*, 414; Steven, *History*, 72, 75-7.

persisted among the congregation until 1684.⁷³ However, the significance of the debates in the United Provinces had already been overtaken by MacWard's campaign of lay protest in Scotland.

IV. Reinventing Scotland's 'Old Cause': The Cameronian Platform, 1680 to 1681.

The events of Cameron and Cargill's mission to Scotland from 1680 to 1681 are legendary in presbyterian tradition. Less well known is how they laid the foundations for the Cameronian platform of the United Societies.⁷⁴

Landing in October 1679, Cameron's attempts to get other field preachers to join him were comprehensively rebuffed.⁷⁵ Only in the spring of 1680, when he was joined by Cargill, Douglas and other militant leaders returning from exile, such as Rathillet, Kinloch and Earlstoun, was popular protest eventually initiated at two public fasts held in Lanarkshire, at Darnead Muir in Cambusnethan parish and Auchengilloch in Evandale parish.⁷⁶ The fasts had two objectives. First, to protest against the enthusiastic reception of the King's Catholic brother, York, in Scotland. Second, to 'stirr up ... the Lord's people to mourn ... for all the abominations of Scotland'.⁷⁷ York's arrival in Scotland to replace Monmouth in November 1679 had brought a more hardline attitude towards presbyterians, but by the time of the fasts, York had already returned to London. In Wodrow's view, the Darnead fast was instrumental in enabling the regime to abandon the third indulgence.⁷⁸ The moderate presbyterian ministry were left with having little to show for the oaths and bonds they had given to Monmouth.

However, the second purpose of the fasts was of greater importance: the creation of a coherent militant platform which would clarify the issues which had bedevilled the militants at Bothwell. Cargill, Cameron and Douglas focussed their efforts on eastern Ayrshire and Lanarkshire, mostly preaching on the high muirs between the shires. They also reached into the South West. Cameron and Douglas were active in Galloway and Dumfriesshire for around two months before Cameron's death, and Cargill spent a 'short time' in Galloway before returning to Lanarkshire 'where he took

73. Steven, *History*, 95-100; Morrison, *Scots on the Dijk*, 15-16.

74. The nickname Cameronian was 'very little heard of' until it became popular due to the Cameronian Regiment. Walker thought they might as well have been called Cargillites. Walker, *BP*, I, 208-12.

75. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 325-7.

76. Walker, *BP*, I, 248-9; Wodrow, *History*, III, 203.

77. Walker, *BP*, I, 197-8.

78. Wodrow, *History*, III, 187-8.

most delight, and had great liberty in preaching'.⁷⁹ According to Walker, their efforts at 'that time increast greatly both in numbers of societies and members, from the River Tay to Newcastle': the same support base on which the United Societies were built.⁸⁰

Soon after the fasts, Cameron and leading lay activists bonded together. The bond committed them and 'all others who shall join with us' to adhere to the Rutherglen Testimony and to disown the Hamilton Declaration for taking the King's interest, the 'present magistrates' for their reception of the 'professed papist' York and destroying the work of Covenanted Reformation, and the indulged and all who professed that 'sinful union'. The bond had been subscribed at a meeting which had provocatively styled itself as 'representative of the true presbyterian Kirk, and Covenanted nation of Scotland'. The unfulfilled threat that the Council of War at Bothwell was more representative than Parliament or a General Assembly, had been enacted. It was a proto-type that the United Societies would adopt for their first convention.

The meeting also agreed the Sanquhar Declaration. On 22 June 1680, the anniversary of Bothwell, Cameron and his armed militant supporters once again usurped the theatre of royal proclamations and issued the Sanquhar Declaration. It publicly disowned Charles II and declared his 'right, title to, or interest in the said crown of Scotland for government, as forfeited' due to his tyranny, 'perjury and breach of Covenant', and protested against York's possible succession. It raised 'the standard of our Lord Jesus Christ' and declared 'war' on the 'tyrant and usurper [Charles II], and all the men of his practices' or those who acknowledged his tyranny, 'as enemies to our Lord Jesus Christ, and his cause and Covenants' who 'would betray or deliver up our reformed mother-kirk unto the bondage of anti-Christ, the Pope of Rome'.⁸¹ In September, Cargill followed up the Sanquhar Declaration by pronouncing the ecclesiastic sanction of excommunication at Torwood in eastern Stirlingshire against Charles II, York, Monmouth and other key individuals involved in their persecution.⁸² The issue of the militants' attitude towards the authority of Charles II, which had been extremely divisive in the Bothwell debates, had been unequivocally and publicly clarified. Sanquhar and Torwood were designed to directly challenge to the legitimacy of the Scottish regime. However, they were also intended to be a challenge to the moderate presbyterian ministry, as both had been executed in the name of the Church.

The Sanquhar Declaration and the Torwood Excommunication's attempt to create a coherent

79. Wodrow, *History*, III, 216-7; Walker, *BP*, II, 34. For Cameron, Douglas and Cargill's campaign see Appendix 1.6.

80. Walker, *BP*, II, 58.

81. Wodrow *History* III, 212.

82. 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), 491-501. Cargill chose the historically symbolic site of the field next to the Wallace Oak at Torwood.

militant platform brought down the ire of the authorities, moderate presbyterians and some militants. Within weeks of the Declaration, Cameron was killed by government forces in a skirmish at Ayrsmoss in Ayrshire and Rathillet was captured and executed.⁸³ The death of Cameron was a severe blow, made worse by the involvement of the moderate presbyterian laird, John Cochrane of Ochiltree, in his entrapment.⁸⁴ The antipathy was mutual. On several occasions, Cargill was critical of what David Allan has termed the 'neo-stoic' retreat of the gentry from public life: 'your lords, lairds and gentlemen are making brave houses and large parks; they may build at leisure, it will not be long many of them will possess their houses, which have been nests of wickedness'; and stated that the gentry had 'dipt their hands in the persecution and deep compliance, but few of them have had a fur of land to spare for the interest of Christ, and ... [that] their inheritance will vomit out their names'.⁸⁵

Cargill and Douglas were also confronted by other militants. In early 1680, copies of MacWard's letter, which warned against right-hand extremes out of fear that they would lead the militants to 'run down one another with divisions, and rush into courses ... most dangerous yea destructive of the whole old cause of Scotland', were passed hand-to-hand through militant circles.⁸⁶ Cameron, Cargill and Douglas supported MacWard's line against the indulgences, but their efforts were undermined by James Boig and other militants who had brought their 'wild-fire of bastard-zeal' for separation from any who heard the indulged preach back to Scotland.⁸⁷ Boig's brief career is highly obscure. According to Walker, he was the son of an Edinburgh merchant and, like Alexander Shields, a graduate of divinity at Utrecht. He was also close to the militant leadership. After the meeting at Arnbuckle, Boig had been sent to fetch the other assassins of Sharp from Fife and after his withdrawal at Rotterdam, Boig may have played a part in the dispute in Utrecht, as the discord he created in militant circles in Scotland seems to have upset Douglas in particular, who had been involved in the Utrecht dispute, as Douglas left for exile to England.⁸⁸

Beset by presbyterian opponents and with the authorities closing in, Cargill, too, was forced to seek refuge in England in November. His flight left the militant movement without ministry and open to extreme right-hand lay movements. It was in that context, that the Gibbites, or Sweet

83. Walker, *BP*, I, 203-7; Appendix 1.5.

84. Walker, *BP*, I, 203

85. Walker, *BP*, II, 39-40; David Allan, 'Reconciliation and Retirement in the Restoration Scottish Church: The Neo-Stoicism of Robert Leighton' in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 50, No. 2, (1999), 251-78.

86. Walker, *BP*, I, 245-6. Wodrow and Walker disagreed over whether MacWard's letter warning against right-hand extremes was directed against the Gibbites or Robert Fleming. However, MacWard's letter clearly referred to the actions of Hamilton and Boig. See Walker, *BP*, I, 247.

87. Walker, *BP*, I, 246 & II, 13; *CW&N*, 355, 357.

88. Walker, *BP*, I, 247-9; II, 13, 42-4; Kirkton, *Secret History*, 450; James Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 597.

Singers, appeared. Named after their charismatic leader John Gibb, the Gibbites rejected not just Presbyterian authority, but all authority across the world. Gibb's forsaking of all earthly property and advocacy of sexual abstinence, particularly attracted female followers to his apocalyptic movement. They prayed for the destruction of Edinburgh in the Lammermuir Hills and, according to their hostile presbyterian critics, allegedly burnt the Bible. Their views were closer to some of the visionary sects of the English Revolution, like the Seekers, but they had close connections to the militant movement. Throughout the 1680s the Societies were concerned to reclaim the Gibbites and one of them, David Jamie, was described by Cargill as 'a good scholar lost, and a minister split'.⁸⁹

In early 1681, the threat right-hand extremes posed to the militant movement highlighted the need for discipline. On his return from England in the spring, Cargill and Walter Smith, the former clerk of the Council of War at Bothwell, set about bringing discipline to the network of militant prayer societies.

Smith's crucial role in the development of the militant movement has been largely overshadowed by that of Cameron within presbyterian tradition, yet it was Smith who forged the template for the United Societies by establishing a network of militant lay prayer societies in Lanarkshire and eastern Ayrshire.

Born outside Airth at about the Restoration, Smith had studied under MacWard's acquaintance Johannes Leusden, the Professor of Hebrew at Utrecht, and was close to Alexander Shields, whose name his appears next to in the register of students at Utrecht. After Bothwell, he had gone into exile with Cargill at Rotterdam and Utrecht, but had returned to Scotland before Torwood, probably as a replacement for Cameron.⁹⁰ After Cargill fled Scotland, Smith returned to study at Utrecht, but he was back with Cargill in Scotland in the spring of 1681. According to Walker, Smith was Cargill's closest confidant at Torwood, where 'none knew what he wished to do that morning, except Mr Walter Smith, to whom he imparted the thoughts of his heart'. He also undertook much of the aged Cargill's work; advising on 'difficult cases, praying with families' and when Cargill 'was fatigued with sore travel going on his feet, being an old man', presenting for him at conventicles.⁹¹

89. Walker, *BP*, I, 21, 247-61; II, 15-23; For the Seekers, see J. F. McGregor, 'Seekers and Ranters' in J. F. McGregor and Barry Reay eds., *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), 121-39. Jamie may have been another of the students at Utrecht destined for the ministry like Boig, Alexander Shields and Walter Smith.

90. Walker, *BP*, I, 248-9 & II, 55-6, 89-91; Wodrow, *History*, III, 104-5, 281; Howie, *Scots Worthies*, 531; Hector Macpherson, *The Cameronian Philosopher: Alexander Shields* (Edinburgh and London, 1932), 36. Smith was in Rotterdam prior to Douglas' first conventicle in Scotland in April 1680. Under interrogation he claimed to have met Kinloch about twelve months before his capture, dating his arrival to around the time of Cameron's death in July 1680. See Walker, *BP*, I, 248-9; Walker, *BP*, II, 8; Wodrow, *History*, III, 281-2.

91. Walker, *BP*, II, 8, 57.

As Cargill's trusted lieutenant, Smith codified the warnings against separation in his 'Rules and Directions anent private Christian Meetings, for Prayer and Conference to mutual Edification, and to the right Management of the same'.

Prayer societies had existed in Scotland since the privy kirks before the Reformation and had flourished through the Covenanting era. They were a democratic forum in which professors met on equal terms to share their profound spiritual experiences and seek divine guidance. With the onset of the Restoration, presbyterian prayer societies had in part returned to their original function of maintaining the Lord's people when deprived of public ordinances. Alongside the public field preachings, the private prayer societies were the bed-rock of the presbyterian movement. They were also a source of concern due to the potential challenge they could pose to ministerial authority, but their use had been encouraged by the exiled John Brown.⁹²

In his Rules, Smith sought the 'right way' of instructing the 'ignorant' in 'the principles of true religion'. They regulated the conduct of prayer meetings held without a minister present, to maintain discipline and avoid theological disputes, but they also went on to provide a blueprint for a network of societies. Smith's rules brought regulation to the expansion of prayer societies, creating a self-replicating local cellular structure which was committed to secrecy and highly resistant to infiltration. It was a structure designed to survive persecution and formed in the expectation that the Lord's people might have to survive without a ministry until the Apocalypse.⁹³

Smith's contribution may have gone further. According to Walker, Smith was also 'very instrumental in erecting and getting a general correspondence [or convention] settled four times yearly, amongst all [societies], that they might speak to one another' and 'appoint general fasting days ... amongst all'.⁹⁴ If Walker's claim is correct, then Smith had created the United Societies in all but name. Smith may well have been the inspiration; however, *Faithful Contendings Displayed* firmly dates the Societies' inaugural convention to over four months after Smith's death.⁹⁵

The success of Cargill and Smith's efforts meant an increased workload on the aged Cargill. In response, Cargill settled on Smith's indefinite ordination in the field, which was used by the presbyterian ministry to refresh their dwindling numbers during the Restoration, to secure the future of militant preaching in Scotland. It was a challenge to the moderate presbyterian ministry, which had forbidden field ordination, and was only prevented by the capture and execution of

92. For a fascinating discussion of the religious experiences of the Covenanters and prayer societies, see Louise Yeoman, 'Heartwork: emotion, empowerment and authority in Covenanting times' Unpublished PhD thesis St Andrews (1991).

93. Walker, *BP*, II, 71, 73-84.

94. Walker, *BP*, II, 58.

95. Shields, *FCD*, 9-15.

Cargill and Smith in July 1681.⁹⁶

Their execution was a catastrophe for the militant movement, as it left it without any ministerial leadership in either Scotland or in exile. Field preaching stopped. Once again, the standard of the Gospel had fallen. However, Cargill, Cameron and Smith had made considerable progress. They had defined a coherent militant platform and created a lay militant network which within months would form the United Societies. Their execution also left other legacies.

On the eve of his execution with Cargill and Smith, James Boig acknowledged his 'groundless unwarrantable separation' from 'MacWard, Douglas, Smith and others' and sought Cargill and Smith's forgiveness.⁹⁷ The division over hearing the indulged within the militant movement had been patched up.

Awaiting execution, Smith had written the *Twenty-Two Steps to Defection*, an extension of the *Causes of the Lord's Wrath*, drafted at the request of societies in Lanarkshire. The Twenty-Two Steps crystallised for Cargill and Smith's network of societies the sense that their former brethren in the presbyterian ministry had defected from Christ's cause and left them alone to stand as 'the poor suffering Remnant'.⁹⁸

Finally, Cargill's death marked a watershed in the leadership of the militant movement. It marked a shift from away from ministerial control to that of the laity and from experience to youth. Power over the movement now lay in the hands of a younger generation radicalised by field preaching who had not experienced the Covenanting revolution, only the Restoration.⁹⁹ Watching Cargill and Smith's execution was the nineteen-year-old James Renwick. For Renwick, their martyrdoms were a turning point in his life. From then on, he dedicated his life to the militants' cause.¹⁰⁰

V. The Birth of the United Societies.

At noon on 12 January 1682, sixty horse and foot gathered in arms at the burgh of Lanark's mercat

96. Walker, *BP*, II, 56; Elizabeth H. Hyman, 'A Church Militant: Scotland 1661–1690', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 26 (1995), 49–74. Cargill had John Hepburn and probably Alexander Peden in mind to perform Smith's ordination. Walker, *BP*, I, 118, II, 56.

97. Walker, *BP*, I, 249.

98. Walker, *BP*, II, 55, 57, 62–72.

99. At their deaths MacWard was fifty-four, Brown about sixty and Cargill about 61. In late 1681 Hamilton was thirty-one, Earlstoun twenty-nine, Alexander Shields twenty-one and Michael Shields and James Renwick were both nineteen. *Fasti*, II, 224, III, 392, 465; Howie, *Scots Worthies*, 704, Walker, *BP*, I, 117; MacPherson, *Outlaws for Freedom*, 82, 91.

100. Shields, *LoR*, 14. Walker states that it was after Robert Garnock's execution in October 1681 that Renwick became an activist. Walker, *BP*, I, 290.

cross. Within a short space of time, the cross had been defaced with hammers, two acts of the recent parliament on York's succession to the Scottish throne and the Test Oath burnt, and the Lanark Declaration posted.¹⁰¹

The Declaration had been agreed at the first convention of the United Societies held on 15 December 1681. It has usually been framed as a protest against to the Scottish Test Act of 1681, which required all office holders to adhere to the Protestant Scottish Confession of 1560 and at the same time recognise the King's supremacy in all matters civil and ecclesiastic, as Shields claimed that the passing of the Test was the motive for the Declaration. However, Shields was probably intentionally deflecting his readers away from the Declaration's radical agenda, as the Societies later retracted elements which laid them open to the charge of Erastianism, as will be discussed in chapter five.¹⁰²

In the Societies' 'name and authority', it ratified the platforms of the Rutherglen and Sanquhar declarations, and made 'void, whatsoever hath been done by Charles Stewart or his accomplices in prejudice to our Ancient Laws and Liberties'. It also spelt out the Societies' political aim to restore the perfection of Scotland's Reformation and Constitution: 'For we are not only endeavouring to extricat our selves from under a tyrannous yoke, and to reduce our Church and State, to what they were, in the years 1648 and 1649'. The Societies' wanted to restore the 'Rule of the Saints'.

However, rather than using the apocalyptic rhetoric of Sanquhar, it deployed a constitutional tone. It compared their obligations to acknowledge government ordained by God in so far as it broadly governed 'according to the rules set down by him in his Word, and Constitutive Laws of the Nation', with their experience under Charles II 'when all these Laws ... are cassed and annulled, by pretended laws, ... usurpation ... [and] arbitrarie government' and when remedy was denied by the King, 'prelimited' Parliaments and the 'corrupted' offices of the Kingdom. It then asked a beautifully-crafted constitutional question: 'what shall the People do in such an extremity? And answered: 'Have they not ... good ground to make use of that natural and radical power they have [from God, Nature and Scotland's ancient constitution], to shake off that yoak, which neither we nor our forefathers were able to bear?' It was an appeal to the Scottish presbyterian constitutional tradition derived from George Buchanan and Samuel Rutherford, and expanded MacWard's Protester derived lay protest against the presbyterian ministry beyond the ecclesiastic sphere and into the civil sphere.

In particular, the Declaration harnessed the Sanquhar model to a wider constitutional argument and purpose. Where the Sanquhar Declaration had referred to a godly meeting 'representative of

101. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 358.

102. Shields, *FCD*, 6, 10-11, 15.

the true presbyterian Kirk, and Covenanted nation of Scotland', the Lanark Declaration developed that model in an attempt to simultaneously legitimate the disowning of the King by both the Sanquhar Declaration and the Societies by investing the pre-Sanquhar meeting and the new Societies' convention with political authority. The pre-Sanquhar meeting was reinvented as a 'General and unprelimed meeting of the Estates and Shires of Scotland ... A convention of Men ... who had only the glory of God and the good of the Commonwealth before their eyes' which had 'most legally, and by general consent' cast off Charles II.

So that they 'may not seem to have done that [at Sanquhar], or yet to do the like' without justification, the Declaration provided a summary of their grounds for disowning the 'tyrant' King in accordance with 'that power, which God and Nature hath given us' and Scotland's ancient laws. First, that in the Restoration parliament, Charles had 'cut the neck off that noble constitution of Church and State' made by their 'ancestors' and put 'fools of his own feather' in the 'meanest' offices of the Kingdom. Second, for 'obtruding his will for Law, both in matters Civil and Ecclesiask', which had replaced the 'Letter of the Law' with 'the Law of Letters' from Charles II. Third, the King's dissolving of parliaments at his pleasure. Fourth, the persecution of the Lord's people, who 'in great numbers' had been 'murdered and slain in the fields, led as lambs to the slaughter upon the scaffolds, imprisoned, and kept in irons, and with exquisite tortures tormented, exiled, banished, and sold as slaves amongst savages'. Fifth, the King's 'exorbitant taxings ... and grinding of the faces of the poor ... for keeping up a brothel, rather than a court'. Finally, the Test Act's design of 'to unhinge Protestantism'.¹⁰³

The Declaration's discussion of the constitution and protest against the Test, and its subversion of parliament, also sent a signal to their moderate brethren that a reconciliation between the Societies and the moderates was a possibility. The Test had led to the alienation of leading moderate presbyterian figures from the Restoration regime and downfall of the Earl of Argyll. With elite moderate presbyterians faced with defeat in the Exclusion Crisis over York's succession and purged from public life by a resurgent monarchy, the Declaration hinted at the possibility that both factions could reunite in opposition to York's succession and to achieve constitutional change. Over the next year and a half this would lead to the Societies' involvement in the Rye House Plots, as will be discussed in chapter three.

However, from the beginning, the Societies also looked to foreign churches. The Declaration had clarified their political aim in order to prevent their cause being misrepresented by their moderate brethren, especially since the Societies had no access to the printing press. In the years to come, reestablishing contact with their foreign Calvinist brethren in the *Nadere Reformatorie* and Dutch

103. 'The Lanark Declaration', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 33. Printed in *An Informatory Vindication*, 176-85.

printing presses would also become a priority, as will be discussed in chapters two and three.¹⁰⁴

At their first convention and in the Lanark Declaration, the Societies had created a state within a state. However, from their perspective it was a question of legitimacy. The Societies' saw their convention as invested with legitimate authority from the People until a new legitimate state was created, as it derived from the power of a people reduced to a radical state of nature and free of their obligations to their governors. At the same time, they saw the Restoration regime as illegitimate, as its tyrannous persecution had removed the People's obligation to obey its authority.

The tension between constitutional and apocalyptic dynamics lay at the core of the Societies' project and would dictate the ebb and flow of their politics. It was never resolved, but the creative instability it created gave the Societies as much political dynamism as the Restoration state or the moderate presbyterians.

Despite the prominence of the Lanark Declaration, it remains the most enigmatic of all the militant declarations, as its author is not identified and the principal participants in its posting are largely anonymous: only Renwick and William Harvie, a weaver in Lanark parish who had previously posted the Rutherglen Testimony, are recorded at its posting.¹⁰⁵

Shields and the other Societies' narrative sources are also curiously silent about who the eighty founding fathers of the Societies who were at the first convention. However, the choice of location is telling. Logan House lay in Lesmahagow parish at the heart of Smith's militant network in Lanarkshire and eastern Ayrshire which had been behind the Rutherglen Testimony, Drumclog and the Bothwell Rising. It also lay next to Auchengilloch where Cameron and Cargill had begun their campaign and was very close to the site of the Lesmahagow Incident. Judging from the locations of first two conventions, both John Steel of Logan Waterhead and John Brown of Priesthill, and probably David Steel of Skellyhill or Cumberhead, who had replaced Rathillet, were involved.¹⁰⁶ A Government source names others at the first convention: Earlstoun, from the Glenkens in

104. *An Informatory Vindication*, 184-5.

105. Renwick is specifically said to not have drafted the Lanark Declaration, even though he was the clerk of the convention. Sprat, *Copies*, 151. Harvie was executed in Lanark in March 1682 for participating in the posting of the Declaration. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 382; J. H. Thomson, *The Martyr Graves of Scotland*, Matthew Hutchison ed. (Edinburgh and London, no date), 265-6; *CW, & N* 427-8.

106. Shields, *FCD*, 10, 14, 16. For John Steel, see John Blackwood Greenshields, *The Annals of Lesmahagow* (Edinburgh, 1864), 109-22; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 15n, 489n, 247-8. For John Brown, see Walker, *BP*, I, 53-4, 72-5; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n. John King stayed at Brown's house after Drumclog. Wodrow, *History*, III, 134. For David Steel, see Wodrow, *History*, IV, 15. Shields makes almost no mention of David Steel, however, he was clearly a figure of importance. Steel is described as replacing Hackston and was prases of a convention at Panbreck. He was known to Renwick and Russell, and was written to by Robert Langlands. He was shot in 1686. Houston, *Letters*, 178; Jonathan Swift *The Memoirs of Capt. John Creighton: From his own Materials, drawn up and digested by Jonathan Swift*. (1731) quoted in Thomson, *MGoS*, 277; Shields, *FCD*, 134, 137; 'Societies Reply to the former in Latin to the same professors, 1684', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 116; 'Letter Mr Rob[ert] Langlands to Dav: Steil &c. Sept. 28. 1685', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 162.

Kirkcudbrightshire; Renwick, from Edinburgh; John Nisbet, from Northumberland and John Nisbet of Hardhill in Loudon parish, Ayrshire. It also records the names of some delegates to the second convention who may have been involved: Robert Speir, from the Lothians; James Stewart, probably the son of Archibald Stewart in Causey-end in Wigtownshire involved in Sanquhar, and William Stewart from Galloway.¹⁰⁷ It is also possible that the part played by controversial figures in the Societies' history at first convention, such as James Russell or Alexander Gordon of Kinsture who were prominent in subsequent conventions, may explain the Societies' reticence, as both Russell and Kinsture later split from the Societies and rejected Renwick's leadership, as discussed in later chapters.

The distribution of delegates in the early conventions partially reflected in the Societies' structure. Although no definitive structure of the United Societies can be resolved, a picture of where they had a substantial structure can be delineated from the Societies's sources. At the top of the Societies was the general convention made up of delegates commissioned from individual prayer societies. It was in effect the Societies' parliament. Sometimes business was conducted by a council of sixteen members for efficiency, but contentious issues were sent back down to the prayer societies for ratification in days of fasting and prayer. All delegates were sworn to secrecy regarding Societies' business until mid 1683 and they organised collections of funds among their prayer societies which were used to fund Societies' projects and provide relief for those suffering persecution. All members of the Societies were expected to be armed. Below the convention the prayer societies were organised into shire meetings, which were sometimes subdivided into smaller sub-shire meetings where the number of prayer societies was large.¹⁰⁸

Throughout the 1680s, the Societies' shire structure reflected the regional nature of militant presbyterian dissent, with differing shires consistently displaying more moderate or militant characteristics. The societies in Fife and Perth were small in number, but were consistently militant in outlook. They included Russell and other assassins of Sharp and broke with the United Societies in 1682. The Edinburgh societies were militant and influential early on, and produced key leaders such as Renwick and Michael Shields. The 'Livingston and Calder Muir' societies probably covered Linlithgowshire and western Edinburghshire. They contained militants such as Patrick Walker and John Flint, but they also contained more-moderate elements who broke away from the Societies in 1685.

To the west of them lay the militant heartlands of the Societies. The Lanarkshire societies, which

107. Sprat, *Copies*, 151.

108. 'Overtures and Rules anent Enacting and Maintaining Christian Societies in time of Persecution', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 4. Shields, *FCD*, 6-20, 24, 30-1, 48, 58-9, 63, 104-5, 110-1, 156.

were built on Smith's model, were consistent adherents to the United Societies. They were probably subdivided into upper and lower ward meetings and produced the leadership in Lesmahagow parish, Gavin Witherspoon of Heatheryknow in Old Monklands parish and John Wilson in Douglas. They were also later joined by Walker. The Glasgow societies played a prominent role in the Societies's conventions and produced active delegates in Colin Alison, William Boyd, Robert Goodwin and probably Thomas Linning. Delegates from Renfrewshire and Ayrshire also regularly attended the conventions. It is unclear how Ayrshire was subdivided, beyond Carrick being a distinct area. However, the area around Fenwick, Galston, Loudon and Muirkirk parishes was consistently militant in its outlook and contained key figures in the societies such as John Brown of Priesthill and John Nisbet of Hardhill and their kin networks. The Carrick societies were persistently more moderate in their outlook and in 1685 broke from the United Societies. They, too, produced well-known Society people in the Dicks of Benbain and the Duns of Benquhat in Dalmellington parish.

To the south of Carrick lay a further Societies' stronghold in Galloway, which consists of Wigtownshire and the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. Within the Societies structure, Galloway was possibly divided into four: the Glenkens in the north, Wigtownshire and the societies between the rivers Dee and the Cree in the west, and probably a fourth division east of the Dee from Kirkcudbright to Irongray parish. While the Glenkens area was a militant stronghold, the other parts of Galloway were more moderate in their outlook and also broke with the Societies in 1685. Galloway also produced significant figures in the Societies, such as Earlstoun, Kinsture and John Clark in Moorbrock in Carsphairn parish.

In Dumfriesshire the Societies's structure was divided into two sub-shire meetings: one in Nithsdale and the other Annandale and Eskdalemuir. Of them, Nithsdale appears to have been the larger in terms of numbers and more militant, as it conducted several large scale prisoner rescues and produced militant activists such as John Mathieson of Closeburn and the Harkness brothers of Locherben.

The final substantial piece of the Societies' jigsaw lay in Teviotdale, which was moderate in outlook. Teviotdale broke with the Societies under the leadership of Andrew Young in 1682. Beyond Teviotdale, the Societies also stretched into northern England, with societies in Cumberland, Northumberland and Newcastle. They, too, broke from the Societies in 1682, but at least one society in Newcastle returned to the Societies' fold in 1685.¹⁰⁹

The structure of the United Societies broadly mirrored the pattern of militant presbyterian dissent. From 1679, three snapshots of dissent more accurately model its distribution south of the

109. Wodrow, *History*, III & IV, passim; Shields, *FCD*, passim; Walker, *BP*, I & II, passim.

Tay and reinforce the patterns seen in the distribution of deprivations and the indulged. In late 1679, 240 militant prisoners picked up after Bothwell were banished on the *Croune of London*. Of them, forty-five per cent came from the western shires of Ayr and Lanark; twenty-three per cent came from the eastern shires of Stirling, Linlithgow and Edinburgh; fifteen per cent came from the south-western shires of Kirkcudbright, Dumfries and Wigtown, and nine percent from Roxburgh in the southeast.

The Fugitive Roll of 1684, which listed presbyterians declared fugitive by the circuit courts in 1683, exhibits a similar pattern. Of the 1,819 named lay presbyterians with an identified location on the Roll, forty-eight per cent came from the western shires of Ayr and Lanark; thirteen per cent from the eastern shires of Stirling, Linlithgow and Edinburgh; eighteen per cent from the south-western shires of Kirkcudbright, Dumfries and Wigtown, and nine per cent from Roxburgh in the southeast.

The same pattern recurs in the distribution of those with an identifiable origin killed in judicial and field executions between 1679 and 1688. Of the 145 militant presbyterians killed, fifty-three per cent came from the western shires of Ayr, Lanark and eastern Renfrew; ten per cent came the eastern shires of Stirling, Linlithgow and Edinburgh, and twenty-nine per cent came from the south-western shires of Kirkcudbright, Dumfries and Wigtown.¹¹⁰

When the data from the above is combined to produce a 'relative militancy' rating per parish for each shire south of the Tay, the western shires of Ayr and Lanark emerge as areas of severe militant dissent, with moderate levels found in Renfrew and a low level in Dunbarton. In the south-western shires a mixed picture emerges with Kirkcudbright showing a particularly high level of dissent, Dumfries a moderate level and Wigtown a low level. In the south-eastern shires Roxburgh and Selkirk show moderate levels with Peebles, and Berwick exhibiting low or very low levels. In the eastern shires Linlithgow had a high level, Stirling a moderate level and Edinburgh and Haddington low levels. Perhaps most surprising of all, Fife, given its prominence in the struggle over conventicles, exhibited very low levels of militancy. However, it shared that trait with its neighbouring central shires of Perth, Clackmannan and Kinross, which were among the least militant of all.¹¹¹

However, at a deeper sub-shire level, the variations in levels of militancy between parishes more strongly corresponds with fragmentary evidence for the Societies' structure. In Linlithgowshire dissent was relatively evenly spread, but peaked in Livingston parish, which formed a cluster of upland parishes with higher levels of militant dissent with the parishes of West and Mid Calder in

110. See Appendices 7.7, 7.8 and 7.9.

111. See Appendices 7.7 and 7.8.

Edinburghshire: an area that correlates with the societies of 'Livingston and Calder Moor'.

Across the shire boundary in Lanarkshire, there were three clusters exhibiting high levels of militancy. One lay north of the river Clyde in the upland parishes of Old and New Monklands, Shotts, Cambusnethan, Carluke and Lanark, around the Societies' convention site at Darmead where Cameron, Cargill, Peden and Renwick all preached. A second militant stronghold lay in the burgh of Glasgow, which played a prominent role within the Societies. The third stronghold lay south of the Clyde in the parishes of Evandale and Kilbride and the upland parishes of Douglas and Lesmahagow, which all exhibited extremely high levels of militant activity. They produced numerous Societies' martyrs and also lay around the sites for Societies' conventions around Auchengilloch in Lesmahagow parish, which was also the location of Renwick's main hideout.

In Renfrewshire, militants were concentrated in the eastern parishes of Cathcart and Eastwood, which threw up a number of Societies' martyrs. To the south, another militant stronghold lay in eastern Ayrshire in a swath of upland parishes in eastern and southern Ayrshire. This ran from Fenwick and Kilmarnock in the north, to Galston, Loudon, Muirkirk, Sorn, Cumnock and Dalmellington, which ran along Ayrshire's eastern boundary with Lanarkshire and Nithsdale, before flowing to the south-west to Tarbolton parish and into the upland parishes of Carrick in Ballantrae, Barr, Dailey, Commonel and Straiton. They were all parishes which threw up Societies' martyrs and are well-recorded areas of Societies' activity.

Another stronghold lay in the northern uplands of the south-western shires which adjoined southern Ayrshire and Lanarkshire. In Wigtownshire, the burgh of Wigtown and the upland parish of Penninghame which bounded Carrick and Kirkcudbrightshire, stand out as centres of militancy. Wigtownshire was home to Kinsture and was where Alexander Peden preached. The parish of Penninghame in particular was involved in the infamous Wigtown martyrdoms and provided a safe haven for Renwick on at least one occasion.

In northern Kirkcudbrightshire, militancy was concentrated in the upland Glenkens parishes of Carsphairn, Balmaclellan, Dalry and Kells, and in the low-lying parishes of Borgue and Twynham and the burgh of Kirkcudbright. The Glenkens area was described by Renwick as 'bows of steel' in maintaining the militant cause and the above parishes produced several Societies' martyrs and leading figures within the Societies.

To the east in Dumfriesshire, dissent was focused in the uplands of Nithsdale, in particular around the parishes of Glencairn, Tynron and Closeburn, which are all well-recorded areas of Societies' activity in terms of martyrdoms, leadership and acts of violence.¹¹²

The Fugitive Roll also gives a good indication of the socio-economic backgrounds of those

112. See Appendix 7.7; Houston, *Letters*, 228.

involved in the Societies. Of the 1,819 lay presbyterians with an identifiable location listed on the Fugitive Roll, thirteen per cent were inhabitants of burghs and eighty-seven per cent lived in rural areas. In some shires, the percentage of fugitives in burghs was higher; in Lanark it rose to seventeen per cent, in Roxburgh to twenty per cent and in Linlithgow to twenty-four per cent. However, in other shires the percentage of fugitives in rural areas were higher: in Stirling it rose to ninety-three per cent, in Dumfries to ninety-five per cent and in Berwick to a hundred per cent.¹¹³ Although the distribution of burghs and their proximity to strongly presbyterian communities may have distorted the urban component of dissent within individual shires, it is clear that militant presbyterian dissent had a significant urban dimension to it: a conclusion which is at odds with the popular image of the Societies as 'Hill men'.

The Roll also indicates which occupations were prominent within militant presbyterian dissent. Of the total, sixty-eight per cent had no specified occupation and thirty-two per cent had a specified occupation. The former category highlights a distinct rural component of militant presbyterian dissent. Of the total of those listed without a specified occupation, ninety-three per cent lived in rural areas. Given that most of those rural fugitives lived in upland parishes, it is a reasonable assumption that the majority of them were directly involved in pastoral farming. When the latter category is subdivided into occupational groups, four distinct elements emerge: twenty-seven per cent were small landholders in one form or another or close kin of them; twenty-five per cent were servants or in the service of a landholder; nine per cent were engaged in mercantile business, either as minor merchants, chapmen or maltmen; and thirty-five per cent were connected to a trade – nine per cent were weavers, six per cent were tailors, five per cent were shoemakers or cordiners, three per cent were millers, three per cent were blacksmiths and three per cent were coopers or wrights.

The Societies primarily drew their membership from pastoral farming upland communities, but they also had a significant presence in the burghs. Within those communities, four socio-economic groups formed the basis of the Societies' support base. Across all of the communities in which the Societies were active, servants and small producer trades, especially shoemakers, weavers and others involved in the production and finishing of cloth, formed important components of militant dissent. Small landholders and minor merchants or chapmen were also crucial components, especially in the Societies' heartlands of the western and south-western shires.¹¹⁴

In general, the socio-economic profile of militant presbyterian dissent in Scotland mirrors that of English dissent. In particular, the prominence of those involved in mercantile trade, the production and finishing of cloth, and of shoemakers and cordiners is similar to the findings of

113. See Appendix 7.10.

114. See Appendix 7.11.

Tim Harris and Mark Knights in their studies of Restoration dissent in London.¹¹⁵

Soon after their formation, the United Societies were a coalition of the militant movement and some of the moderates from Bothwell who did not agree with the presbyterian ministry's cooperation in the Monmouth settlement. It was an unstable coalition and over the next year it would quickly be shorn of its moderate elements.

115. Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1987), 215-16; Mark Knights, 'London's Monster Petition of 1680', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No1 (Mar., 1993), 61-3.

‘Let King Jesus Reign, And All His Enemies Be Scattered’

TWO

The United Societies in Scotland, 1682–1684

Oppression maketh a wise man mad, as on the other hand, a gift
destroyeth the heart.
– *The Wisdom of Solomon.*

From 1682 to 1684, two broad strategic trajectories are evident in the actions of the Societies in Scotland. First, the Societies were engaged in a period of ideological tightening led by Renwick, which led to multiple schisms within their ranks. And second, due to the pressures of judicial persecution they resorted to force of arms to resist persecution, which culminated in the Societies’ virtual declaration of war against the state, known as the Apologetical Declaration. How had a movement formed as a protest against the Test Act, and to bring discipline to the fragmented militant presbyterian societies, transformed into one which engaged in war with the state?

I. Schisms

At their formation the United Societies incorporated a broad geographic spread of societies and spectrum of views. Initially they had come together to protest against the Test and to bring some coherence and discipline to the militant presbyterian movement as a whole. Inevitably there were tensions over what the United Societies stood for in the year after their incorporation, when these matters were settled, which produced a series of schisms and expulsions. Central to this process was the question of the embassies to London and the United Provinces, discussed in depth in the next chapter, and what the Societies’ agreed testimony was in relation to the nonconforming presbyterian ministry. The embassies’ express aim was to provide the Societies with a ministry through contacts with sympathetic Protestants abroad. As such, it represented a challenge to the authority of the presbyterian ministry in Scotland and defined the Societies as a separate or independent entity. The other issue of the Societies’ testimony towards the nonconforming ministry was a continuation of the debate within militant circles since Bothwell and especially since Rotterdam, as discussed in chapter one, over withdrawal from the indulged ministers or those

ministers who maintained brotherhood with them or were perceived as backsliding in relation to the sins of the land. At the Societies' formation, both issues remained unresolved and both were entwined in a broader debate over the Societies' testimony towards the nonconforming presbyterian ministry.

The decision of the Societies to embark on the foreign embassies at the second convention in March 1682 led to considerable internal debate. While the societies in Edinburgh backed the mission, those in Glasgow and Teviotdale were opposed. The dissenters were unable to halt its departure in April 1682.¹ A majority of the convention was probably in favour of the embassies, but the question of the Societies' attitude to the presbyterian ministry was soon thrown into relief by the appearance within the Societies and renewed field preaching of Alexander Peden, the outed minister of Glenluce.

Peden was undoubtedly sympathetic towards the militants' cause, having opposed the indulgences and the bond pressed after Bothwell. He also had a long history of opposition to the regime. He was among the first of the field preachers, had taken part in the Pentland Rising, and been imprisoned on the Bass and cunningly evaded banishment to Virginia in 1678.² Although in hiding in Ireland, he had briefly returned to Scotland and met with Earlston and Cargill in May 1681.³ In mid 1682 Peden returned again and contacted leading Society figures. At Douglas he preached on Amos 7.9 'And I will rise against the House of Jeroboam with the Sword' and predicted the fall of the Stuart monarchy before John Wilson of Lanark, who was executed in May 1683, and another John Wilson, one of the most active delegates in the convention.⁴ He also conducted marriages and baptisms, including the marriage of John Brown of Priesthill and a child baptism for Alexander Gordon of Kinsture, both leading members of the Societies.⁵ While in Scotland, Peden delivered an uncompromising message of support for the Societies in two sermons at Glenluce.⁶ He attacked the indulged and spoke of the unlawfulness of ministers leaving the fields.⁷

Where is the Kirk of God in Scotland the day? It is not among the great clergie folk. Sirs, I'lle tell you where the Kirk of God is, wherever there is a praying lass or lad at a dyke-side in Scotland. A praying partie will ruine them yet, Sirs, and a praying partie shall go throw the storm.

1. Shields, *FCD*, 19, 21; 'Letter from Some Friends in Tiviotdale to the General Meeting, 1682', EUL MSS. La.III.344.2, fol. 52.

2. Walker, *BP*, I, 45, 46, 52-3, 105.

3. Walker, *BP*, I, 34, 48, 50-2, 118.

4. Walker, *BP*, 49-50; Shields, *FCD*, 100, 238-42, 244, 251, 317, 329, 380, 394, 402, 405, 407, 439.

5. Walker, *BP*, I, 53-4 73, 108.

6. Howie (ed.), *Sermons*, 555-65. An extract from the second sermon which may accurately retain Peden's Scots is printed in D. Reid (ed.), *The Party-Coloured Mind* (Edinburgh, 1982), 172-6.

7. Howie (ed.), *Sermons*, 564, 565.

He praised the martyrs of Bothwell and Ayrsmoss, and 'noble worthies' Cargill and Cameron who were 'all glancing in glory now'. He urged the faithful in Carrick and Galloway to follow the example of the Societies:

O sirs, what are ye doing in this countryside? Christ's followers in throw in Clydsdale yonder, they have ventured sair for God and given a great testimonie. They have burnt the Test and the acts of the cursed parliament.⁸

He promised that afterwards

[God] shall set you on thrones, and ye shall give in your judgement and sentence with Him, when He shall judge the bloody king, bloody council and parliament, and the bloody Duke of York, and our profane and wicked nobles and gentlemen, and graceless ministers in Scotland, who are all dyed with the blood of the saints. Oh, my heart trembles within me to think what is coming on the backsliding and soul-murdering ministers in Scotland!⁹

Peden had broken the presbyterian ministry's agreement to cease field preaching. However, his return was not universally welcomed among the Societies. At the third convention in June 1682 there was heated debate over Kinsture's right to sit in the convention due to Peden's baptism of his child. In Renwick's view, Peden 'had many times tried, and practice had proved him unfaithful in times bypast', probably a reference to Peden's failure to maintain field preaching in Scotland after Bothwell, but no resolution was achieved. Kinsture was suspended until 'enquiry and trial' was made of Peden and an unknown number of others who were 'the only pleaders for trusting Mr Peden before trial' and had opposed Earlston's mission, an indication that Peden's supporters did not wish to challenge ministerial authority. To resolve the issue the Societies appointed a delegation headed by the hardline James Russell, the assassin of Sharp, to meet with Peden, but the rendezvous failed to materialise due to Peden leaving Scotland and a schism within the Societies.¹⁰

The third convention also saw the Societies brought to the brink of schism over the foreign embassies, but that schism was prevented by a post-convention rift between Russell and Renwick, the leaders of the pro-embassy faction, over a proposed joint reply to the dissenters. At the fourth convention each presented his own reply. Renwick's was well received, but there was a hostile reaction to Russell's reply and his further divisive demands that the Societies' testimony should include refusal to pay taxes and customs at bridges and ports and reform of the pagan names of the days and months by replacing them with numbers. Their rejection led to a walkout by Russell and the delegates of Fife and Perth and the formation of another Cameronian party apart from the

8. Reid (ed.), *Party-Coloured Mind*, 171, 172, 173.

9. Howie (ed.), *Sermons*, 559.

10. Shields, *FCD*, 22-3; Houston, *Letters*, 73, 74.

Societies, the Russellites. In part the schism was motivated by ideological differences. The Russellites favoured a stricter interpretation of the sins of the land, had greater desire for further reformation, and took a harder line against the dissenters than many in the convention, but the other source of dispute articulated by the Russellites was Renwick's style of leadership, an indication that the desire to control the Societies was a crucial factor in the schism.¹¹

The loss of the hardline Russellites swung the convention in a moderate direction and a compromise was quickly arranged with Peden's supporters. In return for Kinsture's recognition of his 'offence', he was received back into the convention and the foreign embassies were abandoned. However, the dissenters' victory was short lived, as Peden abandoned field preaching and the Societies' receipt of providential news of a breakthrough in the United Provinces, discussed in the next chapter, saved the embassies and swung the convention decisively behind Renwick. Having secured a majority in favour of the foreign embassies, Renwick then purged the convention of dissident elements who did not want to break with the nonconforming presbyterian ministry in Scotland or in exile. In the run up to the fifth convention, Renwick reprimanded the societies in Newcastle for associating with Andrew Young, the representative of the Teviotdale societies opposed to the foreign embassies, and for hearing the presbyterian ministers James Welsh and John Hepburn, the latter of whom rejected the Sanquhar Declaration, and warned that if they did not cease their associations with them, they would be expelled from the Societies. A few days later at the fifth convention, Young and the Teviotdale societies were formally expelled in an attempt to quash dissent, but it failed, for in December the Newcastle societies were lost at Young's 'instigation' and expelled for continuing to hear Hepburn and James Veitch, the indulgent minister who had preached at Rotterdam.¹²

By the time Renwick departed to take up his studies at Groningen at the end of 1682, the United Societies had thus fragmented into three factions due to defections. In the north were the hardline Russellites of Fife and Perth, in the West the United Societies, and in the Southeast and Northern England moderate societies who refused to break with the Scottish presbyterian ministry. Fragmentation significantly reduced the geographic spread of the United Societies, but in terms of the Societies' membership it probably amounted to no more than a loss of about twenty per cent: the Russellites accounting for about five per cent; Teviotdale and the other societies to the south-

11. Shields, *FCD*, 23-4, 26-8, 113-4.

12. 'Letter from Some Friends in Teviotdale to the General Meeting, 1682.', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol. 2. Item 52; Shields, *FCD*, 19, 29, 42-6; Carslaw, *Letters*, 21-4, 31-2; Houston, *Letters*, 81-4. Renwick had expressed the Societies' hope of reclaiming a minister called 'J. V.', probably James Veitch, in his letter to Earlstoun of 20 November 1682. He claimed that 'J. V.' had joined with Hepburn. Houston, *Letters*, 87.

east about ten to fifteen per cent.¹³

Despite Renwick's purge, the debate continued within the Societies' western heartlands. Without Renwick's firm hand, the seventh convention in February 1683 reopened the question of the Societies' relations with the nonconforming Scottish presbyterian ministers by issuing a call to selected ministers likely to be sympathetic to the Societies, mainly in Ireland and including Peden and Hepburn, to preach to the Societies. Greaves suggests that the call was motivated by the Societies' desperate need for ministers, but the evidence suggests it was due to internal political reasons.¹⁴ The call was written by John Smith and delivered by Kinsture, who were both on the moderate wing of the Societies. Smith had been a promising candidate for the ministry short-listed for Groningen, but drawn a blank in the lot that selected which students went to Groningen. With Renwick and Flint, he had drafted a paper on withdrawing from the backsliding ministry which formed the basis of the seventh convention's call that had left the option for reconciliation open. Considering that Renwick and Flint took a hard line on withdrawal from the presbyterian ministry and that Michael Shields later berated Smith's 'mishandling' of that paper, it is probable that Smith was instrumental in promoting the convention's call. Despite the seventh convention's endeavours, all the ministers rejected the call.¹⁵

The ordination of Renwick at Groningen in May brought further resolution to the question of the ministry. In his testimony composed in April, he testified against joining with Peden, Hepburn and other named presbyterian ministers who had been close to the Societies, including two of the instigators of the Societies' original platform, Thomas Douglas and the deceased Robert MacWard, who had both advocated that professors continue to hear Robert Fleming at Rotterdam after he had allowed the indulged James Veitch to preach. Renwick's testimony was a decisive break from the Societies' former position. The rejection of Douglas and MacWard moved the Societies' testimony further to the right-hand, i.e. towards a more extreme position. In 1680 only a few, such as Boig, Hamilton and Rathillet, had adopted such an extreme position, which even Cargill had rejected. It was a Hamiltonian outlook - Hamilton had separated from MacWard over the same issue - and Renwick was Hamilton's protégé, as will be discussed in chapter three. Renwick's ordination and adoption of such a right-hand testimony against the ministry marked the end of the

13. This estimate is based on the percentages relating to militancy values for each shire expressed in Appendix 7.8 and from the fact that Renwick failed to preach in certain shires for the next few years. The Russellite estimate is based on the combined total for Fife, Perth, Kinross and Clackmannan shires and perhaps parts of Stirlingshire. The Teviotdale estimate includes Roxburgh, Haddington, Berwick and Selkirk shires as well as the small number of societies in northern England.

14. Richard L. Greaves, *God's Other Children: Protestant Nonconformists and the Emergence of Denominational Churches in Ireland, 1660-1700* (Stanford, CA, 1997), 207-8.

15. Shields, *FCD*, 43-5, 48, 50-1; 'Letter from some Societies to Mr Mich[ael] Bruce, Mr Sam[uel] Arnot & Mr Alex[ander] Pedin', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 64.

long running dispute since Bothwell over the status of the ministry. As the Societies only ordained minister, Renwick's pronouncements against joining with the ministry effectively became the Societies' new platform, even though some of the Society people did not share his views. His views proved highly controversial.

On his return to Scotland, Renwick read out his testimony at Darnead on 3 October followed by a conventicle there on 23 November. Darnead offered symbolic continuity with Cargill and Cameron's ministry, as it was the place where they had first preached in 1680, and Renwick symbolically preached on the same text as Cargill's final sermon. The convention accepted Renwick's ministry, but the discontinuities were evident, as his testimony was 'very ill taken' by some and led to a further unspecified number deserting the Societies' standard. In particular, his naming of some ministers with whom he would not join in communion caused anger, as those whom Renwick named were among the closest to the Societies' platform. According to Alexander Shields, some of those present later represented Renwick's naming 'very odiously' so that 'many' beyond the convention believed he had excommunicated the ministers. The presbyterian ministers also joined the attack. To dissuade people from hearing him they pointed to his foreign ordination and alleged he was a schismatic Independent, Anabaptist or Gibbite, who cared for nothing but 'railing against ministers and the king's authority'. The attacks were partially successful, as the Shields brothers and Walker were later at pains to clarify Renwick's position and Renwick later wished he had not been so specific in naming the ministers.¹⁶

In the wake of the divisions at Darnead, the twelfth convention sent a delegation in the hope of wooing part of the Russellites back into the Societies' fold. Led by Thomas Linning, William Nairn and Michael Shields, all trusted hardliners, it met with some of the Russellites' membership in Fife and expressed the Societies' sympathies with the Russellite platform, but their overtures were rebuffed. Having failed to woo the Russellites, the convention took practical steps to ensure that it was purged of remaining dissident elements. At the thirteenth convention, in March 1684, a set of questions was imposed relating to the delegates' adherence to the new hardline testimony before they could sit in the convention, and at the seventeenth convention, in January 1685, a formal written commission was introduced for the use of all participating societies as proof of their delegates' identity and adherence to the testimony. Nonetheless some dissenting voices remained. William Boyd, who had aided the Russellites' students at Groningen, but forsook them in mid 1684, returned to Scotland in June 1684. Renwick appears to have desired to censure Boyd, but Boyd was

16. Shields, *FCD*, 104, 111-2; Shields, *LoR*, 36, 41-3, 45-8; Walker, *BP*, I, 255-6. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 598; At Darnead, Renwick preached on Isaiah 26.20. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 13-32. See, Appendix 2.2 for ministers who opposed Renwick and the Societies.

neither 'spoken to, or heard' at the fourteenth convention. Clearly Boyd had some support in the convention, a fact which Renwick alluded to soon after, when he warned Hamilton that Boyd would 'breed us work yet'.¹⁷

To strike back at the presbyterian ministry, the twelfth convention also sent a 'protest' against the Scots Congregation in Rotterdam to Hamilton which was published in May 1684. It protested against the congregation and 'all in any wise complieing, joining hand and issue with you', an oblique reference to the former members of the Societies in the South East. It objected to the ministry of Robert Fleming, 'ignorant' elders, the admission of those who had taken oaths and bonds, the debarring of Rathillet, and attacked the ministers responsible for the 'misinformations' against the Societies at Renwick's ordination.¹⁸ The Protest was a comprehensive rejection of the authority of the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam, which served as the headquarters of the presbyterian movement as a whole, and of the exiled presbyterian ministry. While not a declaration of war, its comprehensive rejection of all compliers with the Scots Kirk bore marked similarities to aspects of the Societies' later declaration of war against the state in the Apologetical Declaration, as discussed later.

In mid 1684 the Societies, or as they then styled themselves, the 'Anti-popish, Anti-prelatick, Anti-erastian, Anti-sectarian, True Presbyterian Remnant of the Church of Scotland', were politically and religiously isolated from their former presbyterian brethren.¹⁹ The godly 'Remnant' had been born. At the same time, the Societies faced increasing pressures from persecution which in one case was spectacularly aided and abetted by their former moderate brethren.

II. Persecution

In 1682 to 1683 the Societies were not the subject of targeted persecution; rather, they were encompassed within the general persecution against presbyterians who refused to acknowledge the power of church and state. The primary mechanism for enforcing conformity to the government's will was the Circuit Courts of Justiciary. It is impossible accurately to assess the effect of persecution by the circuit courts and the oaths, fines and sentences of imprisonment they enforced on Societies as a whole, but it must have been considerable given their attitude towards church and

17. Shields, *FCD*, 113-14, 130, 131, 134, 156. Houston, *Letters*, 161. Boyd was delegated at the fourteenth convention to translate papers into Latin to be sent to Hamilton. EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol. 1. Item 234.

18. Shields, *FCD*, 112; Steven, *History*, 100-1; 'Societies Protestation against the Scottish Congregation at Rotterdam Nov. 28. 1683', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No 105; Shields, *Protestation*, 1-5. The Protest was printed by Hamilton in the United Provinces.

19. Shields, *FCD*, 186.

state. As discussed in chapter one, the Fugitive Roll alone, produced from the records of the Circuit Courts and published on 5 May 1684, contained 1,846 named individuals, mostly concentrated in areas where the Societies are known to have operated. The Societies' sources make frequent references to these forms of persecution in general terms, but not on a case basis. What they do specifically refer to are the cases where martyrdom or potential martyrdom was the issue either by banishment or execution.

Since 1679 there had not been any banishments from Scotland, but in 1684 the Privy Council brought banishment back into use to deal with the mounting numbers of imprisoned presbyterians. Six or seven prisoners were banished to the army in Flanders in March and fourteen in August to New Jersey.²⁰ However, one case in particular stands out, that of the Society prisoners banished from Gourrock aboard the *Carolina Merchant* to Carolina on 21 July. Yeoman and Roper's article points out that this was an embarrassing case for Presbyterian historians such as Wodrow as the Cameronian prisoners were unwillingly transported by their former moderate presbyterian brethren, including in one case the kidnap of Elizabeth Linning, probably the sister of Thomas Linning, who had simply come to visit the banished on board ship. The voyage of the *Carolina Merchant* was directed by the merchants James and Walter Gibson, and William Dunlop, later Principal of the University of Edinburgh, and was part of the Carolina Project to create a haven for Scots and English dissenters in the New World.²¹ Its backers were the English Whigs like Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury, then deceased, and in Scotland, leading moderate presbyterians such as Henry Erskine, Lord Cardross, Lord Melville, Cochrane of Ochiltree and the Campbells of Cessnock, some of whom were involved in the Rye House Plots and later the Argyll Rising.²² The moderate John Erskine of Carnock, who dined with Dunlop and treated the ship's departure like a social event, reported that thirty-five prisoners were aboard.²³ Among them were John and Thomas Marshal of Starryshaw, Shotts parish, who were known to Walker and who died under banishment, and John Mathieson in Closeburn parish, an active delegate in the convention, whose fate is discussed in chapter six.²⁴ Twenty-two of the prisoners were Society people imprisoned in Glasgow, and they subscribed a testimony which Renwick interpreted as a witness against

20. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 9; NLS MSS. Wod.Oct.XXIX, f.271; Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 114; John H. Thomson ed., *A Cloud of Witnesses for the Royal Prerogatives of Jesus Christ: Being the Last Speeches and Testimonies of Those Who Have Suffered for the Truth in Scotland Since the Year 1680* (Edinburgh, 1871), 529.

21. Louise Yeoman & Lou Roper, 'The Unprincipled Principal: New Light on William Dunlop and the Settlement of Stuartstown', unpublished article.

22. Greaves, *SK*, 35, 97, 137, 163-4; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 387-8.

23. John Erskine, *Journal of the Honourable John Erskine of Carnock, 1683-87*, W. MacLeod ed. (SHS, 1 series, XIV, 1893), 67-72. Carnock had a financial interest in one of the 'servants' sent to Carolina. Those banished were under forced indenture. Wodrow stated that there were 32 prisoners banished. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 11.

24. Walker, *BP*, II, 38, 41; EUL MSS. La.III.350. No.116; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 8-9.

'complying ministers and professors, who are going to the same place'.²⁵

The importance of the *Carolina Merchant* banishments is that for the first time moderate presbyterians openly colluded with the regime in the persecution of the Societies. It shows just how hostile their relations with the Societies had become as a result of the Rye House Plots, Renwick's ordination and the protest against the Scots Congregation in Rotterdam. The Societies were isolated and reviled by their former moderate brethren in part because they considered them to be their social inferiors and because of the threat their radical politics posed to the social order. Carnock shared the Societies' revulsion to what he termed popery, tyranny and the 'usurpation' of the Church and was later deeply involved in the Argyll Rising, but in his journal entry on his brother's departure on the *Carolina Merchant* he recorded his fear of the 'extirpating of presbyterians out of Scotland (which I hope in God shall never be)' and how his brother could not get 'law or justice' in Scotland, without any hint of irony, considering the Society prisoners stowed below. For Carnock, recent events had shown that the Societies, or 'rusticks' as he pejoratively termed them, were dangerous schismatics, who 'disown all other presbyterians or others whosoever, who did not in every point adhere to their ridiculous principles' and who 'falsely' called themselves the only 'true Presbyterians'.²⁶

Presbyterian historiography has presented the banished and executed martyrs of the 1680s as representative of the sufferings of all presbyterians, but it is clear that in mid 1684 moderates and the Societies were involved in a bitterly hostile relationship with each other in which one faction resorted to collusion with their persecutors against the other. The suffering from the most severe form of persecution, execution, was also unevenly shared between the presbyterian factions, as the evidence proves that the vast majority were either members of the Societies or sympathetic towards them.

Between January 1682 and February 1685 forty-six presbyterians were judicially executed in Edinburgh, Glasgow and, in one case each, in Kilmarnock and Lanark. Only two were moderate presbyterians. Mr John Dick, executed on 5 May 1684, stated his adherence to the Hamilton Declaration which had been rejected by the Societies, and William Baillie of Jerviswood, executed on 29 December 1684, had headed the moderates' delegation to London during the Rye House Plots.²⁷

A further two martyrs are of unknown factional provenance. Thomas Lauchlan, a heritor in Lanark forfeited for his role in Bothwell and executed on 16 August 1682, left no testimony to point

25. Houston, *Letters*, 160. Dunlop was the only preacher on the voyage. Erskine, *Journal*, 71.

26. Erskine, *Journal*, 72, 95.

27. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 452; Greaves, *SK*, 164-7 passim; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 400.

in either direction.²⁸ There are grounds for suspicion for a Societies' connection in the case of William Boig of Auchenreoch in Campsie parish, executed in Glasgow on 12 June 1683. Boig had confessed to being at Bothwell and wavered over the Test, the illegality of Bothwell and the assassination of Sharp before the Circuit Court at Stirling, but in reality his execution was due to the backlash over the rescue of Alexander Smith at Inchbelly Bridge on 8 June. The next day, Claverhouse wrote that Boig 'would doe anything to saive his lyf: but nothing to be reconciled to the government', and recommended his execution as 'execution would be more terrible at Glasgow than heir, and he will succed to him [Smith] who wes so villainously ressewed'. Intriguingly, Carnock who had travelled with the Lord of Justiciary to Boig's execution noted that 'within a little of Inchbelly bridge we saw a country house razed to the ground, where, on Friday last, David Murray, one of the King's Guard, was killed, and Ballantine wounded, by about seven men'. Auchenreoch lies within a mile of Inchbelly Bridge and it is probable that the attack was launched from Boig's house.²⁹

The remaining forty-two martyrs were connected to the Societies in varying degrees. Of them, six were possible members. William Harvey, a webster in Lanark executed on 2 or 3 March 1682, was indicted for publishing the Lanark Declaration at Lanark. Before the Privy Council he demonstrated some degree of moderation, as he stated he believed in the King's authority as far as it accorded with law, and said God save the king, but his alleged actions indicate his sympathies for the Societies.³⁰

Captain Alexander Hume, portioner of Hume, executed on 29 December 1682, confessed to attending conventicles and involvement in Bothwell. Hume's testimony is found in a collection of Robert Hamilton's letters.³¹

John Kerr or Gilry, a wright from Hownam parish, George Martin, a notary and teacher in Dailly parish, and James Muir of Crossford in Lesmahagow parish, were executed on 22 February 1684 for their 'treasonable principles and assertions'. Martin may not have been a member of the Societies, as he was circumspect over the legality of the Bothwell Rising, but Gilry and Muir probably were, as Carnock, who was present at their trial, implies that they thought that Bothwell was lawful and

28. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 384.

29. Erskine, *Journal*, 3-5; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 399-400; Thomson (ed.), *MG&S*, 244. Auchenreoch OS Ref. NS 677 767.

30. Campbell, *SW*, 130; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 382; Thomson, *MG&S*, 265-6; *CW&N*, 427-8; 'Copy of testimony (1682)', NLS MSS. Wod.Oct.XXVIII, f.54v.

31. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 385; 'His last words on the scaffold, 1682', NLS MSS. Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 47; *CW&N*, 424-7; 'The last speech of Alex. Hume portioner of Hume who suffered at the Crose of Edinburgh, Dec 29, 1682.', GUL MSS. Ms Gen 32, 1009, No 8.

would not pray for Charles II as he was not the lawful monarch of Scotland.³²

William Young, executed on 27 August 1684, was from the Societies' heartland of Evandale parish. Described by *Cloud* as 'a good man, but somewhat crazed in mind', he was condemned by his confession that he had heard Donald Cargill and had fought at Bothwell. Prior to execution he escaped from the Canongate Tolbooth with some known Society people, but was quickly recaptured. Although he had Societies' contacts, he left no testimony behind to reveal his views.³³

All the remaining thirty-six executions were of Society people. Eight can be identified by their connections to the Societies. Robert Gray from Northumberland, executed on 19 May 1682, was a committed follower of Cameron in Scotland, regarded as a 'very dear acquaintance' by Walker, and his execution witnessed by Renwick, who probably collected his martyr's testimony.³⁴ The three men executed on 15 December 1682, James Robertson, a pack man in Stonehouse parish, John Finlay, an illiterate resident of Muirside in Kilmarnock parish, and William Cochran from Cairnduff in Evandale parish, were also Society people. Robertson testified to attending many preaching, fast and communion days, in particular that of Cargill and Cameron at Auchengilloch in 1680, as well as giving testimony 'to fellowship meetings of the Lord's people, particular and general', the latter a reference to the Societies' conventions. Finlay was Robertson's 'dear comrade' and in his testimony confessed to being at Drumclog, to conversing with Cargill and Cameron, and testified in favour of fellowship meetings and the Lanark Declaration. While Cochran condemned ministers and 'our noblemen and gentlemen' for deserting the cause and believed that within the last two or three years the Lord was beginning to 'let us see our former ground', an obvious reference to the Societies' campaign.³⁵

John Wilson, a 'young gentleman' and writer in Lanark, and David MacMillan from Galloway, executed on 16 May 1683, were among seven whose apprehension was noted by Renwick. Most took the Test Oath, but Renwick selected Wilson and MacMillan out for praise.³⁶ Wilson had sat on the Council of War at Bothwell and was forfeited for his part in the rising. In his testimony he urged professors not to impose on ministers, but also that ministers should return to field

32. Muir is usually mistakenly referred to as of 'Cessford Boat', when he was from Crossford Boat, a small ferry across the Clyde in the Societies' stronghold of Lesmahagow parish. He was probably related to Adam Muir in Crossford who is listed on the Fugitive Roll of 1684. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 418; Erskine, *Journal*, 36, 38; 'John Gilry, wright, Hownam, letters of (1683)', NLS MSS. Wod.Qu.XXXVI, f.165.; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 325; Wodrow, *History*, IV 15n, 489n. According to Carnock, who was witness to his trial and Parliament's annulling of his forfeiture, he was called Kerr. Wodrow and *Cloud* refer to him as Gilry.

33. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 433-4; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 69-70; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 386; Erskine, *Journal*, 80; 'William Young, Account of his trial, 1684', NLS MSS. Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 90; Wodrow, *History*, IV 489n.

34. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 225-37; Walker, *BP*, I, 193; II, 51.

35. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 384-5; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 238-58, 259-68, 268-73.

36. Houston, *Letters*, 131.

preaching where persecution was at its hottest, a reference to the Societies' recent call to the ministry. His testimony is also found in the letter collection of Michael Shields, the clerk of the convention.³⁷ MacMillan was personally known by Renwick and his testimony reveals that he was badly wounded at Bothwell and had attended field conventicles. Specifically he testified against the indulgences, curates and payment of the cess, all standard Societies' beliefs. His testimony was also in the hands of Michael Shields and his final letters were held by Hamilton.³⁸

Although almost nothing is known about the trial and execution of James Lawson and Alexander Wood at Glasgow on 24 October 1684, they were connected to the Societies. Both were probably from Lanarkshire, as they admitted they had heard Cargill and Cameron preach and the only two James Lawsons are found on the Fugitive Roll in Lesmahagow and Evandale parishes. Their joint testimony confirms their allegiances, as they bade farewell to 'sweet societies and Christian fellowship-meetings' and adhered to the Lanark Declaration.³⁹

A further eleven executions were connected to extensive kin networks and contacts within the Societies. John Nisbet, the younger in Glen in Loudon parish, executed in Kilmarnock on 4 or 14 April 1683, was related to an extensive local kin network deeply involved in the Societies, which included the martyrs John Richmond of Knowe, James Nisbet of Highside and John Nisbet of Hardhill, and Hardhill's son, Sergeant James Nisbet. In his testimony he believed it was a duty 'either quit Christ or Charles', owned Cargill and Cameron, and left his testimony against unfaithful ministers, the Cess, and hearers of curates.⁴⁰ Nisbet was also rigorously questioned over Captain John Paton of Meadowhead, Fenwick parish, who was executed 9 May 1684. The aged Paton, one of the leading figures among the militants of Ayrshire, had fought in the earlier Mauchline and Pentland risings, taken command of the horse from Fenwick and Galston after Drumclog, and sat on the Council of War at Bothwell. Although Paton made no mention of the Societies in his testimony, he was associated directly with them, not only through his kin (his son James was known to Walker and Peden) but in his actions. In 1680 Cameron had baptised on his farm and Paton had

37. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 394-5; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 303-304, 310-11, 311-19; Wodrow, *History*, III, 114-115n., 247-248; 'Account of his trial [1683]', NLS MSS. Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 96; 'Copy, 1715, of papers of [1683]', Wod.Qu.XXXVI, f.169; 'John Wilson Wryter in in Lanerks Papers. 16 May 1683.', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 88.

38. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 395-6; 'David MacMillan's paper', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol. 2. No. 87; *CW&N*, 451-452; 'Copy of his testimony, 1683', NLS MSS. Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 49. 'Copy of, ca. 1715, of papers concerning (1683)', Wod.Qu.XXXVI, f.184; A copy of two letters left by D[avid] McMillan containing his examination and last testimony as he knew he would not be permitted to speak on the scaffold, 1684', GUL MSS. Ms Gen 32, 1009, No 9.

39. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 406-8; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 15n, 17n, 489n; Thorbjörn Campbell, *Standing Witnesses: An Illustrated Guide to the Scottish Covenanters* (Edinburgh, 1996), 108-9.

40. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 394; Wodrow, *History*, III, 453; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 288-300; Campbell, *SW*, 122-3.

escaped capture at Lochgoin, the farm of the Howie family who were committed to the Societies.⁴¹

Richmond of Knowe in Galston parish was one of five Societies' men whose execution in Glasgow on 19 March 1684 was praised by Renwick for provoking a hostile reaction against their enemies.⁴² The others were John Main of Old Monklands parish, Archibald Stewart of Underbank in Lesmahagow parish, James Johnston of Cadder or Old Monklands parish and James Winning, a tailor from Glasgow.⁴³ Richmond testified to the declarations at Rutherglen, Sanquhar and Lanark, Cargill and Cameron's ministry and to fellowship meetings.⁴⁴ Main testified to the Rutherglen and Lanark declarations, and to Cargill and Cameron's ministry, and confessed to conversing with Gavin Witherspoon, a leading figure in the Societies.⁴⁵ Stewart was captured after he and John Steel of Over Waterhead, one of the founders of the Societies, were surprised by troops near Lanark in early 1684.⁴⁶ Johnston gave testimony to the ministry of Cargill and Cameron, and the Rutherglen, Sanquhar and Lanark declarations.⁴⁷ Only in the case of Winning is there some doubt, as he regretted hearing curates, but his unsatisfactory answers over the murder of Sharp and Bothwell indicate militant beliefs.⁴⁸

Richmond's funeral led to the capture of James Nisbet of Highside, Loudon parish, who was executed at Glasgow on 5 or 11 June 1684. Nisbet's testimony confirms his adherence to the Societies, as he rejected the Cess, gave testimony in favour of Cameron and Cargill, whom he had heard preach, and to the militants' declarations and actions at Rutherglen, Lanark, Torwood, and the Queensferry Paper.⁴⁹

Another group of Lanarkshire men executed on 30 November 1683, Arthur Bruce of Dalserf parish, John Cochran, a shoemaker in Lesmahagow, and John Whitelaw of Bothwellshields, New Monklands parish, were also connected to the Societies. Whitelaw was taken after Renwick's conventicle at Brown Ridge on 3 October and Cochran gave testimony to the *Solemn Acknowledgement of Public Sins and Engagements to Duties*, which expressed his commitment to the

41. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 351-6, 359-64; *RPCS*, VI, 241; 'Copy of dying testimony of 1684', NLS MSS. Wod.Oct.XXVIII, f.80.

42. Houston, *Letters*, 160.

43. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 421; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 63-5; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 326-9. Johnston is listed twice on the Fugitive Roll. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 14n, 17n.

44. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 339-48.

45. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 329-37.

46. Greenshields, *Annals of Lesmahagow* (Edinburgh 1864), 113-9 passim. His testimony is printed in *CW&N*, 498-500.

47. *CW&N*, 495-8.

48. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 326-7.

49. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 364-73; Thomson, *MGoS*, 131, 133-4; 'Copy of dying testimony of [1684]', NLS MSS. Wod.Oct.XXVIII, f.85.

covenanted reformation as established in 1648 to 1649. It is likely all three were taken after Renwick's conventicle and all three were convicted of taking part in the Bothwell Rising, for which Whitelaw had already been forfeited, and of providing treasonable answers on the legality of Bothwell, the murder of Sharp, and the authority of the King.⁵⁰

The executions of another nine can be specifically linked to the activities of the Societies. James Smith and John M'Quarrie, both of Lesmahagow parish, executed at Glasgow on 14 June 1683, are linked to the rescue of Alexander Smith at Inchbelly Bridge. Presbyterian historiography has presented Smith and M'Quarrie as hapless bystanders captured in the aftermath of Inchbelly, but they were probably involved in the rescue, as Carnock, who attended their trial, states they were seen by witnesses some miles south of Inchbelly, 'very hot' and calling for water, and when captured were found with arms concealed under their clothes. Smith's testimony further confirms his links to the Societies, as he urged his father to avoid paying the Localities tax, comparing at courts, and hearing curates, and urged his 'brethren' to 'join yourselves in a society or fellowship meeting'. M'Quarrie was the younger brother of the Laird of Scorrieholm, which lay by the houses of two key Societies figures John Steel of Over Waterhead and David Steel of Skellyhill. He had fought at Bothwell and was clearly a committed Covenanter, for in the midst of his execution, in which his right hand was chopped off, he held up his stump and cried, 'this and other blood now shed, will yet raise the burned Covenants'.⁵¹

Andrew Gullane, a webster from Dundee and later Balmerino in Fife, executed on 20 July 1683, was one of the assassins of Sharp. In Presbyterian historiography he is often praised for his attempts to spare Sharp's life, but he died 'hardened and insensible' to Sharp's murder stating that Sharp was a Judas who had sold the Kirk out for 50,000 merks a year who deserved to be put to the sword. In his testimony he revealed his membership of the 'sweet societies' and also urged them to 'pour out' their fury on their 'heathen' persecutors.⁵²

Arthur Tacket, a tailor in Hamilton executed on 30 July 1684, was taken fleeing Renwick's conventicle at Black Loch in Lanarkshire and executed after he failed to reveal under torture anything about the meeting. Tacket had been Hamilton's lieutenant at Bothwell and was forfeited for his part in the rising. In his testimony he witnessed to Renwick's faithful ministry.⁵³

50. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 278-81; Erskine, *Journal*, 23, 24; Wodrow, *History*, III, 247-8, 446.

51. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 281-3, 286-7, 567-9; Erskine, *Journal*, 5; Greenshields, *Annals of Lesmahagow*, 113-9 passim; Thomson (ed.), *MGoS*, 238-41; John McWhirry, Letter from him and James Smith to their friends before their execution, 1683', NLS MSS. Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 54.

52. Kirkton, *History*, 419; 'Andrew Gullan, Letters and Testimony of (1684)', NLS MSS. Wod.Qu.XXXVI, f.158; Thomson, (ed), *CW*, 273-5, Wodrow, *History*, III, 462-3.

53. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 429; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 373-80; Wodrow, *History*, III, 247-8.

The Enterkin Rescue in July 1684 also produced a further crop of Societies' martyrs whose passing was lamented by Renwick.⁵⁴ Thomas Harkness, Andrew Clark and Samuel M'Ewen were captured in a dragnet operation to capture the perpetrators soon after the rescue and executed on 15 August 1684. Although their joint testimony does not itself provide conclusive proof that they were Society people, all three clearly were.⁵⁵ Harkness was a fugitive from Locherben in Closeburn parish. He was part of a Societies' kin network in Nithsdale which included his younger brother, James Harkness, who had led the Enterkin Rescue and who later murdered the minister of Carsphairn in 1684 and rabbled 'curates' at the Revolution. Harkness's fellow martyrs were young men. Clark was a nineteen-year-old blacksmith from Leadhills in Crawford parish, and the brother of Adam Clark of Glenim in Sanquhar parish, who was an associate of James MacMichael, another of the killers of the minister of Carsphairn, and the Harkness family. While M'Ewen, who was only seventeen years old and from Glencairn parish, left a separate testimony to 'all the protestations and declarations given by the poor remnant'.⁵⁶ Also taken with Harkness and the others was Thomas Wood in Kirkmichael. He too had taken part in Enterkin, but his trial was delayed due to his severe wounds and he was eventually executed on 9 December 1684. Given the context of his involvements in Enterkin and with Harkness, it seems likely he was involved with the Societies, although no testimony has survived to confirm his sympathies.⁵⁷ The execution of Harkness and his colleagues also led to the execution of James Nicol on 27 August 1684, who was apprehended for shouting at their hangman. Nicol, a former merchant and burgher of Peebles reduced to vagabondage by persecution, left his testimony against John Flint and the Russellites, and at his trial owned the Rutherglen, Sanquhar and Lanark Declarations.⁵⁸

The final eight executions related to the Societies' Apologetical Declaration of November 1684. Three Lanarkshire men, John Semple of Craighorn, Glassford parish, Gabriel Thomson, perhaps

54. Houston, *Letters*, 165-6.

55. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 404; 'Joint testimony before suffering at Edinburgh, 1684', NLS MSS. Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 86. 'Copy of testimony of 1684', NLS MSS. Wod.Qu.XXXVII, f.93v.

56. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 405; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 24n. 67-8; Walker, *BP*, II, 85; Simpson, *Traditions*, 145. Thomson thought that there was no evidence to support Thomas Harkness's involvement in the rescue at Enterkin Pass on 29 July 1684, but Hewison and Ford thought otherwise. See Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 402; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 431-2; Ford, 'Enterkin and the Covenanters', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 3rd Series. No. 36., 136. For James Harkness, see Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 431-3; Simpson, *Traditions*, 141-2; Walker, *BP*, I, 280. For Adam Clark's associates, see Simpson, *Traditions*, 54-6.

57. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 166-7; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 447; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 402-3; Ford, 'Enterkin and the Covenanters', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 3rd Series. No. 36., 136; 'Wood, Thomas, Interrogations put to him on his trial, 1684', NLS. MSS. Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 87.

58. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 433; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 386-97; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 24n, 69, 489n; Erskine, *Journal*, 80.

of Hairmyres, Kilbride parish, and John Watt of Kilbride parish, executed on 14 November 1684, were charged with posting the Apologetical Declaration on church doors in Lanarkshire. Due to the speed of their execution and lack of any testimony, little is known of the views of the latter two, but Semple, who was tortured before the Privy Council for information on the Declaration, left a letter to his mother and sister in which he refused to comment on the Declaration, probably out of fear of disclosing any information. Their execution also provoked unrest among Societies' sympathisers in Edinburgh, including the elderly Janet Filmerton, a former correspondent of Walter Smith, who was taken for claiming Semple's bible and twelve women who were imprisoned for attempting to make off with the corpses.⁵⁹ Three others, James Graham, a tailor in Crofts, Crossmichael parish, George Jackson of Eastwood parish and Thomas Robertson in Edinburgh, were executed on 9 December 1684 for refusing to disown the Declaration. Graham and Jackson had been imprisoned for some time and took no part in posting the Declaration, but both were members of the Societies. According to Walker, on a previous occasion when Jackson was imprisoned, he had stuffed a handkerchief into John Gib's mouth to silence the ravings of the Gibbite leader. Jackson had been taken in Glasgow with seditious papers in early 1684, but was brought before the Privy Council for a second time after the Apologetical Declaration and questioned over his participation in the Societies and the Declaration. In his testimony he described the Declaration as 'most agreeable to the Word of God' and adhered to the declarations at Rutherglen and Sanquhar, and Renwick's 'faithful' preaching. Unlike the others, Robertson was taken in a recent search of Edinburgh and was accused of involvement in posting the Declaration. In his testimony he witnessed to the faithful ministry of Cargill and Renwick.⁶⁰ The final executions in this period on 29 January 1685 were of Robert Miller, a mason in Rutherglen, and Robert Pollock, a shoemaker in Glasgow who hailed from East Kilbride parish, for refusing to disown the Declaration. Miller testified to 'all the fellowship meetings', to the preaching of Cargill and Renwick, and against all intelligencers and apprehenders of the Lord's people, a clear reference to the aims of the Apologetical Declaration. Pollock, too, added his testimony to the Declaration.⁶¹

59. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 443; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 150-2; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 415-21; 'John Semple, Account of his trial, 1685', Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 92; 'Gabriel Thomson, Answers and interrogatories of [1684]', Wod.Oct.XXIX, f.287. Thomson is probably one of the sons of Gabriel Thomson 'in Haremire', Kilbride parish, Lanarkshire, listed on the Fugitive Roll of 1684. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 16n. His father was shot in 1685. John Watt is probably either a tailor in Kilbride or in Flaikfield, Kilbride parish listed in the Fugitive Roll. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 16n.

60. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 447-8; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 166-7; Walker, *BP*, II, 22-3; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 383-6, 409-14, 422-4. *Cloud* states that Jackson was questioned over the Sanquhar Declaration, but it is obvious from his interrogation that it was the Apologetical Declaration. *Cloud* also confused James Graham with his brother William who was shot on 15 March, 1684.

61. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 458; Wodrow, *History*, IV 226, 489n; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 425-8, 429-35; 'Account of Robert Pollock's trial before the Council', Wod.Fol. XXXIII. items 93, 94.

From 1682 to early 1685 the Societies almost exclusively suffered the most severe form of persecution. The impact fell hardest on the Societies' Lanarkshire and Ayrshire heartlands as twenty-four of the Societies' martyrs, or fifty-seven per cent, came from Lanarkshire, four or ten per cent from Ayrshire, and small numbers from other southern shires. Although the numbers from Ayrshire were small, their significance to the local Societies' network was considerable. The figures also call into question the focus of the Covenanting 'Radical Southwest' in this period, as the area from Ayr south into Galloway only accounted for four martyrs, compared to twenty-nine from the shires of Renfrew, Lanark and eastern Ayrshire. They also have profound implications for the martyr traditions of presbyterian historiography. Plainly, the majority of the martyrs belonged to the Societies, not to the presbyterian movement in general. After the Revolution the martyrs were co-opted by the established presbyterian church to justify the deposition of the Stuarts. The church had a good claim to them, as most of the Societies rejoined the church in 1690, but at the time of their execution they were part of the Societies who had withdrawn from the presbyterian ministry. One other aspect may have concerned the Societies. As the period progressed the numbers of Societies' martyrs increased. In 1682 it was only six, in 1683, nine, and in 1684, twenty-five.⁶² The pace of persecution was quickening and its impact on the Societies increasing – factors which help to explain what the Societies did next.

III. 'Declare War Against the Bloody and Whorish Beast'

All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, an to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask petition of any God or man for thirty days, save thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. — *Book of Daniel*, 6.7

On the night of 8 November 1684 the Apologetical Declaration was furtively posted on burgh market crosses and parish church doors across the West of Scotland. The Declaration had come from the hands of the Societies' sixteenth convention, and declared war on their persecutors. Most historians have been content to justify the Societies' adoption of such an extreme policy as the regrettable but natural outcome of the severe persecution they faced and their militant religious ideology. Hewison thought it an act of 'self defence'.⁶³ Cowan argued that it was due to the fact that it had 'become apparent that few if any would eventually escape the clutches of the authorities'.⁶⁴

62. See Appendix 2.1

63. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 440.

64. Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 120-1.

And Mathieson, who was hostile to the presbyterian tradition, agreed that persecution was a factor, but also saw it as the outcome of the Societies' fanaticism.⁶⁵ Greaves, less stridently, states that it was 'for the sake of religion'.⁶⁶ The effects of persecution were certainly the primary motive behind the Declaration, but other unrecognised ideological and political factors also lay behind it, which place it within a wider strategic and apocalyptic context. Those latter political factors were not simply the product of the Societies' fanaticism or militancy, but came out of the context of the hostile relations between the presbyterian factions, which left the Societies politically isolated and holding the firm conviction that they alone were the bearers of the Lord's standard in Scotland. Historians have also stressed the Declaration's continuity with presbyterian traditions of resistance. Hewison saw it as 'a re-announcement of the opinions of [John] Knox and his successors'.⁶⁷ Mathieson compared it to 'Scottish Presbytery in the zenith of its power', when it had Huntly executed in 1650 for declaring war on the Covenant, and in 'substance', similar to the teachings of Andrew Melville.⁶⁸ Or they have claimed it was 'softer' in tone than the language of the Societies' earlier declarations or 'less virulent than was to be expected from firebrands'.⁶⁹ The Declaration was built on the resistance theories of George Buchanan, Samuel Rutherford and James Stewart of Goodtrees, and on the assassination of Sharp, but in its form and strategic intent it was novel. The Apologetical Declaration was only the second public pronouncement by the Societies and it marked a distinct change in their strategy towards their persecutors, one which moved their strategy from essentially defensive forms of resistance to deploy an offensive form employing assassination.

The origins of the Apologetical Declaration have not been previously explored in any detail. It was undoubtedly inspired by Hamilton's letter of 8 May 1684 in which he pointed the convention towards Scotland's apocalyptic role to 'display Christ's standard ... against all opposition' and to 'declare war against the bloody and whorish beast, and all his supporters, whether right, or left hand enemies' in 'long and costly warfare' against 'all the courts of the Antichrist' ...

A war, not only foreign, but intestine; maintained, not by nobles, gentry, statesmen, experienced warriors, nor by great and learned ministers, but by a poor silly, feckless like company, enabled to do great exploits, and to counter-act the deepest counsels that have ever been managed against a poor church, and that notwithstanding of many of the many treacheries carried on against them, by their own ministers, and pretended brethren amongst themselves.

Hamilton clearly had the Societies in mind and urged them to support Renwick's ministry. He also

65. Mathieson, *Politics and Religion*, II, 310-1.

66. Greaves, *JK*, 265.

67. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 441.

68. Mathieson, *Politics and Religion*, II, 310.

69. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 148-150; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 440-1.

justified his war by reference to the *Book of Daniel* 6.7-10 in which the Persian princes plotted Daniel's downfall by using Daniel's adherence to the law of God against him, by persuading King Darius to issue a decree that no man could petition their Gods or man for thirty days, except through the King, or they would be cast into the lion's den, and Daniel ignored the decree and continued to pray and give thanks to God.⁷⁰ The parallels with the Societies' situation were obvious, but Hamilton's letter perhaps also outlined a future strategic direction for the Societies based on scripture. All the convention would have known that Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, as a test of God's powers of deliverance, with the outcome that he survived and his betrayers and their wives and children were thrown to the lions where they were killed, and that Darius issued a second decree to his kingdom to make men tremble before the God of Daniel. The following chapter in the *Book of Daniel* dealt with the Apocalypse, and possibly indicates that Hamilton viewed their persecution and war as heralding Christ's return, just as the Fifth Monarchists had used the *Book of Daniel* to interpret the events of the English Revolution as presaging the Apocalypse earlier in the century.⁷¹ It seems possible that Hamilton was urging the Societies to provoke a confrontation with their persecutors in order to achieve their deliverance, which possibly explains the parallels between the language of *Daniel* 6.7, above, and the Apologetical Declaration's targeting of privy councillors, commissioners of justiciary, generals of forces, adjutants, captains, lieutenants and all who assisted them.

Hamilton's letter also places the origins of the Apologetical Declaration within the wider context of a Societies 'war' with their right- and left-hand enemies. In his letter, he confirmed that he was opening up a new front against their moderate left-hand enemies who had 'betrayed the cause and the wrestling Remnant', by printing *The Protestation of the Antipopish, Antiprelatick, Antierastian, true Presbyterian, But poor and persecuted Church of Scotland, against the Scottish Congregation at Rotterdam in Holland*. And in July the fifteenth convention wrote to Groningen, accusing the Scots ministers in Rotterdam of reproaching the presbytery of Groningen, and of betraying the Societies by offering to deliver them up into the 'hands of the common adversary', a reference to the *Carolina Merchant* banishments, and of branding the Societies 'as if we were the only incendiaries of church and state'. However, it was to no avail, as discussed in the next chapter, as their Dutch support network

70. Shields, *FCD*, 136.

71. See P. G. Rogers, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London, 1966). The Queensferry Paper of 1680, witnessed to by Societies' martyrs, cryptically responded to the accusation that the Cameronians were Fifth Monarchists: 'if this be their Fifth Monarchy, we both are, and ought to be such, and that according to God's word'. Wodrow, *History*, III, 207n. As discussed in chapter three, the Societies were close to them in both their apocalyptic beliefs and politically in the Rye House Plots. See, Bernard Capp, 'The Fifth Monarchists and Popular Millenarianism' in J. F. McGregor and Barry Reay eds., *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), 165-89 & 'Transplanting the Holy Land: Diggers, Fifth Monarchists, and the New Israel' in *Studies in Church History*, 36 (2000), 288-98.

collapsed and defected to the moderates. Their other front against their right-hand enemies, the Russellites, was similarly unsuccessful. In the same letter Hamilton outlined their continuing wrangles with the Russellites in Groningen and delivered news that the Russellites in Fife had issued a call to their students, Flint and Thomas Russell, 'to come home and preach the gospel', but, as also discussed in the next chapter, he was unable to prevent the Russellites initiating Flint and Russell's ministry in Fife.⁷² At the same time as the sixteenth convention agreed the Apologetical Declaration, it also issued a formal protest against Flint and all who joined with him.⁷³

By mid 1684, the Societies had effectively lost their 'war' with the moderates and the Russellites abroad. The result was their total political isolation from other presbyterian factions and their complete disenchantment with their former brethren. Both had openly turned against them, the Russellites in the preaching in fields, the moderates in the collusion in the *Carolina Merchant* banishments. In part, the Declaration was a product of a struggle against their former brethren, but it was also product of rising apocalyptic expectations in relation to their struggle in Scotland.

The receipt of Hamilton's letter coincided with a sense of apocalyptic expectation in the Societies' sources and hints that possibly indicate that the Declaration or some similar action may have been under consideration after its arrival. On 12 June, the fourteenth convention appointed 10 July 'as a day of thanksgiving unto the Lord, for the various & miraculous proofs of his power as faithfully manifested to his people in preserving & delivering t[he]m from the potent & furious adversary'.⁷⁴ Although Hamilton's letter to the fifteenth convention which met on 31 July is lost, the convention's reply, which is filled with apocalyptic expectation, has survived.⁷⁵ It assured Hamilton that the Lord was still at work in Scotland 'preventing trials, or supporting under trials', a reference to the Carolina banishments, and had 'bridled' their enemies so that 'they cannot get us reached'. They were 'persuaded' that God was 'posting upon his way to appear for his broken and buried work', i.e. covenanted reformation. That he was in 'many ways presenting himself to his people, and testifying his willingness to return again to them', and that they did 'not doubt but that he would return, and that suddenly' with mercies for those waiting and 'judgments, judgments, judgments' for their opponents.⁷⁶ Intriguingly, the convention's letter also prefigured the language of the

72. Shields, *FCD*, 135, 137, 139.

73. 'The Protestation of the Contending and Suffering Remnant of the true presbyterian Church of Christ in Scotland Against Mr John Flint pretended minister of the Gospell, and all joyners and Compliers with him', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 141.

74. EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol. 1. Item 234. Hamilton's letter of 8 May was probably delivered by Boyd in early June. Shields, *FCD*, 131.

75. Hamilton's missing letter dealt with a proposed journey further abroad to aid the Societies. Shields, *FCD*, 141. Hamilton must have sent the letter from the Dutch ministers in Groningen of 10 July with his missing letter to the convention. Shields, *FCD*, 132-3.

76. Shields, *FCD*, 141-2.

Declaration in discussing the 'sad days' coming for those 'dealing with a slack hand this day', where in the Declaration they stated that they would not be 'so slack-handed in time coming, to put matters in execution' against their enemies.⁷⁷ Renwick's correspondence in this period is also suffused with similar providential fervour and apocalyptic expectation. On 2 July he wrote that 'the cause is the Lord's' and that He would prevail and 'overturn thrones and kingdoms'.⁷⁸ On 9 July Renwick reported to Hamilton numerous recent providential escapes with the Lord's help, and understood his deliverance from troops to Darmed in terms of *Isaiah* 62.6-7:

I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall not hold their peace day or night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.⁷⁹

Renwick's letter of 12 August also alluded to the story of Daniel. On one occasion while closely pursued and with no hiding place in sight at Dungavel Hill, Renwick hid in 'a pit' providentially 'ordained of God for hiding me' and a few days later escaped out of the 'very paws' of the militia.⁸⁰ In the same letter, he was also sure that the purpose of the 'hot furnace' of persecution was

not to consume, it is to purge and refine ... [For] Scotland is now like a woman in hard labour, who must either get speedy help and delivery, else she will be in peril of dying in travail. But courage yet—her sharpest hour is at the minute of delivery. Die, die she will not, for the Lord is but hasting through her travail. The more sore the pains be, the more joyful her delivery will be; yea, the Lord will have brave mirth at it; for He will feast of many a man's carcase at it.⁸¹

In the run up to the Declaration, the Societies were filled with apocalyptic expectation and took note of the Lord's signal favour towards them. Behind such expectations lay their increasing persecution at home by government forces, which on a more prosaic level was another factor which provoked the Apologetical Declaration.

Until mid 1684 the Societies preferred defensive rather than open forms of resistance. The Societies and authorities usually played out the game of capture, imprisonment and sentencing to an unwritten set of rules in which both sides accepted their roles: the authorities to punish or persuade prisoners to take oaths; the Societies to evade capture or, if taken, to witness to their cause. Fatalities due to armed violence were rare. Government forces had generally operated without inflicting extra-judicial fatalities, except for the shooting of William Graham as he escaped

77. Shields, *FCD*, 141; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 149n.

78. Carslaw, *Letters*, 91.

79. Houston, *Letters*, 155-9.

80. Houston, *Letters*, 164, 165.

81. Houston, *Letters*, 165-6.

his mother's house on 15 March 1682.⁸² In turn, the Societies rarely inflicted fatalities, although they deemed various defensive measures legitimate. Escape was one option open to prisoners. On 13 September 1683, eighteen presbyterian prisoners escaped out of Edinburgh Tolbooth by climbing out of a window.⁸³ And on 21 August 1684, John and William Campbell of Over Wellwood chiselled their way out of the Canongate Tolbooth followed by eleven others.⁸⁴ The other option open to the Societies was armed rescue, which was rarely used, but did produce a few fatalities. On only three occasions did the Societies attack government forces to rescue prisoners. On 2 March 1682, Walker and three others shot a dragoon who discovered them at Moss Plat near Kilncadzow in Lanarkshire.⁸⁵ On 8 June 1683, one member of the King's Guard was killed and another wounded in the rescue of Alexander Smith by seven Societies' men at Inchbelly Bridge in East Dunbartonshire.⁸⁶ And in January 1684, militants from Lesmahagow parish liberated some prisoners, reclaimed expropriated property and stabbed dragoons' horses.⁸⁷

The secretive nature of the Societies had generally protected them from the government's attentions. The Societies were bound by an oath of secrecy not to reveal their affairs to anyone until the oath was abandoned in October 1683 when Renwick's public preaching began. Even then, the Societies remained a highly secretive organisation.⁸⁸ Only by incremental steps did the potential threat they posed come to the attention of the Privy Council. The first step was the capture of Earlstoun in mid 1683 as he revealed under torture details of the Societies' role in the Rye House Plots, some of those involved in the early conventions and an outline of the Societies' structure and surprisingly large size.⁸⁹ The Societies soon learned that their secrecy had been compromised. Edward Aitkin, Earlstoun's assistant who had been captured with him, escaped and reported that Earlstoun 'did not carry as it became a prisoner for truth'. However, his warning was unwelcome. Renwick described Aitkin's carriage against Earlstoun as 'very hurtful to the cause, and in private very unchristian, opening mouths to reproach and blaspheme' and did his best to deny Aitkin's hopes to 'follow his books' in the United Provinces.⁹⁰ But it is notable that after Earlstoun's

82. Thomson, *MGoS*, 365-6. Hewison thought Graham was shot on Thursday 15 March 1684. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 378.

83. Wodrow, *History*, III, 472; Erskine, *Journal*, 17, 29n.

84. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 434.

85. Walker, *BP*, I, 308-10.

86. Erskine, *Journal*, 4; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 400-1.

87. Greaves, *SK*, 264.

88. For the secrecy oath see Shields, *FCD*, 15, 104-5. Some members broke the oath: Andrew Young over the Lanark Declaration and Renwick revealed the Societies' discussions to Hamilton. Shields, *FCD*, 27-8, 63. Earlstoun, too, broke the oath under torture. See chapter three.

89. Sprat, *Copies*, 140-58.

90. Houston, *Letters*, 141; Shields, *FCD*, 372.

capture, the Societies became more cautious in where they held their conventions. Until mid 1683, they had frequently held their conventions in Edinburgh, but afterwards the pattern changed to the exclusive use of remote and secure locations in the upland hills between Lanarkshire and the neighbouring shires of Ayr, Renfrew and Dumfries.⁹¹

From the Societies' perspective the beginning of Renwick's field preaching in late 1683 marked a significant step in the level of persecution against them, as it 'raised a hotter and harder, keener and more cruel persecution' against Renwick, than 'was ever prosecuted against one man in our nation'. This forced him and the Societies

to many hard shifts and perplexities, where to find hiding holes, to hide themselves from the country-people, as well as the soldiers; which they were forced to seek under the ground, by digging in the remotest hags of mosses they could find, when they could not have them with safety and secrecy above the face of the Earth.⁹²

However, it seems that pressure was only gradually increased on Renwick and the Societies. After his arrival, Renwick had operated in the Societies' heartlands in Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and Ayrshire, where he was able to hold conventicles, attend conventions and conduct regular correspondence with the United Provinces.⁹³ This period was not without its dangers, but in the summer of 1684 the risk Renwick and the Societies faced markedly increased.

A month after Hamilton's letter of 8 May 1684 and on the anniversary of the Inchbilly Rescue, Renwick preached on 8 June to seventy armed followers near the site of the Rescue at Whinn Bog by Black Loch in New Monklands parish. The arrival of government troops brought a narrow escape from an attack, a prolonged search which 'proved very obstructive' to the fourteenth convention on the 12 June, a trooper being killed and a near full-scale skirmish.⁹⁴ A few days later Renwick encountered a party of horse crossing the Clyde, probably near Crossford, and escaped to Darnead.⁹⁵ And six weeks later, he and three comrades encountered dragoons at Dungavel Hill. Only Renwick managed to escape, missing the fifteenth convention, and was again nearly taken a

91. See Appendix 7.2 & 7.3.

92. Shields, *LoR*, 50, 63-4.

93. Renwick initially stayed in Lanarkshire holding conventicles at Brown Ridge, near Darnead on 3 October 1683, Little Drumbreck in New Monklands on 5 October, Darnead on 23 November and at the end of the year at Wintercleugh in Crawford parish. He was also in Renfrewshire for the twelfth convention and preached near Greenock, Paisley and Woolf Hole Craigs[?]. He also attended the thirteenth convention at Panbreck on the Ayrshire/Lanarkshire boundary. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 278-81; Wodrow, *History*, III, 446; Shields, *FCD*, 104, 112, 129; Shields, *LoR*, 57, 64-5; Simpson, *Traditions*, 125-8. Renwick wrote ten letters abroad from his arrival in September 1683 until August 1684. Carslaw, *Letters*, 67-71, 71-4, 76-9, 79-81, 84-5, 85-7, 87-9, 89-94, 94-101, 101-5.

94. Houston, *Letters*, 155-6; Erskine, *Journal*, 65.

95. Houston, *Letters*, 157-8.

few days later after a meeting in Evandale parish.⁹⁶ During the summer of 1684, government forces had repeatedly come close to capturing Renwick in Lanarkshire and had substantially disrupted the work of the convention.⁹⁷

On 29 July, the pressure was further increased by a rescue at Enterkin Pass, in which seventy armed Society people from Kirkcudbrightshire and Nithsdale liberated Gordon of Kinsture and several other prisoners sentenced to banishment in a daring attack on an armed party transporting them to Edinburgh. The brazen rescue by such a large force only led to further measures against them. On 12 August, Renwick wrote of his fears over the militia being sent into the West to deal with the Societies and the speedy dispatch of some of the Enterkin rescuers 'upon the very day when they receive the sentence of death'.⁹⁸

Following that letter, Renwick's regular correspondence with Hamilton ceased for several months and he disappears out of contemporary sources. It may simply be that he moved beyond the range of easy communication - prior to August 1684 Renwick had remained in and around Lanarkshire - but he also seems to have retreated deeper into the south-west after the arrival of the militia, as later fragmentary traditions of Renwick place him in the upland areas of Carrick, Kirkcudbrightshire and perhaps as far south-west as Newton Stewart.⁹⁹

The final step came on 22 September, when the Privy Council intercommuned Renwick after a trial in absentia and offered a reward for his capture.¹⁰⁰ The Privy Council's proclamation endangered the entire Societies' project, as Renwick's ministry was absolutely central to it. His loss would have placed the Societies in an even worse predicament than they had been at their formation, as since the recent collapse of their Dutch network, he had become an irreplaceable asset. According to Michael Shields, the Council's proclamation led directly to the Apologetical Declaration, as its 'wicked mandate ... [led to] ... the indefatigable vigilance of some vagabond villains, who were suborned, and encouraged to give information, and intelligence of them, wherever they saw, or heard they were seen'; thus they were 'forced to fall upon the only expedient they could think upon, in order to evite their ineluctable ruin'.¹⁰¹

In mid to late 1684, all three streams – their war against their former brethren, apocalyptic

96. Houston, *Letters*, 163-5; Shields, *LoR*, 63-4.

97. Renwick also probably preached at Tambowie Hill, East Dunbartonshire, at this time. 'Hints of Sufferings', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol. II. No. 125.

98. Houston, *Letters*, 165-6; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 403.

99. Renwick is said to have travelled in the company of George Hepburn of Blackside, Sorn parish. Simpson, *Traditions*, 245, 362-3, 373-80; Thomson, *MGoS*, 358. After 12 August Renwick's letters ceased until February 1685. Carslaw, *Letters*, 119-23.

100. Shields, *LoR*, 64-5; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 70.

101. Shields, *FCD*, 149.

expectation and increased and targeted persecution – came together to produce the Apologetical Declaration. The drafting of the Declaration was agreed at the sixteenth convention held at Glengaber on 15 October.¹⁰² Later sources claim that Renwick was ‘at first opposed to it due to the effects it might have’ but due to ‘the necessity of the case admitting no delay he was prevailed upon to consent’ by a ‘warmer set of people’. But those claims are counter-balanced by Renwick’s drafting of the Declaration and its completion well after the convention on 28 October.¹⁰³ Renwick’s existing hardline stance and command of the convention also make it unlikely that he was pressed into it, as does the apparent long-term commitment of the Societies to some form of ‘war’ with their enemies since Hamilton’s letter of 8 May. Intriguingly, the Declaration was posted on the night of 8 November, precisely six months after Hamilton’s letter.¹⁰⁴

The Apologetical Declaration, or as it was fully entitled ‘The Apologetick Declaration and Admonitory Vindication, of the True Presbyterians of the Church of Scotland: Especially anent Intelligencers & Informers’, claimed continuity with the previous Lanark and Sanquhar Declarations which disowned the authority of Charles II ‘and all authority depending on him’ and ‘declared war against him and his accomplices ... hellish designs’. Beyond the claim, there was little continuity - the Societies had not seriously confronted the government forces since Ayrsmoss in 1680 - and the Apologetical Declaration marked a distinct development in their strategy, from defensive measures such as prisoner rescues to an offensive war.

The posting of the Declaration locally and at night was also unusual, as all the other Societies’ declarations were theatrically delivered under armed escort in daylight. This was due to it being targeted at a different audience. While the other declarations communicated a message of defiance to an elite or national audience, the Apologetical Declaration was intended to reach into the specific localities where the ‘curates’, intelligencers and soldiers stayed. Its primary aim was to terrify them into halting the flow of information and assistance to the authorities, and to preserve the lives of those who lived in those communities who were either members of, or assisted, the Societies. It was also delivered on church doors on a Saturday night, to target the ‘curates’ and their hearers on the Sabbath.

102. Shields, *FCD*, 149-50. The location of this convention was unknown, but the protest against Flint was subscribed and dated at Glengaber on the same date. ‘The Protestation of the Contending and Suffering Remnant of the true presbyterian Church of Christ in Scotland Against Mr John Flint pretended minister of the Gospell, and all joyners and Compliers with him’, EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 141. There are four places called Glengaber, but Alexander Shields confirms that the convention site was near Glengaber Hill (OS Ref NS 847 138), which was the site for the forty-first convention in October 1688 and lies by another convention site at Cogshead near Wanlockhead. Shields, *FCD*, 360; Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 181.

103. Shields, *LoR*, 66-7; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 150; ‘Societies Declaration agt Intelligencers 1684. EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 140.; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 148n.

104. Shields, *LoR*, 67.

The Declaration was essentially about a struggle between the Societies and the authorities for the control of local communities where the Societies were active. Its express aim was to prevent their 'utter extirpation' by the persecution of the circuit courts and government forces which, if continued, would damage their covenanted reformation and reduce the Societies 'to a very low ebb' due to 'the consciences of many more [being] dreadfully surrendered' by the imposition of oaths.

To counter their persecution the Societies threatened 'whoever stretcheth forth their hands against us, while we are maintaining the cause and interest of Christ against his enemies, in the defence of our covenanted reformation, by shedding our blood'. It targeted those in authority who issued commands, such as 'bloody counsellors ... [commissioners of] justiciary, generals of forces, adjutants, captains, lieutenants' and, more importantly, those who obeyed such commands, such as 'bloody militia men, malicious troopers, soldiers and dragoons' or gentlemen and commons who assisted in searching for them, or delivered them to their enemies, or stirred up their enemies to take their lives. It also targeted those who informed against them such as the 'viperous and malicious bishops and curates', all intelligencers or those who raised 'hue and cry after us', or compeared in court against the Societies or 'those who befriend us to their and our extreme hazard and suffering', that they would be reputed to be 'enemies of God' and covenanted reformation, and punished in the 'degree of their offence' if they persisted in those courses after the publication of the Declaration. What the Societies meant by punishment was not spelled out, but in practice it referred to their policy of enacting righteous judgment on their persecutors – killing them.

The Societies' war was not to kill 'all who differ in judgement and persuasion' from them. Instead, the Declaration was a comprehensive attack on the local mechanisms of persecution at shire and parish levels. In particular, it aimed to stem the flow of information from within local communities which aided the persecution of the societies or their abettors in those communities. Thus it repeatedly warned intelligencers in particular that the Societies would not be 'so slack-handed in time coming, to put matters in execution' and that they could 'expect to be dealt with as ye deal with us'. Most of the Declaration was not a direct declaration of war. It was a line in the sand which threatened those who assisted persecution with the Societies' war against their persecutors if they continued to join in the persecution of the Societies or their supporters in 'any of the forsaid ways' after its declaration.

Where the Societies did declare war was on the 'chief ringleaders and obstinate offenders', who were excluded from the period of warning. They were to be subject to a para-legal process and killed by the Societies. Prior to any attempted assassination, certain conditions had to be met. They could be acted against only after the 'deliberation' of local societies and a vote achieving 'common or competent consent' among the members at a meeting. 'Certain probation by sufficient witnesses, the guilty person's confession, or the notourness of the deeds themselves' would be taken into

account, and their certain guilt of the alleged offences established. All personal attempts outwith this process were unreservedly condemned.¹⁰⁵ In effect, the Declaration democratised the enactment of righteous judgement and established parallel godly tribunals to the circuit courts, just as the Societies' convention mirrored parliament. It also broadened the potential application of assassination, from renowned persecutors, such as Archbishop Sharp, to local persecutors at a shire or parish level.

The Apologetical Declaration was the high watermark of the Societies' militancy. It represented the culmination of several processes in which the Societies had been shorn of international connections, politically isolated and persecuted by the regime and their former moderate allies. The Declaration also performed on two levels. Strategically, it was an act of self-preservation for both the Societies and those who assisted them, and their covenanted reformation. Faced with what they believed was 'utter extirpation' at the hands of the judicial circuit courts and government forces, the Societies chose to terrify their persecutors and their abettors with the prospect of assassination and to contest the authority of the state at a community level in order to inhibit their persecution. It was also the product of apocalyptic expectation. The Societies viewed themselves as the only true presbyterian remnant who were engaged in a war with both their former brethren and the regime. Hamilton's letter, their persecution and their belief in the Lord's providential intervention, all heightened their expectation that the end times would soon be upon Scotland and the world. Given the evidence of Hamilton's letter, it is perhaps possible that the Societies' leadership deliberately provoked further confrontation with their persecutors in the hope that God would deliver them and smite their enemies. The Societies hoped, as the flourish at the end of the Apologetical Declaration proclaimed, to 'Let King Jesus reign, and all his enemies be scattered'.¹⁰⁶

What the Declaration succeeded in bringing about was one of the most ruthless persecutions in Scottish history, in what is known as the Killing Times. Just as Hamilton's letter had seemed to foretell, the Societies were thrown into the lions' den.

105. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 148n.

106. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 148n.

‘Alone Against All The World’

THREE

The United Societies’ Foreign Embassies, 1682–1684

From 1682 to 1684 the Societies sent two embassies abroad, to London and the United Provinces. Both would end in failure, but each profoundly shaped the Societies. The embassy to London would involve the Societies in the Rye House Plots and ultimately leave the Societies politically isolated from what Richard L. Greaves has termed the ‘British radical underground’.¹ And the embassy to the United Provinces would reshape the Societies’ testimony in an extremely hardline direction leading to schism within the Societies and from their former presbyterian brethren. Both embassies led to conflict between the moderate and militant factions, and exacerbated the deep schism within the presbyterian movement.

I. The Rye House Plots, 1682–1683

In 1682, England probably offered the Societies their best hope of relief from persecution. As Tim Harris’s work has shown, in the early 1680s England faced intense persecution of its dissenters, second only to that inflicted in Scotland.² That persecution offered the Societies a potential reservoir of support in England that they had lacked in 1679, as intensifying persecution and the failure to exclude the Catholic James, Duke of York, from the succession pushed English radical Whigs into considering regime change by force of arms. The Societies faced the same strategic reality that had been ignored by the militants at Bothwell, that only a joint or co-ordinated uprising with the Whigs and dissenters in England which toppled the regime in London was guaranteed to end their persecution and secure their aims in Scotland by preventing the intervention of English

1. Greaves, *SK*, vii.

2. Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and His Kingdoms, 1660–1685* (London, 2005), 371-2.

forces in Scotland. It was that imperative which drew them into the Rye House Plots.

The Rye House Plots derive their name from a plot to assassinate Charles II and York at the Rye House on their return from Newmarket in March 1683, but more broadly they are a label for a series of Whig insurrectionary plots from mid 1682 to mid 1683, which aimed to remove the perceived absolutist government of Charles II and replace it with a republican or moderate monarchical settlement that excluded York from the throne. The principal plotters in England were some of the great Whig lords and politicians, including Monmouth, Anthony Ashley Cooper, earl of Shaftesbury, William Russell, Lord Russell, Arthur Capel, earl of Essex, William Howard, Baron Howard of Escrick, Ford Grey, Lord Grey of Wark, Algernon Sidney and John Hampden, and a group of more humble republicans who lay behind the assassination plot, led by Robert West. The Scots in prominent roles in the insurrectionary plots included Robert Ferguson, an independent minister who acted as a go-between for the factions; Archibald Campbell, ninth earl of Argyll; William Carstairs, Argyll's agent; Robert Baillie of Jarviswood; Sir John Cochrane of Ochiltree; and, for the Societies, Earlstoun and John Nisbet.³

The question of the genuineness of the Rye House Plots has divided historians for centuries. At their revelation in 1683 they became the subject of highly partisan debate. Allegations against the conspirators were quickly published by Bishop Sprat and George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh, the Lord Advocate of Scotland, while some of the alleged conspirators strongly denied being party to any plots.⁴ Presbyterian historians have also been divided. Wodrow was convinced that they were a fabrication, while Hewison accepted them as fact.⁵ In the last century many scholars have denied the plausibility of the plots. Maurice Ashley described the assassination plot as 'one of the great historical myths' and Mark Kishlansky had no doubt that it was concocted out of 'perjured evidence' obtained to extract revenge on the monarchy's Whig opponents.⁶ Recent scholarship has challenged that view. Richard Ashcraft and Jonathon Scott, in their respective contextual studies of the political thought of John Locke and Algernon Sidney, have accepted the reality of the plots, and Greaves, in his detailed study of radical networks and their conspiracies, was convinced of the

3. 'Rye House Plot', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

4. [George Mackenzie], *A True and Plain Account of the Discoveries made in Scotland of the Late Conspiracies Against His Majesty and Government* (London, 1685); T. Sprat, *Copies of the Informations and Original Papers Relating to the Proof of the Horrid Conspiracy Against the Late King, His Present Majesty, and the Government: As they were Order'd to be Publish'd by His Late Majesty* (London, 1685).

5. Wodrow, *History*, III, 498-9. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 398, 427.

6. Maurice Ashley, *John Wildman: Plotter and Postmaster* (New Haven, 1947), 239; Ronald Hutton, *Charles II* (London, 1973), 309; Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain, 1603-1714* (Harmondsworth, 1996), 260.

evidence for both the insurrection and assassination plots.⁷ More recently debate has focused on whether the Whig lords knew of the assassination plot or not. Melinda Zook has argued that the evidence 'weighs heavily' in favour of their knowledge, while Scott took the view that the Whig Lords were not implicated in the 'pub talks' and 'cutlasses at dawn' of the assassination scheme.⁸

The debate over the Plots has naturally focused on the centre of the conspiracy in England, in particular on the events and Whig relationships in London, with detours to discussions in Scotland and the United Provinces, and on the reliability of the English evidence. The concentration on England as the centre of the plots has obscured the role of the Scottish presbyterian factions in the planned insurrections of 1682 to 1683. It is one of the paradoxes of the plots that, although the centre of discussions lay in London, it was the exiled earl of Argyll who was the most consistent in his determination to promote an insurrection. It was Argyll and his Scots' circle who craved an insurrection, and the English Whig lords who had to be persuaded, a predicament which straightforwardly accounts for the interminable discussions among the English radicals over whether, how and in what form an insurrection should take place, and why the Scots' focus was on the practicalities of financing their rising.⁹

One reason for the doubts over the genuineness of the plots is the wealth of confession evidence extracted under duress, predominantly from English radicals. Greaves directly tackled this problem by the use of corroboration between the confession evidence and others sources to build a credible case for the reality of the plots. The Societies' evidence can independently confirm the plots' reality, without reliance on English confessional evidence. Although some of the Societies' evidence comes from forced confessions and letters in the government's hands, its strength lies in the fact that it can be corroborated and confirmed by a large volume of evidence from other members of the Societies who were not apprehended. Nonetheless, care must be taken in interpreting the Societies' sources, as some of them deliberately conceal the depth of their involvement in the plots. Michael Shields' *Faithful Contendings Displayed* is perfectly frank in admitting that there was a design against the government, but he deliberately conceals his own role in the plots and downplays the Societies' knowledge and willingness to participate in them. The fact that Earlstoun's confessions were extracted under torture could make them inadmissible as evidence, but the effects of torture on Earlstoun's confession should not be overestimated, as it is clear that despite his ordeal he was

7. Richard Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics & Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (Princeton, NJ, 1986), 338-40; Jonathon Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis, 1677-1683* (Cambridge, 1991), 267, 275-91; Greaves, *SK*, 1-251. Harris has altered his opinion. Cf. Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration to the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1987), 208; *Restoration*, 310-12.

8. Melinda S. Zook, *Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England* (University Park, Penn., 1999), 110-11; Scott, *Algernon Sidney*, 267.

9. Greaves, *SK*, 87-245 passim.

careful to conceal his own and the Societies' role in the plots to avoid execution. Only Nisbet's letter of 20 March 1683 is relatively open regarding the plots, although it requires careful analysis as it is written in cant. It is conceivable that the latter two sources were fabricated as they were in government hands, but the corroboration of a myriad of details they contain from sources unknown to the government makes their fabrication highly improbable.¹⁰

In Greaves's narrative, the Societies played only a minor role in the plots. In his chronology, the Societies caught wind of a possible alliance between Argyll and Shaftesbury in mid 1682, but were not involved until they were approached by the English plotters prior to their seventh convention in February 1683. In his view, the Societies were distrustful of those involved and ultimately backed out of any insurrection in early May.¹¹ The evidence presented below suggests that elements of Greaves's work need to be revised, as the Societies were involved much earlier and more deeply and were more eager to participate in the plots than has hitherto been considered. Nonetheless, this study will make use of Greaves's valuable work to provide a broad narrative of the plots' development, as it is beyond the scope of this thesis to reassess the evidence for the English radicals and Scottish moderates' involvement in the plots, and will use the Societies' sources to reassess their role in the plots, to nuance Greaves's framework of their development, and to reinforce his conclusion that the Whig insurrectionary plots were not an imaginary threat.¹²

'Fireside Merchants'

London with its promise of relative anonymity had been a magnet for fugitive presbyterian ministers involved in Bothwell, such as John Welsh, Thomas Douglas, Robert Langlands and George Barclay.¹³ The Societies, too, were drawn to London. In their first two conventions their business was dominated by the issue of sending an embassy to Protestant sympathisers in England and the United Provinces, and in March 1682, Earlstoun and Nisbet were selected for that purpose and dispatched to London in April.¹⁴

From Shields' history it appears that the mission to London was of secondary importance to the Dutch mission and without any apparent purpose beyond contacting sympathisers. He does not provide any explanation of why Earlstoun and Nisbet went first to London and remained there

10. For a list of correspondence relating to the Plots, see Appendix 3.2.

11. Greaves, *SK*, 81-8

12. For a comparison of chronologies, see Appendix 3.1

13. Walker, *BP*, I, 249; *Fasti* II, 224-225, 288; Greaves, *SK*, 104-5; Shields, *FCD*, 171.

14. Shields, *FCD*, 13-14, 18-19.

until July, when Earlstoun left for Holland.¹⁵ No correspondence survives to illuminate their purpose, but it is possible that Earlstoun and Nisbet went to London, either in the hope of recruiting sympathetic ministers like Douglas to return to field preaching, or to open a way to ordinations with the Scots Congregation at Lothbury, which performed a similar function to the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam in ordaining presbyterian ministers, as discussed in chapter five. If so, they failed but in the process they did open the door to contacts with English radicals and their involvement in the Rye House Plots.

Nisbet and Earlstoun's London contacts indicate who their English sympathisers were. Soon after arriving, Nisbet became an usher at Mr Walton's school in Bethnal Green.¹⁶ Through it, he probably came into contact with Mr Matthew Meade, one of the leading Independent pastors in England who was involved in radical circles.¹⁷ Nisbet also established a postal address for the Societies' correspondence at the house of an Anabaptist named Elizabeth Gaunt, to which he directed letters until December 1682.¹⁸ His connection to Gaunt demonstrates that the Societies used established English radical networks to convey their correspondence in England, as Gaunt acted as an agent between radical communities in London and the United Provinces, channelling finance, people and correspondence between them until her execution for her part in the Monmouth Rising in 1685. She was also connected to the earl of Shaftesbury's circle and acted as an intermediary for his escape to Amsterdam in late 1682.¹⁹ Another of their contacts was a Mrs Ward, whom Nisbet mentions as sending her regards to Earlstoun.²⁰ Mrs Ward was Elizabeth Papillon, an associate of Gaunt and the daughter of a Whig MP and London merchant. She was married to Sir Edward Ward, a lawyer with Whig sympathies who later acted as counsel for Lord Russell when he was tried for his role in the Rye House Plots.²¹ A fourth, and key, contact as regarded the plots was Robert Murray, whose pseudonym was 'John Johnston'. He was 'a little pock-marked' man with a periwig from the 'west country' of Scotland, who lived at Gray's Inn. Murray was also one of Shaftesbury's agents and in 1681 had been suspected of suborning witnesses

15. Shields, *FCD*, 19. In his letter of 8 July 1682 Renwick wrote to Hamilton: 'And as to matters before your brother S [probably Earlstoun] his departure from us, whom we expect you shall see very shortly'. Houston, *Letters*, 71. Earlstoun travelled to Holland where Hamilton met him and brought him back to Leeuwarden. Shields, *FCD*, 207.

16. Greaves, *SK*, 85.

17. Nisbet had perhaps come into contact with Meade through Mr Walton's school, as Meade's wife was one Elizabeth Walton (d.1707). Richard L. Greaves, 'Meade, Matthew (1628/9-1699)', *Oxford DNB*; Sprat, *Copies*, 136.

18. Greaves, *SK*, 85.

19. Melinda Zook, 'Gaunt, Elizabeth (d.1685)', *Oxford DNB*.

20. Sprat, *Copies*, 159.

21. Samuel Pyeatt Menefee and Stuart Handley, 'Ward, Sir Edward (1638-1714)', *Oxford DNB*; Greaves, *SK*, 347.

for him.²² Another possible contact was John Locke, the English political philosopher who was a close confidant of Shaftesbury. Locke's papers from this period have not survived, but Locke's biographer, Richard Ashcraft, has implicated him in the Rye House Plots. There is no direct evidence that Nisbet ever met Locke in London, but after Nisbet and Locke's flight to Amsterdam in late 1683, Nisbet was used in a position of considerable trust by Locke, transferring finance between him and the English radical Israel Hayes, an associate of Ferguson.²³

Plainly Earlstoun and Nisbet had encountered English radicals connected to Shaftesbury, but the nature of their business in London is unstated, except for one tantalising clue provided by Earlstoun, which shows that the Societies had been brought into a conspiratorial loop involving Shaftesbury and Argyll, as around the time of the contested shrieval elections in London in June-July 1682, Earlstoun learnt from Nisbet and Murray of a design for an English uprising, and of failed negotiations between Shaftesbury and Argyll over the terms for a Scottish rising.²⁴

Following that failure, Earlstoun journeyed to the United Provinces. Nothing is known of Nisbet's actions after Earlstoun departed, until the Societies decided to withdraw him from London. At the fifth convention in October, Nisbet was selected as one of four students to be sent to study for the ministry at the University of Groningen.²⁵ The convention wrote to Nisbet confirming his selection and sent him a testificate, but neither document has survived.²⁶ Nisbet presumably confirmed his acceptance, although again no letter survives, as he later reaffirmed his commitment to come to Groningen.²⁷ Nisbet's mission in London was at an end, but he failed to depart due his to deepening contacts with London radicals.

By that point, Nisbet had moved into Meade's house in Stepney.²⁸ According to Greaves, it was through Meade in late 1682 that Nisbet and the Societies were introduced into Shaftesbury's circle, but they had already been in contact with Shaftesbury's agents since mid 1682.²⁹ In early December, as Nisbet prepared to depart, he wrote a letter to Earlstoun which described 'trading' in London as 'very low' with

22. Sprat, *Copies*, 142, 145. Greaves, *SK*, 34, 86, 242, 365.

23. Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics*, 412, 419, 426n; Greaves, *SK*, 141.

24. Sprat, *Copies*, 143, 145, 152.

25. Shields, *FCD*, 43-4.

26. Shields, *FCD*, 44.

27. Greaves, *SK*, 347; Sprat, *Copies*, 143.

28. Nisbet moved into Meade's house in October or November 1682. Richard L. Greaves, 'Meade, Matthew (1628/9-1699)', *Oxford DNB*; Sprat, *Copies*, 136.

29. Greaves, *SK*, 85.

many breaking, which has made the merchants ...to think that desperate diseases must have desperate cures; and that while they have some stock, it will be better to venture out, than to keep shop and sit still till all be gone, and then they shall not be able to act, but let all go.

Nisbet's perspective on the low state of affairs in England accords well with Greaves's narrative of the postponement of any insurrection in November 1682 and the English plotters' consideration of assassination as a desperate cure for their ills.³⁰ At that time, Nisbet thought that the English radicals' resolution was 'a thing not to confide in [to Earlstoun], seeing the most of them are fireside merchants, and love not to venture where storms are anything apparent', but in mid to late December, Meade, Murray and some others had shown Nisbet a 'model of affairs in such order', that it persuaded him that 'venture they must, and venture they will'.³¹ Nisbet does not spell out what the 'model of affairs' was, but it probably related to the 'desperate cures' under consideration, perhaps both assassination and the designs for simultaneous risings in the English shires and London.³² Whatever their model was, in their approach to Nisbet, Shaftesbury's circle plainly wished to add a Scottish dimension to their plans by involving the Societies, alongside their discussions with Argyll in the United Provinces.

The Rotterdam Conversations?

Prior to Meade and Murray's revelation, there had been little reason for Nisbet to remain in London. Following the collapse of negotiations in mid 1682, the principal plotters, Shaftesbury and Argyll, and their respective *consiglieres*, Robert Ferguson and William Carstares, had withdrawn to the United Provinces where they renewed negotiations in late 1682. Earlstoun later admitted that it was at this time that he heard by 'common report' among the Dutch of the 'renewing of the treaty' by Argyll with Shaftesbury, Monmouth and Lord Grey, but he never admitted any complicity in the negotiations and carefully stated that he had never personally met with Argyll.³³ His denial cannot be taken at face value, as the fragmentary evidence suggests that Earlstoun and Renwick did

30. Greaves, *SK*, 121-36.

31. Nisbet first learnt of the plot about the time of his planned departure for the United Provinces and the 'very week' he had sent his 'last' letter to Earlstoun. Sprat, *Copies*, 159 Earlstoun's challenged Nisbet 'why he came not sooner over to Holland as he had promised' in January 1683. Sprat, *Copies*, 143. Earlstoun's letter replied to Nisbet's 'last' letter written prior to Nisbet's letter of 24 December to Renwick. EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 108. Since Nisbet probably wrote to Earlstoun at about the same time as he wrote to Renwick, the probable time frame for his departure, learning of the plot, and last letter to Earlstoun is in mid-to-late December 1682.

32. West's republican cabal involving figures close to Shaftesbury discussed both assassination and insurrection plans in mercantile canting language in December 1682. Greaves, *SK*, 133-5.

33. Sprat, *Copies*, 142, 145; John Willock, *A Scots Earl in Covenanting Times: Being Life and Times of Archibald 9th Earl of Argyll (1629-1685)*, (Edinburgh, 1907), 304.

enter into discussions about an insurrection with Shaftesbury and Argyll's circles in Rotterdam in January 1683, a dimension overlooked by previous studies.

Although no source directly discloses their part in such discussions, it can be gleaned from an analysis of the Societies' contacts and situation prior to their gathering in Rotterdam, Renwick's contemporary correspondence and Earlston's later confessions. On 24 December, Nisbet wrote to Renwick in Scotland mentioning that he had written to 'Mr Pringle', i.e. Earlston, 'signifying what was done' in the Societies' name. According to Greaves one passage gives some hint of radical activity in London:

As for writting a Letter concerning the bill I sent[,] the gentlemen most concerned [including Murray?] thinks it needless[.] Only he with the rest would have you know that it is out of love to the cause they understand that party is suffering for, & particularly in token of their respects to Mr Caroll (to wit his fellowes). If you writ any thing direct it for me to be given to Mrs [Elizabeth] Gaunt & [t]hat the discourse be generall to them all.³⁴

The 'bill' has not survived, but Nisbet's letter confirms that the Societies had received a communication from London radicals via himself and that they were expected to reply via him. Considering the timing of Nisbet's letter, it is likely that the gentlemen in question were either Meade or Murray or other members of Shaftesbury's circle, as Shaftesbury was then involved in discussions with Argyll in the United Provinces. No reply from Renwick or the Societies survives. As clerk of the convention, Renwick would have been responsible for any reply. However, precisely at this time, Michael Shields became clerk of the convention, as Renwick had embarked for the United Provinces.³⁵

Renwick may have been ignorant of developments in London when he departed, but he could not have remained so, given his probable contact with Earlston and what happened next. Instead of going directly to Groningen to take up his studies as the other students had done, he, George

34. '[John]. Nisbet Letter to Emerson i.c. M.S [actually James Renwick] London Dec 24. 1683 [actually 1682]', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 108. Partially transcribed in Greaves, *SK*, 85.

35. According to Earlston 'letters for Scotland from any correspondents of the party in which Earlston was engaged' were 'directed to Mr Henry Emersone, written at Edenburgh' i.e. Renwick. Sprat, *Copies*, 143-4. Renwick departed for the United Provinces in late December 1682 or early January 1683. On 6 December, Renwick was headed to the western shires. Carlaw, *Letters*, 31-2. Two letters to 'Henry Emerson' were sent in December 1682. One on the 18 December indicates that Renwick had not arrived in Rotterdam by this date as Flint had been requested to proceed to Groningen independently of Renwick. 'Letter to the United Societies from Mr John Flint from Rotterdam. 1682', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 62; Carlaw, *Letters*, 31. The other was Nisbet's letter of the 24 December. Since both letters were held by Michael Shields, who succeeded Renwick as clerk of the Convention, it seems that Renwick did not receive either letter prior to his departure. Renwick was in Rotterdam until 18 January 1683 when it appears he had been there since at least the last day in Rotterdam and that Hamilton had already learnt of his arrival. The letter also discussed news of martyrdoms, probably that of Alexander Hume in late December, probably an indication that Renwick had already left Scotland. If so, Shields would have received Nisbet's letter of 24 December. Houston, *Letters*, 89-90.

Hill, the preses of the Convention, and Earlstoun lingered in Rotterdam throughout January 1683 on unspecified business.³⁶ Only a matter of considerable importance could have required the collective presence of such a high-powered Societies' delegation. Whatever the matter was, it took precedence over Renwick's studies at Groningen.

The activities of Renwick and Earlstoun prior to January reveal what probably required their presence. Little is known of Earlstoun's activities in this period. After his arrival in July, Earlstoun had aided the Societies' students' entry into Groningen, but most of the negotiations fell to Hamilton, who was jointly commissioned with Earlstoun from October.³⁷ One other aspect of Earlstoun's endeavours is revealed by Renwick's letter of 20 November, which discusses the Societies' attempts to reclaim the minister James Veitch to their cause.³⁸ What Earlstoun's role in this was is hard to tell, but he may have been putting out feelers to exiled Scottish ministers before the convention issued a call to them.³⁹

As discussed in the previous chapter, throughout 1682 and early 1683 the Societies did not have a clear policy towards lawfully ordained presbyterian ministers who preached to their membership. This went to the nub of the *raison d'être* of the Societies: were they a protesting faction who sought to bring the presbyterian ministry back into the fields, or were they a separate 'true presbyterian' faction? In late 1682, that lack of clarity left the Societies engaged in a turf war with some presbyterian ministers for control of their rank and file membership in the Border counties, as discussed in chapter two. Just as the confrontation was coming to a head, Earlstoun is revealed in contact with Shaftesbury and Argyll's circles and Scottish ministers at Rotterdam in English radical correspondence.

On 8 December, Ann Smith, an English radical based in London, wrote to Francis Smith in Rotterdam informing him that agents were en route to him. One agent was to consult with Shaftesbury and Ferguson, and the other, the Scots' minister Robert Langlands, who was described as 'a friend' of Earlstoun, was conveying something to Earlstoun. The letter also linked Earlstoun and Langlands to William Veitch, another Scots minister, who was 'intimate' with Earlstoun.⁴⁰ All of those named in the letter were connected to Argyll or Shaftesbury. Ann Smith, the baptist wife

36. Houston, *Letters*, 89-90, 91. Earlstoun was in Leeuwarden until early December. Carslaw, *Letters*, 28, 32. But he afterwards moved to Rotterdam. In January, Earlstoun wrote to Nisbet in expectation of a quick reply. When Nisbet replied he addressed it to 'Mr Alexander Pringle', Earlstoun's pseudonym, to be left at 'Mr Alexander Hope's house in Four Glass Haven, Rotterdam', rather than Leeuwarden. Intriguingly Argyll was also known as Mr Hope. Sprat, *Copies*, 143, 160. He was back in Leeuwarden by 6 February. Carslaw, *Letters*, 35.

37. Carslaw, *Letters*, 16-18; Houston, *Letters*, 78-81.

38. Houston, *Letters*, 87.

39. The seventh convention issued the call, but it did not include Veitch. Shields, *FCD*, 50-1.

40. Greaves, *JK*, 104-5.

of a wealthy sugar-baker, had secretly lodged Argyll in London until the earl fled to Holland in September. She also later hid Elizabeth Gaunt, who aided Shaftesbury's escape in 1682 and received Nisbet's correspondence.⁴¹ Francis Smith was a radical printer connected to Shaftesbury. During the Exclusion Crisis he had spread seditious publications concerning the Popish Plot, Ferguson's infamous works on the 'Black Box', and works in support of Shaftesbury prior to the latter's treason trial.⁴² Langlands was a minister at the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam who soon after became involved in dispute with the Societies in the United Provinces, discussed below, and who later joined Argyll's rising in 1685, as discussed in chapter four.⁴³ Veitch was Argyll's agent, but also closely connected to Shaftesbury, as he nearly entered Shaftesbury's employment in late 1682.⁴⁴

Earlstoun also had contacts with Argyll's circle in London. When he was captured, his contact list contained the addresses of Abraham Holmes and Jeremiah Marsden, and he was later accused of betraying John Haddow's house in London.⁴⁵ Haddow had been a member of the Council of War at Bothwell and is later found in Argyll's conspiratorial circle in 1685.⁴⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel Abraham Holmes was a baptist and former officer in the New Model Army familiar with Scotland from the Cromwellian occupation. During Argyll's escape, William Veitch had taken a Captain John Lockyer into his confidence, who led them to Ann Smith's house where they were introduced to Holmes. Veitch and Holmes were the only two entrusted with knowledge of Argyll's whereabouts in London, and after Argyll fled to Holland, Holmes continued to act as his loyal agent throughout the Rye House Plots.⁴⁷ Jeremiah Marsden was an English Fifth Monarchist who had suffered frequent persecution and imprisonment in England and Ireland. Early on in the Restoration period, Marsden, Lockyer and Holmes had all been involved in numerous Fifth Monarchist conspiracies against the Restoration regime. Marsden was known for 'preaching up the 5th Anarchy' against the 'rulers of Sodome and of Gomorrah'; in 1676 he joined the Scots Congregation in Lothbury and succeeded to the charge in the following year. In 1678 he compared York's potential succession to

41. M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 131-41; Willcock, *A Scots Earl*, 285-295, 304; Robin Clifton, 'Smith, Ann (fl. 1682-1686)', *Oxford DNB*. In 1685 Elizabeth Gaunt stayed with Smith during preparations for Monmouth's rising. Melina Zook, 'Gaunt, Elizabeth (d.1685)', *Oxford DNB*.

42. Greaves, *SK*, 6-8, 18-20, 41, 43, 48, 365.

43. Renwick may have met Langlands in Rotterdam at this time. In 1685, Renwick stated that he had 'met with Mr Langlands [in 1685], and found him no otherwise [i.e. hostile] than when I was in Holland [in 1683]'. Houston, *Letters*, 177.

44. M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 151-2.

45. Greaves, *SK*, 89; Shields, *FCD*, 372.

46. See Appendix 1.4 and chapter five.

47. McCrie (ed.), *MV*, 137, 139; Mackenzie, *A True and Plain Account*, 9. Holmes was executed for his part in Monmouth's rising in 1685 and died a republican martyr. Melinda Zook, 'Holmes, Abraham (d.1685)', *Oxford DNB*.

the reign of Bloody Mary and condemned him as an enemy of God's people.⁴⁸

All of Earlstoun and Nisbet's contacts in London and Rotterdam in late 1682 were members of Argyll's and Shaftesbury's circles or connected to the Scots congregations in Lothbury and Rotterdam. This leads to the inescapable conclusion that Earlstoun was deeply involved in discussions with those circles, far more than he admitted under torture. It also provides a coherent context in which Renwick, Earlstoun and Hill's spell in Rotterdam in January 1683 can be understood.

Did any contacts take place in Rotterdam? And what was discussed? The Societies' actions after their leadership's sojourn in Rotterdam suggest two possible candidates for the topics discussed there: either the Societies' first call to selected ministers or their involvement in preparatory talks about a Scottish insurrection, as both issues were dealt with at the next convention. They were interlinked issues. Throughout early 1683, the convention dealt with both issues simultaneously and they resurfaced in the context of Argyll's rising, as discussed in chapter four.⁴⁹ Given their interrelated nature and Earlstoun's known contacts, it is probable that any discussions with Argyll's and Shaftesbury's circles in Rotterdam would have focused on both simultaneously.

An intriguing strand in Renwick's contemporary correspondence and a careful reading of Earlstoun's confessions confirms that covert discussions took place and yields clues that an insurrection in Scotland was under discussion. According to Carslaw these letters represented some sort of spiritual crisis for Renwick, but a reading that they were about covert activities is more credible.⁵⁰ On 18 January, he wrote to Hamilton that 'dispensations' had prevented his reply to a letter from Hamilton inviting him to Leeuwarden and that George Hill had written to Hamilton with 'sad news or progress' which Renwick could not speak of. A few days later Renwick acknowledged a further invitation from Hamilton, but again could not come, as he was still 'being detained here by a certain dispensation fallen out of which I cannot now write; but when met (if the Lord will) I shall give you an account of the matter and the manner of it'. Renwick's trepidation in mentioning what the 'dispensation' or 'dispensations' were was unusual. He was typically frank in his correspondence with Hamilton, which indicates that whatever the 'dispensations' were, they must have been about something so significant that it could not be put down on paper out of fear of interception or disclosure. If the matters discussed were merely about the call to the ministry, Renwick would surely have been freer with Hamilton, whereas discussions about an insurrection

48. *Fasti*, VII, 489; Richard L. Greaves, *Enemies Under His Feet, Radicals and Nonconformists in Britain, 1664-1677* (Stanford, CA, 1990), 11-12, 17-18, 193-4, 209, 259.

49. The seventh convention in February issued a call to select ministers and made preparations for an insurrection. The ninth convention in May toughened their call to the ministers, while protesting at charges made against the Societies in London. Shields, *FCD*, 50-1, 63-4.

50. Carslaw, *Letters*, 40.

would have required secrecy on his part. One further clue sheds some light on the 'dispensations'. In mid 1684 Hamilton also referred to 'dispensations' in the context of a proposed rising by Argyll, telling the Societies that they should mind their duty 'and seriously ponder, what the time, the opportunity, and the dispensations under which they are at present call for', a reference to either the Covenants or the form of settlement proposed by Argyll's agents. In early 1683 Renwick was clearly opposed to the direction of any discussions, as he warned: 'I do not think it my duty to go on deliberately in a seen hazard, where there is no probability of safety'.⁵¹ Once again, his choice of phrase suggests an insurrectionary context and dissatisfaction with any discussions or proposed settlement. Once he left Rotterdam for Groningen, Renwick continued to warn Hamilton of looming dire consequences:

O Sir! Cry and wrestle and desire all that love Zion to cry and wrestle with the Lord that
He would preserve a remnant from being swallowed up by this weighty cloud of wrath
hanging over our heads, ready to break forth now when we are so ripening for the same.
I shall let you know my mind in all our particulars, but (as yet) I can say nothing.

He also told Hamilton 'let us be Lions in God's cause, and Lambs in our own', a phrase later repeated in the students' joint letter of 24 February to the convention which rejected any association with the plotters as sinful.⁵²

Renwick's fear of the Societies being 'swallowed up' by a 'weighty cloud of wrath ...ready to break forth' once again points towards an imminent event such as an insurrection and the alliances associated with it. Renwick was absolutely against any alliance, but he understood that the effect of their choices would be divisive in Scotland: 'I think some of our dispensations will be to some more discouraging than darkening. O mind Sweet Scotland'.⁵³ The consistent language and tone of this strand in Renwick's correspondence lends credence to a hypothesis that the Societies' leadership were involved with some crucial decision over the future direction of the Societies, which depended on the outcome of their secretive activities in Rotterdam.

A further clue as to what those secretive activities were comes from Earlstoun's confessions as to when he learned of the insurrectionary plot. With every interrogation, Earlstoun became more specific as to the time frame of his knowledge until he settled on January 1683, the same time as the mysterious 'dispensations'. He also divulged that he knew of Argyll's plans to furnish 7,000-10,000 men with arms from Holland to provide a 'diversion' in Scotland for an English rising.⁵⁴ His

51. Shields, *FCD*, 136-7; Houston, *Letters*, 89-90, 90-2. Carslaw dates the latter letter to 22 June but Houston's earlier dates seems more likely. See Carslaw, *Letters*, 61-2. On 9 Feb Brackel wrote of his belief that his correspondence with the Societies was being intercepted. Shields, *FCD*, 73-4.

52. Carslaw, *Letters*, 34; Houston, *Letters*, 100.

53. Carslaw, *Letters*, 35-7; Houston, *Letters*, 92-4.

54. Sprat, *Copies*, 142, 143, 152, 157.

statement that he had heard of these plans by 'common report' is almost certainly misleading. Earlstoun clearly knew many of the plotters or their agents, and if he had confessed to participation in treasonable discussions, he would have been executed, rather than imprisoned on the Bass.

Circumstantial evidence also points to a similar conclusion. In order to launch a Scottish rising, Argyll would have wished to bring the Societies on board to increase his chances of success. The Societies were a natural constituency of anti-government sentiment and had a network in place throughout southern Scotland, making them an obvious choice for Argyll to approach. The fact that Argyll approached the Societies in 1685 for the same purpose, as discussed in chapter four, strengthens this possibility.

Judging by Renwick's comment that the 'dispensations' would be more 'discouraging than darkening' in Scotland and from what happened afterwards, it is almost certain that no agreement was reached between the parties in Rotterdam, perhaps on account of Shaftesbury's death on 21 January, or the Societies' rejection of any agreement, as Renwick and Earlstoun both later stated their opposition to participation in an insurrection.

A case for the Societies' role in preparatory talks about a Scottish insurrection with Argyll and Shaftesbury's circles in Rotterdam can be built on fragmentary and circumstantial evidence, but ultimately a classic Scottish 'Not Proven' verdict must pertain. However, the case for their involvement in the plots in London is beyond doubt.

'Venture They Will'

With Shaftesbury's death the centre of plotting transferred to London and the 'Council of Six' – Monmouth, Russell, Howard, Essex, Hampden and Sidney – who quickly resolved to ally with Argyll, and Argyll opened a channel to London via Carstares and Holmes. The Council of Six also dispatched an emissary to Scotland in early February to consult with the moderate Sir John Cochrane of Ochiltree and invite him, Lord Melville and Sir Hugh Campbell of Cessnock to London to discuss plans for a joint insurrection. It took until April for the Scots moderates' delegation to arrive.⁵⁵ By then, the Societies had been engaged with the plotters in London since late December and had even laid plans for an insurrection, but in retrospect the death of Shaftesbury and his replacement by the Council of Six marked a turning point for the Societies' participation in the insurrection schemes due to the Council's subsequent recruitment of their moderate presbyterian opponents.

After the plot had been revealed to Nisbet in December, he acceded to Meade and Murray's

55. Greaves, *JK*, 136-7, 163, 177.

desire that he stay a month in London to 'help trading' and delayed his journey to Groningen. In doing so he acted without Earlstoun's knowledge, as Earlstoun wrote to him in January seeking an explanation for his failure to appear in Groningen, but the letter did not come into Nisbet's hands until 17 March due to Earlstoun sending his letter via Elizabeth Gaunt, who had left London for the country, when Nisbet resided in Meade's house. Only good fortune brought the letter to Nisbet via Elizabeth Papillon, who had collected it from Gaunt's house. In his reply, Nisbet explained that he had made arrangements to journey to Groningen and bade farewell to Gaunt, before the revelation of the plot had changed his plans. He also sought to convince Earlstoun that he should not mis-construct his staying in London 'seeing in it I designed nothing but the advancement of our trade [i.e. the Societies' cause]'.⁵⁶

The unfolding of Nisbet's dealings with the plotters is a complex matter, as his only surviving correspondence in this period is his letter of 20 March, which provides a compounded summary of events since December. However, a reliable chronology can be derived from it by determining the timing of lost correspondence mentioned within it.

Soon after Nisbet learned of the plot, he related that 'our friends from Scotland' desired Murray 'to stand here in my place' and take 'engagements of secrecy'. Greaves misidentifies the 'friends' as the moderate presbyterians Jerviswood, Ochiltree and the Cessnocks; 'friends' was a term the Societies reserved for themselves, usually referring to the Convention. Given the antipathy they held towards Ochiltree for his part in Cameron's killing in 1680, it is particularly unlikely that Nisbet would have referred to them as such. Earlstoun, too, certainly understood that Nisbet was referring to the convention, as he refers to the meaning of Murray's engagement as 'an ingagement of secrecy and some queries to try if they agreed in principles', a reference to the Societies' engagement to secrecy and the questions put to members as to their principles, which were prerequisites to any discussion of Societies' business.⁵⁷

After Murray took the Societies' engagement, Nisbet 'ordered' him to write to Earlstoun with 'an ample account of matters' in a letter which Earlstoun explained used the metaphor of a marriage solemnised to mean a rising against the government. According to Nisbet, this letter was to show Earlstoun 'the grounds of my staying [in London] and to desire if you inclined to cross the water [from Holland] to come this way [i.e. to London]'. Although this letter is lost, it clearly dates to mid January, as Earlstoun received it at the start of February.⁵⁸

56. Sprat, *Copies*, 143; Greaves, *JK*, 347, 349. In his March letter Nisbet specifically requested that Earlstoun should write in future to Mr Meades in Stepney, rather than to Bethnal Green. Earlstoun must have known to address his future letters for Nisbet under Meade's pseudonym, Mr Richardson, as Nisbet did not inform him of this information in his reply. Sprat, *Copies*, 136.

57. Shields, *FCD*, 15, 21-2, 63, 101, 130.

58. Greaves, *JK*, 347-9.

The timing of Murray's letter in cant reveals a new dimension of the Societies' role in the plots. By implication the sixth convention on 10 January must have written to Nisbet seeking the cooption of Murray and acted in response to the 'bill' and Nisbet's letter of 24 December in the hands of Michael Shields. Remarkably, Shields made no mention of these events in his account, even though the sixth convention was the first at which he acted as clerk, probably to avoid revealing his own and the Societies' role in the plots, but by early January 1683 the Societies had signalled their interest in Shaftesbury's plot by ordering Murray's cooption.⁵⁹

At the same time as Murray's letter to Earlstoun, Nisbet also wrote to the convention. According to Shields, Nisbet sent a 'darkly written' letter to the seventh convention held on 14 February 1683. This is almost certainly the letter Nisbet mentions in his letter of 20 March that 'signified somewhat of it [the insurrection scheme] to them'. Shields claims that the convention could make 'little sense of it', beyond Nisbet's making contact with Independents and Anabaptists who were 'most willing to join' with them and 'desirous to know what they were doing', but the foregoing statements are completely contradicted by the actions of the seventh convention.

The seventh convention clearly attached importance to future letters from London. Nisbet's letter had intimated that his London associates would soon write 'more fully' to the Societies and in response the convention appointed that 'in case any letters came from London, which required an answer, that one should be written by Thomas Linning, George MacVey, and Robert Goodwin [i.e. representatives in Glasgow], and another by friends in Edinburgh, and both presented at the next meeting'. The fact that Glasgow and Edinburgh were to pen responses demonstrates that the convention had delegated responsibility for any replies to ensure a quick response before the next meeting and was fully engaged in the prospective plot.⁶⁰

The convention also acted to ensure a cohesive response to a possible insurrection. It appointed 'that no letters ... or public declarations or protestations, be written, spread, or published, by any ... persons whatsoever' unless they were presented to the Convention.⁶¹ It also took measures to place themselves in a state of readiness for conflict. Plans were laid, allegedly in case they were 'massacred by Papists', that every 'three or four societies lying nearest together' would select a place to meet 'for learning the exercise of war, and persons most skilled made choice of to teach them,' and that the choice of skilled people 'be made without partiality, for persons to teach and conduct

59. The sixth convention's letter to Nisbet is now lost, but it was presumably sent by Shields to Gaunt's house as per Nisbet's instructions.

60. Shields, *FCD*, 58; Sprat, *Copies*, 160. Nisbet's letter read at the seventh convention is now lost. It is possible that Nisbet used it to also inform the convention of his new postal address, as Nisbet seems to have received the seventh convention's reply in later February while Earlstoun's correspondence lay in Gaunt's house.

61. Shields, *FCD*, 59.

the rest'. If required, the whole force of the Societies was to assemble at the 'public place of meeting' at Cairntable Hill, near where the shires of Lanark, Ayr and Dumfries meet, which was also the site of the next convention, and the same location later designated as their mustering point prior to the Argyll Rising. It also promised to ensure that all of the local societies were provided with arms and resolved upon the codeword 'reformation' to ease mutual recognition.⁶² Plainly, the Societies were making preparations for a possible spring insurrection alongside an English rising involving Shaftesbury's circle. They had acted independently of any moderate participation in the plots and not at the moderates' request. Indeed, the Societies' preparations materialised well before those of their moderate rivals. It was not until May that the moderates made similar preparations, including the adoption of the codeword 'harmony' for similar reasons.⁶³

The seventh convention also wrote back to Nisbet, in a letter unrecorded by Shields, but confirmed by Nisbet:

Friends, I mean merchants [the seventh convention], wrote to me, that after I had spoken to you [i.e. via Murray's letter to Earlstoun], possibly you might come this way [to London], the better thereby to advise them [at the next convention] what to do in this case [about the proposed insurrection], for I have signified somewhat of it to them [in the 'darkly written' letter to the seventh convention], but not so far as this [Nisbet's letter of 20 March].⁶⁴

The letter from the seventh convention is obviously the letter from 'Michael Shiells, one of the clerks of the convention', that Nisbet showed to Earlstoun at the end of March or beginning of April to validate his actions.⁶⁵ Once again, Shields conveniently forgot his own letter but it plainly had an effect on Nisbet's activities.

In London, in late February or early March, Nisbet sought to discover the plotters' intentions through negotiation, probably at the seventh convention's behest.⁶⁶ Nisbet's letter of 20 March does not reveal the identity of the plotters or to which group they belonged, but the time frame and content of the negotiations tie in well with Greaves's account of Ferguson's discussions with West's cabal in late February and early March which plotted the assassination and produced a 'modell' or 'project' for a government which aimed to re-establish an English republic.⁶⁷

62. Shields, *FCD*, 61, 63-4. Unusually, the seventh convention did not fix a time and place for the eighth convention.

63. Greaves, *JK*, 166.

64. Sprat, *Copies*, 160. Greaves in his annotated version of the letter thought that Earlstoun was to 'return to Scotland' rather than London. Greaves, *JK*, 349.

65. Sprat, *Copies*, 151.

66. It is likely Nisbet responded to the letter from Michael Shields and the seventh convention. This indicates a time frame for Nisbet's further negotiations with the plotters in late February or early March 1683.

67. Greaves, *JK*, 139-44, 148-9.

Nisbet enquired how 'trade' would be carried on and was informed that the plotters 'knew well what goods had proven most prejudicial to the trade [i.e Charles II and York or the Restoration settlement]'. Nisbet interpreted that as designed to 'still some criticks in the trade [i.e. the Societies]' in the hope that they could reach an agreement over what they were against, rather than what they were in favour of. In stark terms Nisbet noted that their plan was to 'endeavour the dispatching of old rotten stuff [the King and York or the Restoration settlement] before they order what to bring home next'. With no guarantees of the form of constitutional settlement the English radicals aimed to bring into being, Nisbet began to distrust the plotters' intentions, as he believed that they 'do best in it' rather than the Societies. Nonetheless, he then sought 'some stock to set the broken ones up', which Greaves interpreted as finance for the Societies, but almost certainly meant commitments to re-establish the Covenants, as Nisbet mentions the 'broken ones' in the context of a discussion of constitutional settlements; as the Societies regarded the Covenants as 'broken' since the collapse of the Covenanters' regime in 1650; and as the Societies reiterated their demand for a covenanted settlement in the Argyll Rising, as will be discussed in chapter four.

One other consideration he took into account was the revelation of the plotters' consultation with some whom the Societies had found to be 'treacherous dealers' in their 'trade', almost certainly moderates such as Ochiltree, Melville and Monmouth, some of whom had fought against the presbyterian forces at Bothwell. As a result, Nisbet opted to reserve the Societies' position in the belief 'that our merchants, though broke, will rather live a while longer as they are [i.e. not join in an association], than join with such, &c. to advance the trade; unless surer grounds of their fidelity be gotten [i.e for a covenanted settlement], than is, or can be expected'. With that Nisbet 'bid them farewell ... they to try their way, and we ours'.⁶⁸ The issue of a covenanted settlement and the entry of the moderates into the plotters' circle had brought Nisbet's mission to an impasse, but he left the door open for Earlstoun to continue discussions.

'Either Off or On, Break, or Go Through'

As the seventh convention broke up, letters from 'friends abroad' informing them of the plot arrived. In the light of them, key delegates within the Societies - Kinsture, Robert Goodwin, John Smith, William Nairn and Thomas Linning - wrote to Earlstoun urging him to return to Scotland in mid-April as 'several weighty affairs called for his being present' at the next convention, set for 2 May.⁶⁹ The letters from friends abroad were from Earlstoun, Murray and the Dutch minister

68. Sprat, *Copies*, 160.

69. Shields, *FCD*, 63.

William Brackel. Earlstoun probably wrote to the convention in early February, as it took up to ten days for a letter from Holland to reach the convention, and was prompted by his receipt of Murray's January letter under the metaphor of marriage, 'anent which all things were agreed and the marriage ready to be solemnised [i.e. an insurrection]', which he included along with his own to the seventh convention. Earlstoun confirms that his letter caused the delegates to send for him 'to have his mind concerning that affair' and later confessed that the delegates had interpreted the letter from Murray as 'seeking of their assistance in their intended rising'.⁷⁰ The seventh convention had been prepared to engage in an insurrection proposed by Shaftesbury's London circle, based on the information contained in Nisbet's 'darkly written letter', but the receipt of Earlstoun's letter probably cast doubt on their former resolutions, as it must have commented on Murray's proposed scheme and perhaps commented on the Rotterdam discussions and the failure to achieve agreement for a covenanted settlement. Whatever Earlstoun reported, the Societies clearly felt the need for his counsel. Their letter reporting the seventh convention's activities and recall of Earlstoun would have reached the United Provinces in late February, and probably prompted the joint letter from Renwick and the other Societies' students on 24 February, which urged the convention to reject any alliance, as they desired 'no deliverance from the yoke of oppression, without a deliverance from the yoke of transgressions'.⁷¹ Renwick and the other students were insistent that the Societies adhered to their covenanted obligations and did not participate in any insurrection without agreement on a covenanted settlement.

The other letter from Brackel informed the Societies of their students' progress, but it also indicated that the Societies' leadership in Holland had lost patience with Nisbet's failure to appear, as it requested that the Societies to select a replacement to take up Nisbet's place at Groningen.⁷²

On 6 March, Renwick reported to Hamilton that Earlstoun intended to return to Scotland and hoped he was not 'unconcerned at this time', a sign that Renwick was worried that the Societies would join the insurrection and possibly that he harboured doubts over Earlstoun's commitment to nonparticipation in an insurrection.⁷³ Nisbet had expected Earlstoun to visit London as a result of Murray's letter in January, but by mid March he had received only Earlstoun's misdirected letter expecting him in Groningen.⁷⁴ Why Earlstoun had failed to appear could not have been clear to

70. Sprat, *Copies*, 144.

71. Houston, *Letters*, 96-100.

72. Shields, *FCD*, 59-60, 73. Edward Aitkin may have been selected to replace Nisbet at either the eighth or ninth convention.

73. Carslaw, *Letters*, 42. Earlstoun probably wrote to Renwick from Rotterdam in late February, but the letter is now lost.

74. Sprat, *Copies*, 160. Greaves thought that Earlstoun was to 'return to Scotland' rather than London. Greaves, *SK*, 349.

Nisbet, but that failure combined with the possibility of an imminent insurrection led Nisbet into the desperate act of penning his remarkably open letter of 20 March about the plots. By then Nisbet had accepted that Earlstoun would be too late to advise the convention in Scotland, as he warned him that within a week 'matters will in instanti, either off or on, break, or go through' for 'matters are full as high as I tell you'.

The compiler of *Copies of the Informations and Original Papers Relating to the Proof of the Horrid Conspiracy Against the Late King* (1685) was in no doubt that Nisbet was alluding to the proposed assassination of the King and York at the Rye House, as he marked the relevant passage of Nisbet's letter as referring to the intended return of Charles II and York from Newmarket. The letter certainly points towards the projected date of assassination and curiously warns Earlstoun that 'if something strange should happen' within the next two weeks, he would be written to.⁷⁵

Nisbet was privy to information that something spectacular was planned. However, there is no direct evidence that either Nisbet or Earlstoun ever met any of the group led by West involved in the assassination scheme, or met Robert Ferguson, who knew of the plan. It was only in late February, when Ferguson had returned from the United Provinces, that the plan to attack the royal party on their return from Newmarket was finally agreed.⁷⁶ At the same time, Nisbet had rejected the Societies' involvement in any insurrection until he received clarification from Earlstoun, but that does not preclude Nisbet's personal involvement in the assassination plot, as it is possible that Nisbet was one of those recruited to execute the scheme, rather than at the planning level. In late 1682 Carstares had told Ferguson that assassination was not a job for his moderate brethren, but for 'our wild people in Scotland', as he termed the Societies. The plotters behind the assassination scheme also settled on 'fierce bigotted men in Religion, who were under an invincible fear and hatred of popery', rather than republicans, to carry out the scheme, a characterization easily applied to many in the Societies. And Ferguson was reported to have recruited mainly Scots.⁷⁷ None of the names of any Scots recruited for the assassination scheme was divulged. Only three members of the Societies are known to have been present in London at the time: Nisbet, Murray and perhaps Haddow. Of the three, Nisbet certainly fits the bill, with the proviso that Nisbet was from Northumberland, and had form in regards of assassination: in early 1682, he and Captain Alexander Hume had been allegedly involved in a plot to assassinate the bishop of Edinburgh.⁷⁸ Whatever the

75. Sprat, *Copies*, 160.

76. Greaves, *SK*, 142-3.

77. Greaves, *SK*, 115-7, 145, 146, 162. The cabal met in the Salutation tavern on Lombard Street near the Scots Congregation, a natural haven for Scottish dissidents. Richard Rumbold, the proposed leader of the attack, knew Holmes and Carstares, who were close to Argyll, and later joined Argyll's rising in 1685. Greaves, *SK*, 115.

78. *RPCS* VI, 440, 458; VII, 123, 155-6, 187-8; Sprat, *Copies*, 37.

truth of Nisbet's involvement, the early return of Charles and York from Newmarket due to a fire there on 22 March thwarted the assassination attempt. With that opportunity lost, the English plotters concentrated on building up a network of alliances for an insurrection.

'That Land is a Valley of Snares'

Earlstoun arrived in London in late March or early April.⁷⁹ He may have been operating according to the Convention's instructions and in response to Nisbet's March letter, but Earlstoun's arrival in London also coincided with that of Carstares from the United Provinces and the moderate delegates from Scotland to negotiate the terms for a joint rising.⁸⁰ The latter included Jerviswood, Ochiltree, Melville and the Cessnocks, who either had not participated in, or else had actively suppressed, the Bothwell Rising, and representatives of the presbyterian ministry, William Veitch, Robert Trail, Alexander Hastie, and William Gilchrist, with whom the Societies were in dispute. Their presence in this delegation made the Societies' involvement in any planned insurrection highly problematic, as the Scots factions would have been required to cooperate.

Earlstoun later maintained in his confessions that when Murray had offered to take Nisbet and he to meet with Lord Russell, Lord Grey and several former Cromwellian officers, Earlstoun had 'refused to meddle with their designs' and 'shunn'd to meet with them'. He did later admit that via Murray and Nisbet he knew that a treaty was concluded between the Scots delegations and the Council of Six, which involved Argyll receiving payment of £ 10,000 sterling to kindle a Scottish rising. He also admitted that he knew via Murray that Ochiltree, Jerviswood, the Cessnocks and several gentlemen of the West of Scotland were to rise at the first occasion, probably in late May or June in line with the moderates' preparations. However, the only person he actually admitted to meeting with, apart from Nisbet and Murray, was Meade, who had apparently said nothing regarding the plot.⁸¹ Instead, Earlstoun and Meade discussed arrangements for Nisbet to depart for Holland to take up his studies. Earlstoun seems to have accepted Nisbet's explanation for his failure to appear at Groningen and set about organising Nisbet's return to his studies, but Earlstoun's version of his conversation with Meade also specifically related to a 'little letter from Stepney' found in Earlstoun's possession when he was captured. This evidence Earlstoun could not

79. Sprat, *Copies*, 151. Corroboration that Earlstoun travelled to London at this time can be found in his curious absence from the ordination preparations of the Societies' students in Groningen.

80. Greaves, *JK*, 163, 177.

81. Sprat, *Copies*, 145-6, 152-3, 157. Earlstoun met Meade at Mr Cooks, a merchant's house near the Exchange, in Austin Fryers, London. Sprat, *Copies*, 146. About this time, Carstares discussed a rising with John Owen and Meade. Greaves, *JK*, 165-6.

deny.⁸²

If Earlstoun's version of his month-long visit to London is to be believed, he did not meet with any of the core plotters and was only kept informed of developments. If that was all that had happened, surely the Societies' involvement in the plots would have been at an end? Faced with execution, Earlstoun had clear motives for being economical with the truth in his confessions. The actions at the ninth convention a few weeks later also cast doubt on Earlstoun's account, as they drafted a paper to the 'confederators', probably the Council of Six and almost certainly relating to the title given to them in proposed commissions drafted by West's circle in the name of the 'the Confederate Lords and Commons of England' which was produced alongside West's republican circle's 'Modell of Government'. The paper to the Confederators provides a further hint that the Societies' contacts were primarily with English republicans, rather than the moderate circle around Monmouth. It also aimed to give a response: 'knowing that their [the Societies'] concurrence would be desired in the said association'.⁸³ Clearly, after Earlstoun's month in London, the ninth convention still believed that the plotters wished the Societies to take part. However, the involvement of the Scots' moderate delegation was a significant stumbling block to their participation. In particular, the Societies had concerns over the Council of Six's request that the Societies accept some of the moderates in 'places of trust and office' over them, information which could have been communicated to the ninth convention by only Earlstoun and which indicates Earlstoun's deeper involvement in negotiations than he later confessed.⁸⁴ The Council of Six had also kept channels of communication open with the Societies after Earlstoun's departure. At some point after 2 May a meeting at Tweedsmuir received a letter for Earlstoun from Robert Johnston, one of Lord Grey's men, in which Johnston offered to accompany Earlstoun to the Societies in Scotland, presumably to explain the proposed scheme directly. It mentioned Andrew Young, the dissident recently expelled from the Societies for joining with moderate ministers, in a negative light, as one who 'laboured to undervalue the disaffected party in Scotland', and may have been an attempt at bridge building between elements of the Council of Six and the Societies in light of the difficulties in London talks.⁸⁵

82. The dating of this letter is quite confusing. It was informally dated 'Friday at seven o'clock', probably for immediate delivery from Meade to Earlstoun. Earlstoun claimed that it had been written in early May, but given that he was in Edinburgh at that point, late April seems a more likely date. Earlstoun claimed that the words 'what my Hands find to do' referred to Nisbet going to Holland. Sprat, *Copies*, 142.

83. Shields, *FCD*, 67.

84. Shields, *FCD*, 71.

85. Sprat, *Copies*, 153-4, 157, 168. It is unknown if Earlstoun received the letter before or after the ninth convention. 'Robert Johnston' may well be a transcription error for Robert Murray, aka. John Johnston. Since Murray had taken the Societies' engagement to secrecy and could discuss Societies' business, he would have been the logical choice to send to the Societies.

On 2 May the eighth convention received word from Earlstoun that he had returned from London and decided to reconvene in Edinburgh on 8 May. Prior to the ninth convention, the Societies were divided over the question of an association with the plotters. Some 'had shown much forwardness in that matter', while their students in Holland had been hostile to the concept. Earlstoun claimed to have fallen into the latter category, as he maintained that he attempted to dissuade the convention from joining in any proposed rising. The fact that he had to dissuade them provides some idea that a sizeable faction within the convention must have been in favour of participation, a fact confirmed by Shields who wrote that 'not a few' of their members favoured joining the insurrection. Those divisions may also account for the compromise nature of the resolution passed by the convention:

That no persons (of our societies) should draw together in a public manner of rising in arms, except be it for necessary self-defence, and deliverance of our brethren, because thereby we could do nothing but render ourselves prey to the enemy, if not marr the Lord's work...until the Lord by his right word and Spirit, should give us and them further light therein.⁸⁶

The convention put a hold on their preparations approved at the seventh convention and aimed to rein in rash actors who favoured an association with the London plotters, but it did not reject participation; rather, it sought to reserve the Societies' position in the event of hostilities or until surer grounds for agreement could be found that would satisfy the sceptics within their ranks.

The convention commissioned Earlstoun to deliver their paper to the 'Confederators' in London, known as 'The Reasons of the Sufferings and Actings of the True (though greatly reproached, and persecuted) Presbyterian, Anti-Prelatich, Anti-Erastian Party in Scotland'. The information it contained on the discussions in London, almost certainly came from Earlstoun and further undermines his later confession that he did not participate in discussions there. The paper to the Confederators served a dual purpose. First, it demonstrated their mind about the designed rising, which they were 'not against'; secondly, it acted as a protest 'against that promiscuous association with men of blood, profanity, and malignancy'. It is plain from the paper that the Societies had faced accusations that they were constitutional extremists, who had rejected royal authority and laid claim to 'the legislative powers of the nation, and the power of Parliament', had rejected lawful ministry, made their 'covenants', declarations and martyrs' testimonies a test that bound consciences and that they would only be satisfied with an 'army of saints' leading the insurrection. The most likely originators of those attacks were the 'men of blood, profanity, and malignancy',

86. Shields, *FCD*, 65-7; Sprat, *Copies*, 144. Renwick wrote Earlstoun prior to 5 May. The letter is now lost, but if it dealt with the association it would undoubtedly have stressed Renwick's opposition. Carslaw, *Letters*, 48.

namely the members of the Scots' moderate delegation in London. Similar accusations were also levelled against the Societies in Holland at exactly the same time by Langlands and other ministers connected to the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam, which had come from James Stewart, the brother of Coltness, who was implicated in the conspiracy and connected to Carstares.⁸⁷

During Earlstoun's month in London and beyond, the Council of Six had been divided between monarchical and republican factions, until the arrival of the Scots' delegation tipped the balance in favour of a moderate monarchical settlement which would preserve the crown's prerogatives.⁸⁸ It seems that the divisions between the Scottish factions had impacted on the London talks. In order to help secure a commitment from the Council of Six to a moderate monarchical constitutional settlement, the Scots' moderates had caricatured the Societies in order to provoke fears in both monarchical and republican factions that the Societies were unsuitable partners for an orderly regime change in Scotland. That view seems to have gained some credibility, as the ninth convention's paper sought to allay such fears. It pointed to the Societies' understanding of the constitutional legality of their actions, as 'laws being made for the government of the whole nation, every member within the same, prince, people are equally obliged thereto'. This formed the basis of their rejection of the 'tyrant's authority', and the reason they had assumed the 'legislative powers of the nation, and ... of Parliament' or similar powers was merely to make their 'course of affairs more legal and strong'. It also sought to reassure the Council of Six that when regime change had been secured and 'well-constitute judicatories' were in place, they would not present any threat, as they would 'assume no more but our privileges, in our place and stations, as free born subjects'. At the same time, the ninth convention also attempted to refute allegations that they rejected lawful ministry by issuing a second call and protestation to the ministry.⁸⁹

The paper also struck back at those who had 'scrupled at, our refusing to join issue and interest, or in arms with a malignant party, carrying on malignant designs', a reference to the Scots moderates and possibly Monmouth, who had defeated the presbyterian rising at Bothwell, by referring to the presbyterian tradition of rejecting the malignant parties due to evidence of the Lord's wrath. While they did not desire an army of saints, they saw no reason to give 'places of trust and office with us' to those 'men of blood and bloody practices' whom God 'has so eminently appeared against' for 'we cannot expect but he will whip us with taws of our own making' and cause the project to fail. Thus the Societies wished to make it known that they rejected an association which placed the Scots moderates and perhaps Monmouth in positions of power over them:

87. M. Jardine, 'Scottish Presbyterian Radicals in the Northern United Provinces 1682-84', *Dutch Crossing* 29.1 (2005), 94; Shields, *FCD*, 171; Greaves, *SK*, 162.

88. Greaves, *SK*, 168-9.

89. 'Societies Call and Protestation May 8, 1683', EUL MS. La.III.350. No.81. Printed Shields, *FCD*, 52-7.

whatever shall be acted or done by such confederacies or associations, that no churches, neither foreign nor neighbouring, attribute or ascribe the same to the true church and nation of Scotland, whose laws both of church and state being so just, as they could not admit them to live, much less to rule or officiate, being men of such wicked practices, destructive not only to religion, but civil society.⁹⁰

At first sight it appears that the Societies had withdrawn from the plots, but in reality their position was one which reserved their options, to either join or stand apart from the proposed insurrection and not to be bound by its constitutional aims. This solution left the Societies with scope to influence any proposed settlement for Scotland; it would later be one which they adopted in the rising of 1685 and in 1688-1689.

For Greaves the ninth convention marked the end of the Societies' involvement in the plots, based on the evidence of Shields' statement that Earlstoun and Edward Aitkin 'presently after the meeting, took journey for Newcastle' to depart for the United Provinces.⁹¹ However, the paper to the Confederators was given to Earlstoun 'that he might have delivered it to some persons in London, concerned in the association'.⁹² Renwick also confirms that Earlstoun planned to return to London, as he wrote that Earlstoun was 'a long while ago come from Scotland' with the paper from the ninth convention and bound for London. His letter also betrays Renwick's continuing suspicions over Earlstoun's visit, for he hoped Earlstoun would know 'his errand and call thereunto [in London], though I cannot see it' and hoped that Earlstoun would be led away by the Lord from any ungodly association 'for that land [England] is a valley of snares, especially at this time'.⁹³ Earlstoun's planned third journey to London to confer with the plotters indicates that the Societies' convention had still not given up on the possibility of reaching terms. That possibility vanished however with Earlstoun and Aitken's capture at Tynemouth on 1 June.⁹⁴

Nisbet still remained in London. Since late April, his mission had effectively been at an end and his withdrawal under discussion. In late May, Hamilton's difficulties in Groningen provoked Hamilton to write to the convention urging them to get Nisbet to come to Groningen 'with all haste' to take up his studies and gain ordination.⁹⁵ Soon after the plots were revealed in mid June 1683, Nisbet and Meade were captured in the process of escape.⁹⁶ Under interrogation, Nisbet

90. 'Reasons of the Sufferings and Actings of the Societies May 8. 1683 entitled Protestation' EUL MS. La.III.350. No. 82. Printed in Shields, *FCD*, 67-71.

91. Shields, *FCD*, 65-6; Greaves, *JK*, 88-9.

92. Shields, *FCD*, 67.

93. Houston, *Letters*, 130-1.

94. Shields, *FCD*, 65-6.

95. Shields, *FCD*, 94, 96.

96. Greaves, *JK*, 195.

claimed that he had intended to travel to Flanders to study in a college, a fact which correlates with Earlstoun and Hamilton's actions, but also a convenient excuse, which betrayed nothing of his role in the plots.⁹⁷ Unlike many others, Nisbet held his nerve under interrogation and saved his life.⁹⁸

However, prior to his capture Renwick had warned Hamilton not to 'meddle' with Nisbet.⁹⁹ Although Nisbet appears to have toiled loyally for the Societies, Renwick, it seems, no longer considered Nisbet to be ideologically sound due to his urging discussions with the Council of Six. Clearly, a rift opened up between Nisbet and Renwick, despite Hamilton and Earlstoun having seemingly accepted that Nisbet had acted in good faith. It was Renwick who ostracised Nisbet and, after Nisbet's release, Nisbet rejected the Societies in favour of English radicals and moderate Scottish presbyterians. In December 1683 Nisbet appeared in Amsterdam with John Locke and in 1685 he joined with Argyll, probably acting as an agent for him to the Societies. By 1686 he was back in Holland where Carnock met him in the company of Andrew Cameron, another former member of the Societies, and two 'English students', one of whom was Meade's son. However, in 1688, an effort was made to recall Nisbet to the Societies' fold, which shows that others within the Societies disagreed with Renwick's assessment of Nisbet's conduct.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

Were the Plots genuine or not? The Societies' evidence reinforces Greaves' conclusion that the Rye House Plots, or at least the Whig insurrectionary plots, actually existed, as no other hypothesis could plausibly account for the Societies' actions in this period. Even without the use of Societies' evidence in government hands, the preparations for an insurrection and their paper to the confederators would indicate contacts with radicals in London planning an insurrection.¹⁰¹

The Societies' evidence suggests the need to nuance the narrative of Greaves in the light of the new dimensions to the Plots that it reveals. Plainly, the Societies were more significant players in the Whig's plots of 1682 to 1683 than previously recognised. They were involved at an earlier stage contacting members of Shaftesbury's circle in mid 1682 and became engaged at the turn of the year through Nisbet's contact with Shaftesbury's circle and possibly West's cabal. By mid February the Societies were making extensive preparations for a spring insurrection, but the hostility of their

97. Sprat, *Copies*, 136-7.

98. Greaves, *JK*, 242; Earlstoun was transported to Scotland. Under interrogation and torture, between July and September 1683, he revealed Nisbet's role in affairs in London. Sprat, *RHP*, 80-1, 140-2, 143-5, 150-4.

99. Houston, *Letters*, 130-1.

100. Houston, *Letters*, 178; Erskine, *Journal*, 190; 'Letter Societies to Mr Nisbit March 7. 1688', EUL MS. La.III.350. No. 227; Shields, *FCD*, 332, 336.

101. See Appendix 3.3.

leadership to any proposed alliance which included Scottish moderate presbyterians led to confusion, internal divisions and backtracking over their participation in the insurrection within the convention, which ended only when Earlston was captured.

The Plots saw the first attempt at a reunion between the militant and moderate factions of the presbyterian movement since the failure to unite at Bothwell. However, their effect was to reawaken the divisions over the constitutional settlement of Scotland and Britain and lead to further acrimony between the factions. In England, moderates and republicans could come together to attempt to effect regime change. In Scotland, the increasingly bitter divisions proved an insurmountable obstacle to cooperation. The Scottish moderates effectively forced the Societies out of the British radical underground by encouraging the Whig grandees to see the Societies as unsuitable partners for stable constitutional change. As at Bothwell, the British dimension to moderate or Whig politics was the Societies' undoing. The Plots also exposed ideological divisions within the Societies. In early 1683 the Societies faced an ideological and strategic decision between either political isolation or inclusion in the British radical underground with other radical movements. The Societies were divided over the issue, but their exclusion from the Plots helped to make the decision for them. In an ironic twist, it was as much the moderates' hostility towards the Societies which created the hardline militancy of the Societies after 1683, as any decision taken by a militant cabal at the heart of the Societies. Radical options were being sidelined by an emerging moderate Whig consensus. In Scotland, the Covenanted tradition and, in England, the republican tradition, were pushed aside by an emerging 'British' Whiggery which sought what it saw as a sustainable Protestant monarchical solution. With that, the Societies' interest in English radicals came to an end and would not be rekindled.

II. The Societies in the Northern United Provinces, 1682–1684

Since the time that I have known your estate, I have judged it necessary that certain men ... should be chosen for tha[t] pastoral office, and should be sent unto us, for the space of one or two months, that they might be instructed in the method of forming preachings ... Next that they should be examined in a lawful way by some pastor in an ecclesiastic convention, (let not little knowledge deter any man) and in the name of the Lord sent unto his vineyard, and be confirmed in that office by imposition of hands; ... I care not much for the knowledge of tongues, and literal instruction, ... for not by the defect of learning, but by the spirit and piety, is the Church of Scotland brought so miserable a condition; and I think it is not to be restored by learning, but by spirit and piety.

– Letter of William Brackel to the United Societies, 9 February 1683.¹⁰²

Just as the Societies' involvement in the Rye House Plots was collapsing, the ordination of James

102. Shields, *FCD*, 73-4.

Renwick in the United Provinces set the Societies on a new path. From Shields' *Faithful Contendings Displayed* it appears that the primary goal of the Societies in 1682-3 was to obtain ordination of ministers in the United Provinces. From his perspective in the early 1690s, the ordination of Renwick at Groningen was the defining event in the history of Societies and their contacts with the United Provinces, which led to his ordination, naturally the most significant. Shields generally omitted to mention the Societies' involvement in the Rye House Plots, evidence which suggests that England was of greater strategic importance to the Societies in 1682 to early 1683, than their desire to achieve ordinations in the United Provinces. However, as their involvement in the plots unravelled, their alternate strategy in the United Provinces came to the fore. This in no way diminishes the importance of Renwick's ordination to the shaping the Societies, it merely puts it perspective.

'Unto His Vineyard'

Since the deaths of MacWard and the militant ministerial leadership in 1681, the militant societies in Scotland had been bereft of a ministry and isolated from a support base in the United Provinces. At the Societies' first convention they naturally sought to re-establish their contacts with sympathetic Protestants in England and the United Provinces. After a consultation it was decided to send an embassy, almost certainly to resolve their ministerial crisis, and Earlston was commissioned to undertake it. From the outset the proposed embassy was divisive and led to schisms within the Societies, as discussed in chapter two. The Russellite schism in particular reduced the majority in favour of the embassy with the result that the fourth convention on 11 August 1682 wrote to Earlston, who had only arrived in the United Provinces after a fruitless spell in England, of their 'disability to manage the affair', and recalled him home. With Earlston's embassy formally recalled, a tussle ensued between the Societies and the Russellites to win Earlston over. The Russellites got to Earlston first, and he wrote a 'grieving and astonishing' letter allegedly filled with 'base calumnies and misinformations' to the fifth convention, but the Societies won him over when the convention sent Renwick with a letter subscribed by its delegates reassuring him of their fidelity towards him and their cause in November.¹⁰³

However, prior to the struggle over Earlston, and within weeks of the embassy's cancellation, the Societies received astonishing news of a breakthrough in Friesland. On 22 August Robert Hamilton wrote to Renwick informing him that 'work' had begun in Friesland and that four or five students for the ministry were to be sent 'to stay by Mr Brackel, or else some college here in the

103. Shields, *FCD*, 13-4, 18-9, 21, 23-4, 26-8, 29, 32; Houston, *Letters*, 77; Carslaw, *Letters*, 28-30, 31-2; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 502-3.

winter and receive ordination in the spring'.¹⁰⁴ Although the news of the breakthrough coincided with Earlstoun's arrival in the United Provinces in mid August, the breakthrough had been achieved by Hamilton, who had been seeking to advance the 'Protestant interest' across Europe since the divisions in Rotterdam, as discussed in chapter one. It seems that Hamilton had acted on his own accord, probably after hearing of the Societies' desire to advance their cause in the United Provinces, perhaps through his brother-in-law Earlstoun, who had been appointed to spearhead the effort. In around March 1682 Hamilton had journeyed to Friesland and quickly won William Brackel, the minister of Leeuwarden, over to the Societies' cause, as will be discussed in chapter six.¹⁰⁵

Brackel became the lynchpin of the Societies' advances in the United Provinces. Through him the Societies re-established connections into the *Nadere Reformatorie* network which had been close to MacWard. Brackel or Willhelmus á Brakel had been a student of Gisbert Voetius at Utrecht, was a colleague of the Voetian divine Jacob Koelman and had a plethora of useful connections in the northern United Provinces, from Johannes á Marcke or Marck, the Professor of Church History and Divinity at the University of Groningen, to ministers in Emden, as discussed in later chapters.¹⁰⁶

From the moment of their meeting, Brackel was convinced of the Societies' need for ordinations and that 'certain men' should be sent over to be 'instructed in the method of forming preachings'. The broad outline of Brackel's plan for ordinations, which was ultimately enacted, had been formed. Only the place where the students would study and be ordained remained to be resolved.

Hamilton quickly informed the Societies' leadership of the utility of his connections in Leeuwarden to their cause. During Hamilton's initial six-week stay at Brackel's home, he wrote to Renwick seeking 'advice how to move most advantageously for your [the Societies'] behoofs'. Thus it was Hamilton, rather than Earlstoun, who first opened the eyes of the Societies' leadership to Friesland's potential, when he was neither a member of the Societies nor subject to its engagement to secrecy.

Hamilton's intervention diverted the Societies' priorities for their embassy away from England and towards Friesland. On 8 July Renwick gratefully replied to Hamilton's offer, informing him that he should expect to see Earlstoun soon, a sign that the leading figures within the Societies looked to build on Hamilton's success and that Earlstoun's embassy would be redirected towards

104. Shields, *FCD*, 36-41.

105. According to Hamilton, prior to Earlstoun's arrival he had spent six weeks in Brackel's home and then three months in his own private chamber before moving into Earlstoun's family home in Leeuwarden in August 1682. This places Hamilton's move to Leeuwarden prior to Earlstoun's departure for London in April 1682.

106. Shields, *FCD*, 32-264 passim.

Leeuwarden.¹⁰⁷ Clearly, Earlstoun was kept informed of developments for when he departed London soon afterwards, he headed directly for Leeuwarden and Hamilton moved into Earlstoun's newly established family home. However, no sooner had Earlstoun arrived, than his embassy was recalled. In those circumstances, it was probably timely for Hamilton to reveal the fruits of his covert endeavours in Leeuwarden in his August letter. Soon after, Earlstoun, too, gave his approval and confirmed that the University of Groningen would be the destination, and Brackel sent a letter to the Societies admiring their platform of separation from the indulged and moderate presbyterians as paving the way for King Jesus to restore a purer church in Scotland.¹⁰⁸

With the pathway to ordination laid out, Renwick quickly exploited the potential of the providential news by distributing copies of Hamilton and Brackel's letters throughout the Societies in September. From *Faithful Contendings Displayed*, it appears that the providential news from Friesland ended opposition to Earlstoun's embassy and sending students abroad even though Hamilton had secured ordinations without any direct instructions, or even a commission, from the convention. However, it is clear that Hamilton's news helped to provoke the schism with Andrew Young and the Teviotdale societies. It also tightened Renwick's grip over the Societies, as he was confident enough to inform Hamilton that the fifth convention in October would jointly commission him with Earlstoun to represent them abroad and dispatch students to Groningen.

The fifth convention duly selected by lot four students: Nisbet, John Flint, William Boyd and Renwick himself. Flint and Boyd reached Groningen in late November to begin their studies, but both Renwick and Nisbet were delayed by their involvement in the Rye House Plots, with Renwick alone eventually reaching Groningen just before 6 February 1683. Three days later, Brackel wrote to the convention proposing they consider 'that thing of so great moment [i.e ordination]; and that ye may either do or reject that as ye shall think fit'. And on the 14 February the seventh convention requested that the students should make trial for ordination and left Hamilton to oversee the students' studies, as Earlstoun was recalled to deal with the crisis brewing over the Rye House Plots.¹⁰⁹

While Marck was in charge of the students' instruction, Hamilton handled their progress towards ordination. Hamilton used his position to purge those he deemed ideologically unsound and to ensure their ordinations were not tainted by Cocceianism, a liberal brand of Dutch theology based on the work of Johannes Cocceius that challenged literal interpretations of the Bible, and was

107. Shields, *FCD*, 206-7; Carslaw, *Letters*, 7-9. It is clear from Renwick's July letter that he only knew Hamilton by reputation.

108. Shields, *FCD*, 32-6, 41.

109. Shields, *FCD*, 42-4, 59, 63, 73-4, 84; Carslaw, *Letters*, 12-15, 16-18, 28-30, 31-2, 34; Houston, *Letters*, 89-90, 90-2.

opposed by the Voetians. As will be discussed in chapter six, Hamilton had already taken a highly partisan attitude towards the Voetian/Cocceian dispute within Dutch Calvinism, and this was reflected in his approach to ordinations. On the one hand, his pro-Voetian views made attaining ordinations more difficult, as he was particularly scrupulous in avoiding Cocceians, but on the other, it secured the support of influential Voetian divines such as Brackel and Marck.

Hamilton consistently dismissed Brackel's advice to have the students ordained at Emden in East Friesland due to his suspicions of Cocceianism. Instead, he consistently favoured what he saw as the more Voetian Classis of Groningen as the Lord's providential choice. However, the pathway to ordinations there was uncertain due to Cocceian involvement in the University. Nonetheless, Marck and the local Dutch ministers committed to ordain the students with one remarkable condition: that they were conducted under 'great secrecy by the professors of the College' to avoid there being revealed to Marck's Cocceian colleagues.¹¹⁰ Plainly Hamilton was able to exploit the Frisian ecclesiastical politics of the Voetian/Cocceian dispute to the Societies' advantage.

From the outset, Hamilton sabotaged Flint and Boyd's hopes of ordination in favour of Renwick. Within weeks of Renwick's arrival, Hamilton later claimed, he and Brackel offered Renwick ordination, but Renwick shared the letter with Flint and Boyd who interpreted it as an offer to all of them. Whatever the truth of Hamilton's claim, Brackel does not seem to have shared his view of Flint as he consistently supported Flint's ordination. In the following weeks, Hamilton attempted to dissuade Flint and Boyd from progressing to trial. In a fraught confrontation, Boyd withdrew from the process on the grounds he would not 'lay his house with such stones', a pointed reference to Renwick and Flint; but Flint refused to withdraw. Hamilton then tried to exploit the classis's requirement for a testimonial to foil Flint's ordination, as he claimed to have only Renwick's providentially to hand, but the irregular form of Renwick's testimonial led the classis to request new testimonials for both. Undeterred, Hamilton confronted Flint with his belief that the Lord had opposed his passing and that the offer of ordination was in 'no ways designed' for him, but, once again, Flint would not yield and Hamilton was forced 'to countenance him' and to obtain a testimonial from Brackel. With that failure, both Flint and Renwick passed their trials before the classis on 19 April and their ordinations were set for 10 May, the classis generously offering to remit the usual fee due at ordination.¹¹¹

However, Hamilton remained implacably opposed to Flint's ordination. In further fiery confrontations, Flint bitterly objected to Renwick's passing and asserted that he would not return, work or ever agree with Renwick. The basis of Flint's ire was his suspicion that Renwick had acted

110. Shields, *FCD*, 86, 87-8, 99-100, 207-8; 'Letter of Robert Hamilton to Mr Ritzing, minister of Emden, Groningen, 7 May 1683' EUL. New College MSS Box 1.9.6.

111. Shields, *FCD*, 85-9; Carslaw, *Letters*, 40-2; Shields, *LoR*, 29-30; Houston, *Letters*, 105.

in collusion with Hamilton to block his ordination, and that Renwick had 'read too little' to be entitled to ordination and shown a 'spirit of supremacy in his dealings in Scotland'. Clearly, Flint was concerned over the direction of the Societies, but Hamilton felt 'loosed' from 'doing any more' for Flint, and it remained his priority to stop him. At this very late stage, Hamilton drew the Societies' Dutch supporters into the dispute in a bid to halt Flint. Hamilton wrote to Brackel with his opposition to Flint's ordination, but Brackel warned that if Flint was not ordained, it would be 'prejudicial' to the Societies' cause. Nonetheless, Hamilton went on to somehow persuade Flint to withdraw. Renwick knew of Flint's withdrawal in advance of the day of ordination, but it came as a complete surprise to the Dutch minister William Van der Schuur, the preses of the Classis, on the morning of the ordinations. At a last-minute meeting, Hamilton spuriously claimed Flint could not go through with his ordination due to 'a distemper of body', but his deception was exposed by the suggestion that Flint could be ordained if he was fit enough to sit on a chair. Even when warned again that the Flint debacle would 'greatly reflect' on the Societies' cause, Hamilton pressed on, only persuading the Dutch not to ordain Flint when Flint personally withdrew.¹¹²

Renwick alone was ordained. Hamilton, George Hill and William Gordon, Earlstoun's brother, witnessed the laying of hands for the Societies, but the form left the Societies open to allegations that Renwick was not lawfully ordained. Renwick's ordination at the hands of Dutch ministers and by Scottish rites was highly unorthodox. According to Hamilton, he had insisted at the last minute that Renwick subscribe the Westminster Confession, rather than the Belgic Confession, catechisms and canons. Even more remarkably, he claimed that the Dutch agreed to this 'practice never before heard of in these lands'. However, Hamilton's account has to be doubted. Following Brackel's plan, the ministers at Groningen must have known that Renwick's ministry was intended for Scotland. At the very least, there must have been a high degree of complicity by Groningen's Voetian ministers in acceding to a Scottish form of ordination.¹¹³

Renwick's ordination marked a turning point in the Societies' history as it had a profound long-term effect on the testimony of Societies and their relations with the presbyterian ministry. Ordination consolidated Renwick's power over the Societies. As Hamilton's protégé, he shared similar hardline views on the rejection of sinful associations. In his testimony submitted to Hamilton prior to his ordination, he had testified against joining with several named presbyterian ministers, many of whom had previously been close to the Societies, including MacWard, Douglas and Peden. Renwick's ordination moved the Societies' public platform further towards what had previously been considered right-hand extremes. This represented a significant ideological shift in

112. Shields, *FCD*, 90-2; Houston, *Letters*, 108.

113. Shields, *FCD*, 91-4; Shields, *LorR*, 30-3.

the Societies, away from being a protesting party against a backsliding presbyterian ministry as outlined by MacWard and towards a Hamiltonian vision of separation and schism.¹¹⁴

However, Hamilton's pursuit of ideological purity had damaged the Societies' cause at Groningen. The debacle over Flint's ordination had given the Voetian's ministers in Friesland a glimpse into the strife within the Societies. In the following weeks and months, others would open their eyes to the deep divisions within the presbyterian movement.

'Alone Against All the World'

In the aftermath of Renwick's ordination, several more Societies' students were expected in Rotterdam. On 18 June Renwick wrote of Andrew Cameron, the younger brother of the martyred Richard Cameron, coming to Hamilton but hoped that the Lord would make Hamilton's duty towards him clear, almost certainly meaning to prevent or inhibit Cameron's progress, and in August that Thomas Linning would be sent.¹¹⁵ At around the same time, Edward Aitkin and Nisbet were called to Groningen. Once again, Michael Shields discreetly fails to mention a second batch of Societies' students heading to Groningen or the convention sanctioning their studies, perhaps on account of the involvement of his brother Alexander in that second batch, as discussed later. Clearly, the Societies intended to ordain more students than just Renwick.

However, soon after Renwick's ordination the Societies' network in Groningen and Leeuwarden was faced with several crises which brought about its collapse. Immediately prior to Renwick's ordination, Langlands and George Barclay, ministers from the Scots Church in Rotterdam, had approached the Voetian divine Jacob Koelman with accusations against the Societies and Nisbet designed to halt the ordinations.¹¹⁶ Koelman wrote to Brackel with the charges, but Brackel prevented their immediate impact by insisting that the Scots ministers put them in writing. Langlands and Barclay failed to fulfil Brackel's requirement in time. Although Brackel's actions bought time for Renwick's ordination to proceed, Shields later claimed that Brackel had altered his mind towards the Societies due to Langlands and Barclay's 'misinformation'.¹¹⁷

The day after Renwick's ordination, two of the Russellites, James Russell and Patrick Grant, arrived in Groningen, allegedly for the same purpose of preventing the Societies' ordinations, but probably to embark on studies for the ministry. They soon formed an alliance with the disgruntled

114. Shields, *FCD*, 29, 48, 50-8. Renwick's Testimony of 14 April 1683 is printed in Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 584-600.

115. Houston, *Letters*, 133, 141.

116. Shields, *FCD*, 101.

117. Shields, *FCD*, 32.

Flint and Boyd.¹¹⁸ The threat this pact posed to the Societies' Dutch network provoked the twelfth convention in November to urge Brackel to stop the Russellites' progress, but to no avail, as James and Thomas Russell took up studies under Marck at Groningen.¹¹⁹

The rebellion against Hamilton's ideological strictures also spread to the second batch of Societies' students.¹²⁰ Alexander Shields, who later led the Societies, and Andrew Cameron linked up with Flint to seek ordination, probably at Emden, but Renwick was delighted to inform Hamilton of the failure of their scheme in January 1684:

Mr [Alexander] Shields is brought to Scotland. I know that he and Mr. Andrew Cameron and Mr. Flint were joined together in seeking after ordination, that they might come home to Scotland. But I when I heard it, I was not satisfied that you [Hamilton] were not owned in it. However, this hath a strange language. The Lord hath crushed it; for their papers anent the same, and many books, were cast away at sea. O! The majesty of your God and my God, that shines in His management of affairs. Let you and me stand and admire this.¹²¹

Following that failure, the students who had opposed Hamilton either withdrew from the United Provinces or entered into dialogue with the Societies' moderate opponents. Alexander Shields withdrew to London, where he 'traded' with leading merchants', probably meaning English radicals, and later seems to have discussed the possibility of joining with Argyll in early 1685.¹²² Andrew Cameron defected to join Argyll and became an agent for him in 1685.¹²³ Flint remained with the Russellites. Out of all the Societies' students, only Boyd was reconciled with the Societies and returned to Scotland in mid 1684, although Renwick's fear that Boyd would 'breed us work yet' proved to be correct.¹²⁴

118. Houston, *Letters*, 133-4.

119. 'Letters of Michael Shields to William a Brackel Glasgow, 28 Nov. 1683' EUL New College MSS, Box 1.9.11. Shields, *FCD*, 124, 224; 'A copy of a Testimonial to Mr Flint' EUL MSS La.III.350, fol. 137.

120. 'Societies Letter to Mr John Flint [and to] James Russell P. Grant & J. Russell March 20. 1684' EUL MSS La.III.350, fol. 126; 'Letter Michael Shields to Messrs Boyd and Flint' La.III.350, fol. 113; Shields, *FCD*, 125-7, 131-2, 133.

121. 'Mr J[ohn] Flints Letter to the General Convention in Scotland Groning[en] 26 Day of the 9th Month 1683', EUL MSS La.III.350, fol. 99; Houston, *Letters*, 133, 151. The index to the Societies' volumes in Laing manuscripts lists: 'Item 70. Draught of the Societies Application to the Classis of Emden. Orig. Mr A[lexander] Shields hand' but it is now missing. From its place in the index it appears to date to mid 1683. Shields had not been to Groningen. Alexander Shields, *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), 32. See also EUL MSS New College. Box 1.9.6; 'Letter of Mr Alex[ande]r Shields [c. January 1684?]', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 112.

122. Hector Macpherson, *The Cameronian Philosopher: Alexander Shields* (Edinburgh, 1932), 10-39; Carslaw, *Letters*, 123, 132.

123. Houston, *Letters*, 175-6, 178; Carslaw, *Letters*, 125-6, Erskine, *Journal*, 190.

124. Shields, *FCD*, 131; Houston, *Letters*, 161; Carslaw, *Letters*, 125-6.

At the same time, the Consistory and University at Groningen were drawn into the factional squabble when both the Russellites and Societies sent papers attacking their rivals.¹²⁵ Their infighting proved detrimental to both sides. Marck and the ministers at Groningen 'bound up their hands from any more acting, speaking, or praying in public' for the Societies and ordinations at Groningen were prohibited without subscription of the Belgic Confession, catechism and canons.¹²⁶ Flint and Thomas Russell also failed to achieve ordination and were issued only with testimonials of their student conduct, while James Russell was forced to leave Groningen due to an irregular marriage.¹²⁷

At the same time the Societies' network in Leeuwarden was put in jeopardy by a feud between Hamilton and Brackel over Brackel's call to a charge in Rotterdam. Hamilton's hostility towards this 'woeful Erastian call' led to the loss of Brackel's support for the Societies. Soon after Brackel joined Argyll's moderate presbyterians in Rotterdam, allegedly handing over funds collected via Brackel's network which had been destined for the benefit of the Societies. It also led to a schism in the prayer society established in Leeuwarden, which left only a 'small handful' supporting the Societies.¹²⁸

The catastrophic collapse of the Societies' Dutch network was compounded by Hamilton's failure to capitalise on the opportunities for publication which it had offered to the Societies' cause, in terms of providing published works for both their campaign in Scotland and for a wider European audience. From 1682 to 1683 Hamilton was sent several tracts for publication. In September 1682 he was sent 'all our martyr's testimonies that are unprinted' to be printed in a *Cloud of Witnesses* style martyrology.¹²⁹ Renwick also sent him a 'little book' of uncorrected sermons by John Welwood, whose preaching was much respected by the Societies, and in August 1683 he was to be sent a

125. 'Translations of the Reproachful Information given by James Russel and Patrick Grant to his Prof. Of Divinity at Groningen anent the Societies' EUL MSS La.III.350, fol. 115; 'Societies Reply to the Former in Latin to the same professors.1684.' La.III.350, fol. 116; 'The same in English 20 March. 1684.' La.III.350, fol. 117; Shields, *FCD*, 129-30.

126. Shields, *FCD*, 134-5, 250-1.

127. Shields, *FCD*, 131-2, 224; 'A copy of a Testimonial to Mr Flint' EUL MSS La.III.350, fol. 137; 'The Short Signification of John Flint his mind in things whereof he is convinced. Groningen 24 Day of the 6th Month, 1684', La.III.350, fol. 138; 'Copie of a Testimonial to Tho[mas]: Russell at Franeyier 18 day of — the month Anno 1685', La.III.344.2, fol. 144.; Shields, *FCD*, 133, 224.

128. Shields, *FCD*, 189, 206-8, 208n; 'Letter perhaps Societies to Brackel' EUL MSS La.III.350, fol. 111; Shields, *FCD*, 189, 209, 313.

129. Houston, *Letters*, 77. All the testimonies not in print would have included the twenty-one testimonies of those executed from Rathillet on 30 July 1680 to Robert Gray on 17 May 1682, but excluding those of Gouger, Miller and Sangster vitiated by John Gibb. Renwick also asked Hamilton not to print 'two particular testimonies, or rather letters, of James Skeen, which he never intended to publish'. His collection was supplemented by further testimonies sent by Renwick prior to 19 June 1683. Houston, *Letters*, 135-6.

further edition of the sermons in 'Welwood's own hand' from the societies in Glasgow.¹³⁰ He was also sent copies of a letter to Cargill and a paper in reply, described as 'imperfect, he being taken away before he got time to finish it'.¹³¹ The final item was a book from Glasgow of Cargill and Cameron's sermons which was to be published 'with all the so-called acts of parliament' against presbyterians. However, the tenth convention in August 1683 was forced to enquire on behalf of the Glasgow societies 'what is become of the book of Mr Cargill's, and Mr Cameron's sermons; if it be corrected, and put to the press'.¹³² Copy editing may have caused delays, but Hamilton also failed to put any of them into the press.

The only project he did manage to publish was the controversial Societies' protest against the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam. Even then, there were delays. Hamilton was asked by the tenth convention in August 1683 to draft a protestation, but he failed to do so, forcing the twelfth convention in November to draft and send one to Hamilton which eventually appeared in May 1684 as *The Protestation of the Antipopish, Antiprelatick, Antierastian, True Presbyterian, But poor and persecuted Church of Scotland, against the Scottish Congregation at Rotterdam in Holland*.¹³³ However, to the convention's surprise an unauthorised Dutch version also appeared, as Hamilton explained:

not having so much money in the world to pay it; yet I resolved it should be done; hoping the Lord would send me some little part of my dear sister Jean's patrimony, but one of our friends [in Leeuwarden?] getting notice of it, begged me to have the honour to have so much hand in the testimony as to pay the printer, which was ten or twelve guilders; and afterwards when I gave that person two or three copies of it, they immediately translated it into Dutch, and caused bind *The History of the Indulgence, The Causes of the Lord's Wrath*, and the said Protestation in one volume, *Vade Mecum*.¹³⁴

Hamilton had mishandled the Protestation's limited distribution. Copies of the English version were distributed to Rotterdam and a copy was sent to Scotland, a sign that it was primarily aimed at Scots exiles, but Hamilton's desperate attempt to explain away the Dutch version shows that it had not been intended to reach a Dutch audience, where its revelations of the disputes between the Scottish presbyterian movement was probably counter-productive, especially given the Societies' problems at Groningen.

Hamilton's excuses for failing to publish the Protestation reveal that finance was another

130. Houston, *Letters*, 77; Shields, *FCD*, 80. For Welwood's sermons see Howie (ed.), *Sermons*, 339-74. He was the subject of a life by Patrick Walker. *Some Remarkable Passages in the Life and Death of Mr John Welwood, Late Minister of the Gospel* (Edinburgh, 1727).

131. Houston, *Letters*, 77-8. This is probably *A letter from Mr. Donald Cargill to his paroch of the Barony Kirk in Glasgow. March the 27th 1681* (no date).

132. Houston, *Letters*, 78; Shields, *FCD*, 80.

133. Shields, *Protestation*, 1-5.

134. Shields, *FCD*, 209.

problem. Although the Societies had sent him a manuscript copy in the belief that he could afford their printing, he obviously could not. According to Hamilton the ten or twelve guilders he had received for the printing of the Protestation was all the money he had for printing 'either of testimonies, or any other books' and there is no record of the convention sending Hamilton money for printing. However, in the end, Hamilton's own opinion of himself sums up the reasons behind the Societies' failure to publish: he was 'unfit for it, suppose I had money'.¹³⁵ The Societies first attempt to raise their public profile was an abysmal failure.

From mid 1684 all surviving Societies' correspondence and references to their Dutch contacts cease for a year and a half. The convention was slow to realise the extent of their situation – the fifteenth convention in July 1684 wrote to Groningen in the hope of further ordinations and to deny the Russellites access but received no answer – but the evidence indicates that Groningen had ceased to be an option. At the same convention Thomas Linning was approved to begin his studies, but did not take up a place at Groningen, for a year and a half later he was in residence with Hamilton and Earlstoun's family and under the private tuition of Mr Gerkima, Brackel's replacement in Leeuwarden.¹³⁶

The Societies' embassy to the United Provinces had started promisingly. It had successfully established channels of support and pathways to ordination, but ultimately both networks collapsed in a setback which took years to reverse. The single lasting achievement of the embassy was Renwick's ordination. In retrospect this lent the embassy special significance, but from the perspective of 1682 to early 1683, the Societies' embassy to the United Provinces was of secondary importance to their involvement in the Rye House Plots. Nonetheless, Renwick's ordination was a turning point in the Societies' development from a faction which protested against the actions of the presbyterian ministry into a party separate from them. Through the embassy, Renwick and Hamilton, with their hardline ideology, came to dominate the Societies. Renwick's ordination solidified that control and provided him with a platform of authority from which he moved the Societies' testimony towards an extreme right-hand position which rejected both the indulged and nonconforming presbyterian ministry and all sinful alliances. The paradox of the Societies' Dutch embassy was that in reaching out to European Calvinism, the Societies became more politically isolated from their former presbyterian brethren and valuable continental supporters. Much of the credit for this paradox and the embassy's success and failure, must go down to the talents of one man, Robert Hamilton. However, Hamilton was not solely responsible. In particular, Brackel's

135. Shields, *FCD*, 210.

136. 'To the Reformed Churches 31 July 1684. Intituled Recommendation of Tho: Linnen.' EUL MSS La.III.350, fol. 131. Houston, *Letters*, 245; Shields, *FCD*, 143-6, 186, 258, 259.

initial support of the Societies proved invaluable in creating their Dutch network and in securing Renwick's ordination. The hostility of the moderates and the Russellites, in part provoked by Renwick and the Societies, and the internal divisions within the Societies over Renwick's new platform, also contributed to the collapse of the Dutch network. Like the Societies' experience in the Rye House Plots, structural flaws in the embassy hindered the development of the Dutch network. Operating at such a distance from the convention, the Societies were over-reliant on their commissioners, especially Hamilton. Effective communication across the North Sea proved difficult: there were suspicions that some their letters had been intercepted; Hamilton failed to keep the convention up-to-date on certain matters, especially regarding publications, and disputes often spiralled out of control before the convention could respond. Finance was also a persistent problem. Although funds were raised through Brackel's network, Hamilton and the Societies were often reliant on the charity of their Dutch hosts, a source of funds which almost certainly reduced to a trickle after Brackel's departure. By mid 1684 only a rump of the Societies' Dutch network remained in place around Hamilton in Leeuwarden, but it was of little consequence or utility to the Societies as a whole for the next few years.

The Societies had survived the revelation of the Rye House Plots with their organisation still in place, unlike many of the other radical factions whose operations in England and Scotland were severely disrupted. However, the Societies' expulsion or withdrawal from the Rye House Plots and the collapse of their Dutch network left the Societies excluded from radical support networks outside of Scotland. Beset by left- and right-hand opponents, moderate and Russellite; rejected by their Dutch and English radical allies, and unable to gain recognition for their cause in the face of spiralling persecution, the Societies were extremely isolated. In the words of Alexander Shields on Renwick's return to Scotland, he was like '*unus Athanasius contra totum Orbem*' – Athanasius alone against all the World – a comparison to the fourth-century father of the church admired by Protestants who was frequently banished by Roman Emperors and vigorously defended orthodoxy against Arianism.¹³⁷ A year later, the Societies were engaged in their own apocalyptic war against the Crown and their persecutors.

137. Shields, *LOR*, 37.

Into The Lion's Den

FOUR

The Societies at War, 1685

I. The Killing Times

I A. B. do hereby abhor, renounce, and disown, in the presence of the almighty God, the pretended declaration of war, lately affixed at several parish churches, in so far as it declares war against his sacred majesty, and asserts, that it is lawful to kill such as serve his majesty, in church, state, army, or country.

– The Abjuration Oath as issued by the Privy Council on 30 December, 1684.¹

After the Societies declared war on their persecutors in the Apologetical Declaration, they became embroiled in the Killing Times, a period of intense persecution in the western shires defined by summary executions which Hewison quaintly but with some accuracy entitled ‘the policy of the rope and the gun’.² The aim of this section is to analyse the Killing Times with respect to the Societies and their network. It was from the Societies that the first accounts of the Killing Times originated, but no previous authors have specifically tackled the Societies’ role in them, which is all the more surprising considering that the Societies were the express targets of the Killing Times.

A great deal about the Killing Times is a matter of dispute. The timing of their beginning is uncertain. For Patrick Walker they began on 15 August 1684 with the execution of the Enterkin rescuers and included all subsequent executions. Alexander Shields dated their beginning to the death of Charles II in February 1685.³ And recently Thorbjörn Campbell dated their start to December 1684.⁴

There is also no precise end point. Campbell included isolated killings in December 1685 and

1. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 161n.

2. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 361.

3. Hay Fleming (ed.), *Six Saints*, II, 97; Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 200. Cowan follows Walker in dating the start of the Killing Times in August 1684. Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 119.

4. Campbell, *SW*, 193.

Shields included incidents up to 1688. For the purposes of this study the Killing Times are defined as the period when an express policy of summary execution was consistently applied, i.e. from December 1684 to July 1685.

There is also no precise answer to how many were killed in the fields within that period. Shields named seventy-two in *A Short Memorial* (1690) and Campbell eighty-six, but Howie of Lochgoin claimed that 498 were dispatched.⁵ In this study four criteria for inclusion have been applied. First, that the killings occurred within the period outlined above. Second, that they were caused by a deliberate act of execution or violence by government forces, military or judicial. Third, that they were a consequence of the Privy Council's policy of dealing with malefactors in their locality, and not before the Justiciary in Edinburgh. And fourth, that they were not directly due to the Argyll Rising. Settling on a hard number is nigh impossible, but a baseline estimate of eighty-eight victims is arrived at if doubtful or potential duplicate cases are discarded from a soft total of 101 recorded killings.⁶

Three-quarters of the cases can be roughly dated from burial evidence or narrative accounts or by context in relation to other known cases. An analysis of the numbers killed per month shows that the numbers slain snowballed from six in December 1684 up to twenty-three in the first two weeks of May 1685 before Argyll's invasion brought a pause until July, when a few sporadic cases mark the end of Killing Times.⁷ At least half of those killed were probably proclaimed fugitives by the authorities and three-quarters were probably members of the Societies. Both figures are probably underestimates. Due to the loss of records of the Abjuration courts, we do not know who was in flight from them, and in most cases those who were killed had refused the Abjuration Oath directed against the Societies.

One striking difference between the victims of earlier judicial executions, as discussed in chapter two, and the Killing Times was their shire of origin. In the former, 58 per cent of cases came from Lanarkshire, with small percentages from each of Renfrewshire, Ayrshire, Galloway and Nithsdale. In the Killing Times this pattern was reversed. Although Lanarkshire was still well represented with ten cases, these amounted only to 13 per cent of all cases, whereas Ayrshire produced twenty-five cases or 32 per cent, Galloway twenty-four cases or 30 per cent, and Nithsdale twelve cases or 15 per cent. Why? Several local factors probably provide the reason. The south-western shires had

5. Alexander Shields, *A Short Memorial of the Sufferings and Grievances, Past and Present, of the Presbyterian in Scotland, Particularly of those of them called Nick-name Cameronians* (Edinburgh, 1690), 34-8; Campbell, *SW*, 193-7; Howie, *Scots Worthies*, 655.

6. See Appendix 4.1; Campbell, *SW*, 20, 25n.

7. These figures based on Appendix 4.1 are in broad agreement with Campbell's findings, although there are differences in the dating of some events. See Campbell, *SW*, 20-1.

seen a flurry of open defiance or violent acts by the Societies and were where Argyll was widely expected to drum up support, as discussed below. There is also a hint in the figures that wandering fugitives were particularly drawn to northern Kirkcudbrightshire, perhaps as a safe haven due to its upland geography, sympathetic population and relative distance from the intense persecution to the north in 1682 to 1684.⁸ One other factor was doubtless the enthusiasm of local persecutors. 'Bluidy Clavers' is infamous in presbyterian tradition for the violence of his persecution, but his tally is surpassed by those of Drumlanrig and Lagg, who unlike Claverhouse had local knowledge of their principal area of operations in Galloway and Nithsdale.⁹

Historians have broadly agreed on the causes of the Killing Times in pointing to the Societies' Apologetical Declaration and the Privy Council's decision to enforce the Abjuration Oath, reproduced above, although they differ in the emphasis placed on each.¹⁰ However, the main cause for the Killing Times was the outbreak of anti-government violence in the south of Scotland which followed the Apologetical Declaration. Within days of it being affixed to church doors on 8 November, the Societies launched a series of attacks on government forces and the infrastructure of persecution. In Nithsdale, the Isle Tower was stormed by militants and on 16 November a force of more than a hundred attacked Kirkcudbright tolbooth and killed a sentry. On 19 November, two lifeguards were killed at Swinabbey in Linlithgowshire and at some point a Captain Urquhart and two soldiers were killed in Galloway. Most infamously of all, Peter Peirson, the minister of Carsphairn, was slain at his manse for assisting in the persecution of his parishioners by a delegation of Society people.¹¹ The Declaration also had other effects. According to Michael Shields, the 'great noise' it made 'did much deter' intelligencers and 'not a little damp and fright many malignants in the West' especially 'many of the curates, [who] were so terrified, that in some places in Galloway and Nithsdale, scarce one of them durst stay, but went into Edinburgh and other towns'.¹²

The presbyterian historians Wodrow and Hewison were quick to point out that Peirson's murderers were publicly disowned by the Societies, but that did not happen until six months later in the second Sanquhar Declaration, by which point all the perpetrators had either been killed or turned informer. Even then, only Peirson's murder was disowned and that in a highly-qualified fashion, as they suggested that there had been insufficient deliberation before his killing and that

8. See Appendix 4.2 & 4.5.

9. See Appendix 4.3 & 4.4.

10. For discussions of the Killing Times see Wodrow, *History*, IV, 147-67, 181-7, 239-53, Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 440-54; Mathieson, *Reformation to Revolution*, II, 310-12; Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 120-33; Campbell, *SW*, 18-24.

11. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 442-3, 445-6, 448; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 196-8.

12. Shields, *FCD*, 155.

it was 'not materially murder' as he was 'a man of death, both by the law of God and Man'.¹³ Throughout the Killing Times and beyond, the Societies did not disown their war against their persecutors. Rather, they continued to justify what they termed the enactment of 'righteous judgement' on known persecutors in works such as *A Hind Let Loose*.¹⁴ However, this is a case where one should judge them not by what they said, but by their actions. By the start of 1685 the Societies' attacks on persecutors ceased. From then on they were cautious in launching offensive operations against government forces. Many skirmishes followed, but only two were initiated by the Societies: the attack on Newmilns Tower in April and the rescue of David Houston in 1688. The Societies' offensive against their persecutors was short-lived and, despite their continued ideological commitment to the principle, rapidly abandoned in favour of a defensive posture of considered strikes and awaiting the opportunity for a successful insurrection.¹⁵ The suspension of attacks signalled a tacit acknowledgement on the part of the Societies that their strategy had backfired. They were also surprised at the severity of the regime's response and the damage it did to the Societies' network and cause. According to Michael Shields, the Declaration was 'the greatest handle' for condemnation 'of anything they had ever done' and had 'allowed' the framing of the Abjuration Oath which 'was universally pressed in such an arbitrary manner as was never heard of before'. The cost to the Societies was considerable when counted in imprisonments, executions and field shootings, but also in the fact that 'very many complied' with the Abjuration.¹⁶

Following the outbreak of anti-government violence, the Privy Council directed a two-pronged attack expressly against the Societies. Firstly, on 22 November they decided that it was lawful for anyone questioned before the King's commissioners in the field and two witnesses who owned or would not disown the Apologetical Declaration to be 'immediately put to death'. This provided the power of summary execution to army officers and sheriffs and was especially dangerous for any member of the Societies captured or interrogated by them. The other prong aimed to divide the local population from the Societies. On 30 December 1684, commissioners were appointed to administer the Abjuration Oath to all the population more than sixteen years of age in every parish below the River Tay, and on 9 January extended those powers to magistrates in burghs. The commissioners were empowered immediately to hang anyone who owned the Declaration in their court or, in the case of women, who were not to be proceeded against unless they were involved in a 'signal manner', to drown them. They were also authorised to banish anyone who failed to

13. Wodrow, *History*, IV,197; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 446-7; Shields, *LoR*, 76, 77, 80; *An Informatory Vindication*, 202.

14. Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 716-85.

15. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 469-70; Shields, *FCD*, 337.

16. Shields, *FCD*, 150, 155.

appear and sequester their goods, and asked to proceed against those who had been at Bothwell, fine heritors who were guilty of church disorders, find cautions from all merchants, packmen, cadgers and drovers not to carry letters, intelligence or sell ammunition to the rebels, and to issue passes to those who disowned the Declaration. To induce intelligence, a reward of 500 merks was proffered for the discovery of anyone involved in the Societies.¹⁷

Of the two prongs, the former was by far the more effective. At most, only three executions can be ascribed to the Abjuration Courts, as the death of Charles II ended the general pressing of the oath.¹⁸ They included Andrew MacGill executed in Ayr in January 1685 who was a fugitive from Arecleoch, a very remote farm in Ballantrae parish. Betrayed by an informer, it is likely that MacGill was brought before the Ayrshire Abjuration Court and executed.¹⁹ And on 3 February, James Algie and John Park of Kennishead, Eastwood parish, were executed at Paisley. While the sources disagree as to whether they disowned the Apologetical Declaration or not, they agree that those victims had recently turned to the Societies.²⁰

The vast majority of the killings were due to military action or summary trials before commissioned military officers in the field. Presbyterian historiography has given these killings the appearance of random events. Although all the deaths cannot be encompassed within a coherent narrative, a large number can, as they conform to a series of underlying structures, each with its own rationale; these show that the Killing Times was not a single phenomenon, but a series of interrelated processes connected to both the actions of the Societies and government forces.

The Killing Times began with a series of intelligence-led actions specifically directed against members of the Societies responsible for acts of resistance in the south-western shires of Wigtown, Kirkcudbright and Nithsdale. The killing at Carsphairn led Claverhouse into a skirmish at Auchencloy with eight Society people on 18 December 1684. In the action James McMichael, fowler to the laird of Maxwellton, was killed and five captured. Three, Robert Fergusson, John Grierson and Robert Stewart, were shot after refusing the Abjuration, and two others taken to Kirkcudbright and executed soon after. At least some, and probably all, were members of the Societies. McMichael, a fugitive in nearby Dalry parish, had been the principal ringleader of the Carsphairn incident and had previously fought at Ayrsmoss and taken part in the Enterkin Rescue. Stewart, of Manquhill, Dalry parish, had taken part in the Enterkin and was the son of Major Robert Stewart

17. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 154-5, 160n, 165.

18. Shields, *FCD*, 162.

19. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 458-9; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 312. 'Andrew McGill, Sufferings of (1679-85)', NLS MSS. Wod.Qu.XXXVII, f.234; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 21n, 336; Campbell, *SW*, 39, 193.

20. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 460; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 189-91, 241, 489n; Campbell, *SW*, 157; Thomson, *MGoS*, 281-4; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 570-1.

of Ardoch who had fought in the Pentland Rising. Grier or Grierson was a chapman in Clachan or Blackmark, in Dalry parish, who had also taken part in Enterkin and was listed as a fugitive 'sometimes in Dumfries'. Fergusson, too, was a fugitive from Glencairn or Tynron parish in Nithsdale.²¹ According to Daniel Defoe, an Archibald Stewart was also shot at Auchencloy, probably the fugitive Stewart of Causey-end in Penningham parish, Wigtonshire, who had been an organiser of conventicles and was the father of James Stewart, a delegate at the Societies' convention and sought for proclaiming the Sanquhar Declaration.²² The two executed at Kirkcudbright were William Hunter and Robert Smith. Judging from the form of their execution, both were guilty of a treasonable crime as they were hung and beheaded in a similar fashion to those involved in the Inchbelly Rescue. Hewison thought that Hunter was a fugitive from Tarbolton, but he is probably the William Hunter of Old Clachan of Dalry who took part in Enterkin and perhaps the same as the fugitive listed in Auchenhessane, Tynron parish. The identity of Robert Smith is a mystery. Hewison thought that he was from Glencairn, but he could have been the fugitive in Kilroch, Dunscore parish, who had been forfeited for his part in Bothwell and who was possibly the same man as the Robert Smith of Dunscore who gave information on the Societies in February 1684. Or, given his companionship with Enterkin rescuers, he was perhaps a relative of Thomas Smith who tradition says was killed in the rescue.²³

Presbyterian tradition also offers no explanation for the shooting of six men after refusing the Abjuration who were attending a prayer meeting at Caldons Wood in Glen Trool, Minnigaff parish, on 23 January 1685, but it was almost certainly connected to deaths of Captain Urquhart and two troopers, as two of the victims, John McClive and John Stevenson, were from Star, Straiton parish, the houses of which were ordered to be burnt in a letter of 28 January for the reset of Urquhart's killers.²⁴ Also slain at Caldons were two men with close connections to the Societies' leadership, James and Robert Dun, brothers from Benquhat, Dalmellington parish, who headed a kin network deeply involved in the Societies. Robert was a known fugitive, as was James's son Roger, who had escaped from Caldons Wood and had previously attended Renwick's conventicle at Craignew in Carsphairn parish in late 1684.²⁵ Their importance within the Societies is confirmed by the fact that

21. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 448-9; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 23n., 24n. 177, 196-8; Ford, 'Enterkin and the Covenanters', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 3rd Series. No. 36., 136.

22. Defoe, *History of the Church of Scotland*, 250; *RPCS*, VI, 159-60; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 22n, 489n. For James Stewart see *RPCS*, VI, 482-5; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 22n; Sprat, *Copies*, 151.

23. Hewison, 'New Light on Enterkin', *Scotsman*, 1 April, 1901, 8; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 430-1, 449; Ford, 'Enterkin and the Covenanters', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 3rd Series. No. 36., 136; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 24n, 180, 247-8.

24. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 539; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 198, 239; Thomson, *MGoS*, 357-8.

25. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n; Simpson, *Traditions*, 362-3; Thomson, *MGoS*, 358.

soon afterwards Alexander Peden preached at Glen Trool, where he made mention of their end, and Renwick preached at Kilmein above Benquhat.²⁶ James Dun's son-in-law, Gilbert McAdam of Waterhead in Carsphairn parish, had sheltered Sharp's assassins in 1679 and was also shot in Nithsdale on 11 July 1685.²⁷ They were also almost certainly related to another Robert Dun, who was one of the leaders of the schism within the Societies in 1685 and led efforts by breakaway societies to rejoin the Societies in early 1689.²⁸

The letter of 28 January may also connect the Caldons incident to another set of executions, as it ordered the execution of three men involved in Urquhart's death after the Caldons Wood incident. Those executed were probably the undated hangings at Wigtown by Captain Winram of William Johnston, a gardener to the Laird of Fyntalloch, John Milroy, a chapman in Fyntalloch, and George Walker, a servant in Kirkcalla, as they were all from the north end of Penningham parish which lies close to Caldons Wood and is the only triple execution carried out in this area, even though tradition records only that they were hung for refusing the Abjuration.²⁹

The turning informer of two of the Carsphairn murderers also led to two further attacks on Societies' hideouts in Nithsdale. On 30 January Robert Padzen directed Captain Dalziel's troops to a shieling in Morton parish where they captured Daniel McMichael, the brother of James killed at Auchencloy, a fugitive for the Sanquhar Declaration, who had probably taken part in Enterkin. McMichael was shot after refusing all oaths symbolically at the entry to the Enterkin Pass.³⁰ And in April, the information of Andrew Watson led Drumlanrig to attack a cave at Ingleston in Glencairn parish in which five more Societies' men were shot. They included Robert Mitchell in Cumnock parish, another of the killers of Peirson and the cousin of the James Mitchell executed for his attempted assassination of Sharp; Robert Edgar, who had fled his home to evade the Abjuration; and John Gibson, younger of Ingleston, who had been forfeited for Bothwell.³¹

26. Walker, *BP*, I, 63-5, 69; Simpson, *Traditions*, 359; Thomson, *MGoS*, 337.

27. See Table Appendix 4.1. For McAdam see R. Lawson, *The Covenanters of Ayrshire* (Paisley, 1887) 49-50; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n, 329; Thomson, *MGoS*, 493-4; Kirkton, *Secret History*, 473.

28. Shields, *FCD*, 369.

29. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 252; Thomson, *MGoS*, 429-30. Previously undated, these executions took place around the time of Peden's conventicle at Glen Trool soon after the beginning of James VII's reign. Peden had not left Ireland at the end of February, but his presence in the West was noted by Fountainhall on 27 March 1685, indicating that they probably occurred in March. Walker, *BP*, I, 58, 63-5, 69; John Lauder of Fountainhall, *Historical Observes of Memorable Occurrences in the Church and State, from October 1680 to April 1686 by Sir John Lauder of Fountainhall*, David Laing and A. Urquhart eds. (Edinburgh, 1840), 157.

30. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 459-60; *RPCS*, VI, 482-5; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 24n, 239-40; Thomson, *MGoS*, 459-62. Simpson, *Traditions*, 105.

31. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 470; Wodrow, *History*, III, 180, 247-8; IV, 24n, 196-8, 243; Thomson, *MGoS*, 387, 442-4. The traditional date for the Ingleston killings is 28 April, but it probably happened prior to the expiry of Drumlanrig's commission on 21 April.

Another of the Carsphairn assassins, John Gordon in Garryhorn, Carsphairn parish, was shot by Captain Bruce at Lochenkit in Kirkpatrick-Durham parish on 19 February or 2 March. Gordon, who had also been involved in Enterkin, had been returning from a prayer meeting with seven others when they were all captured. Along with Gordon, three others were immediately shot and two others who were fugitives were taken to Lagg in Irongray parish and hung after refusing the Abjuration.³²

At about the same time information also led Lagg to attack some Society people at Kirkconnel Moor in Tongland parish, which led to five more shootings. They included John Bell of Whiteside, Anwoth parish, who was the stepson of Viscount Kenmure and had been forfeited for his role in Bothwell; Robert Lennox of Irelandton, Twynholm parish, also forfeited for Bothwell, and David Halliday, portioner of Mayfield, Twynholm parish, all of whom had been involved in a night conventicle held by Renwick at Irelandton attended by John Paterson in Pennyvenie, whom tradition connects to later shootings at Carsgailoch.³³ The Kirkconnel incident was the first of several raids on the area between Twynholm and Tongland parishes. At some point Halliday's fugitive neighbour, John Hallume in Lairdmannoch, was taken after a pursuit and hanged at Kirkcudbright after refusing the Abjuration.³⁴ And in July, Lagg ordered another of Halliday's kin, David Halliday in Glengap, to be shot in Tongland parish for refusing the Abjuration, together with George Short, another fugitive of the parish.³⁵

Further north, action was also taken against the Societies' heartlands in the shires of Ayr, Lanark and Renfrew. On 10 February, Captain Buchan was ordered to establish a garrison at Blackwood in Lesmahagow parish and within a day or two he and Cromwell Lockhart, laird of Lee, were involved in a skirmish with eighty rebels in Lesmahagow parish, almost certainly the delegates bound for the eighteenth convention at Auchengilloch on 12 February, in which John Smith was taken and shot and three others captured.³⁶ Soon after, John Brown, the factor to the laird of

32. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 461; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 22n, 23n, 196-8, 240; Thomson, *MGoS*, 363-4.

33. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 467-8; Wodrow, *History*, III, 180, 247-8; IV, 242, 489n; Thomson, *MGoS*, 369, 392-3, 395, 411-2; A. Sinclair Horne and J. B. Hardie, *In the Steps of the Covenanters* (Edinburgh, 1974), 27; Simpson, *Traditions*, 228-32; 'Robert Lennox, his sad sufferings and losses by Claverhouse & Lag', NLS MSS, Wod.Fol. XL. item 44; Simpson, *Traditions*, 358-9.

34. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 22n, 183-4; Thomson, *MGoS*, 403.

35. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 22n, 23n; Alex S. Morton, *Galloway and the Covenanters or The Struggle for Religious Liberty in the South-West of Scotland* (Paisley, 1914), 248; Thomson, *MGoS*, 369-70.

36. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 204, 240; Houston, *Letters*, 170; Thomson, *MGoS*, 143; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 548; Shields, *FCD*, 162-3. The evidence connecting Smith's death with the convention and Buchan and Lee's actions was known to previous authors, but not recognised as referring to the same event. The Auchengilloch convention is the same as the Renwick's field preaching 'to a great company at Moor of Evandale' and subsequent meeting 'a short time after the accession of James' attended by Laing of Blackgannoch. Simpson, *Traditions*, 17.

Blackwood, was shot, and in April two fugitives were shot at nearby Evandale Castle, one of whom was William Paterson, the fugitive son of the laird of Kirkhill, Cambusnethan parish, slain at Ayrsmoss, who had already escaped banishment and was taken after a Sabbath meeting.³⁷

A little over a month after Buchan's move into the Societies' strongholds in Lanarkshire, Drumlanrig was urged to take action against openly armed rebels in Ayrshire, probably the hundred armed rebels accompanying Peden after he arrived in Scotland.³⁸ Across the shire boundary from Lesmahagow and Evandale parishes, two were shot in Muirkirk parish in February or March. William Adam, who was possibly a member of the Societies, was shot at Wellwood.³⁹ And Drumlanrig and Peter Ingles were involved in the capture of Thomas Richard of Greenock Mains and his trial and execution at Cumnock in early April.⁴⁰ Further south, another centre of the Societies in Carrick saw a series of intelligence-led actions when troops surrounded farmsteads. Edward M'Keen, who was perhaps involved in Enterkin and the Societies, was shot in Barr parish after refusing the Abjuration.⁴¹ Two other fugitives, John Semple and Thomas McClorgan, were

37. For Brown see Wodrow, *History*, IV, 243; Thomson, *MGoS*, 279-80; Campbell, *SW*, 50, 194. For Paterson see Wodrow, *History*, IV, 16n, 253; Thomson, *MGoS*, 249.

38. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 206-7, 207n; Fountainhall, *Historical Observes*, 157.

39. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 241; Thomson, *MGoS*, 150-1. The farms at Welwood had many associations with the Societies. The fugitives John and William Campbell in Over Welwood who escaped from the Canongate Tolbooth in August 1684 were associates of Peden. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 434, 434n; Walker, *BP*, I, 117; John Campbell of Over[w]el[wood], 'Some account of what befell him between 1683-1699.', NLS MSS, Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 56. Middle Welwood was where Peter Gillies, who was a member of the Societies and executed at Mauchline in May 1685, left a letter to his wife. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 534. According to Wodrow, Adam was not a fugitive, but he may be the fugitive listed as a servant in Crofthead, Sorn parish. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n, 241. Alexander Jamieson, listed as a fugitive in the adjacent farm of Croftfoot, could be the same as the one taken at the field shootings at Carsgailoch. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n, 218, 220, 221; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 555.

40. Thomas Richard, 'Account of his death in 1685', NLS MSS. Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 107; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 252-3; Thomson, *MGoS*, 336; Horne & Hardie, *In the Steps of the Covenanters*, 17, 19. Two fugitives, James Aird and Thomas Edward, portioner of Greenock were from the same location. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n, 28n.

41. According to Wodrow, Edward M'Keen had come from Galloway to purchase corn, but he had perhaps been involved in Enterkin as he confessed that he was from the 'Water of Menock', or the Mennock Water, which lies over the hill from Enterkin in Nithsdale. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 241; Thomson, *MGoS*, 316-7. Auchengruith, one of the very few farms on the Mennock Water, was where one witness reported seeing the Enterkin rescuers firing pistols before the attack. Hewison, 'New Light on Enterkin', *Scotsman* 1 April, 1901, 8. Auchengruith was the home of Andrew Clark, the cousin to both Andrew Clark, executed in 1684, and Adam Clark of Glenmin. Andrew Clark in Auchengruith was nearly shot when he was misidentified as Clark of Glenmin. Simpson, *Traditions*, 57-61. In 1685 Peden, John Mathieson and others were nearly captured at an old baronial residence near Auchengruith, but were saved by a great mist, and Peden hid nearby in the Glendyne Burn. Simpson, *Traditions*, 40-8; Walker, *BP*, I, 69-70, 116.

shot attempting to escape houses in Dailly and Maybole.⁴²

Two specific intelligence-led actions in the northern shires mark the beginning of a series of interrelated incidents which led to the deaths of more than twenty Society people. In early 1685, Drumlanrig pursued a group of six Societies' men near the isolated farm at Cogshead, Sanquhar parish. One of the group, James Welsh, perhaps of Little Cluden in Irongray parish who had been rescued at Enterkin, evaded capture, but two others were shot by Drumlanrig's men by the Crawick Water. They were Robert Morris or Morrin, a fugitive from Dalswinton parish, and William Brown, who was related to the family at Cogshead who had given them shelter. Since Cogshead was used for the thirty-ninth convention, it seems likely that Brown's relations were Society people. Three others, including David Dun and Simon Paterson, were captured, but escaped during a severe thunderstorm.⁴³ The second action was Peter Ingles' attack on a prayer meeting at Little Blackwood in Fenwick parish in late April in which James White was killed after opening fire. John Gemmel, a fugitive from Nether Blackwood who was later taken with John Nisbet of Hardhill and banished to Barbados, managed to escape, but seven others were imprisoned in Newmilns Tower. The latter were soon liberated in an attack on the tower by up to sixty local Society people including John Browning, a smith in Lanfine who was the nephew of John Brown of Priesthill, and John Law, Hardhill's brother-in-law, who was killed in the attack.⁴⁴

On 25 April Lieutenant-General Drummond was ordered into the West in anticipation of Argyll's expected invasion. His preparations for the defence of the kingdom heralded the second phase in the Killing Times. Among the forces sent were Claverhouse and a force of Highlanders who arrived at the end of April in time to deal with the aftermath of the Newmilns rescue.⁴⁵ On 1 May, Claverhouse raided Priesthill and captured John Brown and John Browning. Brown's execution is one of the most notorious acts of the Killing Times, as he was shot in front of his wife and child.

42. John or James Semple in Eldington, Dailly parish, was a known fugitive who hid fugitives in his house. He was informed against by his neighbour, Alexander Fergusson of Kilkerran. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 21n, 244, 489n; Thomson, *MGoS*, 324-6; 'James Semple, Eldintoun, Dailly parish, Account, of 1712, of killing of (1685)', NLS MSS, Wod.Qu.XXXVII, f.257. McClorgan was perhaps the fugitive son of Andrew MacLarchan officer in Bargeny. He was killed at 'Drummellian's house', almost certainly Drumellan in Maybole, where the fugitive John Bryce was a 'servant to younger Drumellan'. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 21n; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 557; Thomson, *MGoS*, 325.

43. Shields, *FCD*, 337; Simpson, *Traditions*, 35-8; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 24n. Simpson dated the Cogshead incident to early Summer, but the severe thunder storm could be the intense 'great storm' mentioned by Renwick prior to the Auchengilloch meeting in early February, 1685. Houston, *Letters*, 170.

44. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 469; Campbell, *SW*, 146-9, 207-8; Thomson, *MGoS*, 129-30. *New Statistical Account*, V, 838. White was probably one of three local fugitives. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 15n. David Finlay, wounded at Little Blackwood, was possibly shot by Ingles. Campbell, *SW*, 148. Law was possibly the fugitive from Holehouse in Sorn parish. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n. John Smith, a farmer at Croonan, Loudon parish, was perhaps shot by Ingles for aiding the rescuers. For a discussion see Campbell, *SW*, 142-3.

45. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 208; Walker, *BP*, I, 260; Shields, *FCD*, 163.

According to Claverhouse, he put Brown to the Abjuration, which Brown refused saying 'he kneu no King', and bullets, match and treasonable papers were found in his house, with the result that 'I caused shoot him dead, which he suffered very unconcernedly'. Claverhouse's role as executioner has been fiercely debated ever since Wodrow accused him of personally dispatching Brown, but Claverhouse acted in accordance with the Privy Council's instructions and did not personally pull the trigger, as even Walker relates that Brown was shot by six troopers, 'mainly' in the head, although these arguments seem irrelevant in a post-Nuremberg world.

There is little doubt that Brown was deeply involved in the Societies, although neither Wodrow nor Walker makes mention of it beyond his instruction of 'Christian youths'. As discussed in chapter one, Brown was part of an extensive kin network embracing the Steel and Brown families of Lesmahagow parish, was involved in Drumclog, Bothwell and the formation of the Societies, and a close associate of Peden. Unknown to Claverhouse, he had come within a hair's breadth of capturing key elements in the Societies' leadership, as Peden and James Nisbet, Hardhill's son, had left Priesthill that morning, and Renwick was probably hiding just over Priesthill Height at Steel's house at Cumberhead.⁴⁶ On the same day, to the north in Eaglesham parish, Ardincaple and a party of Highlanders pursued and shot two men returning from Renwick's conventicle at the back of Cairntable four miles south of Priesthill where 260 armed men 'mustered and exercised'. They included Gabriel Thomson, probably the fugitive in Hairmyres, Kilbride parish, whose son had been executed in 1684.⁴⁷

Browning too, was a fugitive who had fought at Ayrsmoss, and was a neighbour of John Richmond executed in 1684. In 1683 to 1684 either he or his father may have taught the Societies' students Latin in preparation for their studies abroad. Having seen his uncle shot, Browning offered to take the Abjuration, but was faced with the firing squad in a ruthless piece of interrogation technique until he confessed to attending Renwick's conventicles at Loudon Hill, which was probably Renwick's conventicle on Evandale Moor held in early February, the mustering at Cairntable and the attack at Newmilns. He also revealed his uncle's underground hideout capable of concealing a dozen men and containing an arms cache. Claverhouse promised to intercede for

46. Walker, *BP*, I, 72-5; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n, 244-5; 'John Brown of Priesthill, Account of his murder by Claverhouse, 1714.', NLS MSS, Wod.Qu.XXXVII. item 105; Simpson, *Traditions*, 17-18. A. B. Todd states that the poet Robert Burns was related through his mother Agnes Brown to John Brown of Priesthill and another slain at Ayrsmoss. Burns's oldest traceable maternal ancestors are his great-grandparents John Brown and Jannet McGren of Kirkoswald who were married in Girvin in 1695. A. B. Todd, *Covenanting Pilgrimages and Studies* (Kilmarnock, 1911), 43.

47. Thomson, *MG&S*, 72-3; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 16n, Campbell, *SW*, 207-8.

his life.⁴⁸ However, by 3 May, he had been handed over to Drummond at Mauchline, where he was hanged on 6 May with four others captured by the Highlanders as they marched west. They, too, were probably members of the Societies as all four were described as 'dear acquaintances' by Walker, who was involved in the Societies in their localities. They included John Bryce, a weaver in West Calder parish, who may have been related to Barbara Brice, a 'desirable Christian' from the same parish who visited Cargill in prison with Walker's wife, and Thomas Young, who was taken by Lockhart of Lee in Carluke parish. Young was probably Captain Thomas Young, a tailor in Strathaven, who had fought at Bothwell and probably the same individual who was involved in the shooting of a trooper near Kilncadzow in Lanark parish in 1682 with Walker.⁴⁹

According to Alexander Shields, at 'about the same time' as the deaths in Eaglesham the Highlanders were responsible for series of field shootings in the valley of the River Nith after Renwick held a conventicle at Kilmein in Dalmellington parish. David Dun, a fugitive from Closs in Ochiltree parish, and Simon Paterson, who had both earlier escaped at Cogshead, were captured and taken to Cumnock where they were either shot or hanged, probably for refusing the Abjuration.⁵⁰ James Jamieson, Joseph Wilson and the fugitive John Umphrey, a merchant in Lanark who had been forfeited for his role in Bothwell, were shot at Carsgailoch Hill in Cumnock parish, while a fourth companion, Alexander Jamieson, was imprisoned and banished to Jamaica.⁵¹ Jamieson, Wilson and Umphrey had been in hiding near Kilmein with John Paterson in Pennyvenie, whom tradition claims was connected to the earlier Kirkconnel incident, had attended Renwick's conventicle at Kilmein, and who later hid Hugh Hutchison who was nearly captured after he

48. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 471-2; Walker, *BP*, I, 260; Shields, *A Short Memorial*, 34; Campbell, *SW*, 140, 207-8; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n; *NSA*, V, 838; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 588; Thomson, *MGoS*, 161-2; Simpson, *Traditions*, 17. Brouning's identity is a matter of some confusion in the sources as he is also known as John Binning, Buening, Bruning or Lanfine. His father, another John 'elder in Riccarton' is also listed on the Fugitive Roll. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 28n. According to Hewison, John Brown of Priesthill taught a school for theology. This may be the school for the Societies expectants which is mentioned by Michael Shields taught by 'John Binning' who was appointed to teach the Societies 'expectants' in May 1683. His appointment did not meet with Renwick's approval as he declared he did 'not know what to think of it'. On Renwick's return to Scotland, Binning's appointment was annulled in favour of Thomas Linning. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 472. Shields, *FCD*, 66; Houston, *Letters*, 134, 146.

49. Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 477-8; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 13n, 17n, 245-6; Walker, *BP*, I, 250, 260, 308-10; Thomson, *MGoS*, 161-3; John Bryce, Peter Gillies, Account of their sufferings & martyrdom, 1685. Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 108; Defoe, *History of the Church of Scotland*, 250. The date of their execution and composition of the court they faced is disputed. See Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 478 & n.

50. *Cloud of Witnesses* states that Dun and Paterson were shot 'near the Coyle Water' which rises just east of Kilmein. Their grave in Old Cumnock states that they were shot there and Wodrow that they were hung there. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 555; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n, 252; Thomson, *MGoS*, 328-9, 336-7.

51. Wodrow, *History*, III, 247-8; IV, 16n, 218, 220, 221, 252, 489n.; Thomson, *MGoS*, 338-9, 343; Simpson, *Traditions*, 342; Lawson, *The Covenanters of Ayrshire*, 50.

attempted to visit Jamieson in prison in Cumnock.⁵² Two others, George Corson and John Hair, in Glenwharrie in Kirkconnell parish, were also shot by Highlanders on the same day further east on the border of Cumnock parish with Nithsdale.⁵³

At about the same time Drummond was active in Carrick, where he and the Laird of Bellymore pursued and shot Daniel McIlwraith and John Murchie near Alterconnoch in Colmonell parish and Drummond's troops shot Alexander Lin as they headed south into Wigtownshire.⁵⁴ It was there on 11 May that the most disputed executions of the Killing Times took place, in the infamous case of the drowning of the Wigtown Martyrs, Margaret Lauchlison and Margaret Wilson, extensively discussed in the conclusion to this thesis. Their deaths were part of a pattern set in motion by the Argyll emergency which reached its greatest intensity in early to mid May before a lull in killings as government forces dealt directly with the threat from Argyll. Like the Wigtown case, these latter executions featured individuals who had already been apprehended. On 10 May, Drumlanrig also shot Adam MacQuhan, a captured fugitive, close to Wigtown at New Galloway in Kells parish.⁵⁵ Major Balfour summarily shot two fugitives and a weaver after he captured them at Polmadie in Renfrew on 11 May, Claverhouse shot his captive Andrew Hislop in Annandale on 12 May and Captain Bruce shot the imprisoned James Kirko of Sundaywell on the sands at Dumfries on 12 or 13 May.⁵⁶ These executions mark the end of the second phase of the Killing Times. A few sporadic shootings are recorded in a brief third phase in early July after Argyll's defeat, but the Killing Times quickly petered out when the threat of insurrection dissipated with Monmouth's defeat in England.

The Killing Times had a paradoxical impact on the Societies. On the one hand, they created doubts within the Societies over the conduct of their struggle. Although Shields claims that little was discussed at the eighteenth convention on 12 February, later evidence suggests that the issue of the Societies' war was a source of concern at the convention. On 24 February Renwick wrote to the Societies on the swearing of the Abjuration 'according to your desire', an indication that it was at the convention's request. The tone of his letter was of advice, not instruction. While he advanced reasons not to take the Abjuration, he was clear that it was a matter of conscience, rather than express policy, to refuse it.⁵⁷ The convention also appointed a fast day due to 'the unwarrantable out-breakings ... committed by some, in several places, contrary to our Covenant-

52. Simpson, *Traditions*, 348-52. Paterson attended a conventicle at 'Little Mill' which lies on the Water of Coyle just north of Kilmein. Simpson, *Traditions*, 359-61.

53. Thomson, *MGoS*, 339-40.

54. Thomson, *MGoS*, 319-20, 406-7; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 545.

55. Thomson, *MGoS*, 389-90; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 22n.

56. Thomson, *MGoS*, 69-70, 389-90, 453; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 14n, 17n, 249-50.

57. 'Copy of a Letter concerning the Oath of Peace are With the Societys', EUL. La.III.350. No. 147; Shields, *FCD*, 150-4; Carslaw, *Letters*, 107-12.

engagements and Declarations', a sign that incidents such as Carsphairn had troubled the Societies, but in his letter in cant of 28 February, Renwick deemed that those divisions were not critical:

There is some difference amongst our merchants [delegates] anent the matter of seeking in our debts [killing persecutors] of the last accounts [the Apologetical Declaration], which we gave against our antagonists; but I do not fear that my Master will suffer a breach among us upon that head, for we all agree in the matter.⁵⁸

On the other hand, the Killing Times also won them broader support. At the end of February Renwick reported that the 'greatest part' of the country gave their 'approbation to our trade', that 'very many' provided them with funds and resorted to their 'markets', meaning field preachings, or sought to join their 'incorporations', meaning societies, although he suspected that the motives of some were more worldly than godly.⁵⁹ Renwick's claims are borne out in the increased numbers participating in the Societies' actions. At the end of April sixty Society people attacked Newmilns and 260 mustered at Cairntable, and at the end of May a hundred exercised with arms at one of Renwick's conventicles near Darmead, almost exactly the total number of lives claimed by the Killing Times, and 220 helped to proclaim the Second Sanquhar Declaration.⁶⁰

In contrast to the well-documented efforts of the Restoration regime to sway popular opinion behind the monarchy from the Exclusion Crisis, the Scottish government's heavy-handed counter-insurgency campaign of the Killing Times made little effort to win hearts and minds in the presbyterian communities of the West.⁶¹ The martyrdoms of the Killing Times proved counter-productive among a local population broadly sympathetic to an embedded insurgency, further sullyng the government's reputation in the western shires and drawing support towards the Societies.

The Killing Times also had a sting in the tail for the Societies. At the end of the second phase in mid May the authorities emptied the tolbooths of presbyterian prisoners and marched them north to Dunnottar, well out of Argyll's reach. The exact numbers involved are uncertain, but of 208 identifiable prisoners, 185 were possibly delivered to Dunnottar who had refused oaths including the Abjuration, out of which, after deaths, escapes and those who simply vanished are taken into account, 141 were disposed of by the Privy Council on their return to Leith on 17 August. What

58. Shields, *FCD*, 163; Houston, *Letters*, 173.

59. Houston, *Letters*, 172.

60. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 210.

61. For the Restoration regime's efforts to sway popular opinion see Harris, *Restoration*, 211-376; Tim Harris, 'Venerating The Honesty Of A Tinker': The King's Friends And The Battle For The Allegiance Of The Common People In Restoration England', in Tim Harris ed., *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke and New York, NY, 2001), 195-232.

percentage were Society people or sympathetic towards them is unknown, but the number who refused the Abjuration probably indicates that they were in the majority.⁶² By then, Renwick had already made his views plain on refusing the Abjuration and had written encouraging letters to the prisoners in Edinburgh, Glasgow and elsewhere reminding them of their duty to give testimony and to trust in the Lord to see them through their banishment.⁶³ If banishment can be considered a favourable outcome, the outcome of the Dunnottar prisoners episode was generally favourable to the Societies, as it once again demonstrated the authorities' failure to break their resolve. Of the prisoners sent to Dunnottar sixty-four, or thirty-one per cent, took oaths at some point in the process, while ninety-eight were ordered to be banished of which eighty-eight, or forty-two per cent, were immediately transported, mainly on the *Henry & Francis* in August 1685, after refusing oaths.⁶⁴ Like the *Carolina Merchant*, the *Henry & Francis* banishments were also organised by a moderate presbyterian, George Scott of Pitlochrie, who had previously appeared before the Privy Council and been sent to the Bass.⁶⁵

The Killing Times were not a single or random phenomenon, but a series of targeted campaigns against the Societies initiated by differing local factors which were eventually subsumed into a broader attempt to suppress the western shires in anticipation of an insurrection. The Killing Times brought a swift halt to the Societies' war, but the condemnation of the Carsphairn murder also played its part. The cost to the Societies was considerable. Networks, conventicles and conventions were disrupted, leading activists eliminated, some members turned informers, and many conformed to the Abjuration Oath. Yet the Privy Council failed in its initial aims, to eliminate the threat the Societies posed or uproot their network; it paradoxically succeeded in increasing the Societies' support, which was mustering in strength in preparation for a possible insurrection.

II. The Argyll Rising

The first inkling the Societies had of Argyll's renewed plans to mount an insurrection came in May 1684 when Hamilton wrote to the convention that 'I doubt not ye are looking out for storms, for

62. See Appendix 4.6 & 4.7.

63. From internal evidence Renwick wrote to prisoners in Edinburgh, Glasgow and 'elsewhere in Scotland' at some point between 26 February and 20 May 1685. Houston, *Letters*, 263-70. He also wrote to prisoners in the Canongate sentenced to banishment. Carslaw placed this undated letter in 1686 and Houston in 1688, but his use of similar phraseology over the apocalyptic birth pangs of Scotland on 12 August 1684 suggests an earlier date. Carslaw, *Letters*, 152-3; Houston, *Letters*, 165-6.

64. See Appendix 4.7.

65. *RPCS*, VI, 198, 200, 328-9; John C. Johnston, *Treasury of the Scottish Covenant* (1887), 589.

I think there is a chattering of the poor birds here, before the bitter winter comes on, a blast before the storm', storms being the Societies' cant for an insurrection. From the outset Hamilton was opposed to the Societies' participation in it. He believed that there would be 'no shelter [for the Societies] ... save under the shadow of the Almighty' and warned them to mind their duty and 'seriously ponder, what the time, the opportunity, and the dispensations under which they are at present call for' as the Lord 'will come, and will not tarry'.⁶⁶ Hamilton's letter set the tone for the Societies' debates over Argyll's insurrection. He and Renwick were opposed to the Societies' participation in it, just as they had been opposed to the Rye House Plots. The antipathy was mutual. Given the hostility between the presbyterian factions, the moderates around Argyll did not involve the Societies in their preliminary discussions, unlike Argyll and Shaftesbury's attempts to woo the Societies during the Rye House Plots. From the outset the presbyterian factions' divisions undermined Argyll's chances of success. Both factions embarked on their own strategies: Argyll to promote his insurrection and the Societies' leadership to conduct their apocalyptic struggle, most notably in their war against their persecutors which Hamilton had articulated in the same letter rejecting any accommodation with Argyll. As noted earlier, by February 1685 the Societies' apocalyptic struggle had created internal doubts over the prosecution of their war and publicly maintaining their testimony in the face of the Abjuration Oath and the Killing Times. At the same time, the death of Charles II on 6 February and the accession of his Catholic brother James VII provoked a crisis within radical circles 'as if fire had been set to powder' which forced the presbyterian factions closer together.⁶⁷

Immediately after James's accession, the Societies set about formulating a declaration in response at the eighteenth convention on 12 February. According to Shields, the convention appointed only the dates of fasts and the next convention, but a tradition Simpson collected from Robert Laing, a descendant of the Laings at the Societies' convention site at Blackgannoch, claims that it was held to agree what 'in the present posture of affairs, was best to be done' and passed a resolution to publish a declaration at Sanquhar 'on an early day'.⁶⁸ A similar pattern of evasion by Shields recurs at the nineteenth convention at Blackgannoch on 6 May. According to Shields, it was sparsely attended due to the presence of Highlanders and only resolved to reconvene later, but Laing once

66. Shields, *FCD*, 136-7. Hamilton was probably referring to Argyll's initial proposals to mount an insurrection in Scotland at Michaelmas in 1684, which was later postponed until the spring of 1685. See Greaves, *SK*, 257-61.

67. Erskine, *Journal*, 180.

68. Simpson, *Traditions*, 17. Laing's 'meeting', which discussed the Declaration, was held after Renwick preached to a 'great company' of Society people at Moor of Evandale held 'a short time after the accession of James', a reference to an obscure conventicle at Loudon Hill confessed to by John Browning and the same as the 'market' Renwick wrote of on 28 February held prior to the eighteenth convention at Auchengilloch. Campbell, *SW*, 208; Houston, *Letters*, 170.

again contradicts him with an account of how his forebear accompanied Renwick from Cumberhead in Lesmahagow parish to a meeting near Blackgannoch in Sanquhar parish where the Second Sanquhar Declaration was to be issued, but that dragoons forced them to postpone its proclamation until the next convention.⁶⁹ Laing's claims can be corroborated to some extent by the fact that a full draft of the Declaration was in existence in early to mid April.⁷⁰ For Shields, the Declaration was drafted to protest against the Parliament of 1685 which began sitting in late April, but the evidence suggests that it originated over two months earlier, immediately after James's accession.⁷¹

The Societies had decided to continue along their own path of offering testimony against James, independently from all other radical factions. However, at the same time it seems that Hamilton was tentatively approached by Argyll's agents in the United Provinces to participate in an insurrection. Word of their proposals reached Renwick at the end of February when he received a letter in cant under the metaphor of trade and a memorandum from an unnamed correspondent which 'opened up the mystery of our trade abroad, which I dreaded, yet I understood it not'. Although both are now lost, and Houston and Carslaw do not reveal to whom Renwick replied, they must have come from Hamilton.⁷² His letter revealed the state of tentative discussions in mid February over the Societies' involvement in a proposed insurrection, which could only be that proposed by Argyll. Little is known about the contents of Hamilton's letter, but he had clearly advised that the subscription of their 'principal accounts', i.e the Covenants, was a prerequisite to any association with the Argyll plotters and believed they were 'earnest' in seeking an alliance.

In his reply to Hamilton of 28 February, Renwick articulated his view that the death of Charles II was a turning point in relations between the militant and moderate radical factions, as 'all merchants now will shortly side themselves, and when at the push [the launch of a rebellion] they

69. Shields, *FCD*, 164. Simpson, *Traditions*, 17-21. Before the convention Renwick preached on Zechariah 2.8, the subject of ten surviving sermons which seem to date to around 1684 to 1685. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 81-197.

70. Renwick discussed Hamilton's opinion of the Declaration on 13 May in response to a letter and memorandum regarding the contents of the Declaration from Hamilton which Renwick had received prior to an earlier undated letter he had sent to Hamilton in early May. Since it took about ten days for letters to travel to and from Hamilton in Leeuwarden, he must have seen sent a copy of the Declaration in early to mid April. Houston, *Letters*, 169; Carslaw, *Letters*, 125-6.

71. Shields, *FCD*, 165.

72. Renwick's reply in cant was addressed to a Heer Molastadt in Leeuwarden. From late 1684 until early February 1685 Hamilton hid with a sympathetic Dutchman in Leeuwarden from spies until Charles II's death 'made the enemies pack away'. Renwick's letter also discussed how money could be received off the correspondent's hand, and Hamilton later sent 260 guilders back to Scotland. Renwick also wrote to Hamilton's sister within two days. 'Letter Societies to Robt Hamiltoun July 29. 1685', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 161; Carslaw, *Letters*, 124-5; Shields, *FCD*, 188, 210; 'Letter from James Renwick to Heer Molastadt [Hamilton?], Leeuwarden, 28 February, 1685', GUL MSS. Ms Gen 32, 1009, No 40.

declare themselves willingly whose trade they are for ... we [the Societies] will know the better what to think of them'. He agreed that a Covenanted settlement was essential and advised Hamilton that 'we need not be rash in our proposals, till we see how these men settle; for now they must settle some way or other', but he added a coda that such a strategy had not been put before many in the Societies. He also noted that the same 'mystery', meaning a desire to ally with Argyll against the regime, was prevalent among the Societies in Scotland. In his view most 'merchants', i.e. delegates to the convention, were 'pretty steadfast', although 'all sorts are most earnest that we should trade with them, and they with us. But I judge, they respect not the advantage of our trade therein, but of their own'. Renwick put the Argyll plotters' desire to 'trade' with the Societies down to the latter's popularity and increasing size, but chiefly because they looked 'upon us as venturous merchants, that do not abide dealing with naughty commodities, but set out aye for wholesale; and that we are resolute, so that no storm will keep us back from our intended voyage'. However, Renwick believed that the risk to the Societies was too great. If they agreed to take part, the plotters would get them 'set upon all desperate traffic', and if they lost, it was the Societies which would be destroyed, which Renwick thought the plotters 'would not regard much'. For Renwick this was 'the knack' or the fundamental problem with the Societies participation in any proposed alliance. Like Hamilton, he clearly did not support joining with Argyll; however, he did provide Hamilton with up-to-date information on the increasing strength of the Societies and stressed that they would not 'lie in the harbour because of a storm' or be fazed by 'a hasty proposal' when the time for an insurrection arrived.⁷³

Once again, the Societies were being courted to support an uprising. After two years of inter-factional hostility, Renwick was unsurprisingly suspicious of their motives, but surprisingly he did not directly reject any participation in Argyll's insurrection. Instead, he opted for a wait-and-see strategy which allowed the Societies to judge the advantages of participation, a sign that the Societies had learnt from their experiences in the Rye House Plots. This time, the Societies would not negotiate in advance but play hard to get. In Renwick's view, the Societies were in a strong position as their numerical strength and resolution made them desirable partners, which when 'the push' came, could shove Argyll towards supporting a covenanted settlement.

At the same time, the Killing Times drew Peden back to Scotland. The continuation of the Killing Times under James was a propaganda gift to the Societies, due to its intoxicating blend of a Catholic monarch and Protestant martyrs, and it caused the hostile ranks of the presbyterian ministry against the Societies to break for the first time with Peden's return. In March, he and a party of armed followers landed in Galloway where he preached against James VII at Craigminn,

73. Houston, *Letters*, 171-3.

close to the martyrs' graves at Caldons Wood in Glentroll.⁷⁴ Preaching on the wall of a sheep fold, he delivered a sermon on the herdsman prophet Amos's third vision, citing *Amos* 7.8, in which the Lord stood on a wall with a plumbline in his hand and said: 'I will set a Plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more'. It was undoubtedly a vivid image for his upland audience, and Peden used it to condemn the ministry:

how few of the ministers of Scotland will answer the plumbline! Lord send us a Welwood, a Cargill and a Cameron, and such as they, and make us quit of the rest [of the ministry]. And I will rise against the House of Jeroboam with the Sword.

He also picked up on the next verse to foretell an apocalyptic struggle which would see James banished, the Stewart dynasty ended, and persecution stopped:

I'll tell you good news, our Lord will take a feather out of Antichrist's wing, which shall bring down the Duke of York, and banish him out of these kingdoms, and remove the bloody sword from above the heads of His people; and there shall never a man of the name of Stewart sit upon the throne of Britain after the Duke of York, whose reign is now short, for their leachery, treachery, tyranny, and shedding the precious blood of the Lord's people.

He was certain that the Lord would wreak devastation, but believed that the blood testimony of the martyrs who had refused the Abjuration would assuage the Lord in His judgment:

Glory to the Lord, that has accepted a bloody sacrifice of a seal'd testimony off Scotland's hand; we have a bloody clout to hold up, and the lads that got the bullets through their heads, the last day at Glentroll, their blood has made the clout the redder; when our Lord looks upon the bloody clout, He will keep the sword of His avenging justice in the sheath for a time.⁷⁵

It was an explicit declaration of support for the Societies' cause, a fact confirmed by Renwick who stated that Peden had returned 'to join with us' and that he was 'clear in all things'. This represented a remarkable turnaround in Renwick's attitude towards Peden as he had previously opposed him, as discussed in chapter two. However, in early May, Renwick did not dread any 'hostile draft' from Peden, although he had not yet met him.⁷⁶ Peden's breaking ranks with the rest of the ministry and willingness to join and support the Societies probably accounts for Renwick's change of heart. At some point, probably before mid June, Renwick and Peden had an amicable meeting at Cairntable, where Renwick invited him to preach along with him.⁷⁷ Simultaneously, Renwick displayed a similar charitable attitude towards Alexander Shields, who had also broken with the moderate ministry and

74. Walker, *BP*, I, 69.

75. Walker, *BP*, I, 63-5.

76. Carslaw, *Letters*, 131-2.

77. Walker, *BP*, I, 91-2; Shields, *LoR*, 115. Peden and Renwick probably met in early May 1685.

no longer 'traded' with the 'leading' merchants in London, probably a reference to the Scots Congregation and English radicals. Shields had been captured and succumbed to the Abjuration Oath in Edinburgh, but afterwards Renwick charitably noted that Shields seemed 'to be more and more right' and 'duly sensible' that his 'foul fall' had 'cost him many an hour's bitter exercise and many a bitter outcry'.⁷⁸

Both ministers had expressed solidarity with the Societies' struggle, but Renwick may have misjudged them in relation to Argyll. In June Peden came out in support of Argyll and kept company with Argyll's associates, William Cleland, John Fullerton and the ministers Langlands and Barclay.⁷⁹ Shields, too, was close to the Argyll plotters. In 1684 he corresponded with a minister known as Mr Brune, probably John Alsop, the chaplain to Thomas Papillion the Whig MP involved in English radical circles close to Argyll.⁸⁰ He was suspected of conversing with Ferguson and Argyll in Holland.⁸¹ And during his imprisonment he attempted to write to John Balfour of Kinloch, who was involved in Argyll's circle, and after the Rising Shields briefly corresponded with Barclay, who had come over with Argyll.⁸²

There is no evidence to link Peden with Argyll prior to June, but his Craigminn sermon is suggestive that he was preparing the way for a rising. He also met with an impressive array of the Societies' leadership, including John Clark in Moorbrock in Carsphairn parish,⁸³ John Dick in Benbain,⁸⁴ John Mathieson in Closeburn,⁸⁵ John Nisbet of Hardhill,⁸⁶ John Brown of Priesthill,⁸⁷ John Campbell in Wellwood,⁸⁸ and James Wilson in Douglas.⁸⁹ He was also accompanied by Samuel Clark, from New Luce parish, who had attended meetings with the martyred Lennox of Irelandton; Hardhill's son; and his armed followers, who were probably commanded by Isaac Blackwell, the

78. Carslaw, *Letters*, 132.

79. Walker, *BP*, I, 75-6; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 396.

80. 'Letter Mr A[lexander] Shields to Mr Brune, Lond[on] Sept 3. 1684', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No.139; Houston, *Letters*, 173; Greaves, *SK*, 301.

81. Shields, *A True and Faithful Relation*, 15.

82. Shields, *A True Relation*, 67, 69, 72; 'Mr A[lexander] Shields Letter to Mr Geo[rge] Barkley July 13. 1685', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 158; When writing to Kinloch, Shields adopted the pseudonym of Mr Target. Kinloch participated in Argyll's Rising alongside Langlands and Barclay. Howie, *Scots Worthies*, 727; Wodrow, *History*, III, 453-4; Greaves, *SK*, 282.

83. Walker, *BP*, I, 66-9.

84. Walker, *BP*, I, 89.

85. Simpson, *Traditions*, 45-8; Walker, *BP*, I, 69-70, 116. Mathieson and Peden were nearly captured near Auchengruith in Sanquhar parish.

86. Peden was with Hardhill on 26 April 1685 prior to he and James Nisbet leaving Preisthill. M'Crrie (ed.), *MV*, 520-1.

87. Walker, *BP*, I, 72-5.

88. Walker, *BP*, I, 117.

89. Walker, *BP*, I, 71-2.

forfeited son of Thomas Blackwell in Glasgow who had been one of John Welsh's guard.⁹⁰ The sources do not indicate that Peden discussed joining with Argyll, but his meetings with high profile Society people may explain the wave of support for joining with Argyll which nearly overwhelmed Renwick when the Rising started.

The 'push' Renwick had foreseen came only six weeks after his letter. On 17 April Argyll's Council met in Amsterdam and decided on the contents of the declarations for his rising in Scotland and adjusted them to conform to Monmouth's declaration for his planned simultaneous rising in England. Argyll's council included John Cochrane of Ochiltree, who had previously opposed the Societies, and moderates who had participated in the Rye House Plots. Argyll's scheme was also supported by Carnock, who was implacably opposed to the 'rusticks' of the Societies, and gained the approval of the exiled ministry at the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam, several of whom joined the expedition, including William Veitch, Robert Langlands, George Barclay and Alexander Hastie.⁹¹ Given the Societies' exceptions against them and their active opposition to the Societies, negotiations between the factions were never going to be easy. In late April, Argyll finally formally approached the Societies for their support via John Haddow, who was sent to Hamilton in Leeuwarden 'a little before' he 'shipped with Argyle', but Hamilton was unconvinced by his flatteries and 'mask of zeal and straightness in the cause', and refused to 'pervert' the Societies with an 'engagement with sectaries, malignants and bloody men, contrary to [their] former national engagements', i.e. the Covenants.⁹²

Back in Scotland a Societies' source in Glasgow later reported that several ill omens were seen in expectation of Argyll's arrival. In December 1684 'thousands' at 'Glasgow and several places about it' saw 'bonnets of several collours flying in the Air & falling on the ground & upon people' and that when Argyll was in arms 'the Militia yt came against them lay and camped ... about the towne qr bonnets were mostly seen to fall' and that the Militia 'all had bonnets on yr heads'. And on a second occasion on 6 May 1685 that a vision was seen of 'foot & horse in Glasgow Green between 9 & 11 at night & the horse in great companies on both sides running away wt great speed but all wt emptie saddles' and that a little later Huntly's government force lay in the same place.⁹³

Argyll's small invasion force of three ships departed Amsterdam at the end of April. He planned to raise support across southern Scotland when he landed and had brought with him thousands of stands of arms, but when he set out he had not secured the Societies to his standard. Isolated at sea

90. Simpson, *Traditions*, 232-5; Walker, *BP*, I, 70-1, 89; Fountainhall, *Historical Observes*, 157; Wodrow, *History*, III, 247-8, *RPCS*, VI, 127.

91. Greaves, *JK*, 280, 282; Erskine, *Journal*, 115, 119, 134.

92. Shields, *FCD*, 189-90.

93. 'Hints of Sufferings', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol. II. No. 125.

for three weeks, he was entirely reliant on agents sent to Scotland after the Amsterdam conference to garner support, including William Cleland, a veteran of Bothwell, and Andrew Cameron, a former Societies' student, who were sent to win the Societies over.⁹⁴

As the agents arrived, Renwick received a letter and a memorandum from Hamilton which are now lost, but which commented on the Second Sanquhar Declaration and rejected the Societies' participation in the Rising. Initially, Renwick cryptically replied that he could not 'at this instant grant your desire, but I shall keep your memorandum till I get it done' as he was so hurried by alarms that he could not write.⁹⁵ By 13 May Renwick seems to have completed revisions of the Declaration, and was free to comment on Hamilton's 'animadversions'. He agreed with Hamilton that any association with Argyll and Monmouth was 'Cromwellian and Bothwellian compound'; however, Renwick was perplexed by his own contact with Cameron, from whom he had received an information. Renwick could 'not believe that policy could mask over temporal designs with so fair colours', as Cameron's 'drift' was 'to get in with Argyle'. Renwick found Cameron's argument more 'dissuasive than persuasive', but others did not share his opinion, such as Boyd, who wrote an encouraging letter to Cleland in early May assuring him of the Societies' complicity in their venture. Renwick dreaded Boyd's influence, 'having seen a paper from his own hand, where he yields to all their desire...and he, forsooth, would have it published in our name'. He was determined to oppose Boyd's plan with his 'whole strength', but feared that others wanted to join with Argyll. For the first time since he and Hamilton had steered the Societies away from the sinful associations of the Rye House Plots, Renwick was in a weak position with his internal opponents and found that he could 'not bottom sufficient reasons against them'.⁹⁶

The Second Sanquhar Declaration, too, had been caught up in the question of an association. Hamilton plainly feared that its 'commentaries on politics' weakened the Societies' stance and left the door open to join Argyll. Two weeks before its proclamation, Renwick reassured Hamilton that

94. Greaves, *SK*, 278, 280; Willcock, *A Scots Earl*, 336-7; Campbell, *No Tragic Story*, 95; Houston, *Letters*, 175-6. Agents were also dispatched to areas of moderate support. William Sythrum, a confidant of Carnock, was sent to Edinburgh and Fife, Pringle of Torwoodlee to Moray and William Veitch to Northumberland. Erskine, *Journal*, 112, 148; M'Crrie (ed.), *MV*, 148-50; Greaves, *SK*, 278, 280; Willcock, *A Scots Earl*, 336-7. Cleland had been a militant member of the Council of War at Bothwell. Afterwards he fled to the United Provinces and entered Leiden University on 4 October 1680, probably to study civil law. Cleland, who had been present at the Amsterdam Conference, probably provided Michael Shields with his copy of the Amsterdam minutes. T. F. Henderson & Stuart Handley, *Oxford DNB*, 'Cleland, William (1661?-1689) army officer and poet'; 'Minutes of a meeting at Amsterdam Apr. 17. 1685', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 149.

95. Houston, *Letters*, 169. Houston misplaced Renwick's letter to after August 1684. Houston, *Letters*, 167-9. Carlaw placed after 9 July 1685. Carlaw, *Letters*, 129-32. However, it seems to refer to events in early May 1685, such as the presence of Highlanders in the west and an Act of Parliament given assent on 8 May. Renwick's mention of near daily martyrdoms also fits in with a composition date in early May. See Appendix 4.1.

96. Houston, *Letters*, 175-6.

while some saw it as 'the strictest thing that ever came from our hands', and others as 'the laxest ... that thereupon they may get a door to enter', he should not be too troubled by the latter interpretation, as he was sure 'our wall is so well cemented ... they will not break through' and that even 'if some shall jump over it, and go out from us [i.e. join Argyll]' their wall would remain 'inviolable'. In any case, Renwick was sure the Societies' 'practice' would 'comment' on the Declaration after its proclamation.⁹⁷ He was confident that the Societies would not join Argyll, but expected some defections over the issue.

Argyll landed at Campbeltown on 20 May and quickly proclaimed his declaration to Scotland; it reached the Societies in time for their twentieth convention on 28 May.⁹⁸ Argyll also sent Barclay to Carrick to gather intelligence and rouse the country for a landing. By 25 May, he had sent back an overly encouraging report that the people in Carrick were 'longing' for Argyll's arrival and could gather a thousand horse 'in a few days'.⁹⁹ Cleland also reported significant progress among the Societies to Ochiltree, who was at Argyll's side:

I have this order to write in their names [the name of the convention?], that if Mr Ker [Argyll] be for the work of Reformation carried on from the 38 to the 48, they are for him...Keep you strong where you are, and keep the enemy in great vexation as you can, till you see a beacon on Lowdown Hill. I hope in eight days, or thereby, all shall be in a flame ... If you would frequentlie alarme the enemy, it would exceedinglie weaken them. In short things are brought to a probable posture.¹⁰⁰

Cleland had persuaded at least some in the Societies to offer support to Argyll, provided that he agreed to their demand for a covenanted settlement. Argyll's Declaration had not mentioned the Covenants, and the Societies' demand looks like a compromise on their part, as they favoured the settlement of 1649, which excluded 'malignants' from public life, rather than that of 1638 to 1648,

97. Carslaw, *Letters*, 125-6; Houston, *Letters*, 175-6; Boyd's letter to Cleland is listed as in the index of the main volume of Cameronian papers in the Laing collection which is Wodrow's missing folio XXIV as 'Item 156. Transcript of a letter by William Boyd in answer to a letter from W[illiam] Cleland', but is now missing from the collection.

98. Erskine, *Journal*, 120. Michael Shields clearly held an annotated copy as it is listed in the index of EUL MSS. La.III.350 as item '154. Argyles Declaration in print with Marginal notes by M[ichael] S[hields]' but is no longer in the folio. See, Archibald Campbell (Earl of Argyll), *The Declaration and Apology of the Protestant People, that is, Of the Noblemen, Burgesses and Commons of all sorts now in Arms within the Kingdom of Scotland, with the Concurrence of the most Faithful Pastors, and of several Gentlemen of the English Nation joyned with them in the same cause, &c.* (Edinburgh, 1685).

99. Barclay later claimed that Carrick held '500 men on foot, and 400 of them armed; and that upon the correspondence they had settled through the country they could have raised near three thousand men upon 30 hours warning, people having come to them by hundreds, but went away for want of arms'. Shields, *FCD*, 167; Erskine, *Journal*, 115, 116, 119, 120, 163.

100. 'W[illiam] Clelands Letter to Sir John Cochran.', EUL. La.III.350. No. 155. Extracts printed in Greaves, *SK*, 280 & Hay Fleming (ed.), *Six Saints*, II, 141. Carnock refers to Argyll as Mr Carr on 23 April 1685. Erskine, *Journal*, 113; Greaves misidentifies Mr Ker as the preacher James Ker or Robert Ker of Kersland. Greaves *SK*, 280.

which did not exclude 'malignants'. Cleland's proposal to Argyll was probably not authorised by twentieth convention. It is more likely that his proposal relied on the backing of more moderate Society people, but his choice of a beacon on Loudon Hill at the centre of the Societies' militant stronghold in Kyle and Lanarkshire suggests that he met with core elements of the Societies. His information that the Societies would not be prepared until early June may account for Argyll's curious behaviour at this point.

On 27 May, Argyll had decided to send around 800 men by ship with 2,000 stands of arms for foot and 200 for horse to the western Lowlands, possibly to Carrick following Barclay's advice. However, the next day he inexplicably reversed his decision, leaving Polwarth disappointed and Ochiltree 'beside himself with rage' and determined to 'go to Ayrshire regardless'.¹⁰¹ Argyll may have been responding to Cleland's advice to harry the enemy and await a signal. Soon afterwards he made a landing on Bute, a move which left the option of an Ayrshire landing open. On 30 May Ochiltree and Polwarth led a brief foray to the island of Great Cumbrae, just a mile off the Ayrshire coast, and on 3 June Ochiltree, Polwarth and Major John Fullerton led a raid on Greenock in Renfrewshire.¹⁰² The forays followed Cleland's strategy of alarming government forces, but a naval blockade quickly ended any prospect of an immediate landing in the Societies' heartlands and left Argyll's army bottled up in Cowal.¹⁰³ Argyll's failure to secure the Societies' support in advance of landing had cost him dear.

Just as Argyll considered entering the Societies' heartlands, the twentieth convention heard from some who were 'concerned in the expeditions', probably including Cleland, who desired that the Societies should join with Argyll. According to Shields, the debate focused on the question of sinful associations with malignants and sectarians, i.e. Argyll, Monmouth and some of Argyll's supporters such as Ochiltree, just as it had done in the debates over the Rye House Plots, but it reached a different conclusion. Although the Societies 'had not freedom to join with such' or 'espouse Argyll's declaration' as 'their quarrel', because of its failure to mention the Covenants and its 'sinful confederacy' with malignants and sectarians, 'yet they were willing to do what lay in their power against the common enemy' short of joining in arms with Argyll.¹⁰⁴ The Societies had decided not to come under Argyll's command or be bound by his party's constitutional aims, but they also gave an express commitment to fight against the regime, a position which made allowance for those who

101. Willock, *A Scots Earl*, 370-2; Raymond Campbell Paterson, *No Tragic Story: The Fall of the House of Campbell* (Edinburgh, 2001), 111; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 291.

102. Erskine, *Journal*, 121-4; Willock, *A Scots Earl*, 372-4, 375, 377; Paterson, *No Tragic Story*, 114-5

103. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 293; John Ker of Kersland, *The Memoirs of John Ker of Kersland, in North Britain, Esq, Relating to the Politicks, Trade, & History*, 3rd edition, pt 1 (London, 1727), 7; Willock, *A Scots Earl*, 379-80; Paterson, *No Tragic Story*, 117.

104. Shields, *FCD*, 165.

wished to aid Argyll, but not those who wanted to join with him.

The twentieth convention also finally issued the Second Sanquhar Declaration, formally entitled as ‘The Protestation, and Apologetick Admonitory Declaration, of the Contending and Suffering Remnant, of the true Presbyterians of the Church of Scotland. Against the Proclaiming James Duke of York, King of Scotland, England, France, and Ireland, The lawfulness of the present pretended parliament, and the apparent in let of popery, &c published at Sanquhair’. Immediately after the convention ‘about 220 men drew up in arms’ and descended on Sanquhar’s mercat cross, where, after singing a psalm and a prayer from Renwick, it was proclaimed.¹⁰⁵

The Declaration was in part the product of the Societies’ rejection of James as king. Judging from its discussion of Parliament it was revised after 23 April, when Parliament first sat, which fits with the tradition of its being intended to be proclaimed on 6 May. After a preamble on the reduction of the country to ‘lamentable slavery’, the persecution of the Killing Times, and the Lord’s wrath with Scotland, it protested against the political communities’ proclamation of ‘York’ as king, as a breach of previous acts of the General Assembly and Parliament, and the Confession of Faith, and condemned the proclamation of James as sinful confederacy with an ‘idolater’ and ‘murderer’ who had shed ‘the blood of the saints of God’. Its main target was Parliament, not James, as the Societies did not recognise his kingship on the grounds that they saw him as a usurper, and it discussed the legality of the former’s acceptance of ‘a known enemy to the true religion’ to be their magistrate, as ‘inconsistent with the safety of the Faith, conscience and Christian liberty of a Christian people’. Like the Lanark Declaration it rejected Parliament’s legitimacy and declared it unlawful, on the grounds of the unfree election of its commissioners, its inclusion of ‘perjurers’ and ‘men of blood’, and on the apocalyptic grounds of its making way for ‘the Man of Sin’, meaning the Antichrist. It also addressed a wider British audience by expressing fears that ‘bloody Papists, the subjects of Anti-christ’ had become ‘hopefull, bold and confident’ under York and that Catholicism was ‘to be intruded again’ on Covenanted Britain. It appealed to English and Irish dissenters to pursue their duties under the Solemn League Covenant in light of ‘what the Lord is now calling for at our hand’, i.e rebellion, and to help the Societies, as they had set themselves against ‘the Man of Sin, the Kingdom of Antichrist, and all the limbs and parts thereof’. In return the Societies promised to act ‘to the utmost of our power’. In a similar apocalyptic vein it also appealed to European Protestants to aid the Societies given the ‘dangerous state of the Gospel interest ...[and] the growth and increase of Popery in all places ... lest ye be too late’, but also urged them not to aid any other party, i.e Argyll’s party, until they knew that ‘the quarrel be rightly stated’ for the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom, i.e a covenanted settlement, lest they provoked ‘the Lord

105. Shields, *FCD*, 165.

to destroy you in the wilderness'.¹⁰⁶ Compared to the Societies' previous declarations, it did not significantly develop the Societies' testimony beyond updating their rejection of Parliament's legitimacy. As such, it was in part efficient housekeeping, but its primary aims were essentially to comment on the political situation on James's accession and to remind their former brethren of their covenanted obligations within the context of Argyll and Monmouth's risings. The Societies' demand that Argyll agree to a Covenanted settlement in return for their participation still stood, but Renwick and the hardliners had been pushed to the edge of offering support.

On 6 June Argyll was forced to abandon the planned breakout into the south-west in favour of one towards moderates such as Shargarton in Stirlingshire.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, on 12 June the twenty-first convention was held in the 'expectation' of an Argyll breakout to 'know better when, and how to move and act', even though they could not 'embody themselves with that party, yet they were not for discouraging of them', but, the presence of Highland forces prevented any decisions being taken.¹⁰⁸ Soon after, Argyll's breakout failed and the Rising imploded. As a final act, Polwarth, Ochiltree and 150 men forced a passage across the Clyde and on 18 June won a small engagement at Muirdykes, but it was too little, too late, for Argyll had already been captured.¹⁰⁹

As the Rising collapsed, elements of the Societies finally took up arms for Argyll. On 16 June Peden gathered a 'considerable' force at Wigtown and two days later preached with Barclay in support of Argyll. Peden's force was possibly led by Daniel Ker of Kersland who was said to have commanded a force of Society people heading to assist Argyll. The son of the influential exile Lady Kersland, he may have been sent as Argyll's agent, but afterwards he played a prominent part in the Societies' affairs. The memoirs of George Bryson, an Edinburgh merchant who escaped after Muirdykes, confirm the Societies' divisions over Argyll at this time. According to him, many of those in 'hiding in the West', meaning Society people, had met together and decided to join with Argyll if the Rising prospered. Once it ended, Bryson and three others intended to join with those Society people who had favoured joining with Argyll. However, at a safe house for Renwick's followers, a widow refused them shelter. Instead, she directed them to John Ferguson of Mains of Enterkine, a leading Societies' figure in Tarbolton parish who was later killed defending Hardhill. He directed them to another safe house, but there they were involved in an armed stand-off with twenty-four Society people, until the latter were informed that Ferguson had sent them. Bryson then moved to the societies in Calder Muir, where he met with a warmer reception. On 9 July, Renwick also informed Hamilton of their recent divisions over Argyll: 'many of our friends were

106. EUL. La.III.350. No. 152.

107. Erskine, *Journal*, 67, 125, 127, 128.

108. Shields, *FCD*, 166-7.

109. Willock, *A Scots Earl*, 388-92, 398; Paterson, *No Tragic Story*, 127-8.

greatly puzzled, whether the Lord was calling them to follow their former methods, or to draw altogether by themselves, and to emit a declaration of their own'. A meeting and a day of prayer were called, almost certainly the convention on 28 May, 'to consider...but the Lord disappointed our meetings, one after another, until Argyle was apprehended'. Even Argyll's execution failed to end their debates due to Monmouth's Rising in England, which had caused Cleland and others 'to wake a new stir, so our difficulties are as formerly'. In Renwick's view, the Rising had failed due to the internal disagreements within Argyll's council over its prosecution, but he noted that the fact that the Societies had kept 'no conditions to them' had rendered Argyll's council 'very dissatisfied' with the Societies.¹¹⁰

III. The Friarminnan Schism

As Renwick had predicted, elements of the Societies had broken with the convention and joined with Argyll. It was the start of a schism which would ultimately redefine the Societies. The fragmentary evidence of Bryson, Peden and Barclay provides a rough map of which societies supported Argyll. These were mainly in lower Galloway, Carrick, some of Kyle and at Calder Muir, and were precisely the same societies which would later reject Renwick's leadership and lead to a schism within the Societies at Friarminnan in early 1686.

After the Rising's failure, the Argyll moderates made tentative approaches to the Societies about a possible union between the factions which culminated in a series of conferences in late July. Immediately after the collapse of the Rising, Langlands, Barclay and some others were sheltered by 'some' in the Societies and conferred with them over 'the differences that were between them and the United Societies', even though, in Renwick's words, the Societies 'had not freedom to join with them until some exceptions they had against us were removed'. Renwick complained to Hamilton that the two ministers passed 'up and down the country ... pretending no difference from us' and showed 'a willingness to join with us', but he suspected that 'their need, and not our need' had moved them and trusted that the Lord would prevent their preaching in Societies' areas winning support 'for long'. In late June or early July he had met with Langlands who proposed a compromise deal whereby he and the other ministers would silence their opposition to the Societies if the latter laid aside their exceptions in *The Protestation of the Antipopish, Antiprelatick, Antierastian, True Presbyterian, But poor and persecuted Church of Scotland, against the Scottish Congregation at Rotterdam in Holland (1684)*. It was the first step towards a discussion over a possible union between the factions. From the evidence of some of Argyll's prominent followers in hiding, it appears that they were

110. Walker, *BP*, I, 75-6; Kersland, *Memoirs*, 7; M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 336-7, 339-41, 344-5; Carslaw, *Letters*, 126-7.

considering withdrawing from the more moderate elements of the presbyterian ministry to achieve union, as Carnock attended a field preaching by Thomas Forrester on *Malachi* 3:2: 'But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap', after which he mulled over the question of disowning ministers. However, from the outset, Renwick confided to Hamilton that he found Langlands 'no otherwise than when I was in Holland' and owning no wrong in writing the information to Brackel which had attempted to stop the ordinations at Groningen in 1683, one of the principal reasons for the Protestation. The latter piece of information would prove highly damaging to the chances of union, for in later conferences Langlands and Barclay denied that they had written to Brackel.

Renwick had also been contacted by former members of the Societies who had come with Argyll. John Nisbet, their former commissioner in London, claimed that he remained 'with us in all things, ... being under no engagements, and taking no place from them', despite his close associations with English radicals and his later known contacts with those close to Argyll. But others were more forthright in their support for union between the factions. He found Andrew Cameron 'a great agent' for Argyll's supporters 'and not simple in their business', as he had refused to join 'any ministers' who were indulged 'or defenders of such'. Renwick also began to worry that Alexander Shields was no longer 'of a right stamp'. At the same time, Shields and others attempted to mediate between the factions and a conference between them was arranged for 22 July. There Langlands and Barclay once again offered to 'lay all debates aside, and go on in the public work', but they were surprised by Renwick and his followers, who objected that their offer was 'not the right way to heal the sore' and confronted them with 'a true transcript' of Brackel's letter containing the ministers' accusations. Undermined by Langlands' alleged prior admission and perhaps surprised by the attack, Barclay offered excuses, but he struck back against *The Protestation ... against the Scottish Congregation at Rotterdam* by claiming that it had been published before the Societies had seen it.¹¹¹

The first meeting between the factions set the tone for a confrontation which lasted until the twenty-fifth convention in January 1686. The principal issues between the factions concerned the Societies' charges raised in the Protestation, as discussed in chapter two, and a few charges derived from Langlands and Barclay's support for Argyll. Langlands and Barclay countercharged that Renwick's Dutch ordination was illegitimate and that the Societies had usurped the authority of the church and state in their declarations and created a 'popular confusion' by compounding the authority of the two kingdoms of church and state together in their conventions. They also claimed that the Societies' withdrawal from the presbyterian ministry was based on the invalid grounds of

111. Houston, *Letters*, 177-8; Erskine, *Journal*, 138, 140-7; Shields, *FCD*, 112, 167, 170; 'Mr A[lexander] Shields Letter to Mr Renwick July 9. 1685', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 157; 'Mr A[lexander] Shields Letter to Mr Geo[rge] Barkley July 13. 1685', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 158.

*The Protestation ... against the Scottish Congregation at Rotterdam.*¹¹²

Although hostile, the first meeting had ended with Langlands and Barclay reiterating their offer to 'concur in the carrying on the public works' if they were called. On 28 July, a second meeting between delegates from each side, probably Langlands, Barclay, Cleland and Fullerton for the moderates and Renwick, George Hill, Michael Shields and Colin Alison for the Societies, also failed to reach agreement. It ended with Langlands and Barclay moderating their offer to lay aside their disputes until they were 'determined by a competent judicatory', a move which would have effectively shelved the issue, but their offer was rejected for 'calling truth into question'.¹¹³ A day later, at the twenty-second convention, Langlands and Barclay once again attempted to break the stalemate by agreeing to draw up the causes of public humiliation jointly with Renwick, provided that the people joined with them in the meantime, to 'either prove what was said in that article of the Protestation, or else to emit somewhat to take it away', but Renwick once again refused, mainly on the grounds that the Protestation's exceptions remained valid. Each side then put their case before the convention, but before a vote could be taken it was conveniently interrupted by an alarm.¹¹⁴

The twenty-second convention ended any realistic hope for union and the dispute rapidly evolved into a battle for control of the rank and file of the Societies. In the months afterwards the societies in the areas which had shown sympathy towards Argyll withdrew from Renwick and the convention. In Carrick, parts of Galloway and Calder Muir 'some' joined with ministers such as Langlands, who preached against the convention's conclusions, and turned 'traducers of their brethren'.¹¹⁵ The breakaway societies were led by Kinsture, one of the most experienced members of the Societies, Robert Cathcart, and leading members of the Societies' kin network in Dalmellington parish in Kyle: James Dick, John and Quintin Dick in Benbain, and Robert Dun,

112. Shields, *FCD*, 169-82; 'Account of the Conference twixt Mrs Barkley Langlands & Renwick as reported to the Societies July 1685', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 159; 'Letter Mr Rob[ert] Langlands to Dav: Steil &c. Sept. 28. 1685', [and on reverse for Andrew Wylie, or John Dick or John Campbell or John Cochran] La.III.350. No. 162; 'Letter R.L. [Robert Langlands] to G.W. [Gavin Witherspoon] Dec 23. 1685', La.III.344. Vol 1. 175; 'Letter J.R. [James Renwick] reply to foregoing letter [to Robert Langlands] of Decr 23. 1685.', La.III.344. Vol 1. 176. Printed in Carslaw, *Letters*, 137-49; 'Copy of Robert Cathcart's letter to some friends presented to Conference on 28th Jan. 1686 at Friarminnan', La.III.344. Vol 1. 190. A version of which is printed in Shields, *FCD*, 230-1; 'Information agt Mr Renwicks paper with account of the conference at Friarminion &c. 1686.', La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 186; 'A Letter to ministers, Information against Renwick & Account of conference 1686', La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 188; 'Relation of the Conference Jan 28. 1686', La.III.350. No. 187; 'Relation of the Conference 1686', La.III.350. No. 189.

113. Shields, *FCD*, 169, 172-8; Erskine, *Journal*, 140-1.

114. Shields, *FCD*, 179-81. This final conference is misdated in the printed text to 24 July. Shields, *FCD*, 167.

115. Shields, *FCD*, 168-9; Walker, *BP*, I, 90-1.

probably in Benquhat.¹¹⁶ Peden, too, turned against Renwick and kept company with Langlands, Barclay, Fullerton and Cleland. According to Alexander Shields, Peden was led by 'reproachers' into a 'declared and unresolved opposition' to Renwick and determined to make his name 'stink above the ground', which discouraged many 'well affected' to Renwick and led their opponents to boast that 'now Mr Peden also was turned his enemy'. Only Walker asserts that they were reconciled just before Peden's death on 28 January 1686.¹¹⁷ Within the Societies, too, Kersland, Boyd and Alexander Smith maintained contact with Carnock after the union negotiations had failed, although Renwick understood that Boyd remained 'clear in our controversies against these ministers'.¹¹⁸ Langlands also wrote to key members of the Societies, including David Steel in Skellyhill, Gavin Witherspoon in Heatheryknow, and John Dick, towards the end of the year.¹¹⁹

Renwick responded to the Societies' fragmentation with a vigorous campaign of field preaching to shore up key Societies' strongholds. In Galloway and Nithsdale he held fourteen conventicles which were well attended with 'none in any of these places staying away that came out formerly', and further north he preached in Cambusnethan, Carluke, Kilbride and Eaglesham parishes. His efforts probably consolidated some areas to his side, for in October he delivered a snapshot which shows that the schism had failed to progress beyond its initial areas of support:

Clydesdale continueth firm as it was; Nithsdale is as one man upon their former ground, together with Annandale; some in Kyle are gone off, but many continue; many in Carrick are jumbled, some, for the time, are quite off, and some few continue; the few that are in Livingston and Calder [Moor] are put in a reel;---the Lord knoweth how they will settle.¹²⁰

Efforts were also made at a shire level to resolve the dispute, at least in the Ayrshire societies, where representatives from Fenwick, Loudon, Kilmarnock, Cumnock and Tarbolton parishes met to heal the breach in November, but their shire meeting was attacked and several of them killed.¹²¹

Renwick and his supporters' efforts were assisted by the withdrawal of Argyll's former comrades. By late 1685 nearly all of those involved in discussions with the Societies had gone back into exile

116. Shields, *FCD*, 225, 227-8, 369; Shields, *LoR*, 103; Walker, *BP*, I, 86-7, 89; Houston, *Letters*, 244; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 394-5.

117. Shields, *FCD*, 264; Shields, *LoR*, 115-6; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 396; Walker, *BP*, I, 82, 91-3. Walker claims James Wilson of the Societies witnessed their reconciliation and that James Nisbet was present.

118. Shields, *FCD*, 227; Erskine, *Journal*, 146-7, 154; Houston, *Letters*, 244.

119. 'Letter Mr Rob[ert] Langlands to Dav: Steil &c. Sept. 28. 1685', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 162; 'Letter R[obert]. L[anglands]. to G[avin]. W[itherspoon]. Dec 23. 1685', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 1. 175. The former letter was also addressed to Andrew Wylie, John Campbell or John Cochran or John Dick. Campbell was probably John Campbell in Wellwood who had escaped from the Canongate Tolbooth and Wylie, possibly Andrew Wylie of Logan in Sorn parish. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n.

120. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 210, 211, 237; Houston, *Letters*, 241.

121. Howie, *Scots Worthies*, 597, 597n. See Appendix 5.2. Peter or Patrick Gemmel in Old Castle of Cumnock also attended. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 18n; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 452-3.

in the United Provinces, including Barclay, Carnock, Cleland and Fullerton, and by December several of them abandoned all hope of progress and opted to become Continental mercenaries.¹²² However, their flight opened up a new front as word of the confrontation between the factions spread to the Dutch ministry. The Societies responded at the twenty-third and twenty-fourth conventions in October by drafting a relation of the conferences with Langlands and Barclay which was taken by Colin Alison to Hamilton in Leeuwarden and to Groningen to 'break the snares laid by men for subverting of our paths'. Renwick also sent an account of how Langlands and Barclay had rendered his ordination 'odious' with charges of Erastianism against the Dutch church and the presbytery of Groningen, and advice to Hamilton on how to use it to 'convince gainsayers'. Their letters were followed up by a mission by Alison and Linning, who conducted a series of interviews in December with Gerkima, Brackel's replacement at Leeuwarden, and Marck, Mathius and Phelingius the younger at Groningen, over the principles of the Dutch church regarding ordination and on the scandalous conduct of the Russellites, who the Societies believed had been feeding information to Langlands and Barclay.¹²³

It was also mainly from the United Provinces that Hamilton became the target of a campaign to undermine his reputation among the Societies. He had probably become the focus of the moderates' ire on account of the centrality of *The Protestation ... against the Scottish Congregation at Rotterdam* in rebuffing the union project. In late 1685 Langlands and Barclay's rebuttal of Hamilton's account of the letter to Brackel, charges of scandal made by Cleland's brother-in-law, John Haddow, in Utrecht, and probably Shargarton's account of Hamilton's conduct at Bothwell, all brought his reputation into focus.¹²⁴ In his letter to the twenty-fourth convention, Haddow, a veteran of the Bothwell Debates, levelled a series of scandalous allegations against Hamilton: that he had countenanced the Hamilton Declaration and subscribed the supplication to Monmouth at Bothwell and misappropriated funds to himself designed for printing martyr testimonies. In response, the convention wrote to Hamilton asking him to prove his innocence of Haddow's charges and to give a 'full and exact probation' of the charges made against Langlands, Barclay and other ministers in the Protestation, especially as to whether or not Brackel had received a letter from Langlands containing accusations against the Societies, or if Brackel had received the

122. Erskine, *Journal*, 162-3, 168, 170-1.

123. Shields, *FCD*, 169-82, 185, 220-4; Houston, *Letters*, 243; Carslaw, *Letters*, 236. In a letter to Langlands in December 1685, Renwick certainly believed that information from the Russellites was the basis for his charge that the Societies had overturned Presbyterian government in confusing ecclesiastic and secular jurisdictions. Carslaw, *Letters*, 137, 141.

124. T. F. Henderson & Stuart Handley, *Oxford DNB*, 'Cleland, William (1661?-1689) army officer and poet'. There is no obvious dating evidence within the text of Shargarton's 'Narrative of the Rising Suppressed at Bothwell Bridge', but given his part in the Argyll Rising and its targeting of Hamilton a date in 1685-1686 is not improbable. It is printed alongside Hamilton's comments on it in M'Crie (ed.), *MV*, 455-83.

accusations from Koelman by 'word of mouth' and 'by virtue of a commission' from Langlands, or if Brackel would own writing his letter to Hamilton and clarify what had occasioned him to write it, as Langlands had asserted that Brackel's letter was 'stuffed with lies' and the convention feared that it would lead to schism if not proven otherwise.¹²⁵ The convention was right to be concerned.

As a signal of their intent to investigate the charges, the convention decided to send Colin Alison to Hamilton as a reliable witness on their behalf, in place of Hamilton's 'friend', Robert Spiers, who Renwick appears to have suggested should handle the investigation. Renwick clearly feared the outcome of the convention's inquiries and set out to subvert the process by creating a discreet channel of information to Hamilton via Spiers, which he concealed from the convention. In secret he wrote to Hamilton reassuring him about the convention's letter and with advice on how to respond. Whatever Hamilton had been 'prevailed to cede unto' at Bothwell, Renwick thought he should express 'your own sense thereof; together with your acknowledgement thereof, according to the degree of the offence' while maintaining his 'innocency' of the charges relating to the money and the Protestation. Renwick hoped that this would vindicate Hamilton's honour, endear him to the Societies and 'stop the mouths of slanderers', but he also warned him that 'many [were] looking out for your halting, many nets are spread against you, both at home and abroad'. Two days after the convention Renwick sent Spiers instructions to provide Hamilton with further information, which he had not committed to paper in his letter, and to show to Hamilton his 'thoughts more conspicuously than my letter doth'. He also instructed Spiers that after Hamilton had considered the letter, 'the paper [Renwick's letter] may be destroyed; for I think it not any advantage to the cause'.¹²⁶

Hamilton completed his response to the charges on 7 December. In line with Renwick's advice, it admitted he had been duped into allowing the Hamilton Declaration and had been unable to prevent its proclamation due to the press of the crowd, and that he had subscribed the supplication to Monmouth believing the paper was from Cargill. It also hotly disputed the charges of financial impropriety. As for the Protestation, Hamilton confessed to naivety in allowing its publishing in Dutch, but omitted mention of the English version. He also defended the Protestation's charges against Langlands and Barclay, claiming that it had 'hit the nail on the head', and launched a counterattack against his accusers: Barclay had preached like a 'well-busked Jad', meaning a worthless nag, against Indulgence in 1680, but in private acted otherwise, and had spread reports

125. '[John].H[addow] letter presented to the General Meeting Octob 21. 1685', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 164; Shields, *FCD*, 183-6.

126. Houston, *Letters*, 242, 245; Carslaw, *Letters*, 132-3. Renwick's letter of advice to Hamilton has been misplaced among letters in 1687 in Houston and Carslaw's editions of his letters, but its contents unequivocally relate to the twenty-fourth convention on 21 October 1685. Houston, *Letters*, 241-5; Carslaw, *Letters*, 232-6. Renwick's instructions to destroy the letter were not carried out.

that no one in Scotland would receive the gospel from Barclay's hand; John Dick had agreed to the supplication to Monmouth and brushed aside Hamilton's objections to it; Haddow and Barclay had supported the inclusion of malignants in the Bothwell Rising and refused subjection to his command; while Brackel had accepted an 'Erastian' call to Rotterdam, had fallen in with Argyll and Monmouth, and misappropriated the Societies' funds, as discussed in chapter three. Only after he had vindicated his position and attacked his accusers did he address the central question of the letter containing Langlands and Barclay's charges to Brackel mentioned in the Protestation. According to Hamilton, Langlands, Barclay and Thomas Hogg the younger had given 'horrid informations' to Koelman who had then written to Brackel informing him that the ministers would soon meet to subscribe a protest to be sent to Brackel. Brackel then sent Hamilton a short outline of their charges in Latin, and had gone to meet Koelman and the ministers. However, the ministers had failed to attend, due to a delay in their getting their protest subscribed by all the ministers in the Scots Congregation in Rotterdam. Once again, Brackel had sent him 'a little account of their aspersions'. As evidence Hamilton sent the convention copies of Brackel's letters, attested by Linning, but his case against the ministers was based on Brackel's letters rather than the hard evidence of a protest, yet he judged, that, even if they were innocent, their bitterness and failure to live up to their duties should count against them. His answer was far from convincing and undermined the central plank of the Societies' exceptions against the ministers in *The Protestation ... against the Scottish Congregation at Rotterdam*. At the twenty-fifth convention at Friarminnan on 28 January 1686, only excerpts of Hamilton's letter were read out, perhaps to ameliorate its bitter contents, and several delegates were 'dissatisfied' with it. In his history, Shields fails to mention the outcome of the convention's deliberations, perhaps to conceal the fact that Hamilton's behaviour was considered scandalous, but the convention clearly shunned Hamilton as it broke off correspondence with him until June and then conducted a sporadic correspondence with him for the next year and a half, which was well below their former levels of correspondence.¹²⁷

Hamilton's reputation was severely tarnished and his influence considerably diminished. In late May, Renwick revealed to him that his letter had only satisfied some, but that 'many' had taken it 'very ill', saying it had 'too much bitterness towards antagonists', and that they were 'seeking all imaginable advantages' against him. Nonetheless, he urged Hamilton to write to some members of the convention, even though 'probability' was against him winning them over. The hostility towards him also prevented his desire to return to Scotland being fulfilled. In August Renwick was unable to confirm if his desire would be fulfilled, but hoped that a formal call from the Societies would 'stop the insulting of many'. However, Renwick reckoned that the level of malice against Hamilton

127. Shields, *FCD*, 186-220, 237, 247-8.

was such that he feared for him, whether Hamilton returned or stayed abroad. No formal call was issued to Hamilton, and soon after, he unilaterally decided to join the Protestant cause in Piedmont, as will be discussed in chapter six. That decision, too, provoked fierce encounters within the convention which left Hamilton 'in the stour', i.e in the midst of the fiery conflict. Even by early 1687, only 'a handful' were prepared call him home, and by mid 1687 Renwick was simply unable to offer any further advice on the matter.¹²⁸

The moderates had successfully broken Hamilton's grip on the Societies, but they were much less successful in their attacks on Renwick. In the run up to the twenty-fifth convention an unsubscribed letter of protestation circulated throughout the societies in Ayrshire and Galloway which attacked Renwick's stewardship of the Societies and the convention for following 'the delusion of their own deceitful hearts, to believe lies, and follow the dictates of an erring conscience whom the Lord in his anger, hath plagued with misinformed judgements'. It attacked the Societies for 'declining a minister', almost certainly Langlands, 'even though that which is alleged cannot be made out', while accepting Renwick's ordination from the 'most corrupt' church at Groningen, for taking the powers of church discipline and government to themselves, and Renwick's leadership: 'Must the gospel live or die with Mr. Renwick, suppose he were a minister of the church of Scotland? Must we all be tied to him?' The paper was widely believed to have come from a minister, but was actually from Robert Cathcart, one of the Society people in Carrick. The Societies suspected that Kinsture and John Dick, who were the cause of their 'greatest difficulties', were responsible for its circulation, although they denied involvement.¹²⁹ The Protestation's design was to whip up support against Renwick and his vision of the Societies, and was possibly the reason for the conference with Dick and Kinsture at the twenty-fifth convention. It is not clear which side called the conference, but Dick and Kinsture attended as representatives for the societies which had supported Argyll in Carrick, some of Kyle and Galloway, probably excluding the militant upland district of Glenkens which remained loyal to Renwick. The fact that they eschewed the formal written commissions, which the Societies required, in favour of verbal commissions, probably indicates that those societies had already rejected the Societies' constitutional framework as illegitimate.

According to Shields, the twenty-fifth convention began with the Societies collectively disowning some of the language of many of their previous declarations and letters, but his account appears to be an attempt to strengthen the Societies' arguments, as it included elements of *An Informatory*

128. Houston, *Letters*, 203-4, 208, 209, 226, 241.

129. Shields, *FCD*, 225, 227, 230-1, 237; 'Copy of Robert Cathcart's letter to some friends presented to Conference on 28th Jan. 1686 at Friarminnan', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 1. 190. Wodrow printed a later version of Cathcart's which post dates the Convention. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 393n.

Vindication (1687) which was not completed until a year later. A more accurate assessment of the Societies' probable position at the convention can be derived from Renwick's contemporary letter to Langlands which sought to clarify and moderate some of the Societies' positions to blunt Langlands' case. In it, Renwick stated that union was desirable to restore the Church of Scotland, but not 'any kind of union', only a right form of union in which the sins of the land were recognised. He denied that the Societies had taken to themselves the power of civil government, saying only that they had rejected the magistrate as a tyrant. As for the Sanquhar Declaration's styling themselves a 'convention of estates' or 'representatives of church and covenanted nation', or the Lanark Declaration's claim to act 'in our name and authority', he advised Langlands to follow the presbyterian divine Samuel Rutherford and 'not to strive about names' as they were not meant in an authoritative sense and he thought that their emitters had published them 'as free subjects, for themselves, and these, from whom they are commissioned, for that effect', although, for his own part, he admitted that he wished that they 'had been otherwise expressed'. For the sake of union Renwick claimed that he was prepared to lay aside such names, 'desiring no more of any who would join with us ... than their cordial agreement with the matter and intent' of their declarations. He also sought to refute other charges. Against the charge that the Societies had created a 'popular confusion', he maintained that their trying of scandals was not in a judicial way, but in a 'private and popular' manner in order to judge how they should carry towards backsliders from the testimony. Against the charge that the Societies had imposed restrictions on ministers in the exercise of their ministry, Renwick argued that they had 'never' restricted ministers, but only desired them to declare the 'sins and duties' of the day. He also dealt with some Societies' documents, then deemed problematic, by disowning the first call to the ministry in 1683 and arguing that *The Protestation ... against the Scottish Congregation at Rotterdam*'s statement that the ministers had been 'treacherous' did not mean individual 'betrayal', but only a collective 'practical deserting of duty, or betraying of trust'.¹³⁰

Under pressure from the arguments of Langlands and the breakaway societies, Renwick was forced to take the first step towards moderating the Societies' testimony in order to preserve their standing numbers and limit the impact of schism. Since mid 1683 Renwick and the hardliners had dictated the course of the Societies' testimony in relative isolation, but the crisis in the latter half of 1685 brought external challenges which had begun to shape their views in a more moderate direction. Renwick had, to some extent, lost control of the process, but he had done enough to ameliorate, but not prevent, schism by acting just in time for the twenty-fifth convention and may have surprised Dick and Kinsture with the Societies' moderation.

130. Carslaw, *Letters*, 137-8, 141-6.

Renwick's manoeuvres maintained his control of the convention at a crucial moment and helped to turn the tables on his opponents. Dick and Kinsture were forced onto the defensive and were evasive over whether they still concurred with the Societies or not. When faced with their support for Argyll, they fairly pointed to the question of the interpretation of the Second Sanquhar Declaration, but were forced to reject the convention's agreed resolution that nothing should be done without its consent. Similarly, when accused of 'consulting with other parties', calling ministers on behalf of the Societies and ignoring the convention's rejection of union, Dick and Kinsture were forced to reject the convention's resolution against joining with Langlands and Barclay, as it prevented hearing faithful ministers, and argued that they had not called Langlands and Barclay on behalf of the Societies, as they had heard them before the convention resolved not to join with them. The denouement came when they were faced with the exceptions against Langlands and Barclay, carefully contrived in a 'more succinct method', i.e. not as enunciated in *The Protestation ... against the Scottish Congregation at Rotterdam*. Both sides held to their prior positions and both invited each other to join with them or not. At which point, Renwick and his allies refused to join with the breakaway societies and Dick and Kinsture 'abruptly departed', taking with them the 'most part' of the societies in Carrick and Galloway.¹³¹

IV. Conclusion

The year 1685 marked a defining moment in the struggle between the authorities and moderate and militant dissent. In the military conflict of the Argyll and Monmouth risings the government emerged victorious and moderate dissent received a significant setback. Afterwards most of the moderates sought political and ecclesiastical accommodation with the regime as a means to progress their cause and abandoned a strategy of provoking insurrection in Scotland. However, the government was unsuccessful in its efforts to curtail militant dissent, as the Killing Times proved counter-productive and increased the strength of the Societies. The principal challenge to the Societies came from the moderate presbyterians involved in the Argyll Rising, not the government. The presbyterian factions were hurled together through their opposition to James VII's accession. The Societies' leadership resolved to cooperate to achieve the common end of removing James, but remain at arm's length from Argyll. That decision was the legacy of the belligerent relations amongst the factions, especially since the Rye House Plots. That legacy was also responsible for

131. Shields, *FCD*, 225-30; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 394n. Although the Friarminnan schism further reduced the geographic spread of the United Societies, it probably only resulted in the loss of about fifteen per cent of the Societies' membership. See Appendices 7.7 & 7.8.

Argyll's failure to enter into a dialogue with the Societies prior to the Rising. As Renwick had accurately concluded, Argyll needed the Societies more than they needed him, but the Societies were approached only after the Amsterdam Conference had settled on a moderate constitutional platform which made no mention of the Covenants. Like the Rye House Plots, Argyll's platform was dictated by the British dimension to the venture and the memory of the Civil War. He could not, and probably did not want to, accede to the Societies' demand for a covenanted settlement, at least in Scotland, and probably extending to England and Ireland. This was politically unacceptable to his English radical allies and much of the Scottish political and ecclesiastical community.

The Societies' general avoidance of participation in Argyll's venture had, just as Renwick had also outlined, ensured their survival, but it also created internal and regional divisions within the Societies. The local leadership in Carrick and Galloway played a similar role to the one that it had at the council of war at Bothwell in seeking to get the Societies to adopt a more moderate position and unite with Argyll. Motivated by contact with Argyll's agents and Peden, doubts over Renwick and Hamilton's hardline platform and apocalyptic strategy, and affected by the impact of the Killing Times on their local leadership, they opted to join with Argyll's rising and afterwards with the ministers Langlands and Barclay. Again, Renwick had anticipated such a possibility, but seems to have underestimated the scale of internal dissent.

Throughout the Rising and beyond, Renwick and the convention firmly held to their apocalyptic convictions and took the path of maintaining their exceptions against the ministers and purging the convention of the breakaway societies. After the July conferences a regional struggle ensued for hearts and minds and control of local societies, which by late 1685 had contained the ministers' challenge within its original support base. Renwick's assessment that the need of the Argyll moderates for union was greater than that of the Societies was also proved correct, as after the union negotiations failed, many of them fled abroad. What Renwick did not foresee were the allegations of scandal against Hamilton, whose charges in *The Protestation ... against the Scottish Congregation at Rotterdam* was the foundation stone of the Societies' exceptions against the ministers. Despite Renwick's secretive efforts, Hamilton's reputation was severely tarnished among the Societies and his grip over them considerably loosened. The opposition to Renwick exposed serious cracks in the legitimacy of the Societies' structure, testimony and leadership. Pushed onto the defensive, Renwick moderated the Societies' testimony for the first time, a move which preserved the cohesion of most of the Societies and allowed the convention to purge the dissident supporters of Argyll at Friarminnan. The third schism in the Societies' ranks was viewed as an unforgivable betrayal by Societies' writers such as Walker and Shields, but the blame equally applied to Renwick and the hardliners who had been determined to reject any form of union with Argyll unless it was

on the Societies' terms. Although the breakaway societies had been expelled, Cathcart's question hung in the air: 'must the gospel live or die with Mr. Renwick ... ? Must we all be tied to him?'

‘War Against Antichrist’

FIVE

The Societies to the Eve of the Revolution, 1686–1688

The defeat of the Argyll and Monmouth Risings had a ‘profoundly negative impact’ on the radical cause. It effectively ended the threat of insurrection against James and ‘eliminated every English and Scottish radical leader of the first rank and many of the middling order’.¹ In Harris’s view, James VII had ‘easily survived their challenge’ because ‘the cause of radical Whiggism ... [was] out of tune with the mood of the country’.² It was a decisive turning-point for the presbyterian movement. Weakened by defeat, most of the moderates were ‘harried’ into the fold of the established church and entered a phase of rapprochement with the Crown by accepting pardons and toleration which led to the rapid decline of the exile community in the United Provinces.³ Only a ‘small minority’ of radicals, such as the Societies, remained committed to outright opposition. In Cowan’s view, the ‘few remaining’ militants were not an urgent problem for the Scottish regime and in isolation they were ‘increasingly revealed as a small and insignificant sect’ powerless to initiate a war on the state as they had in 1679 and reduced to a ‘few sparks’ of protest against toleration.⁴

However, this image of the Societies as locked into a trajectory of decline contradicts the Societies’ own understanding of their fortunes between 1686 and 1688. Unlike the other radical factions, the Societies had prospered in the Killing Times and escaped relatively unscathed from the debacle of the Argyll Rising. Nonetheless, 1685 had marked the nadir in their fortunes since 1679 and left them with a legacy of schism and internal division over their testimony which had weakened Renwick’s leadership. However, from 1686 the Societies responded to those challenges and to the opportunities presented by the moderates’ rapprochement with the Crown by following two strategies. The first was to advance their cause through a war of contradiction through

1. Greaves, *SK*, 290.

2. Harris, *Revolution: The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy, 1685-1720* (London, 2006), 67-8.

3. Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 129; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 493-512; Gardener, *Scottish Exile Community*, 155-77.

4. Harris, *Revolution*, 147, 173-4; Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 129-30, 132.

testimonies; a war against the influence of Antichrist, both on their opponents and on themselves. The second was to respond to the charges against them by moderating their testimony and expanding their ministerial cadre. At times those strategies were to come into conflict, but by the eve of the Revolution the Societies had emerged in a stronger position than has generally been accepted.

I. The Societies Reborn, 1686–1687

I think your legs too small and your shoulders too narrow to take the whole Church of Scotland.

– Alexander Peden's advice to Renwick at their last meeting.⁵

After the Friarminnan schism Kinsture took papers on behalf of the breakaway societies to moderate ministerial prisoners on the Bass and in Blackness Castle, which claimed that 'all had now left Mr. Renwick, but about a hundred or so poor, silly, daft bodies, that were now running through with him and robbing the country' and reiterated the charges made at Friarminnan. Kinsture's efforts were well received and Adam Alcorn, John Black, Duncan Campbell, George Guthrie and John Moncrief were sent to preach to the breakaway societies. By May 1686 Kinsture's embassy had reached Holland, where he was joined by Andrew Cameron, but their endeavours met with a cooler reception from the exiled ministry. At Rotterdam he presented a call to 'several ministers ... but found them no ways inclined' to return home. Only Robert Archibald 'was clear for going home', but did not depart, and at Amsterdam, Barclay was mysteriously 'not fit to travel'. In response Kinsture garnered support among the exiled gentry, who desired that ministers should be sent 'to prepare the country for some noble attempt', but the ministers remained lukewarm and even Cameron decided to remain abroad to finish his studies. Eventually Barclay and George Wishart 'condescended to go' and departed on 17 June. Barclay was soon busy preaching with Langlands and others to the breakaway societies, but they kept their preaching 'obscure' and feared the Societies would 'deliver them up to the enemy'.⁶

Renwick responded to their challenge with a preaching campaign in moderate dominated areas and meetings with societies. On 18 February he reported that he had been to 'several places ... where there used to be no such access' and that his work had multiplied fourfold in some shires. By May he had examined societies in Galloway, Nithsdale and Annandale, and found 'great multitudes' at his preachings in Lower Cunningham 'where there had never been any field

5. Walker, *BP*, I, 92.

6. Shields, *FCD*, 241-3; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 357, 394; Erskine, *Journal*, 194-5; Houston, *Letters*, 194, 206. Archibald was still in Rotterdam on 30 June 1686. Erskine, *Journal*, 196.

preachers' and had received further calls from there and Renfrewshire. Even in the 'dark corners', as Renwick termed the barony of Sanquhar and Kirkconnel parish, he had found people 'quitting the defections'.⁷ He then moved on to preach in Northumberland and Berwickshire in the summer, areas which had adhered to the moderate ministers since late 1682, and circulated a copy of his letter to Langlands to Newcastle.⁸ The increasing rapprochement between moderate presbyterians and the Restoration regime had allowed Renwick to win new converts to the Societies' standard.

However, he also faced 'bitter' opposition from the breakaway societies when he preached in their backyard. On 22 November he was presented with a protest against his preaching at Kirkmabreck in Kirkcudbrightshire on behalf of the societies between the rivers Dee and Cree which reiterated the charges made by Cathcart, Langlands and Barclay, but Renwick continued to preach in the area. In December he rebuffed a similar protest at Irongray parish from John Welsh of Cornley, a former elder under John Welsh who had recently taken the Test and the Abjuration to escape execution. For Renwick the main problem was not the actions of his moderate presbyterian opponents, but in bringing in those who had complied with the regime. He refused to baptise their children without some form of public testimony and he admitted that the joining of children, servants and others in the family exercise of their parents and masters who had complied 'is like to break us more than anything that the ministers can do'.⁹

The Societies, too, set about formally responding to the charges made against them at home and abroad. At the twenty-sixth convention in April they decided that Renwick should compose an account of the Friarminnan conference and that Boyd should draft a refutation of the charges.¹⁰ Boyd's paper ultimately formed the basis of the Societies' revised testimony in *An Informatory Vindication* (1687), probably one of the most significant documents in the Societies' history. The fact that it took nearly a year to draft gives some idea of the care with which it was constructed. The publication of the *Informatory Vindication* presents a paradox. At the time of publication it attracted little comment, being quickly overtaken by the controversy around toleration, but it cannot be a coincidence that its publication seems to mark a turning-point in the Societies' fortunes.

7. Houston, *Letters*, 191, 192-3.

8. Renwick's trip to England occurred prior to his letter of 13 August 1686 which mentioned it and at the time when intelligence of Houston reached the twenty-ninth convention. Houston, *Letters*, 205-8, 215. He had returned to Berwickshire by July when he preached at Greencleugh in Longformacus parish. Brown, *Covenanters of the Merse*, 229-30. In January 1685 a society at Newcastle had rejoined the Societies and Renwick preached there in mid 1685 on Hosea 8.11. Shields, *FCD*, 157-8; Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 74-81; Houston, *Letters*, 169. Houston dates this letter to 1684, when it refers to events in August 1685.

9. Houston, *Letters*, 194, 210-11, 213, 228; 'William McCutcheon's paper to Mr Renwick of Nov: 1686', EUL MSS La.III.350. Item 185.; Shields, *LoR*, 117n, 118; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 235, 395; Shields, *FCD*, 263, 267-8, 268-78; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 495.

10. Shields, *FCD*, 243-4.

An Informatory Vindication set out to prove that the Societies adhered to orthodox presbyterian tradition by displaying their 'faithful contentings' against defections in their declarations and in their disputes with Langlands, Barclay and the breakaway societies, to prevent what they saw as misrepresentations of their testimony. Central to its message was its presentation of their views on magistracy and the ministry which had been the cause of much contention; in both cases the *Vindication* differentiated between the office and the person to reject magistrates who broke the law as tyrants or ministers who had backslidden from true testimony.

Regarding the Societies' general meetings or correspondences, the *Vindication* avoided the secular term 'general convention' and denied that they had created an 'Erastian republic' by discussing matters of church and state in a judicial manner in their general meetings. Instead the *Vindication* countered that they had not assumed a power of magistracy, but because they had been reduced to a state of 'native & radical liberty' they had 'judged it lawful, expedient, & necessary' to form by 'common consent' a general meeting for the management of affairs among the 'purer & better part'. It also maintained that nothing in public matters or relevant to their testimony was agreed to without 'harmonious consent' and claimed that their resolutions were not 'formal statutes of either civil or ecclesiastic judicatories', yet understood as of 'binding force upon all' within the Societies, but not on the whole kingdom.¹¹ The *Vindication* watered down the Societies' understanding of the convention's powers, as they had freely admitted in 1683 that they had assumed the 'legislative powers of the nation, and ... of Parliament'.¹²

In the same way, the *Vindication* stated that the Societies' declarations were not authoritative actions which bound Scotland, but were only published by adherents to the testimony. It claimed that the designation of the first Sanquhar Declaration as from 'the Representatives of the True Presbyterian Church & Covenanted Nation of Scotland' did not mean what it would normally be understood to mean, but 'only a poor people' in 'some way representing the body that should have done it' and that the Declaration was only representative of the nation in the sense that it represented 'the more faithful & better part of the Church & Kingdom'. It also claimed that Sanquhar's disowning of Charles II was not 'a judicial and authoritative deposing' but only 'a private, lawful and necessary disowning' of his magistracy 'for ourselves & all who adhere unto & consent with us'. The Lanark Declaration's usage of the term 'Convention of Estates' was also rejected on similar grounds.¹³

The *Vindication* also sought to clarify the nature of their war against their persecutors. It did not

11. *An Informatory Vindication*, 46-9.

12. Shields, *FCD*, 69.

13. *An Informatory Vindication*, 51-4, 56-8.

define what Cameron had meant by 'war' in the Sanquhar Declaration, but tried to distinguish between the 'declaring of a hostile war & martial insurrection, and declaring a war of contradiction & opposition by testimonies &c.' The former applied only to the tyrant and those under his banner who aimed to destroy covenanted reformation, while the latter applied to 'all such' as 'strengthen, side with, or acknowledge the said Tyrant'. It also denied that they killed those 'of a different persuasion & opinion from us ... for against the latter sort [who were not under the Tyrant's banner]... no killing is intended at all', which it claimed was 'the true import of the Apologetical Declaration'.¹⁴ Again, the Vindication watered down the Societies' previous position, as the Apologetical Declaration had plainly threatened anyone who assisted in their persecution.

It also rejected the notion that they had usurped the authority of the Church by sending delegations in the name of the Church of Scotland abroad or by introducing 'canons' in the questions put to their delegates as to their adherence to their testimony. Instead, the Vindication argued that their delegates were only sent in the name of a 'remnant of this Church'. It also defended Renwick's ordination on the grounds of the Societies' inability to obtain ordination in Scotland and their desire to uphold the Church of Scotland's testimony which was threatened with burial due to the defection, compliance and opposition of its ministers. They had taken it from foreign churches, as they had the power to ordain to the church universal 'upon the request of a people' to 'help and confirm' the power of the Church in Scotland in its broken state. In no sense, the Vindication claimed, did they seek to bring an 'evil report' on the Church of Scotland or 'to carry on a faction or schism [with]in it'.¹⁵ Similarly, it admitted they had tried scandals, but in a 'popular and private' manner, rather than a 'judicial and authoritative' manner, as the power of discipline rightly belonged to elders and ministers.¹⁶

Errors were also addressed. The first call to the ministry, which was issued in Renwick's absence and undermined the Societies' withdrawal from the ministry, was disowned and they acknowledged shortcomings in *The Protestation Against ... the Scottish Congregation in Rotterdam*, specifically that the charges made against the ministers should not have been cast 'in a heap together' without making 'particular application' and that it was an error to designate it as from the 'True Presbyterian Church' when they looked on themselves as only 'a poor distressed & contending remnant, of the ... True Presbyterian Church of Christ in Scotland'.¹⁷

In the area of their separation from their former presbyterian ministerial brethren the Vindication struck a relatively conciliatory tone, but maintained a firm line. It termed their separation as

14. *An Informatory Vindication*, 55-6.

15. *An Informatory Vindication*, 95-104.

16. *An Informatory Vindication*, 108-13.

17. *An Informatory Vindication*, 58-60, 104-8.

'standing still' in a 'negative passive separation' by the better part of a Church from the 'backsliding part of the same Church' and stressed that they were not 'fixed' in their withdrawal, but would join with the ministers when they forsook their offensive courses and gave due satisfaction. It also expressly stated that they still looked on them as ministers and recognised that not all the ministers were equally guilty of defections. Several grounds were offered for their withdrawal. First, from ministers who had overturned the Church's testimony by homologating the Supremacy or who had preached owning the authority of Charles II and James VII. Second, from ministers who had complied with the 'publick enemies' of covenanted reformation by taking part in the sins of the land, such as countenancing prelacy, hearing curates, compearing in courts 'against the people of God', swearing oaths, subscribing bonds and paying the cess and localities to strengthen their enemies' hands. Third, from ministers who defended such courses, such as those who sought union with, or took the side of, or preached in favour of, the indulged, or opposed indulgence as a step of defection or censured those who declared its sinfulness, a category which covered nearly all the ministers at Bothwell or involved in the disputes in Rotterdam with Hamilton. Fourth, from those who had omitted to preach against the aforementioned steps of defection. Fifth, from those 'guilty of lying by from the publick work of preaching the Gospel' in the fields 'when no physical impediment' had prevented them, an oblique attack on Barclay. Sixth, from those who had 'cast oil into our flames ... to crush a poor wasted Remnant ... both by word & writ, at home & abroad'.¹⁸ It was a catch-all list which practically excluded nearly all the Scottish presbyterian ministry.

The Societies had been slow to respond to the Friarminnan crisis, but by early 1687 had begun to reverse the damage caused by it and to expand their preaching campaign into new areas. In part this was due to their own initiatives, especially in the form of the *Informatory Vindication*, but it was also due to a lack of the resolve by the moderate ministry to support the breakaway societies. The moderates had perhaps relied too much on their ministerial authority to carry their charges against the Societies and win them over to union. In doing so they underestimated the Societies' leadership, which subtly moderated the Societies' testimony to refute the charges against them and to emerge in a stronger position. However, while the Societies successfully dealt with their external presbyterian opponents, they were wracked by their own internal divisions over expanding their ministerial cadre.

II. Internal Strife, 1686

The confrontation with the breakaway societies had brought Renwick's position as the Societies'

18. *An Informatory Vindication*, 72-95.

only ordained minister into question and tainted Hamilton's reputation. Prior to Friarminnan, the twenty-fourth convention in October 1685 had requested that Hamilton provide an update on the progress of Thomas Linning's tuition at Leeuwarden and if there was any hope of 'cleanly' ordaining him. Renwick, too, had supported the convention's request for Linning's ordination 'from the purest amongst the reformed', meaning Groningen, but his endorsement was less than wholehearted, as he judged Linning 'not to be a dangerous spirit' and suspected him 'less than many others' in the Societies. Linning's progress was probably delayed by the confusion surrounding the Friarminnan schism, but his ordination was raised once again either at, or soon after, the twenty-seventh convention on 5 May 1686. Just before the convention, Renwick wrote to Hamilton again of 'sending forth T [Linning]' in 'an honest way', but afterwards on 22 May his tone became more circumspect. While it remained 'good service' if Hamilton could get Linning 'stamped', Renwick also informed him that if he had any 'exceptions' the 'merchants' in the convention would not press for ordination. However, he warned Hamilton, given the circumstances they were in, that they would be under 'less suspicion' from the 'strange generation' they had to deal with, if Hamilton restricted his exceptions to only those that 'necessity calls for', rather than simply 'fears' which 'would not bear weight before men', and that if Linning was 'not being stamped', not to mention his exceptions at all. He also proposed to Hamilton that it would be more 'fitting' if Linning was to 'signify to our merchants the case', as although Renwick was 'wrestling under a heavy burden', he did not want an 'ill neighbour' in Linning and some in the Societies believed that he was 'for no help at all'.¹⁹ Renwick's strategy was to block Linning's ordination.

Renwick and Hamilton seem to have harboured fears about Linning's ideological suitability and the impact it would have on their control of the Societies. These fears were perhaps increased by the news that Boyd once again intended to seek ordination, as Renwick reported at the same time that Boyd and Kersland proposed to go to the United Provinces and that at least Kersland, who was probably funding Boyd's studies, did not 'design' the introduction of other parties.²⁰ Boyd represented the more moderate wing of the Societies opposed to Renwick and Hamilton's hardline ideology. If Renwick was to maintain control of the Societies or counterbalance Boyd, he may have deemed it necessary to prevent Linning's progress.

Independently of the Societies, Boyd had resolved the question of access to Groningen and presumably obtained some assurance of ordination. At the twenty-eighth convention on 2 June, Boyd revealed that he proposed to 'revise his studies' and requested a testificate to obtain lawful

19. Shields, *FCD*, 182, 186; Houston, *Letters*, 194, 203, 245.

20. Houston, *Letters*, 202-3. Although unstated by the sources, it is almost certain that Kersland and his family were instrumental in securing Boyd's studies at Groningen. They performed a similar role in securing Linning's studies in 1687, as discussed below.

ordination wherever he could. The convention resolved that every society should seek the Lord's counsel over whether Boyd's plan was agreeable in a day of supplication, which according to Renwick was held to 'prevent disagreement ... amongst friends' over Boyd's business'.²¹

Boyd's plan was obviously divisive, but the Societies could ill afford another schism. His plan seems to have been approved by the day of supplication. At the twenty-ninth convention on 24 June the Societies took a series of steps to recruit a larger ministry to 'wipe off some of our reproach from amongst men, to have ministers concurring together, seeing with one eye, and speaking with one mouth, working with one hand, and lifting with one shoulder'. The twenty-ninth convention's desire to ordain more ministers implicitly accepted Peden's criticism of Renwick's 'shoulders' being too narrow to bear the weight of the whole Church of Scotland, quoted above, and marked a turning-point in their relations with Renwick. A turning-point perhaps aided by Renwick's absence in northern England.²²

With a decision in his favour, Boyd pressed home his plans for ordination. According to Shields, the convention issued Boyd only with a testificate of his Christian carriage for his studies and consented to his departure only provided he did not seek ordination and gave them written assurances that he was of 'one judgement' regarding the 'controversies of the time'. However, Shields' version of events is contradicted by Renwick, who wrote that 'friends (except a very few) were against giving him certificate for ordination, but yet did give it'.²³ The convention had allowed Boyd to seek ordination, not merely to continue his studies. It was a considerable setback for Renwick.

By early August Boyd had arrived in Leeuwarden and Groningen, where, according to Hamilton's letter of 30 September, he and Boyd clashed over why Boyd would not pray for Renwick or the Remnant. Hamilton's account of their clashes provides a remarkable alternate view of the convention's proceedings since Friarminnan. However, given his antipathy towards Boyd the veracity of his claims is not clear. According to Hamilton, Boyd stated he would not pray under any notion of the Societies being the only witnessing remnant as 'some' of the moderates were 'as great wrestlers and contenders as they', and that 'friends at home' were of 'one mind in that' matter and had already privately censured some of Hamilton's judgement. Hamilton also claimed that Boyd openly favoured union with the moderates by insisting that no public acknowledgement of sins should be sought from their presbyterian opponents for 'bygone things' as long as they were willing

21. Houston, *Letters*, 207-8; Shields, *FCD*, 246.

22. Shields, *FCD*, 247-8. According to Renwick's letter of 11 January 1687, he was in England when the twenty-ninth convention first heard intelligence of David Houston. Houston, *Letters*, 215.

23. Shields, *FCD*, 246-7, 253; Houston, *Letters*, 207-8; 'Societies Testimonial to Mr William Boyd, 24th June 1686 subscribed Michael Shields', EUL. MSS. La.III.350. No. 200.

to take part in the public work, and that this was also the judgement of 'friends' in Scotland. In response, Hamilton pointed out that Renwick still required satisfaction from scandalous compliers before baptising their children, but Boyd countered that Renwick's requirement had now gone. He also claimed that Boyd had berated him for not joining with Argyll in an encounter with the laird of Pardovan, whom Hamilton described as a 'furious zealot' for union with Argyll's party, when Boyd supported Pardovan's tirade against Hamilton and 'all who had not joined Argyll'.²⁴

Hamilton's claims were probably true, if perhaps exaggerated. Boyd had been in favour of union during the Argyll Rising and his travelling companion Kersland had taken part in the Rising. Later in 1686, Kersland also stayed with his mother, Lady Kersland, in Utrecht; she freely associated with former Argyll supporters including opponents of the Societies such as Barclay, who preached in her home, and Carnock, who attended her prayer meetings and knew Pardovan.²⁵ Through Kersland, Boyd seems to have had influential moderate connections, which probably account for why Boyd was able to take up his studies at Groningen when other Societies' students were denied access. Boyd plainly supported a form of accommodation or union with the moderates to draw the presbyterian movement back together in response to the post-Argyll crisis, and it is possible that Boyd's ordination was a moderate Trojan horse designed to challenge Renwick's leadership and bring about that union. Renwick certainly viewed it in that way.

Renwick found Hamilton's reports of Boyd 'troublesome and displeasing'. In particular he did not know on 'what grounds' Boyd based his hopes for union. Renwick was determined to oppose such moves and confidently expected that Boyd would find few inclined to hear that 'party' within the Societies. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that Boyd's hopes were discouraging as 'it puts such as are coming forward [to the Societies] to stand still'. However, despite their shared disapproval of Boyd's progress, Renwick urged Hamilton to be patient: Boyd could not be denied a testificate for ordination as he had not been 'fully discovered', but in time he would contradict himself so that the Societies would wish 'it had never been granted unto him'.²⁶ Of course, by then, Boyd would be ordained.

Renwick's strategy was an admission of his and Hamilton's inability to halt Boyd's progress, given the scepticism which would have greeted any report from Hamilton of Boyd and the mood of a section of the convention for union. A frosty standoff appears to have ensued. The thirty-first convention in September sent Boyd a draft of the *Informatory Vindication*, but according to Shields, no other letters were sent to him after his departure for nearly a year, despite Boyd writing to the

24. Shields, *FCD*, 265-6.

25. Erskine, *Journal*, 177-217, passim.

26. Houston, *Letters*, 211, 212.

convention. However, Boyd was sent £3 sterling on two further occasions to fund his studies, a signal that Boyd retained support within the convention.²⁷

To fulfil their desire to have more ministers, the twenty-ninth convention also pressed again for Linning's ordination by writing to Hamilton and Linning, and appointing a fast day for opening a door to his ordination. Their letter to Hamilton remarked on their need for a larger ministry and requested that if Linning's studies had progressed to 'any tolerable capacity' they would seek his ordination, or if not, they would fund him for a season at Groningen. As Renwick had forewarned, it also asked Hamilton whether he had any 'just exceptions' against Linning, and if none, delegated him to use 'the uttermost of your power' to lawfully ordain Linning 'with as great expedition as possible', provided the convention knew in advance by which ministers he would be ordained, so they could give their assent, and the date of Linning's ordination, so they could set days of prayer and fasting apart for a favourable outcome.²⁸ The convention's letter to Linning sought reassurances that he concurred with their 'present testimony' and that he would provide information on who would ordain him, but it also asked if he was ready for ordination or preferred to study at Groningen for a season.²⁹ Clearly, doubts persisted about Renwick's rapid form of ordination when only 'spirit and piety' rather than learning had been required.

Hamilton's reply is missing, but from the outline of it given by Shields it fulfilled Renwick's instructions. Hamilton replied that 'all doors abroad' were shut for Linning's ordination and that while he would give him every help to study for a further season, he was against sending him to the colleges at Groningen or Utrecht as they were full of 'snares' and of little use, as Gerkima believed that Linning had already made 'sufficient progress in his studies'. He also advised that it would be advantageous if Linning returned to Scotland to be cleared by the Societies. Linning's reply is also missing, but it backed up Hamilton's letter. While he would try to gain ordination at Groningen, it was probably an impossibility, as he had heard that Groningen had made an act since Renwick was ordained 'that no man shall pass there' without subscription to the acts of the Synod of Dort, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession, all of which Linning thought no Scot could subscribe. By the thirty-first convention on 22 September, Linning's progress towards ordination had reached a dead end and the convention despondently wrote to Gerkima that due to the misinformations arising from the confusions in Scotland the University and Presbytery of

27. Shields, *FCD*, 255, 312-3, 317; 'Letter Societies to Mr W. Boyd at Groningen', EUL La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 215.

28. 'Letter Societies perhaps to Robert Hamiltoun June 24 1686', EUL. MSS. La.III.350. No. 199; Shields, *FCD*, 247-8, 253.

29. 'Letter Societies to Mr Tho: Linning June 24. 1686', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 201; Shields, *FCD*, 249-50. The convention must have asked Boyd to provide information on who would ordain him, but Shields neglected to mention it.

Groningen 'no longer knew how to act' towards the Societies and that Linning had been denied access. According to Hamilton, this was due to Brackel's 'bitterly' informing against Renwick and the Societies to Marck, which led Marck to sharply reprove Gerkima for teaching Linning.³⁰ At the same time, Koelman had reiterated Kinsture's charges and written in support of union to Renwick. Although the Societies had begun to make significant progress in Scotland, they found that their progress blocked in the United Provinces. The divines of the *Nadere Reformatorie* had turned against the Societies' hardliners.³¹

The fundamental difference between Linning and Boyd was that Boyd had moderate credentials and favoured union while Linning was associated with hardline separatists in the Societies, which translated in practical terms into Linning being denied access to Groningen and ordination, while Boyd's progress for the same purpose was unimpeded. In 1686 those differences mattered to the influential Dutch figures and institutions which had power over the outcome of their progress. The isolation of the Societies had got deeper, but as Boyd's case shows, where the Societies' prospective student favoured union with the mainstream presbyterian movement, doors were opened.

In addition to action on Linning and Boyd, the twenty-ninth convention also initiated efforts to recruit Anthony Slie, a sympathetic English minister in Cumberland. The convention sent a high-powered delegation made up of Renwick, Shields, James Wilson and Doctor Ford to meet with Slie and report on his suitability for receipt of a call to preach. Renwick delivered his verdict on Slie to the thirtieth convention on 18 August. According to Shields, the convention was 'well satisfied' that Slie 'agreed' with the Societies' controversies, but he neglected to mention that Renwick had found him 'not so straight with them' regarding the application of their covenanted testimony to England. Nonetheless, the thirtieth convention sent John Mathieson and Thomas Latimer to Slie, but according to Shields, who could not recall their report, Slie was not issued with a call, a typically hazy admission that their endeavours had come to nought, probably due to Renwick's opposition.³² By late 1686, Renwick had stalled Linning's ordination, prevented Slie from being called, and chosen to ignore Boyd. That his opposition to them was ideological and centred around concerns for the Societies' testimony is demonstrated by his reaction to the appearance of Alexander Shields and David Houston among the Societies at this time.

30. Shields, *FCD*, 249, 250-1, 258-60, 264-5.

31. Shields, *FCD*, 263-4, 266; Carslaw, *Letters*, 220-3.

32. Shields, *FCD*, 251, 254; Houston, *Letters*, 205-6.

III. 'A Silly Fish Caught in Their Angle'

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.
– A saying of Alexander Shields.³³

In late 1686 Shields escaped from the Bass and came to the thirty-second convention. Considering his later importance as an ideologue for the Societies' cause in *A Hind Let Loose* (1687) and his later leadership of the Societies, his biography has attracted little attention. In part this is due to Shields' fragmentary early career: Michael Shields maintained a discreet silence on his brother's role in the Societies, Walker failed to fulfil his intention to write a life of Shields, and it was only in the dying embers of the presbyterian historiographical tradition in the 1930s that Hector Macpherson produced a somewhat idiosyncratic biography. However, it may also be due in part to what Walker realised: that Shields was one of the few to reverse course from defection, as Shields had opposed Renwick and Hamilton's hardline platform for several years.³⁴

Shields was a militant. In 1680 he worked for MacWard putting works to the press. He was eager for news of Cargill and Cameron and knew Walter Smith. However, in the aftermath of the Rotterdam disputes, he and Thomas Douglas had adopted a similar line to MacWard and not withdrawn from an exile congregation in Utrecht over Fleming's support for maintaining brotherhood with the indulged. For Renwick the Utrecht dispute was 'the first clear stating of our testimony in our later times, against the daubers and plasterers of defection' and others considered Shields' actions a 'deserting of the testimony', but Shields' views were like others in the Societies who did not believe in separating from faithful ministers and he took exception to the Queensferry Paper's resolution to separate from ministers who did not join in offering public testimony.³⁵

Following the death of his 'friend and father' MacWard on 26 May 1681, he completed his studies and moved to London where he sought to work as an amanuensis for the Independent divine John Owen 'or some other great doctors' putting books to the press. He followed up a letter of introduction to Nicholas Blaikie, the exiled former minister of Roberton. Shields accepted licence from Blaikie and other Scots ministers in London, as Douglas and Hepburn had a few years previously, and found 'affection and sympathy' among their 'brethren', the English Independents. However, Shields fell out with the Scottish ministers over their acceptance of English oaths and

33. Walker, *BP*, I, 254.

34. Walker, *BP*, I, xxi, 34.

35. Houston, *Letters*, 224; 'Letter from Alexander Shields in Holland to his brother Michael [Shields, May 20 1680]', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 15; 'Another Letter by him [Alexander Shields] from Rotterdam [to Michael Shields, 22 November] 1680', La.III.350. No. 18.

sided with the Societies.³⁶ When the Societies swung towards separation from the presbyterian ministry, Shields then attempted to seek ordination with Flint and Cameron in opposition to Hamilton, as discussed in chapter three. After that, Shields turned his back on the Societies. Like others disaffected from the Societies, Shields was in contact with Argyll's faction, as discussed in chapter four, but had not joined the moderates. He spent time in Holland and as a ship's chaplain, and returned to London where he preached to 'Scotsmen, of very mean figure, some tailors, a shoemaker, a chapmen, etc' at Embroiderer's Hall, a presbyterian meeting house near Cheapside, before he was captured and sent back to Scotland in early 1685.³⁷ There he was confronted with owning the Oath of Allegiance to James, which in the Lord Advocate's opinion 'none will refuse to own ... but the Fifth Monarchy men, and some of our wild folks of assassinating principles', and the Abjuration. After a long struggle before the Justiciary, Shields finally succumbed to the Allegiance and the Abjuration.³⁸ It was a pivotal moment in Shields' life. Shields deeply regretted his 'foul fall' and became determined to be a good example by warning of the sin and dangers of entering into 'any accommodation whatsoever with the enemy'. Like Renwick and Peden, he wrote encouraging letters to the Dunnottar prisoners and he drafted a paper, later published as *A True and Faithful Relation of the Sufferings of the Reverend and Learned, Mr Alexander Shields, Minister of the Gospel (1715)*, to admit his complicity until he was 'a silly fish caught in their angle'.³⁹

During his imprisonment on the Bass Shields entered into a regular correspondence with his brother until his escape when he sought out the Societies and met with Renwick at the Wood of Earlstoun on 5 December 1686. At the meeting Renwick approved of Shields ceasing to carry as 'a mid-man betwixt us and other parties' and found common ground over the value of Cameron's sermon on the Sanquhar Declaration and the Queensferry Paper. Renwick was aware of the political value of Shields joining the Societies and hoped it would 'dash ... the confidence of our oppressors' who had put considerable energies into getting Shields to take the Abjuration. However, the crucial factors in Renwick's acceptance of Shields were probably Shields' public contrition over his backsliding and his agreement with the Societies' testimony, especially his

36. Houston, *Letters*, 222-3; Shields, *A True and Faithful Relation*, 39, 87; 'A Letter from Mr [Alexander] Shields [to Michael Shields] from Rotterdam [19 April] 1681', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 23; 'Letter from Utrecht by Mr Alex[ande]r Shields [to Michael Shields, 9 June], 1681', La.III.350. No. 25; 'Letter from Mr Alexander Shields to the Min[iste]rs in London anent taking the Oaths', La.III.350. No. 40; *Fasti*, II, 225, 305; III, 323-4.

37. Houston, *Letters*, 222-3; Shields, *A True and Faithful Relation*, 2, 9, 15, 22, 32, 86, 89. George C. Cameron, *The Scots Kirk in London* (Oxford, 1979), 16-18; Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 239.

38. Shields, *A True and Faithful Relation*, 22-47.

39. Houston, *Letters*, 221; 'Mr A[lexander] Shields Letter to the prisoners at Dunnottar Edin[burgh] June 1685', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 1. 153. Later printed 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. By Mr. Alexander Shields, Preacher of the Gospel, then prisoner at Edinburgh. Diligently compared with the best manuscripts* (Edinburgh, 1726).

rejection of the presbyterian ministry and union.

Following their meeting, Shields was employed in family worship to have more 'clearness' about him. At the thirty-second convention he agreed with a draft of the *Informatory Vindication*, especially the key article on withdrawal from the ministry, and repented his defections in owning the authority of James VII and taking the Abjuration. His failure to withdraw at Utrecht remained problematic, but Renwick, 'not knowing how to manage that affair to the edification of the Societies', quietly decided not to bring the matter before the convention considering Shields' agreement in the 'present controversies', on the remarkable grounds of his offence being 'very little known in Scotland' and his 'practical testimony' in discountenancing the congregation at Utrecht since then.⁴⁰ The path cleared, the convention called Shields to preach to the Societies and four days later on 26 December he and Renwick preached against 'defective parties', i.e. the presbyterian ministry, and disowned the authority of James VII.⁴¹ And on 30 December Shields and Renwick preached at a fast on forty-four causes of humiliation which they agreed on.⁴²

Although a probationer, Shields was the first minister other than Renwick whose ministry was accepted by the Societies. The expansion of their ministerial cadre was undoubtedly a breakthrough and a valuable propaganda prize against their moderate opponents. It was quickly followed by a second significant advance with a call to David Houston and the establishment of the Irish Societies.

IV. 'A Contender Against Defections': The Societies, Houston and Ireland, 1686–1688

The links between Scottish presbyterians and Ireland stretch back to the early seventeenth-century plantation, which had seen very large numbers of Scots Presbyterians settle in the north of Ireland. These planters maintained close religious and cultural links to Scotland. During the Civil Wars of the 1640s the Scottish Covenanters had sent an army to Ireland and the Scottish Presbyterian ministers in Ireland were integral to the Church of Scotland. Given the strength of those connections, one might expect that Ireland would be of strategic importance to the Societies. This was not the case.

40. Houston, *Letters*, 220-5; Shields, *FCD*, 169, 278. Between 22 May 1685 and 20 September 1686, Alexander Shields frequently sent letters to Michael Shields. EUL MSS La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 179, 192-5, 198, 203-6.

41. Houston, *Letters*, 223; Shields's sermon on 26 December on 2 Cor 5.11 is printed in Howie (ed), *Sermons*, 580-92. Howie incorrectly dates it to 1680.

42. 'Causes of a Fast kept at Cairntable Dec. 30. 1686', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 1. 210; Houston, *Letters*, 223; Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 233-48.

The main reason for the lack of Societies' activity was probably the substantially differing experiences of Ireland and Scotland in the Restoration. As Harris has pointed out, Ireland faced the least persecution of Protestant dissenters of all the kingdoms in the British Isles.⁴³ Due to the differing ecclesiastical landscape of predominantly Catholic Ireland, the presbyterian ministry had channelled its energies towards rebuilding an effective ecclesiastical structure, rather than towards resistance, with the result that they adopted a more moderate stance towards royal authority, indulgences and toleration than pertained in Scotland. Greaves and Phil Kilroy have documented the Societies' involvement in Ireland from the perspective of dissenting communities and religious controversy in Ireland. As Greaves points out, only a 'relatively small number of Presbyterians, fired by their fidelity to the Covenant, opted for a path of religious exclusivity and confrontation' in Ireland, while most cooperated with the Congregationalists and 'gradually established a *modus vivendi* with the episcopalian Church of Ireland'.⁴⁴ The size of that militant minority is difficult to gauge, but it was considerably smaller than the Societies in Scotland. Unlike the north of England, no societies in Ireland had participated in the early conventions and no Irish presbyterians were glorified as martyrs by the Societies.

Since their formation the Societies had taken only sporadic interest in Ireland, mainly as a place of refuge from persecution.⁴⁵ Following Renwick's accidental sojourn in Dublin after his ordination in 1683 the convention had attempted to open correspondence with dissenters there, but direct relations were not established and no embassy was sent to encourage them, unlike England or Friesland.⁴⁶ Renwick's brief sojourn in Dublin had produced few tangible results.⁴⁷

In that context, the twenty-ninth convention's contact with Mr David Houston marked a breakthrough in the Societies relations with militants in Ireland. Houston had been born near Paisley in 1633 and completed his studies at the University of Glasgow in 1654. Prior to the Restoration he was ordained to a parish in Antrim, but afterwards he was brought before the local presbytery for promoting the Covenants and in 1672 he was charged before the magistracy as 'a very turbulent man & disquyeter of the peace'. Despite his preaching being a threat to the presbyterians' indulgence in Ireland, he was allowed to retain his charge after a public act of contrition. However, Houston eventually left his charge due to the ministry's compliance with the Irish regime; in mid

43. See Harris, *Restoration*, 86-104, 377-406.

44. For discussions of militant presbyterians in Ireland see Greaves, *God's Other Children*, 205-14; Phil Kilroy, *Protestant Dissent and Controversy, 1660-1714* (Cork, 1994), 111-18, 124-7.

45. Walker records a cluster of Scottish militants around Peden. Walker, *BP*, I, 54, 56-57, 58, 61, 66, 67, 68, 109, 113-114, 116. Other Society people taking refuge included James Russell, James Harkness and Mrs Binning. Cowan, *Scottish Covenanters*, 95; Simpson, *Traditions*, 145-9; Houston, *Letters*, 240.

46. Carslaw, *Letters*, 64-6; Houston, *Letters*, 139-40; Shields, *FCD*, 105-10.

47. For the impact of Renwick in Ireland, see Greaves, *God's Other Children*, 208-9.

1686 local presbyteries attempted to suppress his divisive preaching, but Houston repudiated their authority and appealed to the presbyterian ministry in Scotland.⁴⁸

His notoriety as ‘a contender against defections’ prompted the twenty-ninth convention in June 1686 to send Colin Alison and William Nairn on a fact-finding mission to Houston to verify accusations of his misconduct and to discuss the Societies’ testimony. Clearly the Societies viewed Houston as a potential recruit to their ministry, despite accusations of misconduct. In September, Alison and Nairn brought back a ‘satisfying’ account of their conference with Houston and others to the thirty-first convention that stated that Houston had agreed with their testimony in every point, had commended the Societies’ methods and had answered the ‘strange reports’ of his misconduct. Houston resolved to come to Scotland and the thirty-first convention appointed James Boyle to confer with Houston over a call, conditional on Houston clearing himself of the strange reports. Before Boyle departed, further charges of ‘a personal nature’ were raised against Houston by Society people who had lived in Ireland, but Boyle brought Houston and James Kinloch back to the thirty-second convention on 22 December.

From their first meeting Renwick embraced Houston with enthusiasm as ‘right for the cause’. Indeed, Houston’s principles were so close to Renwick’s that he could see ‘no reason’ to deny Houston a call. Much of what Houston stood for was also agreeable to the hardliners in the convention. He had defended the ‘suffering party’ in Scotland; he had refused to baptise the children of those who paid extractions; he rejected the ministry’s compliance with the Irish regime; and he had given testimony against joining with Argyll. Crucially, like Shields, he also agreed with a draft of the *Informatory Vindication* that included accepting withdrawal from the moderate ministry, although Houston did say he was ‘ignorant’ of some facts of the dispute. However, doubts remained, as the thirty-second convention did not issue a call, but sent Houston to preach privately among the Societies for further trial before he returned to Ireland in the spring. At some point Houston must have indicated his desire to return as the thirty-fourth convention sent £5 sterling and an agent to bring Houston’s family over to Scotland.⁴⁹ On his return, Renwick was filled with admiration for Houston’s straightness with the testimony and his preaching’s discovery of the spirit of Antichrist. Although Shields does not mention a formal call, it seems likely that Houston was given one, as he admitted elders in Galloway and Nithsdale in July and the Societies’ activist Helen

48. Shields, *FCD*, 252; Greaves, *God’s Other Children*, 206-7, 210.

49. Shields, *FCD*, 252-3, 261-2, 278, 312; Houston, *Letters*, 215-9. Greaves states that Houston turned down a formal call from the convention and returned to Ireland in early 1687, but Renwick’s letter a few weeks after the convention seems to indicate that no solemn call had yet been offered. Cf. Greaves, *God’s Other Children*, 211; Houston, *Letters*, 218-9.

Alexander heard him field preach in the Lammermuir Hills.⁵⁰

The presence of Kinloch, who had been 'sent by some societies in Ireland', confirms that a rudimentary societies' structure was already in existence in late 1686 'in the respective places in Ireland' where Houston had ministered. It was probably through Kinloch that 'some people' in Ireland sent a letter to the Societies in early 1687 which was answered by the thirty-third convention on 2 March. The convention's reply attempted to explain the history, divisions and testimony of the Societies and asked the Irish societies to weigh up the acceptability of correspondence with them, based on the principles of the *Informatory Vindication* which they offered to send to Ireland once it was emitted.⁵¹

The Irish societies were not brought under the ambit of the Scottish convention. Rather, they were a sister organisation which, unlike the societies in northern England, was not integrated into the structure of the convention. This was probably due to the practicalities of sending delegates to the convention and recognition of their independent development. Its emergence coincided with Houston being deposed from the ministry in Ireland and his followers being denied admission to the sacraments as 'as scandalous persons' in February 1687.⁵²

In Ireland Houston preached to significant numbers, and by July when he returned to Scotland, Renwick reported that 'sundry societies' in Ireland had left the defections and opened correspondence with their Scottish brethren. However, renewed controversy surrounding Houston induced the thirty-fifth convention in August to send James Wilson to meet with Irish ministers, but the outcome of his journey is unknown. Houston, too, returned to Ireland after July and soon after correspondence between Scotland and Ireland halted. Something had clearly gone badly wrong and by late December Renwick was convinced something strange, perhaps sickness, had happened to Houston, although he did note that Irish dissent was on the increase.⁵³

Houston had been captured and imprisoned in Dublin. As discussed below, he was rescued in Scotland by the Societies on 18 June 1688, but sustained injuries which prevented his preaching and was then suspended from public preaching. After his capture the link to Ireland was maintained as a sideline rather than as a significant focus of Societies' activities. Only a few letters from Ireland survive. While they confirm the development of a General Correspondence in Ireland, they do not convey any sense of a substantial network or a sophisticated interaction with the Societies beyond

50. Houston, *Letters*, 239-40; David George Mullan (ed.), *Women's Life Writing in Early Modern Scotland: Writing the Evangelical Self c.1670 – c1730* (2003), 201.

51. Houston, *Letters*, 216, 217-18; 'Letter from some people in Ireland', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 177; Shields, *FCD*, 286, 287-307. *An Informatory Vindication* was not emitted for a further nine months.

52. Greaves, *God's Other Children*, 210.

53. Houston, *Letters*, 240, 256; Shields, *FCD*, 311, 317; 'Letter to Mr Dav: Houstoun or Mr Ja: Renwick Aug. 3. 1687.', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 216.

a shared rejection of toleration.⁵⁴ That imbalance is evident in the Irish Societies' requests for assistance from Scotland. On 6 June 1688 the Irish General Correspondence, 'tho small & few in number both of persons, & sufferings', requested the services of Shields or an ordained minister until one could be found to remedy their 'lowe case & condition'. Their request was not met and on 26 December they reiterated their request for a minister and support, but it was several months before Houston returned to Ireland.⁵⁵

The Societies' interest in Ireland was sparked through their desire to obtain a minister, rather than to develop a network. Houston was of worth to the Societies in expanding their ministerial cadre and developing their ecclesiastical structure, but even after his rescue he remained a divisive figure within the Societies due to the allegations of scandal which dogged him. Around Houston a small network of Irish societies had developed in Antrim independently of those in Scotland. They were far more heavily dependent on ministerial leadership than those in Scotland, probably as the dispute in Ireland centred on the complicity of the ministry with the state, rather than persecution. As a result they were comparatively small in size next to the Scottish network. For Greaves, the Societies' relationship with the Irish Correspondence was one between 'equals and brethren' bonded by their shared commitment to the Covenants, but in truth it was one based on inequality.⁵⁶ In recruiting Houston, the Societies removed the major prop to the correspondence in Ireland and left them in a low condition. The establishment of a parallel correspondence was a welcome development for the Societies, but they paid little attention to its needs, as Ireland continued to be of little strategic importance for the convention. Perhaps unfortunately for the Irish Societies, the Societies' renewed interest in Ireland in 1687 had come about just as the introduction of toleration added a new dimension to the divisions between the presbyterian factions in Scotland.

V. The 'Cope Stone' of Defection

Following James's failure to induce parliament to grant a liberty for Catholics, he resorted to the use of the royal prerogative to push toleration through. On 12 February 1687, he issued by his 'absolute power' the Declaration of Indulgence for Scotland which suspended the penal laws against Catholics, introduced a liberty for Quakers, allowed 'Moderate Presbyterians' to preach and

54. 'Conclusions about Fellowship meetings 26 Apr: 1688', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 231. For an outline of the Irish Societies see Greaves, *God's Other Children*, 211-13.

55. 'The Humbl Suplication of John Moor by vertue of a comission from the General Corispondant Mitting of the sufferers of Christ (tho small & few in number both of persons, & sufferings) in Irland, to the General Corispondant Mitting of the faifull (& in Christ valiant) suffrers of Christ, in Scotland. June 6. 1688.', EUL MSS. La.III.350. Unnumbered manuscript after No. 231. Greaves, *God's Other Children*, 213.

56. Greaves, *God's Other Children*, 210.

meet in private houses, and indemnified all religious groups for previous breaches of the penal laws, excluding those guilty of treasonable speeches at conventicles, i.e. the Societies. It also introduced a new oath to replace the Test which acknowledged James as the 'rightful King and Supream Governour', committed its swearers to defend James and his successors' 'absolute Power and Authority', and to never rise in arms against them. As Harris has argued, James's edicts declaring toleration were entirely dependent on his status as absolute monarch of Scotland and 'set out to establish royal absolutism in Scotland, in practice as much as in theory'.⁵⁷

For the Societies, who had long warned of the dangers of popery and arbitrary government, and that James's rule would lead to the 'in let of Popery', the edict's combination of the establishment of James's absolute power with a liberty for Catholics was a propaganda gift which was used to harness popular anti-Catholicism and undermine their moderate opponents.⁵⁸ At a field preaching soon after the first edict, Renwick disowned James as a tyrant, warned of massacre by papists and criticised the moderate presbyterian ministry by stating that he could not see how the edict's 'fire-side preachings' and discharging of field preachings could 'be testified to by these ministers'. The Societies also responded by ordering a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer in April against the edict, which denounced James's absolute power, encroachment on the prerogatives of God by offering oaths, the snares offered to moderate presbyterians and the danger of 'utter destruction' that toleration posed to free preaching.⁵⁹

At the outset, the moderate presbyterian ministry were also hostile to edict due to its restrictions on free preaching, its primary design to help Catholics and the imposition of the oath recognising James's absolute power. Even when James issued a second edict on 31 March which relieved moderate presbyterians of taking the oath recognising his absolute status, they continued to reject it. However, following a third edict of indulgence on 5 July 1687, in which moderate presbyterian ministers were offered similar liberties to those offered to Catholics, by being licensed to preach in houses and chapels as long as nothing seditious was preached, they accepted it and sent a loyal address to thank James for its introduction.⁶⁰

For the moderates, toleration provided a chance to rebuild their shattered presbyterian

57. Harris, *Revolution*, 166-71; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 417n, 424n. On 22 May, 1686, Renwick noted that Parliament was 'not likely to entirely agree' to the liberty as 'a great many folk' were 'gapping for a dissension between the Popish and Prelatic parties'. He also expected that 'Argyle's party' would join in 'an uncouth hotch-potch' with the Episcopalians to oppose the liberty. Houston, *Letters*, 202.

58. For the popular fears surrounding a liberty for Catholics, see Harris, *Revolution*, 149-53, 168-9, 175-6.

59. Shields, *FCD*, 307; Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 456-7, 470, 475. From its content Renwick's sermon on Canticles 1.7 was preached soon after the first edict in mid February. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 437-77. Although the Societies' day of humiliation was ordered at the thirty-third convention on 2 March in response to the first edict, it was not held until April, after the second edict.

60. Harris, *Revolution*, 172-3; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 426n, 428n.

infrastructure, but that infrastructure mostly complimented, rather than challenged, the Societies in their strongholds. The distribution of presbyterian meetings established under toleration to mid 1688 was mainly concentrated on the Central and Eastern shires. Of the 72 meetings established under toleration, 56 were in the Central and Eastern shires, with only fifteen in the presbyterian stronghold of the Western shires, mainly in the presbyteries of Glasgow and Hamilton, and none at all in the Societies' southern strongholds. Far from being a national settlement, the toleration settlement was intensely regional in its impact and reinforced the isolation of the Societies' strongholds in the West and South West from the Restoration settlement of the church.⁶¹

However, to mark the presbyterian ministry's acceptance of toleration the minister John Anderson held a triumphal open air communion at Earlstoun in the Societies' stronghold of the Glenkens in the presence of a thousand communicants and twelve other ministers on 15 July.⁶² The Societies responded to presbyterian ministry's acceptance of toleration with another day of humiliation, but their response was muted due to Renwick being ill.⁶³ By the late summer Renwick had recovered and began to preach against the presbyterian ministry's acceptance of toleration. He attacked toleration as the 'cope stone on all our other steps of defection' which had caused the Lord to hide himself from Scotland, and condemned the moderate ministry's acceptance of this 'sinful liberty ... as a mercy, or our duty'.⁶⁴ After a further proclamation against seditious preachers and conventicles in October, in which field preachers and their hearers were to face the utmost force of the law, and a proclamation offering a reward for Renwick, Houston and Shields 'dead or alive', Renwick fully vented against toleration.⁶⁵ He declared that James's 'popish toleration' was the 'strongest bond of sin, that ever the Church of Scotland was bound with' enforced by 'absolute authority, which none of our kings before did ever assume to themselves' until 'this popish usurper'. He continued that the 'Kirk hath no power, but what he gives her' and that soon there would be 'no parliaments, and then after that no Protestants' and that it would lead to 'the burying' of covenanted reformation as ministers could not preach in defence of the Covenants or the lawfulness of defensive arms without it being considered rebellion.⁶⁶

Despite the apocalyptic tone, Renwick may have been opposed to the form, rather than the

61. McNeill & MacQueen, *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707*, 399.

62. Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 178.

63. Shields, *FCD*, 310, 317; Shields, *LoR*, 135-6; Houston, *Letters*, 234-5.

64. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 515. Renwick's sermon on Canticles 5.16 was preached in September 1687. Printed in Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 509-21.

65. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 413n; Privy Council of Scotland, *A Proclamation Against Field Conventicles, and offering a Reward for apprehending James Renwick, Alexander Shiels, and ----- Houstoun, Seditious Field Preachers* (Edinburgh, 1687).

66. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 483. Renwick's two sermons on Canticles 5.16 postdate October 1687. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 478-508.

principle, of toleration. In the same sermon in which he attacked the ministry's acceptance of toleration, he also laid out the grounds on which the Societies could have had 'fewer scruples to embrace it'. First, if James 'had given a commandment to bring back all our captives, that are cast in foreign lands'. Second, if he 'had set all our prisoners at liberty without imposing oaths'. And third, if he 'had commanded them to do all that is commanded in the written word of God'. Given the political situation and the Societies' antipathy towards James, the latter two were impossibilities, but Renwick's rhetorical grounds for considering toleration point to the possibility that he may have been prepared to accept some form of toleration. Walker certainly claimed that Renwick would have embraced the Revolution settlement's form of toleration which embraced all Protestant denominations.⁶⁷

However, Renwick distrusted the absolute monarch's motives in introducing toleration. In his view it was 'never designed for our good', but 'designed by men, for bad, politic, subtle, and deceitful ends' to divide 'sufferers from sufferers [across the British Isles]... to make the suffering party odious to one another'. Thus he resolved that 'we must set to, with tooth and nail ... to oppose this course of defection'.⁶⁸

From the outset of James's plans to grant a liberty to Catholics or introduce toleration, he had never intended it to benefit militant presbyterians. All the laws against militant presbyterian and field conventiclers were to be enforced with the 'utmost severity' to prevent political subversion of church and state.⁶⁹ Yet, paradoxically, it was the Societies who benefited from the imposition of toleration. To begin with, Renwick's preaching against the moderate's acceptance of toleration was challenged in the fields. The presbyterian ministers sent Samuel Arnot, Gabriel Semple and William Erskine into the fields to let 'none halt' between them and the Societies, but their counter campaign of illegal conventicles soon fizzled out.⁷⁰

Toleration had reinforced the Societies's isolation from the presbyterian ministry, but it also created opportunities for the Societies. Nearly all the ministers who had preached to breakaway societies either accepted it or ceased field preaching.⁷¹ Only Arnot continued to field preach, but when he died in March 1688 the Societies were left without any rivals in the fields.⁷² According to

67. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 484; Walker, *BP*, I, 275. Compared to Pierre Bayle's vision of toleration, which accepted the sincerity of differing denominations' views, neither the toleration of 1687, which excluded militant forms of Protestantism, nor the post-Revolution settlement, which excluded Catholics, were universal forms of toleration, but expansions in the state's tolerance towards differing denominations provided they posed no threat to the state.

68. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 483, 484, 507.

69. Harris, *Revolution*, 154, 164, 170, 171.

70. Erskine, *Journal*, 194; Houston, *Letters*, 238, 239.

71. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 394.

72. *Fasti*, II, 426.

Walker, 'the simple and misled' of the breakaway societies 'saw themselves led and left upon the ice; [and] many of them returned with blushing to Mr Renwick'.⁷³ However, agreement with the leadership of the remaining breakaway societies took longer: Kinsture died in a drunken brawl, and it was not until the Revolution that Dick, Dun and Cathcart sought reunion.⁷⁴

Toleration also aided reunion with the Russellites, as the militant factions who opposed it drew together behind the Societies' standard. In mid August 1685 the Russellites had begun to disintegrate after many of them were taken at a conventicle and Renwick was able to hold a fruitful meeting in Fife with some of their members.⁷⁵ In May 1686 Renwick and Boyd held a conference with Flint and Henry Love of the Russellites, where they disagreed over Renwick and Hamilton's role in frustrating Flint's ordination at Groningen, but found common ground over the authority of the Societies' declarations and the Russellite objections to paying taxes and desire to reform the names of the days and months. However, the main impetus to reconciliation came in mid 1687 when Flint accepted toleration and the Russellites split.⁷⁶ This allowed Renwick to preach in Fife for the first time and in August 1688 the fortieth convention sent Walker to bring some of the Russellites back into the Societies' fold.⁷⁷

The impact of King James's imposition of toleration brought a new dimension to the Societies' dispute with the presbyterian ministry. Its acceptance by the moderate ministry and the leadership of some of the breakaway factions drove the presbyterian movement further apart, but it also served as a recruiting sergeant for the Societies by fatally undermining the breakaway societies and drawing the majority of militant community back together under the Societies' standard. However, the spectre of the Apocalypse, raised by the prospect of Catholic toleration and the disarray among presbyterian ranks, also had an impact on the Societies.

VI. 'Loath To Break Among Themselves'

My great discouragements comes from ourselves. Though there be one part of the people that is straight and steadfast in matters of God, yet there is another part is that inclined to laxness and instability. They will not leave us, and we have not as yet sufficient ground to refuse their concurrence; but they are weights upon our hands, and are always to be drawn, because they will not follow.

– Renwick on the Societies, 15 July 1687.⁷⁸

By mid 1686 the Societies had been once again gripped by apocalyptic expectation. Both Walker and

73. Walker, *BP*, I, 89.

74. Shields, *FCD*, 369.

75. Carslaw, *Letters*, 132.

76. Houston, *Letters*, 239.

77. Shields, *FCD*, 237, 238-42, 358; *Fasti* I, 143, 330.

78. Houston, *Letters*, 239.

Shields record that strange apparitions were seen in the West, particularly 'the falling of bonnets, and armies, as guns, swords, spears, &c' which were 'much talked of at the time' so that 'many concluded they presaged somewhat more than ordinary that this land was to meet with'.⁷⁹ At about the same time a great comet appeared in the sky, reaching its brightest on 27 August.⁸⁰ Soon after the thirty-first convention appointed a day of fasting and prayer on account the Lord 'hiding of his face ... from his people' and that the causes 'might be searched out and mourned over' so that he would return 'to his people to visit them with his presence and salvation'.⁸¹ On 30 December Renwick and Alexander Shields held a fast on the forty-four causes of the Lord's hiding himself from Scotland, which built on Smith's twenty-two steps of defection of 1681 and Renwick's fast at Darmead of 1683.⁸² And in January 1687 Renwick believed that 'that dark hour is now very near at hand, which shall come upon the church before the fall of the Antichrist, and the Lord's glorious appearing for His church, which shall be in the last days' as in *Isaiah* 26.2-8.⁸³ Within that context, Renwick saw the question of the Societies' testimony as of paramount importance in winning back the Lord's favour, as the wrong way of 'carrying the ark' would 'keep it longer in the wilderness' and 'never carry across the Jordan'. Nonetheless, he was in 'continual fear' over what to do for, as he reflected, within the Societies there was 'a choice handful', 'some not so fixed and resolute as they ought to be' and others 'of little principle, but follow example', which had led some hardliners to worry that the Lord was hiding from them. Renwick's solution was to look for 'a narrow sieve' to lay 'many aside' in which the 'good strain' would 'not fall to ground'.⁸⁴ For Renwick purges and further purification of the Societies to assuage the Lord's wrath were the solution.

At least part of the solution had fallen into Renwick's hands with the drafting of the *Informatory Vindication*, as it developed from a refutation of the charges against the Societies into an agreed testimony to which all Society people would be expected to adhere. The Vindication was initially drafted by Boyd. In early 1686 his six-page 'rude draft' was carefully constructed to contain 'nothing rash' and at the twenty-seventh convention on 5-6 May it was revised and the Lord's approval sought in a fast day. However, Boyd's departure abroad led the twenty-eighth convention on 2 June to send it to Renwick. On 13 August, Renwick described it as not being perfect, but that nothing rash would be done with it as 'friends' had determined that Hamilton and Renwick should see it

79. Shields, *FCD*, 253-4.

80. Comet 1686 R1 first appeared on 12 August 1686 and was observable for 34 days until 16 September. NASA.

81. Shields, *FCD*, 262-3.

82. 'Causes of a Fast kept at Cairntable Dec. 30. 1686', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 1. 210; Houston, *Letters*, 223; Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 233-48.

83. Houston, *Letters*, 215, 226.

84. Houston, *Letters*, 214-5.

before it went forth. Hamilton had passed adverse comment on Boyd's draft in a letter of 5 August, now lost, but his concerns were overtaken by proceedings at the thirtieth convention on 18 August at which control of the *Vindication* was passed to Renwick and Michael Shields for further revision. In their hands the scale, content and objective of the *Vindication* were altered in a more hardline direction, as Renwick was able to reassure Hamilton that his apprehensions over Boyd's version no longer applied: 'I need not speak any thing, for we have altered it'.⁸⁵ Without Boyd's presence the opposition to Renwick's hard line lacked a figurehead and Renwick was able to impress his will back on the convention. Renwick's control of the *Vindication* gave him an advantage over his internal opponents, as he and Shields were able to define the Societies' testimony over such vexatious issues as withdrawal from the presbyterian ministry in Hamiltonian terms. Even before its formal ratification at the thirty-third convention on 2 March 1687 it was being used to test adherence to the Societies' testimony, including the 'new' article on withdrawal from the ministry drafted by Renwick and Shields.⁸⁶

The *Vindication* also paved the way for the Societies to admit new church officers to enforce discipline and to replace defections and deaths. The idea had first come from Hamilton, in a letter now lost, but known from Renwick's reply of 21 October 1685 which had noted that they had 'honest old men' from their 'settled state' and that the Societies were 'resolving to set about' choosing new elders and deacons, but that progress had been retarded due to their divisions.⁸⁷ However, once they had ratified the *Vindication*, the thirty-third convention solicited the Lord's approval for the 'right way of constituting and settling elderships'. The first elders were admitted in mid July 1687 with further admissions in October. Although the admission of elders coincided with the presbyterian ministry's acceptance of toleration, the Societies maintained that it followed the *Vindication*'s formula that their admission was neither schism nor 'setting up a church within a church'.⁸⁸ Adherence to the Societies' hardline testimony would be enforced.

However, the opposition to Renwick within the Societies drew a different conclusion from the hardliners. For them, the solution to the disarray within presbyterian ranks and to offering effective

85. Houston, *Letters*, 217, 220.

86. Houston, *Letters*, 194, 202, 207, 212, 216-17, 220; *An Informatory Vindication*, 71-92; Shields, *FCD*, 245, 246, 254, 287. The new fifth article became the fourth article in the final printed version.

87. Houston, *Letters*, 244. Both Houston and Carlaw misplaced Renwick's letter after his letter of 15 July 1687, when it refers to events up to 21 October 1685. Houston, *Letters*, 241-5; Carlaw, *Letters*, 232-6. It is also mentioned in the convention's letter to Hamilton alongside another letter Renwick had sent to Groningen, now lost. Shields, *FCD*, 185; Carlaw, *Letters*, 236.

88. Shields, *FCD*, 308; Houston, *Letters*, 240, 244; Shields, *LoR*, 240; 'Form and Order of the Admission of Elders, as done by Mr James Renwick, at Darnead; and several other places of the Country where he laboured', Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 559-71. Shields only mentioned the admission of elders in October 1687 and is silent on the Societies long-term plans to do so. Shields, *FCD*, 319.

opposition to the Restoration regime lay in a strategy of maintaining the Societies' unity and building bridges with some moderate presbyterians, rather than the hardliners' desire for purges and separation. As Renwick consolidated his hard-line position at home, Linning's progress abroad took a surprising turn. As discussed above, Hamilton had precluded Linning's studying at Utrecht, but Linning studied there during Hamilton's absence in Switzerland, as will be discussed in chapter six.⁸⁹ According to Walker, who was in charge of the Societies' 'contributions and distributions', Linning's 'advances' abroad were due to money from Lady Kersland's family in Utrecht, with whom he had become close: Linning later married Kersland's sister Margaret.⁹⁰ Like Boyd, Linning had become close to moderate presbyterians opposed to the Renwickite hardliners in the Societies, and it was their funding which supported his studies until he returned to Scotland in July 1687. Kersland, who was probably responsible for funding both Linning and Boyd's studies, also returned at the same time for on 15 July Renwick informed Hamilton that he was afraid of Kersland 'in nothing so much as in the business of Mr Boyd'.⁹¹

Renwick's fears were soon fulfilled. News of Boyd's ordination reached the thirty-fifth convention on 3 August. The long-expected confrontation with Boyd, which would test the Societies' commitment to their hard-line testimony on withdrawal from the presbyterian ministry, had come, just after the presbyterian ministry's acceptance of toleration had widened the breach between the presbyterian factions. According to Shields, the news of Boyd put them 'in some amazement, he not having acquainted us with his purpose, (though he transmitted several letters to us)' and 'contrary to his undertaking when he went abroad'.⁹² Shields implied that Boyd had acted in a duplicitous manner, but given the facts that he was awarded a testimonial for ordination, the convention had partially funded his studies and Renwick's suspicion of Kersland's involvement in Boyd's business, Boyd's ordination could not have come as much of a surprise. Remarkably, there is neither mention of which ministers ordained Boyd, nor criticism of the form of his ordination by either the Societies or their moderate opponents. Boyd had been ordained at Groningen, but the presbyterian ministry remained curiously silent in comparison to their outcry over Renwick's ordination. According to Shields, Boyd returned not long before the thirty-seventh convention in December.⁹³ However, once again Renwick's correspondence contradicts Shields by providing evidence that Boyd attended the thirty-sixth convention on 5 October. Shields also

89. 'Mr T[homas] Linnings letter to the Societies Utrecht March 11. 1687', EUL MSS. La.III.344. Vol 2. No. 211. Shields, *FCD*, 267, 312.

90. Walker, *BP*, I, 126; *Fasti*, III, 314. Hamilton had been friends with Lady Kersland's family in 1682, but had fallen out with them by late 1685. Shields, *FCD*, 206.

91. Shields, *FCD*, 318, 361; Houston, *Letters*, 240.

92. Shields, *FCD*, 317.

93. Shields, *FCD*, 317, 319-20.

underplayed the significance of the confrontation between Renwick and Boyd, which was fundamental to the future direction of the Societies and inflicted a substantial defeat on Renwick and his hardline supporters of separation from the presbyterian ministry.

At the thirty-sixth convention Boyd sought to smooth over the hardliners' dissatisfaction over his ordination. He was challenged on two specific points. First, how his declaration that he 'neither was joined, nor would join with us, nor any other party' was consistent with a paper he had left on his departure which declared that 'his withdrawing...[was in]... no way to separate or disjoin' from the Societies. And second, if he judged the acceptance of toleration as a sufficient ground for discountenancing ministers, when, in his former paper, he had signified his dislike of ministers against whom the Societies had exceptions. The hardliners deemed Boyd's answer to the former 'unsatisfactory'; according to Renwick, Boyd was 'not desirous to incorporate with us', but did not clarify his intentions. As to the latter, Boyd argued that no matter what he personally would do, he would not forbid professors from hearing ministers who had sat in the assembly that had delivered the loyal address to James or acted on their direction to preach in the country. Boyd's reply illustrates that the impact of toleration on the Societies was far more divisive than previously thought. The convention inflicted a defeat on Renwick and the hardliners by concluding a compromise resolution which did not openly call or hear Boyd, but also did not 'discourage and discountenance' him 'so far as not to hear him' in family worship. Renwick point-blank refused to accept their decision and stated that he 'would keep at a distance and not concur' with Boyd 'in the public work'. He also questioned the validity of the convention's vote by publicly refusing to 'determine matters of such extent and importance' without his brethren, who in his view 'by providence were not present'.⁹⁴

At the thirty-seventh convention in December, Renwick drew on the rule that one convention's resolutions had to be approved by the next to force a re-run over the issue of Boyd's acceptance, this time doubtless with his brethren present. According to Shields, a 'strange' resolution was passed that no one should be offended 'at any who should call, or hear Mr William Boyd', although some had exceptions against him for his method of obtaining licence from Groningen and a larger group for concealing his plans, as they were 'loath to break among themselves' on this head and 'out of tenderness' towards Boyd whom they hoped would be cleared of their exceptions.⁹⁵

According to Renwick, Boyd professed agreement with the Societies' testimony and offered to join with them, a reversal of his prior position and a repetition of his strategy in mid 1686. Boyd seems to have been mindful of the attendance of Renwick's brethren on this occasion. He granted

94. Houston, *Letters*, 253-4.

95. Shields, *FCD*, 319-20.

that it was lawful for people to 'abstract' themselves from those who professed toleration and spoke of endeavouring to discover the sin of accepting toleration, but could not see the expediency of such a strategy. He then made a deft diplomatic ploy by offering to leave Scotland, rather than be 'the instrument of a breach' amongst the Societies, which left Renwick and the hardliners in 'no small perplexity ... how to carry anent him' for refusing to call him would cause 'very great animosity and breach' among the Societies, as their grounds for refusing a call were 'not valid enough'. Thus, with 'some averseness', the 'most part' were forced to accept the position of the previous convention that those without clearness to call or hear Boyd 'should not be offended with those that might do it' and vice versa. Once again, they agreed to disagree: Boyd was not issued with a joint call, but also not prevented from being called by some societies. Defeated for a second time, Renwick once again rejected the convention's resolution, but his defiance did not last:

put in perplexity, not knowing what to do, seeing many sad inconveniencies to follow, if I had opposed their determination. So with a full heart, I forebore; but afterwards I opened my heart to Mr Boyd.⁹⁶

Once passed by a second convention, the decision to accept Boyd could not be reopened unless evidence in the hands of the Dutch ministers at Groningen was released. Boyd's breakthrough shattered Renwick and Hamilton's hardline ideological platform and opened up the question of the Societies' testimony towards the presbyterian ministry once again, perhaps even the possibility of a slide towards accepting toleration and union. It was a crushing blow for Renwick who responded with a vigorous campaign of field preaching against the tolerated ministry and his *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* (1688), usually referred to as *The Testimony Against Toleration*, to secure the Societies' opposition to both. It was also the campaign which led to his martyrdom.

VII. 'Death to Me is a Bed for the Weary'

Since I came to this place, I have lodged with Thomas and John and lest I should trouble mine own spirit, I have desired any to keep silent anent my being here, nor reproved any for coming into my quarters, whatever the hazard might be; I left that to the providence of God, and people to their own direction, and I find it not the worst way.
– Renwick to Alexander Shields, 12 January 1688.⁹⁷

Two months after his defeat at the thirty-seventh convention Renwick was captured in Edinburgh

96. Houston, *Letters*, 255-6. Kersland diplomatically supported Renwick's decision to compromise to avoid further divisions.

97. Houston, *Letters*, 260.

and executed on 17 February 1688. In his last days Renwick had conducted a bold campaign against the authority of James VII and toleration which was at times reckless with regards to his safety. As noted above, Renwick was aware that he was taking risks, but trusted in providence. He did not consciously set out to be martyred, but he was conscious of the possibility and his behaviour had made his martyrdom more likely.

Renwick was under considerable pressure. By early 1688 he had spent over four years as a hunted outlaw. Although general persecution had declined after the Killing Times, the authorities had sharpened their efforts against Renwick and the Societies' leadership. On 9 December 1686 the Privy Council offered a reward of £100 Sterling for Renwick 'dead or alive' and in the following months Alexander Shields reports that fifteen 'most desperate searches' were undertaken specifically for Renwick which involved 'breaking into cellars, and breaking down the ceilings of houses' and that 'several gentlemen' had 'offered to give the soldiers notice of him'. On 18 October 1687 the reward was reissued and extended to include both Shields and Houston.⁹⁸ The authorities' targeted action claimed the lives of, or captured, some of the Societies' leadership close to Renwick. In late 1685 Hardhill was finally taken and executed, and three others killed after intelligence led troops to their hiding place in Fenwick parish.⁹⁹ On 20 December 1686 David Steel of Skellyhill, a former preses of the convention who had frequently hidden Renwick, was tracked down and shot in Lesmahagow parish.¹⁰⁰ And in January 1688, word reached the Societies that Houston had been taken in Ireland.¹⁰¹

The prolonged physical and psychological pressures on Renwick took their toll and led to the onset of what appears to be a stress-related condition. Renwick described his workload, 'not withstanding of all the persecution', as enough to 'keep ten ministers busy'. On 28 February 1685, Renwick reported that 'after little sleep, sickness so possessed me' that he missed a convention and for two days he was so incapacitated that he reckoned that if he had been at the convention when it was attacked he would have been 'taken from all trading; for my body is so weakened with much travel, that though I travel more than any, yet I cannot come so good speed as others, when need requireth'. On 15 July 1687 he reported similar symptoms. He was frail and sick from travel, night wanderings, unseasonable sleep and frequent night preaching in all weathers, to the point that he

98. Privy Council of Scotland, *A Proclamation Offering of One hundred pound Sterling, to any who shall bring in the Person of Mr James Renwick (a seditious Field-Preacher) dead or alive* (Edinburgh, 1686); *A Proclamation Against Field Conventicles, and offering a Reward for apprehending James Renwick, Alexander Shiels, and ----- Houstoun, Seditious Field Preachers* (Edinburgh, 1687); Shields, *LoR*, 145.

99. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 452-3; Howie, *Scots Worthies*, 596-600. See Appendices 5.1 & 5.2.

100. Thomson, *MGoS*, 274-8; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 549-50; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 357; EUL MSS La.III.350. No.116. See Appendix 5.2.

101. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 442; Houston, *Letters*, 256.

was often incapable of 'any work'. He suffered from 'fits of swooning and fainting', seldom taking 'any meat or drink, but it fights my stomach', and as for 'strong drink', he could 'almost take none of it' - a set of symptoms which Renwick reported the 'work' cast him back into.¹⁰² Alexander Shields described Renwick as so 'infirm and sick' that he could not mount a horse and was carried with great difficulty from place to place to field preach. And following his defeats at the conventions in late 1687 Renwick suffered another 'sore fit of sickness, but it lasted not'.¹⁰³

What drove Renwick on was his commitment to offer a public testimony against toleration. In the latter half of 1687 Renwick took his field preaching campaign even further beyond the Societies' strongholds. On 15 July he had recently travelled 'though some places of the country where I had not been heretofore, and I hope not without fruit' and in September he preached at an armed conventicle at Craig Minnan on Duchal Moor in western Renfrewshire.¹⁰⁴ In late 1687 he moved into areas where the chances of his capture were even higher. In November and January 1688 he preached at Braid Craigs, just two miles south of Edinburgh, and in late December he narrowly escaped after a preaching at Peebles.¹⁰⁵ Edinburgh in particular became the focus of his activities at the end of 1687. While there he handled the first consignment of Societies' books smuggled in from the United Provinces, as will be discussed in chapter six, but his principal business was to compose with Michael Shields *The Testimony Against Toleration* with the aim of delivering it to a general meeting of presbyterian ministers.¹⁰⁶ However, no meeting was planned, so on 17 January he took the very risky step of personally delivering a copy of it into the hands of the moderator of the presbytery of Edinburgh, Hew Kennedy, in an encounter which was symbolic of the changes in Presbyterianism since the Restoration. While Renwick represented himself as the heir of the Protester tradition, Kennedy, who had been brought up by Samuel Rutherford and been deprived in 1660 as 'a very zealous Protestor', had accepted toleration.¹⁰⁷

The Testimony was later published by the Societies, but it does not appear to have been initially

102. Houston, *Letters*, 170, 234-5, 243. Renwick probably drank 'strong drink' in moderation, but he considered the immoderate use of tobacco as one of the causes of the Lord's wrath against Scotland. He was not opposed to the use of tobacco, but complained that 'some in time of public worship cannot be brought from it'. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 246.

103. Shields, *LoR*, 145; Houston, *Letters*, 260. After the thirty-seventh convention on 7 December, Renwick and Shields had preached together somewhere near Lowthers, probably on 11 December, after which they parted and Renwick became sick. Howie (ed), *Sermons*, 606.

104. Houston, *Letters*, 240; Shields, *LoR*, 154; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 447. Craig Minnan, OS Ref. NS 321 640, is also known as Covenanters' Hill. It is perhaps where Renwick's sermon on Canticles 4.16 at 'Lintoeh Steps' was preached in September 1687. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 509-21.

105. Shields, *LoR*, 146, 154; Houston, *Letters*, 256; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 447. At Duchal he preached on Revelations 12.1, Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 521-32.

106. Houston, *Letters*, 256, 261.

107. Shields, *LoR*, 147; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 446; *Fasti*, I, 127.

drafted or issued at the behest of the convention. In it Renwick conjured up presbyterian tradition from Knox to oppose toleration's 'conspiracy of popery and tyranny', but its primary target was the Societies' moderate presbyterian opponents who had accepted toleration and sent addresses to James VII 'in the name of all presbyterian ministers' and from the presbyterians of Edinburgh and Canongate. In Renwick's view, their actions justified James's introduction of popery, consented to 'scandalous conditions' on the ministry, and accepted a form of toleration 'wherein idolaters and hereticks have the greatest share'. The addresses were specifically attacked for their silence about Charles and James's invasion of the constitutions of church and state, and betrayal of 'the cause & the country' by disowning the covenanted reformation and those opposed to the 'anti-Christian usurpers', because of their 'stupid subjection and absolute allegiance' to a 'minister of Antichrist' and their 'rhapsody of flatteries' directed at James which more became 'court parasites' than presbyterians. It also testified against the 'corrupt mixture' of presbyterians who had accepted toleration and their ecclesiastical meetings. The tolerated ministers had become 'the servants of men' and 'forfeited' the honour of being the free servants of Christ by their 'cession of the war they should maintain against Antichrist'. While they continued in their defection the Societies could not submit to such 'declining brethren' without consenting to the encroachments made on church and state. Instead of preaching against the 'Throne of Iniquity ... and all that gave their power to the Beast, to support that tottering Kingdom', the tolerated ministers had condemned some of the principles of the Church 'in her best & purest times'. Instead of joining with the elect's cry for

vengeance against Babylon, & the destruction of the Whore, they pray for all blessings upon the person and government of a chief pimp of hers, who knows but ere long, by such prayers people may be induced ... to think it tolerable to pray for the Pope, as well as for a Popish tyrant.

Compared to the conciliatory tone of the *Informatory Vindication*, the Testimony was far more strident in tone and in its bitterness towards the presbyterian ministry. While it implicitly criticised Boyd's position, it left some room for manoeuvre by briefly stating that it did not doubt that there were some ministers 'who dare not concur in this conspiracy ... whom only ... the industry of our traducers does demur from concurring in this testimony'.¹⁰⁸

Renwick reinforced this message by field preaching around Edinburgh. At Braid Craigs on 22 January he preached against ministers' acceptance of 'anti-Christian toleration, flowing from the

108. James Renwick [and Michael Shields], *The testimony, of some persecuted Presbyterian ministers of the gospel, unto the covenanted reformation of the Church of Scotland, and to the present expedience of continuing to preach the gospel in the fields, and against the present antichristian toleration in its nature and design, &c.* / Given in to the ministers at Edeburgh by Mr. James Renwick upon the 17. Januarii [sic] 1688 (n.p., 1688), 417, 439-47.

fountain of absolute power'.¹⁰⁹ On 24 and 27 January he brought a similar message to Fife.¹¹⁰ He preached what proved to be his final sermon at Bo'ness on 29 January, which coincided with a day of thanksgiving for the James's Catholic queen being with child.¹¹¹

Renwick was captured on the morning of 1 February, not through his own risk taking, but through the mundane actions of customs officials who had been drawn to his lodgings on the Castle Hill in Edinburgh in the search for illicit goods, quite possibly the recently imported Societies' books. Renwick had been lodging in John Louckup's house, a delegate to the convention, with two others, possibly Thomas and John Latimer, who were also delegates. After a brief firefight he and his companions fled, but Renwick was taken in Castle Wynd. He was tried on 8 February and convicted by his own confession. For the authorities his imprisonment was an opportunity to get him to recant his hardline opposition to the regime and toleration. He was repeatedly approached by Catholic, Episcopalian and tolerated Presbyterian clerics and even given a reprieve to allow for more conferences with them, but Renwick refused to retract either his confession or testimony.¹¹²

Renwick testified against owning the sovereignty of James VII and payment of the Cess, and in favour of defensive arms to protect the free preaching of the Gospel. He also used his testimony to confirm the apocalyptic significance of his campaign to purify the Societies. The Societies were not to 'wearie' to maintain their testimonies until 'Christ goes forth to defeat Antichrist; with that name written on his thigh', a reference to the *Book of Revelation*. They were to 'beware of the ministers, that have accepted this toleration, and all others that bend that way, and follow them not'. For the moderates' acceptance of toleration had brought the Lord's wrath descending on Scotland: 'the cloud is fast, fast gathering which will fall down as the irruption and inundation of a flood, and overflow the land: happy are they who have fled into their city of refuge'. It was a distinct warning against Boyd's position towards the tolerated ministry.

Prior to his capture, the possibility of martyrdom seems to have been on Renwick's mind. In particular, his letter to Hamilton of 5 November has many striking parallels with his final actions and testimony. In it he stated that the Societies' 'trials', when their testimony was 'so rightly stated',

109. Shields, *LoR*, 154; Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 521-32.

110. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 538-40. Sermons on Psalm 45-10 and Luke 12.32, Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 532-49. Renwick required a guide to take him to his preachings in Fife. Houston, *Letters*, 261.

111. Sermon on *Isaiah* 53.1 printed in Renwick, *Collected Sermons*, 550-7; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 438.

112. Renwick, *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* (1688), 2-8; Houston, *Letters*, 260; Shields, *LoR*, 148-9; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 446; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 506. For Louckup see Wodrow, *History*, IV, 502-3; Houston, *Letters*, 284. John Louckup is perhaps the John Lauchop 'in Melrose' listed on the Fugitive Roll of 1684. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 26n. For the Latimer brothers of Cockethill, Lochmaben parish, Annandale see Wodrow, *History*, IV, 24n; Shields, *FCD*, 254, 445-8.

were due to their seeking 'Christ's glory' and that Christ would 'not tarry' when he returned to reclaim his interest which had been 'deceitfully abandoned and betrayed into the hands of man'. Those whose souls who were vexed by the 'abounding abomination [i.e. toleration]' would 'have a Zoar to fly unto, when the fire of God shall fall down upon our Sodom', an allusion to the story of Lot who fled to Zoar when fire and brimstone descended on the sinful city of Sodom, which Renwick associated with Edinburgh due to it being the site of the loyal addresses.¹¹³ His testimony also cited numerous biblical 'passages and promises' he had received while imprisoned which paralleled his own fate and that of the Societies alongside references from the *Book of Revelation* which gave assurances of eschatological salvation through the establishment of the New Jerusalem and the Beast and the false prophet being cast into a 'lake of fire and brimstone'. Renwick was also convinced that the Societies 'must be brought to that extremity, wherein there can be no longer subsistence without present help', by which he meant Christ's intervention, a view reminiscent of Hamilton's earlier scheme which had brought on the Killing Times discussed in chapter two. After his capture Renwick thought that he would be followed by further martyrs and identified some key Society people when threatened with torture, when he could have refused to cooperate. In November he had also noted 'a strange thirsting after my blood, but it moves me not; though they had it, they would not be satisfied'.¹¹⁴ And in his testimony he hoped his blood would 'either more silence reproaches or more ripen them for judgment' and 'make some more sparing to speak of those who shall come after me', for he was 'willing to pay this cost, both for their instruction, and my succeeders ease'. Renwick also reiterated his trust in providence displayed in his letter to Shields in his testimony, as he observed that 'it hath pleased the Lord to deliver me up into the hands of men', just as Christ's interest had been betrayed into the 'hands of men' and that he did not 'desire to escape this lot' for it was for God's 'glory and vindication'.¹¹⁵ Renwick bound together the themes of Edinburgh, toleration, and the Societies' cause into an apocalyptic vision in which his martyrdom was central to the drama. It was a powerful vision designed to put his stamp firmly back onto the Societies.

His final act was to confirm both his and the Societies' new testimony. In his testimony he was careful to seal the testimony 'of the day' as expressed in the *Informatory Vindication* and *The Testimony Against Toleration*. Since mid 1686 he had been redrafting his testimony to have it 'more wisely' expressed, 'more confirmed and corroborated' and to have new 'controversies inserted'. On his 'last day on earth', Renwick confirmed to Hamilton that he had moderated his earlier testimony. While

113. Renwick, *Antipas*, 6; Houston, *Letters*, 238, 253; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 428n.

114. Houston, *Letters*, 253.

115. Carlaw, *Letters*, 259; Renwick, *Antipas*, 2-4, 6.

still he adhered ‘unto the matter’ of the testimony he had left in Hamilton’s hands in 1683, he thought that ‘the manner of expression is in some things tart’ and that its naming of the ministers, ‘some of whereof are now in eternity’, was no longer pertinent to their present circumstances. When faced with execution he had come to some extent to realise that he had driven too hard and too fast. Renwick judged that his former testimony ‘therefore ... may be destroyed’, but he allowed Hamilton to retain it if he was troubled by its destruction or desired to clear any controversy as long as he kept his final letter with it and did not publish it.¹¹⁶

VIII. Towards Rapprochement with ‘the Dragonitick party’

Renwick had intended his martyrdom to solidify the Societies’ testimony against toleration and the tolerated presbyterian ministry. Yet, within a few months the Societies had moderated some of their positions and toned down some of the rhetoric of their war against Anti-Christ.

In the months that followed Renwick was eulogised in preaching and in print. At Lowthers on 11 March, Alexander Shields unequivocally condemned toleration, reprised the heads of Renwick’s testimony and placed Renwick in a line of Antipasses, a reference to Christ’s martyr Antipas in *Revelations* 2.12-13, from James Guthrie, martyred at the Restoration, to Cargill.¹¹⁷ And at Distinkhorn Hill in Galston parish on 15 April he preached two sermons. The first dealt with Renwick’s legacy:

The testimony against this anti-Christian tolleration is now sealed with blood. The testimony against this present tyrannical government of this Duke of York is now sealed with blood. The testimony of the gospel ordinances dispensed by Christ’s faithful servants in the persecuted field meetings, is now sealed with blood. The testimony for defensive arms is now sealed with blood. He testified against the land destroying sin of paying the Cess and the Locality, for bearing down of the free preaching of the Gospel let me tell you, O ye Cess payers, for I know there are many of you here ... ye are guilty of the murder of the Lord’s people, and of this martyr’s blood.

The second sermon dealt with the Societies’ obligations under the terms of the Solemn League and Covenant to oppose toleration.¹¹⁸ Shields and the Societies also published a series of pamphlets concerning Renwick, as will be discussed in chapter six, which included *The Testimony Against Toleration, Antipas* and the preceding sermons at Lowthers and Galston which placed Renwick’s martyrdom as central to the Societies’ testimony. Shields also composed a hagiographic life of

116. Renwick, *Antipas*, 6; Houston, *Letters*, 204; Carslaw, *Letters*, 264-5.

117. Preface, Lecture on Rev 2.12-13, Sermon on John 3.3-5 printed in Howie (ed), *Sermons*, 593-618.

118. Shields, *Some Notes or Heads of a Preface and a Lecture; Preached at Distinckorn-Hill: in the Parish of Gaastoun, April 15. 1688* (1688?).

Renwick, but its publication was curtailed by the Revolution.¹¹⁹

The sermons and publications confirmed Renwick's status as the culmination of the Societies' struggle and secured a hardline attitude towards toleration rather than Boyd's more moderate attitude. The image of the martyred Renwick was also useful in sustaining the stability of the Societies until suitable replacements could be found. The Societies did not want to repeat their experiences of 1680 and 1682, when a lack of ministerial oversight had encouraged schisms within militant ranks. In particular, according to Michael Shields, they feared the possibility of defections, especially from those of the left hand who were 'lukewarm' and 'greatest' in number, if they did not quickly replace Renwick.¹²⁰

Alexander Shields' projection of the martyred Renwick conveyed a sense of continuity, but Renwick's death provided the Societies with an opportunity to redefine themselves. On 7 March the thirty-eighth convention took steps to both secure and modify his legacy. On the one hand, some of their resolutions aimed to preserve Renwick's legacy by counterbalancing Boyd but, on the other, many resolutions sought to heal divisions in which Renwick had been instrumental.

Boyd's ministry remained a divisive issue, but there were signs that the thirty-eighth convention still hoped to win him back into the fields, as it appointed a day of prayer 'that he may be sent forth to the work of the ministry' as long as he was 'faithful and valiant in prosecuting the testimony' as the martyred Renwick had left it.¹²¹ Hamilton also used Renwick's name to maintain a hardline attitude towards Boyd. He believed that Boyd's 'yieldings' at the previous convention were a 'trick to get a footing amongst you, now when Great Renwick is out of the way' and urged the convention to get Boyd to write to Groningen to deliver a copy of his testimony and an account of his licensing into his hands citing *Isaiah* 28.16 as a warning: '... I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste'. The convention seems to have shared Hamilton's suspicions for in September Hamilton was labouring to fulfil their 'request' and Linning was to report on Hamilton's 'diligence at Groningen' regarding Boyd.¹²²

However, the thirty-ninth and fortieth conventions also set about quietly changing Renwick's attitude towards their banished brethren. In April 1687 Renwick had written to twenty-six Societies' prisoners sentenced to be banished to Barbados. For him banishment could not be evaded without

119. *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).

120. Shields, *FCD*, 354.

121. Shields, *FCD*, 336.

122. Shields, *FCD*, 329-30, 364. Hamilton choice of warning ironically echoed Boyd when he withdrew from ordination in 1683 in 'not daring to lay his house with such stones'. Shields, *FCD*, 87.

denying the Societies' testimony. He urged them to submit to providence and to reckon 'whatever sufferings you may meet with from your countrymen, from the seas, and from foreigners ... upon the honourable account of your duty'.¹²³ Renwick expected the prisoners to use banishment as a means of offering testimony from which only the Apocalypse offered any hope of relief:

when the time of gathering cometh the Lord will bring again His banished. He will bring them from all places whither they have been driven ... Yea, though the deep should be your grave, or though you die in a strange land, yet your deaths shall be a testimony, and shall cry for vengeance upon persecutors.¹²⁴

However, a year later the thirty-ninth convention received personal testimony from two of those banished to Barbados in 1687 of their brethren's condition under the 'bondage of slavery'. Instead of viewing their sufferings as a testimony against their persecutors, the convention organised the purchase of their brethren out of banishment and return to Scotland, as will be discussed in chapter six. The moderation of the Societies' stance towards banishment was opposed by the Irish Societies. They wrote to the convention objecting to the Societies' collections for those banished to Barbados, protesting that the banished should not be redeemed out of slavery as 'the people of God' should suffer and not accept deliverance, and that the Societies' actions were 'fretting at the chast[e]ning of the Lord'.¹²⁵

The convention also wrote to John Haddow, John Nisbet and Andrew Cameron in Utrecht, who had all been opposed by either Renwick or Hamilton. The letter to Haddow regarded a proposed martyrology project, as will be discussed in depth in chapter six, but the others were directed to those who had split with the Societies in 1683 and joined the moderates, and had studied for the ministry. Clearly their plan was to heal the rift created by Renwick and bring them back into the Societies' fold, in the latter two cases, as potential ministers. Their overtures met with a mixed response. Haddow continued to work with the Societies, but Nisbet did not bother to reply and Cameron, who expressed sympathy for the Societies, would not come to them as he was 'not of the same light' as Renwick's *Testimony Against Toleration*.¹²⁶ The thirty-eighth convention also approached ordained ministers. Kersland and James Wilson were sent to a Mr Darroch in Kintyre and the next convention invited him to a conference, only to find he had gone to Ireland.¹²⁷ They

123. The letters to the banished are dated April 1687 and 1687. Both Carslaw and Houston place the latter letter after 29 December 1687, but it is a follow up to the letter in April. Houston, *Letters*, 233-4, 257-9; Carslaw, *Letters*, 224-5, 248-50.

124. Carslaw, *Letters*, 249-50.

125. Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 184.

126. Shields, *FCD*, 327n, 327-8, 332-5, 336; 'Letter Societies to John Haddoway March. 7. 1688', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 226; 'Letter Societies to Mr Nisbit March 7. 1688', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 227.

127. Shields, *FCD*, 323, 341.

also approached Thomas Douglas in London, whom Renwick had specifically named as not to be joined with in 1683. In late 1686 Wilson had been sent to him to discover where he stood, despite Renwick's reservations. Hamilton had opposed such enquiries, but the thirty-seventh convention deemed his objections irrelevant, as Douglas 'in great measure' agreed with their testimony, had remained 'abstract' from their presbyterian opponents, and had 'for some years abstained' from his 'excessive' use of drink. However, Douglas was not issued with a call, perhaps because Hamilton maintained that Douglas's 'foul deserting' of the work in 1680 should lead them to 'walk circumspectly' or because Douglas withdrew to the United Provinces.¹²⁸

Boyd's ordination and Renwick's execution also transformed Linning's prospects for ordination. Soon after the newly ordained Boyd returned, the thirty-sixth convention resolved to send Linning for another season at the University of Utrecht. Once again the convention sought clarification of his adherence to the testimony and warning of who would ordain him. According to Shields, the convention also agreed to maintain him in Utrecht, but Walker is insistent that funding came primarily from Lady Kersland, a sign that Linning's contacts with exiled moderates continued.¹²⁹ Renwick's death clearly brought the timetable for ordination forward, as the thirty-eighth convention urgently wrote to Hamilton seeking Linning and Shields' ordination at Emden or elsewhere if they were not to lose all that they had 'wrought'. Their ordinations were intended to save the Societies from Boyd and his desire for union, but were also to prevent the possibility of schism. In the short term both were prevented, but in the long term Linning, Shields and the majority of the Societies would accept union in 1690 causing a schism with Hamilton and the hardliners.

From Hamilton's perspective there was 'little hope' of Linning's ordination and he cautioned that secrecy was 'absolutely necessary' at home and abroad to prevent their moderate opponents stopping it. He was also unsure where and when it could be achieved and continued to express doubts as to Linning's suitability, although he trusted the convention's judgment in the matter. In response, the Societies' declared a day of prayer that 'a door might be opened' for Linning's ordination and on 9 June the thirty-ninth convention forwarded Linning's testimonial. Hamilton's endeavours quickly led him to Emden where he must have received assurances of Linning's ordination as the fortieth convention was brought forward to 1 August to deal with the matter. From it, letters were dispatched to Hamilton and the consistory in Emden. The former pressed the need for ordination due to the danger of left-hand defections, i.e. from the supporters of Boyd, and

128. Shields, *FCD*, 255, 321, 329; Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 597-8; Houston, *Letters*, 212-3, 256. He may well be the 'Mr Douglass' who arrived in Holland from England in 1688. Gardiner, *Scottish Exile Community*, 226.

129. Shields, *FCD*, 318, 352, 361; Walker, *BP*, I, 126.

intensifying persecution, and asked him to forward Linning's testimonial to Emden with excuses for its informality and to pursue the possibility of ordination for Shields. The latter requested that Emden emulate its historic role in the Reformation by giving Linning trial and ordination, but was silent on the possibility of schism. However, probably before the letters arrived, Linning was ordained and returned to Scotland on 30 September.

As with Boyd's ordination, there is a sense in the narrative of *Faithful Contendings Displayed* that Linning's ordination was achieved without the full knowledge of the Societies, and it may be that Linning's exile contacts ensured its rapid passage, before the Societies had completed all the documentary formalities or Linning informed them who would conduct the ordination. Whatever the case, at the forty-first convention on 24 October Linning presented his testificate of ordination 'without relation to any particular church' and assured them that the ministers at Emden were neither Erastian nor Cocceian, and was unanimously called by the convention.¹³⁰ Considering Hamilton's previous opposition to both Linning and Emden, it is ironic that he achieved Linning's ordination there but, unlike in 1683, Hamilton seems to have put the need to preserve the Societies ahead of his own views. To some extent Hamilton had come to terms with the reality of the post-Renwick Societies, although he plainly held reservations about the Societies' left-hand direction of travel.

Prior to Linning's ordination the thirty-ninth convention on 7–9 June also attempted to resolve its ministerial crisis by determining to rescue Houston when intelligence reached them of his transportation to Scotland. On 18 or 20 June he was freed in a violent attack on the troops guarding him at Creighton Path in Ayrshire, but in effecting his deliverance Houston was badly injured when he was improvidently dragged along the ground and 'lost his naturals'.

Houston's rescuers had killed six dragoons and wounded ten others. It was the Societies' first use of armed force for three years and brought about a predictable crackdown by the authorities, which included the killing of John MacGeachan, one of the rescuers, who was perhaps 'dangerously wounded' in the attack, and the condemnation of the tolerated presbyterian ministry, when Mr Rogers inveighed against it as 'murder' and apologised on behalf of the tolerated ministers being 'troubled with such criminal matters' at Lanark. 'Harder and heavier' persecution followed. Circuit courts were ordered in five western shires to discover the names of the rescuers, allegedly with the assistance of the tolerated ministers, gentlemen evicted some of the Societies from their 'tenements and habitations under them', and a widespread search was conducted for concealed arms among country people. Some Society people were imprisoned and George Wood, the last Societies' martyr,

130. Shields, *FCD*, 324-5, 331-2, 336-7, 343-8, 361-2, 387; Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 182. No copy of Linning's testimonial or the letter which brought the convention forward have survived.

was shot at Tincorn Hill in Sorn parish in July. The renewal of persecution pressed the 'fear of legal terrors' on many and at the start of October a fast day was held for the 'late grosse defections of many professors'. It seems that many dreaded a second Killing Times on account of Houston's rescue. In response the forty-first convention debated whether they could appear before or enter a plea in the tyrant's courts. While the 'most part' rejected any compliance with their persecution, Alexander Shields argued that in cases where one of their number was maliciously accused of murder or to be deprived of 'all that we have in the world' that legal defences could be used and even 'oaths of verity' taken. Although Shields failed to persuade the convention, his argument indicates that once again at least some in the Societies, especially within the leadership, were considering methods to ameliorate their persecution. Overall, however, the Societies' fears were not realised, as the few circuit courts established were abandoned due to the threat of invasion by William of Orange.¹³¹

Houston's rescue had provoked a crisis for the Societies. It also proved highly divisive. Houston had met with Renwick's approval and he may have been viewed as an effective counterbalance to Boyd by hardliners. However, the plan for his rescue was not universally popular at the thirty-ninth convention as some of its delegates refused to recognise his call on the basis of reports of his misconduct in Ireland, despite him having been cleared of scandal, which perhaps signifies that it was partly effected for factional advantage. Curiously, at this point, Michael Shields maintains a discreet silence on Houston's fate, but the fragmentary diary of Alexander Shields reveals that the convention turned against him, perhaps at the fortieth convention on 1 August, as Houston was suspended from public preaching for 'many reasons' which were 'to be kept secret' and only allowed him to 'goe throu [societies] privately exercising and baptising'. Although Houston had been dogged by scandal, it appears that the secret reasons for his suspension were due to his hardline views. In October 1688 the forty-first convention received complaints from the Newcastle societies over Houston's 'offensive expressions'. The complaint alleged that Houston had claimed that the 'Indulged Party', by which he meant the tolerated presbyterian ministry and moderate presbyterians, were 'more Anti-Christian' than the 'Popish or Prelatick' parties; that Houston had compared them to the three 'unclean spirits' of *Revelations* 16.13 which had come out of the mouths of the Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet, and had referred to them as the 'Dragonitick party' and part of the 'Devil's Trinity' or the 'Devil's Incorporation', and thus were intrinsically 'anti-Christian-political'. Even Renwick had not reached such rhetorical heights in his attacks on the tolerated presbyterian ministry, but Houston had allegedly gone another step further in claiming

131. Shields, *FCD*, 343, 355-6, 358-60; Thomson, *MGoS*, 340-3; Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 178, 181-2; Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 511-12; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 457; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 557; Campbell, *SW*, 173-4. See Appendix 5.2.

that presbyterians who lived and died in the moderate party 'shall not be saved'. Alongside that, the Newcastle societies had also complained that Houston was a one-trick pony who preached incessantly against toleration, had exhorted people in the midst of free prayer, been 'very slack' in his duties among societies and had shown a covetous streak in 'frequently' complaining about his losses and in seeking money from those he married.

At a conference the next day, Houston 'promised to study moderation' but maintained some of his views, with the result that the Societies placed him under observation and formally decreed that he should not be 'called to keep any public meetings'. It was not until early 1689 that Houston preached again, almost certainly without the approval of the Societies, and he returned to Ireland soon after.¹³² In the summer of 1688, Houston had discovered that the Societies had placed limits on the rhetoric of their war against Anti-Christ. Attacks on one element of the 'Devil's Trinity', the tolerated presbyterians, were to be curtailed.

The suspension of Houston for his extreme position over toleration highlights the moderate drift of the Societies' platform since Renwick's death. The Societies were perhaps able to move against Houston thanks to their acceptance of Linning at the same convention. They were also treading a fine line between the views of Boyd and Houston on toleration and were determined to enforce discipline. However, the overriding reason for their silencing of Houston was probably the Societies' expectation that they would have to assist their moderate brethren in William's invasion.

IX. Conclusion

The image of the Societies as insignificant and in decline after 1685 must be revised. Unlike other radical factions, the Societies were the beneficiaries of Argyll's demoralising defeat. Across southern Scotland the Societies garnered new recruits and took their preaching into new areas taking advantage of the Crown's withdrawal of general persecution and the indecision of the presbyterian ministry. In particular, the Crown's policy of toleration polarised presbyterian opinion. As the moderates moved towards an accommodation with the Crown, the Societies repositioned themselves as the standard bearers of anti-toleration presbyterian sentiment, enabling them substantially to heal the schisms within militant ranks.

At the same time, the legacy of Argyll's rising had left the Societies internally divided over the issues of union with the ministry and expansion of their ministerial cadre. However, unlike in their earlier disputes, the Societies demonstrated a new-found cohesion and avoided schism throughout

132. Shields, *FCD*, 324, 336-7, 341, 368, 376; Walker, *BP*, I, 265; Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 178, 179, 184-5. For Houston's fate after he returned to Ireland, see Greaves, *God's Other Children*, 213-14.

this period. Initially, Renwick was unable to prevent a resurgent convention seeking out other ministers and sending Boyd abroad, but he was able to influence their decisions. Only ministers who rejected union and accepted withdrawal from the ministry were issued with a call, and Renwick reinforced those positions in the *Informatory Vindication*. At the time of toleration's introduction, the Societies' platform was against union and in favour of withdrawal, but it was soon shattered when the convention defied Renwick and accepted the more moderate Boyd into their ranks. Renwick's martyrdom effectively stalled any move towards an accommodation with the presbyterian ministry and reinforced the Societies' unremitting opposition to toleration. However, the Societies' opposition to toleration also allowed them to reach out to former brethren who rejected toleration and the remaining exiles in the United Provinces.

On the eve of the Revolution, the Societies had four ministers and had emerged in a considerably stronger position from that they held in 1685, and probably closer to 1679 than at any point in between. They had also begun to expand to Ireland and re-engage in northern England, and elements of them had re-established contact with some moderate exiles and their former Dutch supporters. It is to an analysis of their international contacts with other Calvinist communities that this thesis now turns.

The United Societies' Calvinist International

SIX

The Societies' View of the World, 1682–1688

The information which you give us of the sad overthrow, yea almost extirpation of the ancient and famous Waldenses in the valley of Piedmont, is very grieving and affrightening to us. O what may other churches expect when such things are done unto them!
– A Letter of the Convention to Robert Hamilton in 1687.¹

Other churches ... have had the greatest and most grievous experiences ... of the violence and villainy of atheistical and papistical enemies: whether the reformed church of France, howling under the paw of that devouring lion, the French tyrant; or the Protestants of Hungary under the tearing claws of that ravenous eagle the tyrant of Austria; or those of Piedmont, under the grassant tyranny of that little tyger of Savoy. The accounts they give in print, the reports they bring with them in their flight from their respective countries, and the little hint we have in gazettes, and news-letters, must needs enforce a conviction, if not extort a compassion of the greatness of their pressures.
– Alexander Shields, *A Hind Let Loose* (1687).²

In August 1679 Robert Hamilton lay in hiding in a cave at the head of the Douglas Water deep in the wild moors of Lanarkshire. A fugitive from the rout at Bothwell, he had been cast out by his brethren, yet even at this low ebb in his fortunes he received a letter from Robert MacWard in Rotterdam offering refuge.³ This incident does not simply illustrate the sophistication of the militants' communication network, it also reveals the close ties between the radical networks in Scotland and the United Provinces, which as Ginny Gardner shows was the haven and support network for the hard-pressed presbyterians of Scotland.⁴ A flick through the pages of *Faithful Contendings Displayed* reveals a wealth of correspondence back and forth across the North Sea from conventions held in remote upland farms to the Dutch cities of Rotterdam, Leeuwarden and

1. Shields, *FCD*, 315.

2. Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 20-1.

3. Kirkton, *Secret History*, 477.

4. Gardner, *The Scottish Exile Community in the Netherlands, 1660-1690* (East Linton, 2004).

Groningen.

The United Provinces provided a crucial springboard for the Societies, but it must be remembered that the principal duty of the Societies was to maintain their testimony in Scotland. Exile was also not an economic option for the vast majority of Society people. Most lived in the uplands of the western shires of Scotland in communities based around pastoral farming and small producer trades, and their relative isolation from Scotland's eastern seaboard inhibited their access to the social and economic networks connected to the United Provinces and the rest of Europe, yet their world view encompassed other Protestant communities and European nations – not just the Netherlands.

When Hamilton sat in his cave or the convention met in the wilderness, to which parts of Europe did they look for a sense of shared suffering or to fulfil their strategic aims? And how did the nature of the Societies' interest and relationship with other states or Protestant communities vary, and why? The answer to these questions lies in the evidence of their contacts and attitudes towards other European communities. Although the evidence for the Societies' contacts is fragmentary, sometimes extremely so, certain patterns of their strategic interests and the geographic deployment of their efforts can be observed.

The method by which the Societies kept in contact with Europe was through their delegates commissioned to go abroad. From 1682 to 1688 four individuals were commissioned, Hamilton, Earlstoun, William Gordon, and John Nisbet. Very little is known of Gordon's activities as he was only briefly appointed to assist Hamilton, and Nisbet, who assisted Earlstoun, never travelled beyond Britain in any role for the Societies. Earlstoun did reach the United Provinces, but little is known of his activities on the Continent. Only Hamilton was consistently abroad and most of the responsibility for Continental contacts fell on him until the Revolution.⁵

There is little doubt that Hamilton's and Earlstoun's social status was a key factor in their appointment as commissioners; Earlstoun was deemed 'best qualified' by the Societies as he was 'a man of greatest repute'. Earlstoun was descended from a committed line of reformers stretching back to the Lollards of Kyle and was a grandson of Sir John Hope, Lord Craighall (d.1654), a Lord of Session, and great-grandson of the Lord Advocate Sir Thomas Hope of Craighall (d.1646). Hamilton, too, had a prestigious pedigree, as the second son of Sir Thomas Hamilton of Preston

5. Only the commissions to Earlstoun and Hamilton have survived, and were probably the only ones formally commissioned. Shields, *FCD*, 18-19; EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 37 & 39. William Gordon, Earlstoun's brother and a law student at Groningen, was commissioned as Hamilton's aide in 1684, but little is known of his actions. Shields, *FCD*, 131. Nisbet was commissioned in the same relationship to Earlstoun in 1682. Shields, *FCD*, 18. For an account of the Societies' dealing in the United Provinces from 1682 to 1684 see M. Jardine, 'Scottish Presbyterian Radicals in the Northern United Provinces 1682-84', *Dutch Crossing* 29.1 (2005), 79-106.

and Fingalton, the oldest cadet branch of the Hamilton family headed by the Dukes of Hamilton, and descended from the Bruce and Stewart royal lines. Relative wealth was also important, as one of the prerequisites was that they should be in ‘some capacity for managing such an undertaking’.⁶ However, their social status provoked the ire of their moderate peers. Carnock recorded that ‘no gentleman of interest, quality or parts’ adhered to ‘that small handfull of rusticks’, as he termed the Societies, except Earlstoun and Hamilton, an intimation that both were viewed as traitors by the social elite to which they belonged.⁷

Hamilton’s poor reputation among his more moderate contemporaries has generally coloured historians’ assessments of him ever since. Gilbert Burnet, whose sister was Hamilton’s stepmother, thought that the ‘lively, hopeful young man’ he had taught had turned into a ‘crackbrained enthusiast’ through his militant contacts.⁸ John Blackadder accused him and his militant colleagues of hastening persecution prior to Bothwell.⁹ And Shargarton and Haddow were heavily critical of his conduct.¹⁰ As previous chapters have shown, he was also a divisive figure within the Societies. Even Walker criticised his leadership in taking the rump of the Societies into the ‘dangerous paths’ of disowning the state and schism in 1690.¹¹

Yet Hamilton was also held in considerable esteem by a section of the Societies. Renwick’s letters betray a heartfelt affection and admiration for the man, and the anonymous poet of ‘To the Never-Dying Memory of the much Honour’d and Religious Gentleman, Sir Robert Hamilton’ eulogised him and directly tackled his critics.

His Memory shall never be forgot;
His Name shall Live, while yours in Grave shall rot.
...
... Here was a constant Friend,
Prudent in Counsel, Ready and Discreet
Kind, Wise, and in his Conversation Sweet:
...
Mirror of Patience, Resolute and Brave;
For all the shocks united Dangers gave,
Mov’d not his Soul, which still serene appear’d:
He hated no man, and he no Man fear’d.¹²

6. Shields, *FCD*, 14, 19.

7. Erskine, *Journal*, 95.

8. Gilbert Burnet, *History of His Own Time*, 2 vols (London, 1857), II, 238.

9. John Blackadder, *Memoirs of the Rev. John Blackadder*, Crichton ed. (Edinburgh, 1826), 214.

10. M’Crie (ed.), *MV*, 455-82.

11. Hay Fleming (ed.), *Six Saints*, I, 138-9.

12. Anon. *The Believer’s Farewell to the World, Or An Elegie On The Death of that much Honoured, Truly Worthy, and Religious Gentlemen, Sir Robert Hamilton Son to Sir Thomas Hamilton of Prestoun Who Dyed upon the 21st of October 1701, Aged 51 Years*, (Edinburgh, 1701), 5.

The contradictory evidence about Hamilton's personality suggests that it was his hardline ideological stance, rather than character flaws, which was the principal cause of the denigration of his reputation. This controversy has obscured his achievements for the Societies in Europe and the pivotal role he played in drawing them into the wider ambit of European Protestant struggles. It is to an analysis of Hamilton's Continental experiences that we must now turn.

I. Transylvania and the Holy Roman and Ottoman Empires, 1681–1682

As we have seen in preceding chapters, the Societies were principally interested in the United Provinces and the covenanted nations of the British Isles, but beyond them they also looked to other persecuted Calvinist enclaves in Europe. Even before Hamilton was approached by the Societies, he had shown a keen interest in supporting European Protestant states against the forces of the Catholic Counter Reformation. After he had withdrawn from the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam, Hamilton's desire to promote the Protestant cause led him to the door of Herman Witsius (1636–1708), Professor of Divinity at Utrecht, and William of Orange's court at The Hague. Despite his leadership of the disastrous Bothwell rising and the enmity of other Scots, Hamilton still found favour in the higher echelons of Dutch society. Through those contacts he strove to join Protestant causes across Europe.

At some point in 1681 he sought a letter of recommendation from Witsius to Count Imre Thököly (1657–1705), the renowned Hungarian leader of the Kuruc Rebellion in Transylvania.¹³ In 1681 the Kurucs, Hungarian Calvinists in league with the Ottoman Empire, were engaged in a struggle with the Catholic forces of the Holy Roman Empire.

Like other Christian denominations, the Societies viewed the Turks as 'common enemies' of the gospel alongside Jews and Pagans.¹⁴ Hamilton's associate Koelman believed that the millennium had started in Scotland in 1560 with the purification of the presbyterian church and that the fall of the Pope and the Turks, along with the restoration of the Jews, was imminent.¹⁵ And in a sermon delivered in Lanarkshire, Richard Cameron had compared the 'Turks' Alcoran' to the 'Pope's Conclave' and the 'Council of Britain' as enemies who would perish at the Lord's hand.¹⁶ For the

13. Shields, *FCD*, 202.

14. Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 263.

15. Bernard S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men, A Study in Seventeenth-century English Millenarianism* (Totowa, NJ, 1972), 28, 232.

16. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 422.

Societies, the Turks, Papacy and Councils of Britain were all enemies in an apocalyptic struggle, yet Hamilton was prepared to fight beside the Turks' Transylvanian allies. Why?

One reason was that the Societies rhetorically portrayed their persecutors as worse than the Turks. Renwick hailed James VII as 'the greatest Tyrant that ever lived in the World, far surmounting all the lust, impudence, & insolence of any Roman, Sicilian, Turkish, Tartarian, or Indian Tyrant, that ever trampled upon the Liberties of mankind' and thought that James's power was 'a despotical and arbitrary domination, outvying, and surmounting the height of Ottoman tyranny'.¹⁷ Rathillet compared the persecuting laws in Scotland to other abominations 'detestable among Turks and heathens'.¹⁸ And Alexander Shields wrote of the burning of the Covenant as something 'for which Turks and Pagans would have been ashamed'.¹⁹ He also thought that the 'savages' of the Highland Host, who had descended on the western shires in 1678, were 'more terrible than Turks or Tartars, men who feared not God nor regarded man'.²⁰ He compared their ability to strike back at their persecutors as comparable to slaying invading Turks or Tartars, who as 'public enemies' could be lawfully killed.²¹

Hamilton's enthusiasm for the Kurucs' cause was probably not based on their ungodly alliance with the Turks. Rather, it was focused on Transylvania's conflict with a perceived mutual enemy, the Holy Roman Empire, which since the Thirty Years' War had been in the vanguard of Counter Reformation in Central Europe. In that scenario, the Turks, although enemies, were a secondary threat to the immediate peril posed by Popery.

Another reason was Hamilton's strong attachment to the Hungarian Calvinists, for his 'love of that interest was great'.²² Thököly's Kuruc cause was discussed in Scottish radical circles. In 1683 Carnock reported his disbelief on hearing the news of the defeat of Thököly and the Turks in the Battle of Vienna and in 1685 Alexander Shields compared the Societies' war to that of Thököly with the Holy Roman Emperor.²³ But it is more likely that Hamilton's attachment to Thököly's cause came from the Hungarian students at Utrecht, who were concentrated in Witsius' Divinity Faculty due to its reputation as a bastion of a conservative brand of Calvinist theology known as Voetianism.²⁴ However, despite Hamilton's love of their cause, he was dissuaded by Witsius from

17. Renwick, *Testimony Against Toleration*, 420, 434.

18. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 53.

19. Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 127.

20. Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 226.

21. Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 752.

22. Shields, *FCD*, 202.

23. Erskine, *Journal*, 14; Shields, *A True and Faithful Relation*, 32.

24. Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Republic, Its Rise, Greatness and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford, 1998), 900-2.

going to Transylvania for unspecified reasons.²⁵

Rejected by his presbyterian brethren, Hamilton had sought to serve the Protestant cause in a military capacity and was attracted to Transylvania because it was at the forefront of the struggle against Catholic Counter Reformation and its commitment to a similar brand of conservative Calvinism. Hamilton's shared sense of the struggle spanned the Continent and could cope with the concept of a sinful association with the Muslim Turks, as he conceived of the struggle against Popery in international and apocalyptic terms which transcended national boundaries.

II. The Lutheran Powers: Sweden and Brandenburg-Prussia, 1681–1682

At The Hague, Hamilton had access to the court of William of Orange where he sought a commission to command a regiment from the ambassadors of Brandenburg-Prussia and Sweden and informed them of the state of the presbyterian cause in Scotland. In seeking military service with these Lutheran powers, Hamilton was following a well-worn path taken by generations of Scots mercenaries who had served in the Swedish, Danish and German armies throughout the Thirty Years' War and beyond.

Whether Hamilton intended to assume command of an existing force or to raise one from his Scottish brethren is unclear, but if the latter, it could have provided valuable military experience for Scottish militants which they had singularly lacked at Bothwell. In particular, Sweden may have been attractive to Hamilton in that regard. As the work of Steve Murdoch has shown, at the outbreak of the Covenanting Revolution in 1638, Sweden had supported the Covenanters and released many of its highly-experienced Scottish officers to organise the army of the Covenant, a crucial factor in securing the Covenanters' revolution.²⁶ However, Brandenburg-Prussia had recently eclipsed Swedish power in the Scanian War (1674–78), accruing a fearsome military reputation which may also have attracted Hamilton. The fact that both powers had intrigued with Louis XIV, and the latter was allied to Louis, does not seem to have deterred Hamilton at all.²⁷

Hamilton provides few details of his offer, but it was unusually conditional; the regiment was to be under the same discipline as he had at Bothwell 'so that the laws of God might not be broken

25. Shields, *FCD*, 202.

26. Steve Murdoch, 'Scotland, Scandinavia and the Bishops' Wars, 1638-40', in A. I. Macinnes & J. H. Ohlmeyer, *The Stuart Kingdoms in the Seventeenth Century: awkward neighbours* (Dublin, 2002), 113-34.

27. Charles Upton, *Charles XI and Swedish Absolutism*, 90-106.

unpunished'.²⁸ It would probably have entailed a regiment, perhaps even a covenanted one, commanded by an elected council of godly officers with Hamilton as colonel-in-chief, not the conventional command structure followed in either Swedish or Prussian forces. It would also have been exceptional in that it may have been committed to refusing quarter to its enemies in a similar way to Hamilton's infamous order at Drumclog.²⁹

His offer was taken seriously. Although the ambassadors informed him that he would have to take the Protestant cause as he found it in Sweden or Brandenburg and leave his conscience behind, they also promised him 'great encouragement' if he could accept the cause as he found it, an indication that Hamilton, rather than his scheme, was acceptable to them. However, once again, Hamilton was dissuaded.³⁰ Why he was dissuaded is unspecified, but the ambassadors' rejection of his scheme to export the Societies' brand of Calvinist revolution may have played a part in his decision.

Hamilton's desire to fight for the Lutheran powers shows a flexibility on his part at odds with the stickler mentality presented by his opponents and further demonstrates his belief in the international dimension to the conflict between Protestantism and Catholicism.

III. Friesland and Dutch Calvinism, 1682

In early 1682 Hamilton decided on Friesland as the place for his talents. Unlike his other plans to serve the Protestant interest, Hamilton claimed he had 'no knowledge' of Friesland 'nor of anyone in it' beyond it being cast in his mind after prayer.³¹ However, as discussed in chapter three, Hamilton may well have travelled to Friesland to aid the Societies and it may be prudent to disguise his actions behind a providential smokescreen.

Once again Hamilton used patronage networks to obtain letters of recommendation from 'friends of quality' to the court of Hendrik Casimir II (1657–1696), the Count of Nassau-Dietz and Stadtholder of Friesland and Groningen, and other letters from Witsius, to the stadtholder himself, Johannes Van der Waeyen, Hendrik's adviser and a Cocceian theologian, and to William Brackel, the Voetian minister of Leeuwarden. On the way to Friesland Hamilton consulted with the Voetian divine Jacob Koelman who warned him of the Cocceian sympathies of most of the people to whom

28. Shields, *FCD*, 202-4. For Scots mercenaries serving on the continent in the early seventeenth century see Steve Murdoch (ed.), *Scotland and the Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648 (History of Warfare, 6)* (Leiden & Boston, 2001).

29. Shields, *FCD*, 201.

30. Shields, *FCD*, 202.

31. Shields, *FCD*, 202.

he was recommended. The clash between these Dutch theological factions had divided Dutch society for several decades and had recently flared up in Friesland.³² Hamilton later claimed that he thought little of this, but on the boat north he took a dislike to carrying letters to those 'disaffected to the cause of God' and had an intense conviction to throw himself on the Lord's mercy. As a result he bypassed the court at Franeker for Brackel's house at Leeuwarden. Since Hamilton spoke 'little Dutch' at that time and only had enough money to maintain him for eight days when he had arrived at Franeker, his providential method of travel put him in some peril. He was saved by Brackel's charity in taking him in, but in a sense, Hamilton had compelled him to hold out a helping hand.³³ If he had applied such a method to reaching Hungary it is doubtful he would ever have arrived.

Hamilton and Brackel exchanged notes on their respective churches, and Hamilton provided Brackel with Latin papers on the cause in Scotland which Brackel translated into Dutch for local consumption. Through his dialogue with Brackel, Hamilton claimed that he became committed to witness against Van der Waeyen's Cocceianism due to the 'great differences' between Brackel and Van der Waeyen. Brackel warned Hamilton that his actions would be costly, as 'all expectations' of preferment would be 'lost' and that it would render Hamilton's stay in Friesland 'dangerous'. Hamilton brushed aside Brackel's warning, for 'neither livelihood, life, security nor preferment' bothered him, providing that he 'might be honoured through grace to be a witness in my generation for Christ and his cause'. Hamilton's witnessing for Christ's cause may have been less dramatic than he later made out. In a personal interview with Van der Waeyen at Franeker, he was offered 'great preferment' at the stadtholder's court, but he did not receive it after Van der Waeyen questioned Hamilton over Koelman's opposition to his ecclesiastical reforms and Hamilton spoke in favour of Koelman's witnessing against 'errors and defections which were like to overwhelm the church in the Netherlands'. Having shown his favour for the Voetians, Van der Waeyen became 'instantly weary' of him, but did offer friendship. However, at a second meeting at Leeuwarden, Van der Waeyen explained that he could no longer advance Hamilton 'so creditably as he intended', but would 'liberally contribute' to his expenses. According to Hamilton, Van der Waeyen's offer was rebuffed at Brackel's request due to Hamilton's 'unfreeness to take any thing from Cocceians' and to offer the only form of testimony he could against the dangers of Cocceianism. From then on, according to Hamilton, the Cocceians disowned him, for he had publicly cast his lot in with the Voetian cause in Friesland.³⁴

32. Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 667.

33. Shields, *FCD*, 202-4.

34. Shields, *FCD*, 204-6.

Hamilton's adoption of the Voetian cause was unusual, but it highlights his commitment to further reformation across Europe. For Hamilton national and ecclesiastical boundaries did not prohibit his participation in disputes among the reformed. Where many others viewed the Cocceian-Voetian dispute as an obscure Dutch matter, Hamilton took it as his duty to witness for Voetianism. In doing so he ingratiated himself with the Voetian faction in Leeuwarden and built a relationship that considerably benefited the Societies when they sought ordinations at Groningen, as discussed in chapter three.

Friesland was the first of Hamilton's foreign schemes to come to fruition and had a considerable impact on the trajectory of the Societies' endeavours. While there, he successfully exploited the religious tensions between the Cocceian stadtholderate and the Voetian ministry to secure the sympathy of the Voetians for the Societies' cause. However, to achieve that, Hamilton sacrificed his own preferment.

IV. Emden and Bremen, 1683

Once Hamilton became a commissioner for the Societies, he made a journey on foot along the North Sea coast to Emden in early 1683.³⁵ The city of Emden lay in East Friesland, then a self-governing satellite of the United Provinces garrisoned by Dutch troops, but notionally part of the Holy Roman Empire through its Cirksena counts who had been princes of the Empire since 1654. In the late seventeenth century Emden was in political turmoil due the desire of its regent, Christine Charlotte (1644–1699), to achieve absolute rule. It was perhaps due to that turmoil that parts of Emden's reformed ministry were receptive to the Societies' message.

It was Brackel who had initially pointed Hamilton in the direction of Emden. Hamilton's business in Emden regarded two matters, the ordination of the Societies' students and fundraising for the Societies. In each case Hamilton's attachment to Voetianism complicated matters. Brackel clearly favoured Emden for the ordination of the Societies' students, but Hamilton rejected his proposal in favour of Groningen on the grounds that the 'main' minister at Emden was secretly a Cocceian. The source of Hamilton's knowledge on this matter is obscure, but even when further problems emerged at Groningen, Hamilton continued to reject Brackel's advice to seek ordination at Emden due to the classis of Emden's requirement of a testificate subscribed by all the professors at Groningen which included Cocceians, despite the fact that he had met two ministers from Emden,

35. Hamilton laid out 'the case of our church' to two ministers on his way to Emden who later sent a collection for the Societies to Groningen. Shields, *FCD*, 207. Hamilton returned from his journey to Emden when Renwick's ordination was 'drawing near', i.e. prior to 10 May 1683. Shields, *FCD*, 208.

Mr Allerdain and Mr Peter Ritzing, and had received a clear offer to ordain all three students.³⁶

His hostility towards Cocceianism also probably accounts for his attitude towards some of the ministers' efforts to gather funds for the Societies. In Emden Hamilton once again 'laid out the church of Scotland's reformation, cause, and sufferings' to some ministers who 'most affectionately accepted' his case and offered to raise money for the Societies' relief. However, Hamilton then refused to accompany one minister to the country to lay out the Societies' cause and raise funds saying that 'if the cause itself moved them not, my presence would never do it'. Instead it was agreed at Hamilton's suggestion that the ministers themselves would lay the Societies' cause 'before the people' and bring the money to Mr Allerdain, the eldest minister in Emden, for forwarding to Brackel or Hamilton – a possible effort by Hamilton to avoid associating with Cocceians or to take money directly from their hands.

Through Hamilton's contact with Allerdain, word of the Societies' plight also reached Breミア in 1683. In the late seventeenth century Breミア or Bremen was a Protestant mercantile city and territory subject to the Holy Roman Emperor, but constitutionally independent from him. This may, as in the case of Emden, have made the city's ministry receptive to the Societies' sufferings as they raised eighty ducatoons and sent them to Brackel.³⁷

Hamilton's journey expanded the Societies' support base out of Friesland and into the trading cities of northern Germany. By mid 1683 he had won significant ecclesiastical support for the Societies with conservative Voetian ministers and divines, such as Koelman and Witsius, and from some of the ecclesiastical institutions connected with them, such as the Classis and University of Groningen, and the Classis of Emden.

As a fundraising exercise his trip to Emden was successful and laid the foundations for future contacts, but Hamilton's aversion to Cocceianism also limited Emden's potential for ordination. Emden remained of interest to the Societies. In July 1684 they sent a letter of thanks there for their support, but contact lapsed when the Societies' Dutch network collapsed in mid 1684, reducing their presence to a rump of followers around Hamilton in Leeuwarden, as discussed in chapter three.³⁸

36. Shields, *FCD*, 86, 87-8, 99-100, 207-8; 'Letter of Robert Hamilton to Mr Ritzing, minister of Emden, Groningen, 7 May 1683', EUL. New College MSS Box 1.9.6.

37. Shields, *FCD*, 207-8. Hamilton claimed that he never received the money from Brackel or knew of it until Brackel had deserted the Societies. Allerdain also wrote to his contacts in Rotterdam for a collection and 300 guilders was raised, but Hamilton claims it was misdirected to the Scots ministers in Rotterdam who kept it. Shields, *FCD*, 208.

38. Shields, *FCD*, 143.

V. Piedmont, Helvetia, Geneva and the German States, 1686–1687

For three years after his journey to Emden Hamilton did not leave the United Provinces, until in mid 1686 he began planning a journey to Piedmont. The origins of his Piedmont scheme bore similarities to his earlier schemes to serve the Protestant cause in a military capacity, and like his journey to Friesland, it may also have aimed to revive his shattered reputation among the Societies following the moderates' allegations of scandal against him.

Hamilton announced his intention to travel to Piedmont to the convention in a letter of 30 September 1686, but he had already embarked on preparations, as the Leeuwarden society had already pressed Hamilton to take Linning, which he would not do without the convention's consent. There is no record of the convention discussing either Hamilton or Linning's going to Piedmont, but Hamilton's unwillingness to take Linning without the convention's consent implies that he had taken the decision to travel without authorisation from the convention.

In his letter Hamilton did not offer any explanation for his journey, implying that the convention was familiar with the situation in Piedmont, a subject territory of the Duke of Savoy.³⁹ Hamilton intended to reach the Waldenses or *Vaudois* communities of Piedmont, the Calvinist descendants of the medieval Waldensian heretical sect, whose alpine communities faced annihilation at the hands of Catholic French and Savoyard forces.

The sufferings of the Waldenses were well known in the Cromwellian Protectorate where a fund was raised for them in 1655, but at the Restoration Charles II had appropriated the fund on the basis that he was not bound by Cromwell's engagements or debts.⁴⁰ In Scotland too, the historical struggles of the Waldenses against the forces of Counter Reformation were well known and held up as an example within the Societies. In 1685 Alexander Shields had described the Waldenses as 'constant opposers of Antichrist' and pointed to their long history of resistance against edicts 'so like many of ours emitted this day, that, it would seem, our enemies have taken the copy of it', and suggested that it was 'seemly for the people grieved [the Societies] with such edicts to imitate the copy of the *Waldenses* [in] their practice in opposition to them', by which, he elaborated, he meant their frequent resort to 'resistance by arms' and 'defensive war'.⁴¹

When Hamilton resolved to join the Waldenses, he must have known that they were in a desperate situation due to renewed persecution. At the time of the Revocation of the Edict of

39. Shields, *FCD*, 267.

40. Alexis Muston, *The Israel of the Alps: A History of the Persecutions of the Waldenses* (Trans. by Hazlitt, London, 2nd Edition 1853), 176n.

41. Shields, *A True and Faithful Relation*, 100-1. Although published in 1715, *A True and Faithful Relation* was drafted in about August 1685.

Nantes in 1685, Louis XIV had pressured Victor-Amadeus II, Duke of Savoy, into a joint venture to exterminate Waldensian Calvinism. On 31 January 1686, Victor-Amadeus had issued a rigorous edict ordering the Waldenses to forsake their religion and submit within fifteen days, but the blow did not fall immediately. Negotiations, Swiss intercession and representations by England, Brandenburg and the United Provinces had bought some breathing space, but by late March, the Swiss, aware that no Protestant states were prepared to go to war in support of the Waldenses and that certain defeat and potential massacres would follow, had urged them to surrender on terms in which they could collectively relinquish their valleys for exile. Although most Waldensian pastors favoured submission, the secular communes had refused to submit. On 22 April the French and Savoyard forces attacked and by 13 May had inflicted total defeat.

News of the rapid destruction of the Waldenses and accompanying atrocity stories from gazettes and newsletters would undoubtedly have reached Hamilton when he decided to go. By that time only a small band of guerillas were continuing to resist the Savoyard forces, and it was probably to them that Hamilton hoped to travel at the end of September.⁴²

The sudden end of the guerilla campaign must have altered Hamilton's plans. In late 1686 the Duke of Savoy and the Waldenses came to an agreement which allowed for the release of unconverted prisoners into exile. In all, 2,565 Waldenses fled to Geneva between 25 November 1686 and February 1687 from where many were distributed to other Swiss communities, Brandenburg, Württemberg and the United Provinces. At some point after September and probably after November 1686, Hamilton wrote to the convention of his intention to travel 'through other churches', rather than to Piedmont, by which he meant journeying to Switzerland, especially to the Calvinist strongholds of Helvetia and Geneva where he would encounter the exiled Waldenses.

Michael Shields' reply to Hamilton for the Societies on 6 July 1687 confirms that Hamilton had travelled without the convention's consent, as it reveals that the Societies had not replied to Hamilton's letter which had shown his intention to travel to Switzerland before they had received his account of his journey. Although Hamilton had been shunned by the Societies' convention, there is no evidence that he was discharged from his commissionership to the United Provinces. He had simply deserted his post. As a result, it is uncertain when Hamilton departed, but it was

42. Alexis Muston, *The Israel of the Alps*, 176-7, 190-206; Wylie, J.A., *The History of the Waldenses*, (London, 1860), Vol. II, chapter 11.

probably in the spring of 1687.⁴³ He almost certainly travelled alone, as Linning did not accompany him. His journey was probably financed through funds raised in Leeuwarden, as there is no evidence that the Societies contributed any money. His route to Geneva is recorded in the elegy written on his death – one of the very few biographical details in the text and perhaps a sign of the importance Hamilton and others later attached to this journey.

Batavian Borders, Germany also,
Might tell what Perrils I did undergo,
Helvetian Cantons ere I could attain:
And then traversing Germany again.⁴⁴

To reach Geneva from Leeuwarden he crossed the Dutch border into the German principalities and probably followed the Rhine upstream to Basel where he moved along the south side of the Jura Mountains to Bern and Geneva. A round trip of roughly 1,250 miles, its achievement in about three months possibly indicates that he may have walked some of the way.

Thanks to a controversy over Hamilton's mission discussed in *An Informatory Vindication*, some idea of the purpose of his mission can be uncovered. Although Hamilton was not sent in any official capacity, the Societies were forced to defend their sending of a 'delegation' to 'the churches of Helvetia and Geneva' in the name of the Church of Scotland. According to the *Vindication*, Hamilton's purpose was to convey that, although the Church of Scotland was reduced to 'a ruinous heap' by their enemies, there was 'yet ... a Remnant of her Children, taking pleasure in the stones & dust of her rubbish'. To that end, Hamilton laid the Societies' 'pristine reformation' before them in the hope that, although they 'could get few at home', they 'might provoke some abroad to sympathise with us' so that:

They might commiserate & help us, by their prayers & otherwise: And that we might also know, in what state affairs are among them, which things might conduce both to their & our advantage, putting them & us, according to our places & power, to endeavour the strengthening of ourselves & of the Interest of Christ, against the plots, underminings, & cruelties of the adversary.⁴⁵

Like Hamilton's journeys to Emden and Friesland, his mission aimed to build a relationship with

43. Shields, *FCD*, 313. Hamilton's letter regarding his travel plans is now lost. Renwick continued to write to Hamilton until 11 January 1687 and later asked Earlstoun to write to him on 27 January, but these letters make no mention of Hamilton's journey. After January, the Renwick/Hamilton correspondence ceases until July. It seems Hamilton departed after 25 March 1687 as Linning wrote to him from Utrecht on that date, although no correspondence from Hamilton survives after September 1686 until his return. Appendix 7.6; 'Holograph letter from Thomas Linning to Robert Hamilton, Utrecht, 25 March, 1687', GUL MSS. Ms Gen 1009 No. 15.

44. Anon. *The Believer's Farewell to the World*, 9.

45. *An Informatory Vindication*, 95-7.

the Swiss churches, draw attention to the Societies' plight and raise funds. However, the mission also sought to convey a shared sense of purpose and struggle, to form a Calvinist International, against their shared adversaries in the form of the forces of Counter Reformation, either in Scotland or in Piedmont.

On his return, Hamilton gave the Societies a report of the state of affairs among the churches abroad and of the persecution of the Waldenses, but it is now missing. It is a tremendous pity that Hamilton's account of his encounters on the way and in Basel, Bern and Geneva is now lost as it would have provided a fascinating insight into his perceptions of Swiss and German Protestantism, the Catholic communities of Southern Germany, Calvinist Geneva and the persecution of the Waldenses. It seems that Hamilton's report took a jaded view of his encounters as Shields summarised Hamilton's account of the state of affairs in the churches he had encountered as similar to 'the generality' in Scotland who conspired 'to let go piety, and to cleave to policy'. Renwick, too, stated his displeasure with the 'iniquity' discovered by Hamilton abroad.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, Hamilton was keen for the Societies to open correspondence with some of the contacts he had made. According to Shields he was urged to be patient in the matter. Instead, it was suggested that Hamilton should take the lead in opening correspondence by writing in the Societies' name to thank those in Switzerland who received his information or offered him kindness, and send them letters and information on their cause.

Shields' version of events suggests that no direct correspondence was established between the Societies' convention and the churches in Helvetia and Geneva, but this may have been an attempt by him to sidestep the controversy which it had aroused and pin the blame on Hamilton. It is evident that Renwick offered to send Hamilton letters of information and some of his sermons and in December the convention sent Renwick's printed sermon *The Churches Choice* to Hamilton, who presumably forwarded it to Switzerland.⁴⁷

The substance of the letter of information dealt with the Societies' cause, but one particular passage, which accused the Scottish presbyterian ministry of laying aside their work and 'becoming cruel like the Ostriches of the wilderness', a reference to *Lamentations* 4.3, provoked the outrage of their moderate opponents. They claimed that Societies had attempted to usurp the authority of the presbyterian ministry with the Helvetian Church, as word of the letter's contents had quickly reached their moderate opponents: a sign that the Societies had been unsuccessful in persuading

46. Shields, *FCD*, 313-6; Houston, *Letters*, 240-1.

47. 'The Churches Choice, a sermon of Mr Renwicks in print on Song.1.7.' is noted as attached to 'Letter Societies to Rob Hamiltoun Dec. 7. 1687.', EUL MS. La.III.350. No. 217 in the index at the start of the volume, but it is now missing. The text of the sermon is printed in Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 437-77. Hamilton could also have sent a copy of *An Informatory Vindication*, then fresh off the press.

the Swiss.⁴⁸

Thanks to Hamilton's report and the failure to establish a correspondence, the Societies drew little inspiration from the churches in Switzerland, but Hamilton's encounter with the exiled Waldenses provided a terrifying parallel for the Societies. The Waldensian communes had chosen to resist despite their pastors urging acquiescence, a situation which the Societies clearly saw as analogous to their own since Bothwell and with parallels to the introduction of toleration in Scotland in 1687, in which the mainstream presbyterian ministry had ended its nonconformity, while the Societies had feared the destruction of Scottish Protestantism. The overthrow of the Waldenses by France and Savoy and their near 'extirpation' by force was, according to Shields, 'very grieving and affrightening' to the Societies. What, he exclaimed, could the Societies expect 'when such things are done unto them!' In Shields' view the Waldenses' experience provided the answer that 'they should beware the snares offered by enemies who break their promises to God and man', i.e. King James's edicts introducing toleration.⁴⁹

Hamilton's report also influenced Renwick. In his sermon, *The Churches Choice*, against James' toleration in 1687 he cited the example of the Waldenses as a warning of Popish intentions to destroy Protestantism.

I may give you a more recent instance ... of the Piedmonters who, this last year, being forced to defend themselves by war against some Savoyan and French forces, did wonderfully prosper and succeed, which the enemy perceiving did offer peace unto them, and liberty to enjoy their religion and professions, if they would lay down their arms; which condition, alas! they presently embraced, except a very few; so, their arms being laid down, the treacherous and cruel enemy presently assaulted them, stripping them naked and dragging them into prisons, where many thousands were killed with hunger and cold, and they brought almost to nought.

And in his *Testimony against Toleration* written in late 1687 he expanded his warning.

We have also a recent instance of the cruelty and Treachery of that fiery little Tiger the Duke of Savoy, against some of the relicts of the old Waldenses in the valley of Piedmont, who after some ruffles received, promised unto them the enjoyment of their Religious & civil Liberties, if they would lay down their Arms; But after [he] had got them spoiled of their outward defence, he caught many thousands of them, killing them in Prisons with hunger & cold. And as the Duke of York doth affect much the absoluteness of the French Monarch, so we may expect no better of him, (what ever he promise (who can do & undo, by virtue of his declared Prerogative, being as absolute over promises as over Laws) and however many do extol him as a Gracious Prince) than that he shall trace the steps of his falsehood, treachery, cruelty, & Romish Zeal; That so we may have an Instance of Babylon's deceit & rage acted in Britain & Ireland.⁵⁰

48. *An Informatory Vindication*, 95-100; 'Societies Letter to the Churches in Helvetia & Geneva [undated]', EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 119. This letter probably dates to mid-to-late 1687 after Hamilton returned from Geneva.

49. Shields, *FCD*, 315.

50. Renwick, *Testimony Against Toleration*, 433.

For the Societies the Waldenses provided a concrete warning against trusting Catholic absolute rulers such as James and their schemes for toleration. Toleration could be withdrawn by an absolute monarch, as Louis XIV had demonstrated in 1685 with the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and Protestant communities who differed from acquiescent ministers could be entirely crushed by a determined opponent. For the Societies, James VII's edicts introducing toleration, like Louis XIV and Victor-Amadeus II's promises to the Waldenses, were not to be trusted. Shields and Renwick feared that under a Catholic absolute monarch it was a small step from the alpine valleys of the Waldenses to the Societies' own upland fastnesses.

Hamilton's dissemination of information on the Societies' cause also bore similarities to his previous journeys to Friesland and Emden. Like them, it opened the way for correspondence between the Societies' leadership and potential sympathisers in Switzerland or among the Waldenses. However, there is no evidence of any regular contact between the Societies and the Waldenses or that any funds were raised for the Societies by the Swiss, unlike in Friesland and Emden. That said, the importance of Hamilton's journey did not lie in revenues or a support base, but in the warning the Societies drew from the destruction of the Waldenses against toleration.

A very different image of Robert Hamilton emerges from his European journeys to Burnet's portrait of a crack-brain fanatic who troubled Scotland. Hamilton operated within a pan-European Protestant context and appears to have been comfortable and self-confident within courtly and ecclesiastical circles. His ability to speak some Dutch, Latin and probably French, the diplomatic language of the age, almost certainly helped. His noble lineage too probably helped to open doors, and he seems to have enjoyed some notoriety for his role in Bothwell on the Continent. He could be compared to earlier Scottish travellers such as John Durie (1596–1680) who set out to bring the churches of Europe together, but unlike Durie, Hamilton sought to divide them.⁵¹ In general Hamilton sought out conflict zones, either between Protestant and Catholic communities such as in Transylvania or Piedmont, or between Protestant factions in Friesland and Emden. In these areas his aim was to exploit local religious and political tensions for the Societies' benefit.

Hamilton showed a strong sectarian streak when he was acting on the behalf of the Societies. In Friesland, Emden and on his journey to Geneva, he revealed an intense dislike of Cocceians, Lutherans and Calvinists who cleaved to 'worldly' policies. This stands in contrast to his earlier

51. For John Durie or Dury, see John T Young, 'Dury, John (1596-1680)', *Oxford DNB*; Steve Murdoch, 'Kith and Kin: John Durie and the Scottish community in Scandinavia and the Baltic 1624-1634', in Patrick Salmon & Tony Barrow (ed.), *Britain and the Baltic: studies in commercial, political and cultural relations, 1500-2000* (Sunderland, 2003), 21-46.

flexibility when acting on his own behalf in relation to Transylvania and the Lutheran states, and possibly indicates that he felt the strictures of the Lord's cause more when acting for the collective than when acting individually. Hamilton's journeys reveal the Calvinist communities with whom the Societies came into contact. However, his list of suffering Calvinist communities contains one intriguing omission, the Huguenots.

VI. The Huguenots, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and the Apocalypse, 1685

From the early 1680s the Huguenot communities in France had been the subject of increasing persecution at the hands of Louis XIV culminating in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in October 1685 which withdrew toleration from French Calvinists, legally dissolved their church, and led to an exodus of Huguenots into exile in the United Provinces, England and beyond.

In many ways the Huguenot persecution resembled that of the presbyterian communities in the West of Scotland. From 1681 *Dragonnades*, troops of soldiers, were billeted on Huguenot communities to intimidate Protestants, sometimes through violence, to convert to Catholicism. Some of the Huguenots had also responded in a similar fashion, especially after 1683, by holding illegal field conventicles, *assemblées du désert*, occasionally armed for self-defence and had faced similar persecution including attacks on their *assemblées*, imprisonment, banishment to the royal galleys and martyrdoms. The Huguenot exile communities and their plight and sufferings were well known across Protestant Europe, especially in the United Provinces through the works of Pierre Bayle and Pierre Jurieu in exile in Rotterdam, yet neither Hamilton nor the Societies' correspondence ever mention them. Why?

It may have been due to the Huguenots' attitudes towards absolute monarchy, resistance and toleration. Between 1681 and 1685 French Calvinists rarely offered resistance to their oppressors, and when they did it was disapproved of by their Calvinist elites. Huguenot political theorists, such as Bayle and Jurieu, had an aversion to active resistance and instead stressed their loyalty to the French absolute monarchy and sought the resumption of toleration. Jurieu, the former professor at Sedan and leader of the Huguenot refugee community, had briefly justified Huguenot armed resistance in France in *L'Esprit de M. Arnauld* (1684) in an anonymous fashion, but only moved to a position of outright war against the French king in his *Lettres Pastorales* in 1689 after William of Orange's victories in the British Isles and the construction of the Grand Alliance made the defeat of France a possibility.⁵²

52. R.J.Howells, *Pierre Jurieu: Antinomian Radical* (Durham, 1983), 41-2.

Huguenots' acquiescence to toleration and absolutism probably caused the Societies to have reservations about adopting them as a model for their response to persecution, but it did not stop them from citing Huguenot history 'of older and latter date' to justify their own resistance. In 1685 Alexander Shields wrote of the memories of Louis de Bourbon, Prince of Condé (1530–1569) and Admiral Gaspard de Coligny (1517–1570) being 'yet fragrant' and praised the resistance of the Huguenot towns of Sancerne and La Rochelle whose citizens had resisted royalist sieges in the 1570s.⁵³ The Societies also used the Huguenots to serve as an example of the dangers of toleration to Scotland. In 1688 Shields used them to warn his audience against toleration:

when the most part of the Protestant Churches of Europe have had a tast[e] of their falsehood, and have been cheated by such a method. Was not the Protestants in France cheated by such a tolleration granted to them by the tyrant there? which when he saw fit, he took away; and made them either to renounce and abjure their religion, or then endure great sufferings. Was not the Protestants of the Value of Piedmont ruined by making peace and confederacy with the Duke of Savoy? And will nothing awaken us?⁵⁴

Renwick too cited the example of France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes to tackle the scepticism of his hearers over the dangers of toleration: 'but ye will say that it is nothing, but to fright bairns; but, I trow, France looked as little for it once, as ye do now'.⁵⁵ There is also circumstantial evidence that Renwick knew at least one Huguenot family. In Groningen Renwick lodged at a 'montremaoker's huys' in Volterlinge Straat. Since *montre* is French for watch, and watchmakers were an archetypal Huguenot profession in exile, it seems likely he shared his lodgings with a Huguenot.⁵⁶

While the Societies felt some degree of brotherhood with Huguenots, they also feared the counter-reforming forces of Louis XIV would reach Scotland. Walker records several predictions by Alexander 'Prophet' Peden regarding a potential French persecution and massacre of Scottish presbyterians at the hands of the 'monzies', a disparaging Scots term for French men, after the Revocation of Edict of Nantes. Peden implored the Lord

To have pity on the West of Scotland, and spare a remnant, and not make a full end in the day of his anger ... crying out Oh the monzies, the French monzies, see how they run, how long will they run? Lord cut their houghs, and stay their running... [for] ... ye'll have a dreadful day by the French monzies and a sett of wicked men in these lands, who will take part with them, the West of Scotland will pay dear for it; they'll run thicker in the Water

53. Shields, *A True and Faithful Relation*, 101.

54. Shields, *Some Notes or Heads of a Preface*, 5.

55. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 484.

56. Carslaw, *Letters*, 35.

of Air and Clyde, than ever the Highland men did.⁵⁷

And on another occasion:

O the monzies, the monzies will be thorow the breadth and length of the South and West of Scotland; O I think I see them at our fire-sides, slaying Man, Wife and Children; the Remnant will get a breathing; but they will be driven to the wilderness again, and their sharpest showers will be last.⁵⁸

And on a further occasion, in a more apocalyptic vein, he wished that

the Lord's people might be hid in their caves, as if they were not in the World, for nothing would do it, until God appeared with his judgments, and they that wan through that bitter and short sharp storm, by the sword of the Frenches, and a sett of unhappy men taking part with then, then there would be a spring-tide day of plenty, purity, and power of the gospel.⁵⁹

Persecution by the French in alliance with the regime of James VII formed the denouement of Peden's apocalyptic drama. Peden's vision articulated popular fears among the Societies of Catholic French hegemony over Scotland, Britain and Europe. For Peden, the Societies' struggle was part, if not the key part, in God's apocalyptic scheme for all human history. In the wake of the Revocation, he synthesised the persecution of the Societies and contemporary fears over the fate of Protestant Europe into a powerful vision which saw the Societies' eventual triumph over the forces of Counter Reformation and persecution with the arrival of King Jesus in the Second Coming. For Peden, and probably the Societies, Louis XIV's military might was the most powerful force of Antichrist, but Peden saw the Societies' eventual triumph as one which would be won primarily by spiritual, rather than military, means. Like his own predicament at the end of 1685, when he was hiding in a cave, he envisaged the Societies surviving through the coming storm by the same mechanism: a stark contrast to the violence of Bothwell, the Rye House Plots, the Argyll Rising and the Societies' admiration of the Waldenses.

In the dark days following the failure of Argyll's rising it was perhaps easier for Peden to adopt such a pessimistic outlook on worldly endeavours. However, as the Societies recovered from and their own internal feuding triggered by Argyll's rising, they reappraised their situation in the light of the changed European context which had arisen following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Through the medium of print the Societies sought to engage other European Calvinist communities in order to raise the profile of their cause.

57. Walker, *BP*, I, 78-9. Peden's utterances were made 'a little before his death' when he was at his brother's house at Auchencloigh and a cave nearby, in Sorn parish, Ayrshire. Since Peden died in late January 1686 at Auchencloigh, it is highly probable that they date to after the Revocation.

58. Walker, *BP*, I, 79.

59. Walker, *BP*, I, 82-3.

VII. Printing and the Calvinist International, 1687–1688

In 1682 the Societies had launched missions to the Calvinist communities of England and the United Provinces, but by mid 1683 their contacts with them had been effectively reduced to outposts in the north of England and Leeuwarden in Friesland. Failure brought a more insular outlook to the Societies and they became embroiled in their own war with the state and internal feuds over the Argyll Rising and its aftermath. However, as we have seen in chapter five, 1686 saw a revival in the Societies' fortunes. The regime's policy of relaxing persecution and its shift towards toleration played into the Societies' hands, as it effectively drew their presbyterian opponents, the moderate clergy, away from direct confrontation and towards a rapprochement with the regime. As Gardner has shown, 1687 saw a marked decline in population of the Scots exile community in the United Provinces as divisions opened up between the majority, who took advantage of toleration and pardons to return to Scotland, and those who opted to remain with William of Orange.⁶⁰ That decline and rapprochement created opportunities for the Societies to engage with the remaining exiles in the United Provinces and to represent their sufferings within the European context.

As the exiles returned, the Societies sent Alexander and Michael Shields in the opposite direction. Initially, Alexander Shields was sent to London by the thirty-third convention with £120 Scots to oversee the printing of *An Informatory Vindication*, but failing to find a printer he moved on to the United Provinces where he found one.⁶¹ He was soon joined by his brother, and they remained in the United Provinces until November 1687 putting Societies' books into the press.⁶² This placed the Shields brothers in a key position from which they could direct a publicity campaign to reshape the public image of the Societies, a role which they continued to fulfil after their return.⁶³

The brothers' journey marks the beginning of a wave of the Societies' publications in 1687 to 1688, some of which were designed to win the sympathy of a wider European readership. The scale of their campaign to win hearts and minds was unprecedented in the history of the Societies, especially when compared to the previous feeble efforts of Hamilton, discussed in chapter two, but in 1687 the problems which had dogged Hamilton's efforts were overcome. Under the competent direction and editing of the Shields brothers three works rolled off the press in December 1687.

60. Gardner, *Scottish Exile Community*, 155-77.

61. Shields, *FCD*, 287.

62. Shields, *FCD*, 312, 313-6. Michael Shields had returned to Scotland by 7 December. Shields, *FCD*, 320-1. Alexander Shields probably returned at the same time. Houston, *Letters*, 260.

63. Renwick's letter of 12 January 1688 confirms Alexander Shields's lead role in matters of print. Houston, *Letters*, 260-1.

Firstly, Renwick and the Societies' *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.* (1687). Secondly, Alexander Shields' *A Hind Let Loose* (1687), and thirdly, *The Churches Choice, a sermon of Mr Renwick's in print on Song 1.7* (1687).⁶⁴

Four more works followed in 1688, which all bore the imprint of Alexander Shields' hand. Renwick, Michael Shields and Alexander Shields closely cooperated over *The Testimony Against Toleration*.⁶⁵ Alexander Shields had a hand in the publication of Renwick's martyr's testimony *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* (1688). And some of Shields' sermons were probably published under the titles *March II. 1688. Some Notes or Heads of a Preface, Lecture and Sermon, Preached at the Lothers in Crafoord Moor, by Mr. Alexander Shields, Preacher of the Gospel* (Edinburgh 1688?) and *Some Notes or Heads of a Preface and of a Lecture Preached at Distinckorn Hill in the Parish of Gaastoun, April 15. 1688* (1688?). Only Shields's hagiographic *Life of Renwick* failed to appear despite being completed within months of Renwick's death.

The Societies financed their printing in the United Provinces from a diverse range of international sources. Although the evidence is highly fragmentary, it appears that in the earlier period Hamilton had access to funds collected in Leeuwarden, Emden and Brema, but had relied solely on the charity of one individual to pay for the *Protestation Against the Scots Congregation*. By 1687 the Societies were using more diverse sources. Hamilton provided 300 guilders, probably from collections in the United Provinces. Emden also probably provided funds for Alexander and Michael Shields, and Jane Hamilton brought 160 guilders raised abroad to the convention in Scotland.⁶⁶ Another revenue stream came from the sale of the books or borrowing against their sale. In December 1687 *An Informatory Vindication* was smuggled back into Scotland where they were sold in book format for eight pence and unstitched for a penny less, and one 'Ja. Ca' was to borrow 200 merks 'in the name

64. From its content this sermon dates to the era of Toleration after the Waldenses' persecution and probably based on Hamilton's report of his journey to Geneva of July 1687. Reprinted as *The Church's Choice or a Sermon on Canticles ch.I. V.7. By that Faithful and Zealous Minister of the Gospel and Martyr for Jesus Christ Mr James Renwick* (Glasgow, 1705).

65. The *Testimony Against Toleration* is usually attributed to Renwick. However in January 1688 Renwick wrote to Alexander Shields, who provided it with a preface after Renwick's death, that: 'As for the testimony [against toleration], the publishing of it is longer retarded than I expected, because Michael Shields was not in health for writing; but I shall be careful about it. I have added what was to be transcribed out of Durham upon Scandal, and did oversee the writing of the most difficult places, and taken out some of the [repeated occurrences of the term] "bigots," because the recurring of such epithets makes them unsavoury.' Houston, *Letters*, 261.

66. Shields, *FCD*, 287n, 317; 'Letter of Michael Shields, to Rosin, minister at Emden, Utrecht 29th July 1687', EUL MS. New College Box 1.9.15; 'Letter of Alexander Shields to Monsieur Rosin, Emden. [undated]', Box 4.2.13; 'Letter of Michael Shields, to Rosin, minister at Emden, Utrecht 25th August 1687', Box 1.9.16.

of the meeting' against the books brought home.⁶⁷

The books themselves were smuggled into Scotland from the United Provinces. In January 1688, Renwick noted that 'books', probably *A Hind Let Loose* and *An Informatory Vindication*, had 'come safely in boxes to Wooler' in Northumberland. Clearly the books had been shipped across the North Sea, probably via Newcastle, and dispatched to the English Border area for collection by the Societies and smuggling into Scotland. In January 1688, Renwick noted in a letter that he had inserted papers left by Shields into the books. Since Renwick was in the Latimer brothers' Edinburgh home when he wrote, it is likely that the books were smuggled to Edinburgh for distribution, perhaps by Thomas and John Latimer, through the Societies' network or by under-the-counter booksellers. The pattern of distribution is impossible to trace, but probably included southern Scotland, northern England, London and to the societies in Ireland, as 'Ja. Ca' mentioned above is probably James Caldwell, a Belfast bookdealer who was sympathetic to the Societies. Doubtless some were retained in Utrecht for distribution through booksellers to an exile and Dutch audience.⁶⁸

Renwick's insertion of the 'papers' left by Alexander Shields into the smuggled books highlights the Societies' use of a predominantly continental tradition of using an engraved fold-out frontispiece, rare in British works of this period, to convey their message to a wider, and perhaps less English-literate, audience. The 'papers' are almost certainly the folded engraving inserted inside the front cover of the first edition of *A Hind Let Loose*, which is reproduced in appendix 6.3 of this thesis, that was later re-engraved and reordered by a less refined hand for the frontispiece of the first edition of *A Cloud of Witnesses* (1714). Judging from the high quality of the print and the fact that Shields had just returned from the United Provinces, a Dutch origin seems certain. Since they were printed independently of the text and smuggled into Scotland in a loose leaf format, it is possible that some were distributed independently of the book.

The rationale of the print's design was to communicate the severity of the Scottish persecution through six tableaux based on real events. A public execution scene encompasses the first two tableaux. There was one where martyrs are disembowelled, quartered, and have body parts burnt by the executioner, and another where they are hung and beheaded and have their hands cut off with an axe, like Hackston of Rathillet, or are decapitated by the Maiden, the Scottish version of the guillotine, used to execute the Earl of Argyll. The third tableaux shows the torture of prisoners

67. Shields, *FCD*, 319, 320.

68. Shields, *FCD*, 319, 320; Houston, *Letters*, 260-1; Greaves, *God's Other Children*, 209. Renwick lodged in Edinburgh in the house of 'Thomas and John', probably the Latimer brothers from Cockethill, Annandale, who were active members of the convention. Houston, *Letters*, 260; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 24n; Shields, *FCD*, 254, 445-8.

by the boots, thumbkins and firematches before the Privy Council, illustrating Scotland's controversial use of judicial torture deployed against Scots involved in the Rye House Plots. The fourth tableaux depicts the 'Killing Times' with the godly being shot in the fields by pursuing dragoons or by firing squad, the latter a reference to shootings like that of John Brown of Priesthill. The fifth scene shows prisoners being banished to the plantations, depicting martyrs drowning in the wreck of *The Crowne of London*, or having their ears cropped, as happened to some banished Societies' prisoners in 1685. The final scene shows two images of what may have been most shocking elements to a contemporary audience, the execution of women. The first shows two women being hanged, the case of Isobel Alison and Marion Harvey, and the other two women drowned 'at stakes in the sea', the case of the Wigtown Martyrs, which is discussed in depth in the conclusion of this thesis.

As we have seen, nearly all the published works drew on Hamilton's journeys or touched on the Societies' developing interest in the fate of Protestantism in Europe. *The Testimony Against Toleration* and *The Churches Choice* drew parallels with the Waldenses suffering persecution, praised their efforts at resistance and issued a warning to the Societies that they could expect little different. And *An Informatory Vindication* was designed to quell the charges levelled against the Societies by the Scots ministers in Rotterdam with the aim in part of appealing to the Dutch ministers, such as Brackel and Koelman who had deserted the Societies by heeding the moderates' charges, and dealt with Hamilton's mission to Switzerland. As the quotation at the start of this chapter shows, *A Hind Let Loose* was also partially aimed at an international readership as it drew comparisons between the fate of the Societies and that of the Waldenses, Huguenots and Hungarians. In it Shields points towards the shared persecution of the churches in France, Hungary and Piedmont at the hands of tyrannous monarchs revealed in a commonwealth of sufferings conveyed through printed accounts, newspapers and gazettes and by the reports of refugees in the United Provinces which demanded a compassionate response. Within that Christian spirit, Shields then made a direct plea for the 'Church of Scotland', by which he meant the Societies, to 'be enrolled' among the ranks of the suffering churches of Europe.⁶⁹

To an international readership, Shields would 'not make comparisons' between suffering churches, but in the domestic arena of a field preaching at Lowthers in March 1688, later put in print, he was confident that the Societies were in the vanguard of suffering churches and would receive divine favour at the Second Coming.

69. Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 21.

Although the testimony of the Church of France, and in the valleys of Piedmont, and in Hungary, be great and weighty and well worth the contending and suffering for, yet our testimony for the kingly office of Christ is more noble, and He will give it a glorious vindication when He comes to visit His people with His salvation.⁷⁰

Taken together, these works demonstrate a vastly increased awareness of the place of the Societies' cause within a pan-European Calvinist struggle against the forces of Counter Reformation. They were the fruits of years of European contact, especially through the travels and contacts of Hamilton. In them the Societies aimed to foster a wider consciousness both of their own struggle to a Continental readership and of the Continental struggle to a domestic readership with the aim of constructing a Calvinist International to resist Popery. In this they were partially successful as the Societies achieved a degree of rehabilitation among their Dutch and exiled brethren. As shown in chapter five, the Societies' contacts with Groningen, Emden and Utrecht revived and flourished, and the doors to ordination reopened. The printing of works like *An Informatory Vindication* certainly aided the process of their rehabilitation, but it was probably the shifting political situation in relation to Toleration and the fragmenting of the Scots exile community which were the decisive factors. The change in the political climate probably facilitated the Societies' access to the print media, especially through renewed contact with their former moderate brethren who had remained in the United Provinces. This process can be seen most clearly in the Societies' cooperation with moderates in an even more ambitious project, the compilation and publication of a Scottish presbyterian martyrology.

The Societies had desired to publish a martyrology since 1682-1683, but had been prevented by publishing failures. Later the project was revived and expanded, to take account of the Killing Times. In 1685 the twenty-fourth convention resolved that

Every society should do their utmost to gather up a list of the names, and an account of the sufferings of those within their respective bounds, who suffered martyrdom and other wise; and also the enemies barbarous dealing and cruelty there, and any signal and remarkable judgements that had been inflicted upon any of these enemies: ... that the whole being collected together, might be for the good and comfort of the present and succeeding generations.

The evidence was to be gathered with 'all expedition' but in the end 'not [as] much as was desired' was collected, perhaps because of the internal feuding and schism within the Societies.⁷¹ The project was revived again during the Shields brothers' sojourn in the United Provinces and re-conceived on a grander scale. The earlier designs had aimed to cover the period from 1680 to 1683 or up to 1685, but the new project aimed to cover from the beginning of the 'tyranny' in 1660. It was to

70. Renwick, *A Choice Collection*, 4.

71. Shields, *FCD*, 182.

include 'all the testimonies in *Naphtali*, with what account we can gather from thence and other collections relating to these times before Bothwel' and 'all the dying speeches of those who have suffered since', combined with elements from the earlier design with regard to persecution, persecutors and the Killing Times. In its conception the envisaged work went well beyond what was finally achieved in *A Cloud of Witnesses* in 1714 and even beyond the later nineteenth-century expanded editions of that work. In its scope it resembled sections of *A Hind Let Loose*, and was perhaps inspired by Alexander Shields. He also appears to have worked on the third edition of James Stewart of Goodtrees's *Naphtali* in 1680 which had added the martyrs' testimonies of 1678 to 1679 which were proposed to be encompassed within the new design.⁷²

The new work was also to include those martyrs who had differed from the Societies' testimony with 'animadversions upon their mistakes' in order to form 'a complete system of all the sufferings in our day'. Clearly, the Societies intended to use the work as an educational tool among the martyrology's readership and to clarify and comment on their testimony tradition, no doubt using *An Informatory Vindication* as a benchmark. The broadened scope would also have encompassed their moderate brethren's martyrs, such as John King, John Dick, Thomas Archer and the earl of Argyll, a remarkable development considering the Societies' previous hostility towards the Argyll faction, but indicative of a new inclusive approach taken towards their former brethren by the Societies, which had been pioneered by Kersland, Boyd and Linning in their contacts with Kersland's family in Utrecht.

That inclusive approach is reflected in the editing and financing of the proposed martyrology. The impetus behind the scheme had come from John Haddow in Utrecht, who was in touch with the influential exile Lady Kersland, Thomas Linning, who was then studying in Utrecht, and very likely Alexander Shields.⁷³ The basis for their cooperation is not known, but it was almost certainly due to recent developments within the Societies and the impact of King James's toleration. In late 1687, Kersland and Boyd had shattered the Societies' hardline stance on separation from the presbyterian ministry and potentially opened the way for the factions to draw closer together. *An Informatory Vindication* had clarified that the Societies had moderated their testimony and political beliefs. And the Societies had also publicly opposed toleration, which had fragmented the Scottish exile community.

72. *A Cloud of Witnesses* covers the testimonies only from 1680 not from 1660. Shields had recently published a historical representation of the testimony of the church from 1660 and an account of the persecution and sufferings from 1660 in *A Hind let Loose* (1687). Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 120-216, 216-46. His work on *Naphtali* and experience in the illicit book trade can be found in 'Letter of Alexander Shields to his brother Michael' [20 May 1680], EUL MSS. La.III.350. No. 15.

73. Houston, *Letters*, 260-1.

The project also highlights the financial constraints under which the Societies published. It is clear they were grateful to Haddow for funding the project. Lavish works on the scale of the martyrology were costly and probably impractical within the Societies' wider publication campaign given the limited finance which could be raised within their own network, but in partnership with wealthier Scots exiles from the remaining exile community such a project was a viable option.

A work on such a major scale needed a proficient editor, and Alexander Shields seems to have accepted Haddow's lead role in seeing the martyrology to the press. The Societies' acceptance of Haddow was remarkable, considering his closeness to the Argyll faction and his track record of opposition to the Societies. Haddow, or Haddoway, had been a heritor and merchant from Douglas and a chamberlain to the marquis of Douglas. He was also very likely the brother-in-law of William Cleland, who had been Argyll's agent to the Societies. Haddow had also been in the militant faction in the Council of War at Bothwell and been forfeited for his role there in 1681.⁷⁴ However, following the Rye House Plots, he had joined with moderates in the United Provinces and sat at Argyll's council table, but had failed to convince Hamilton to support the Rising in advance. Haddow's career had followed a similar path to Shields, but Haddow was also responsible for the exposure of Hamilton's scandalous carriage at Bothwell and in the United Provinces, which had led to Hamilton's ostracism by the convention.

The appointment of Haddow marks the beginning of the coming together of the Societies and moderates who had rejected toleration. The scale of this coalition is impossible to determine, but it included at least Lady Kersland and the figures around Haddow who were prepared to fund the publication of the martyrology and Linning's studies.⁷⁵ However, the broadening of the Societies' coalition was problematic. The Shields brothers' endeavours in the United Provinces had pointedly bypassed Hamilton, who with the exception of borrowing and sending 300 guilders, had taken no part in the printing process.⁷⁶ Hamilton was of little utility to the production of the other works published, but his input was essential to the martyrology project, as he held the Societies' collection of testimonies required for it. From the start, Hamilton and Haddow's feud threatened the project. The Societies' invitation to Haddow implicitly criticised Hamilton's skills as a publisher, as Haddow had been chosen for 'his fittedness for waiting upon the press'. Unlike Hamilton, Haddow also had the finances to afford the project as he offered to print the martyrology 'though it should extend to a large volume' at his own expense, an offer the convention, 'not knowing another way to get it done', could not refuse.

74. Simpson, *Traditions*, 414; Wodrow, *History*, III, 114n, 247-8; IV, 15n; T. F. Henderson & Stuart Handley, *Oxford DNB*, 'Cleland, William (1661?-1689) army officer and poet'.

75. Houston, *Letters*, 260-1; Shields, *FCD*, 328.

76. Houston, *Letters*, 241; Shields, *FCD*, 287n.

Although the martyrology was to be funded and supervised by moderate presbyterians, its content was to be provided by the Societies. On the Shields brothers' return in December 1687 the thirty-seventh convention set about its planning. It resolved that every local society was to appoint two or three men to gather accounts of sufferings within their bounds and bring them to the next convention. At that convention in March 1687, Haddow was appointed and letters were sent to him and Hamilton asking them to resolve their differences so they might be helpful to each another 'in the work of printing' the martyrology, but in May Hamilton flatly rejected collaboration with Haddow. His non-cooperation with the convention's desires was probably due to a mixture of personal and ideological factors. Hamilton saw himself as the ideological upholder of the militant testimony of the 'great Renwick'. His refusal to work with Haddow was probably an attempt to prevent any union between the Societies and those who he believed had proven themselves to be ideologically unsound and to preclude any further dilution of the Societies' testimony to accommodate the moderate exiles.

Despite Hamilton's refusal the project continued for some months. Some accounts of sufferings were collected for the martyrology, but it did not go on into print due to 'several things wanting', almost certainly a reference to Hamilton's collection of testimonies, and the Revolution diverting the Societies' efforts.⁷⁷

The design of the martyrology brought moderates and militants together for the first time in a unified presentation of the suffering of Scottish presbyterians to an international audience. For five years the Societies had attempted to publish their martyrs' testimonies and an account of their persecution, but failed to do so. Prior to 1682 some testimonies had been tacked on to James Stuart of Goodtrees' *Naphtali*, a discussion of the lawful nature of resistance, rather than in an explicit account of martyrdom and persecution. The Societies' shift in genre to martyrology would have augmented the legal and theoretical arguments over resistance to tyranny displayed in *Naphtali* and *A Hind Let Loose*, with the emotive rhetoric of persecution and martyrdom, a tried and tested formula designed to win hearts as well as minds.

In adopting the martyrology genre, the Societies and moderates probably hoped to have a political effect. Although initially conceived 'for the good and comfort of the present and succeeding generations', the fact that the project was shelved because of the events of the Revolution highlights that it was designed for an immediate political end of discrediting James VII's regime. Martyrdom was a powerful and divisive concept. If the readership embraced the idea that Scottish presbyterians were suffering martyrdoms like a church under the cross, then the Lord was expressly on their side

77. Shields, *FCD*, 321-8, 330. Haddow later returned with William of Orange in 1688 and became a captain in the Cameronian Regiment. Gardner, *Scottish Exile Community*, 227. Shields, *FCD*, 403.

and their cause a righteous one with apocalyptic significance, while those committing the murder and persecution of Christian brethren could be deemed only to be on the side of Satan. To attack the Stuart monarchy in general since the Restoration, and James VII in particular, in such a way, might have transformed the understanding of the Societies' struggle, as it moved debate on from the legality of their resistance and into the realms of an apocalyptic struggle between good and evil. Had the Societies' and moderates' attempt to print a comprehensive martyrology succeeded it could have made excellent propaganda and significantly raised the profile of the sufferings of Scottish presbyterians within the European context.

VIII. The Societies and Barbados, Jamaica and the English North American Colonies, 1684–1688

The blacks mortally hated him for his fidelity to his master, and made various attempts to murder him. One of them struck him on the head with a long pole, whereby he lay dead for some time, and lost a great deal of blood, so that ever since he is a little paralytic. At another time he was poisoned by another of the Negroes, but was saved by timely applications of antidotes. In short, he was continually in hazard of his life by those savages. – The Rev. Robert Wodrow on the experience of Gilbert Milroy, banished to Jamaica in 1685.⁷⁸

One of the consequences of the Societies' persecution was their entanglement in a transatlantic structure of persecution, which saw prisoners taken in the west of Scotland banished to the New World. The Societies initially limited their response to that network to liberating their brethren in transit to Edinburgh or through prison escapes, but once their brethren had left Scottish shores they moved beyond the Societies' reach. To counter this transatlantic dimension to their persecution required a new strategy; one that could reach beyond Scotland. However, until 1688 the convention took little interest in the banished once they had been shipped to the colonies and made no efforts to secure the return of any of them.

Large numbers of adherents to the Societies were banished to the English colonies of North America, Jamaica and Barbados from 1684 to 1687. The subsequent histories of only a very few who reached their destination have survived in Scotland, and of even fewer that can positively be identified as members of the Societies. One reason for their absence from the historical record was the attitude of the Societies towards banishment as discussed in chapter five. While Renwick was alive banishment was deemed a form of testimony which had to be endured.⁷⁹ This perhaps explains the convention's attitude, but it had not prevented the return of a few individuals from

78. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 185-7.

79. Carslaw, *Letters*, 224-5, 248-50.

banishment to rejoin the Societies, some in very prominent roles. The cases of John Mathieson in Rosehill, Closeburn parish, and Gilbert Milroy or M'Ilroy in Kirkcalla, Penningham parish, who returned with accounts of their sufferings, shed some light on the experiences of the banished and how they were conveyed to the Societies.⁸⁰

Mathieson had been a delegate to the convention prior to his banishment in July 1684 aboard the *Carolina Merchant*.⁸¹ After an exceptionally long and brutal voyage of nineteen weeks from Gourrock, in which Mathieson was beaten, he arrived in Carolina. There Mathieson and the others refused to consent to being sold into 'slavery' for which they were severely beaten. By 'providence' Mathieson got free from 'these bloody butchers' and sailed on to Virginia, then Pennsylvania, through storms and a 'great weighty sickness' which nearly killed him, until he reached East Jersey where he was reunited with some of his banished brethren. Together they sailed on to New England, but Mathieson became 'sorely grieved with the miscarriages' of some of the other banished and returned to East Jersey where he indentured himself to a family. Mathieson was forced to take indenture due to economic imperatives as he explained: 'albeit we had escaped from them that had brought us over, and could not work for them, yet we behoved to work for something to bring us back again'. By his own account, he was 'taken care of' by his master and mistress, and they must have given him generous terms of indenture or waived their rights over him as soon after Mathieson went to New York where he negotiated passage to London. By mid to late 1685 he was back in Scotland in Peden's entourage and had rejoined Renwick and the convention by mid 1686, but he continued to suffer from physical discomfort as a result of his beating aboard the *Carolina Merchant*.⁸²

Milroy, who was taken in June or July 1685, had refused the Abjuration and was sent to Edinburgh for execution, but was instead banished for ten years and only his weak condition preserved his ears from being cropped. In August 1685 he was shipped to Port Royal in Jamaica with 190 others in a three-month voyage plagued by brutality, disease, hunger and thirst which resulted in thirty-two deaths and prisoners drinking their own urine. At Port Royal he recorded their imprisonment prior to sale, but also the kindness of some people, especially of a Mr Hicks, perhaps from the Society of Friends, with whom he had several meetings in Jamaica. After a short spell he and the others were sold 'to be slaves', probably forced indenture, for the benefit of Sir

80. Kirkcalla OS Ref. NX 305 747. Rosehill OS Ref. NX NX 884 923.

81. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 527; EUL MSS. La.III.350. No.116.

82. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 527-8; Shields, *FCD*, 254, 387, 402, 485n; Walker, *BP*, I, 69-70, 116. Some of Mathieson's experience was also shared by James Muir, another former delegate to the convention banished to Carolina in 1684, but he did not reappear until 1690. NLS MS. Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 88; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 502-3; Shields, *FCD*, 445-8.

Philip Howard in England who had been 'gifted' the prisoners by King James VII. Like Mathieson, Milroy resisted his enslavement. For refusing to work on the Sabbath, he was 'beaten several times' and nearly killed by his master with a sword, a testament to the brutal discipline which slaves had to endure. However, Milroy then gained his master's favour and was made overseer of 'all of his Negroes' on the plantation. Milroy's Christian sympathies did not extend to the black slaves who had been similarly transported from their native land, as Wodrow summarises above. Milroy survived his 'bondage', unlike many of the others from the same shipment, and returned to Wigtownshire in 1690 where he became an elder in Kirkcowan parish and one of the witnesses to the veracity of the execution of the Wigtown Martyrs.⁸³

In both cases the brutality and deprivations of the passage and the hazard of disease were intrinsic to the process of banishment. However, while the banished were delivered to the Caribbean and the Colonies by the same mechanism, the similarities between them ended at the point of sale. In the Colonies, Mathieson had some latitude, but Milroy's Jamaican existence was directed by the cruelty of the plantation system. Whereas Mathieson had a range of choices in the American colonies directed by his conscience and economic circumstance, Milroy's choices were more far restricted and starker in terms of life and death. Mathieson also had the advantage of being able to escape across colonial jurisdictions, unlike Milroy on the island of Jamaica. The structure of the cultures and economies they experienced was also substantially different. Those banished to the American colonies were sent to build a colonial settlement within a broadly familiar European Christian context, while those sent to the Caribbean worked in the proto-industrial context of the sugar plantations surrounded by the unfamiliar cultures of the slave population, which Milroy and probably many others regarded as heathen savages.

The switch in destination of banishment from the Colonies to the Caribbean marked the beginnings of a very different experience of banishment, one which was alien to the Societies membership in the uplands of Southern Scotland. Prior to 1685 the authorities had sent banished presbyterians to the colonies in Carolina and Virginia. They had attempted to send prisoners from Bothwell to Barbados, but that attempt ended with the wreck of *The Crowne of London*. However, in mid 1685 a large shipment, predominantly made up of prisoners from the Argyll Rising, was sent to the Jamaican plantations. The rapid expansion in sugar production and accompanying profits may have lain behind the authorities' actions as the Caribbean trade required slaves and indentured servants for its plantations in Barbados and Jamaica. Funnelling Societies' prisoners there not only helped to remove them from Scotland and prevent the spectacle of public executions, it also helped

83. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 185-7, 217; NLS MSS. Wod.Oct.XXIX, f.219; Angus Calder, *Revolutionary Empire, The Rise of the English-Speaking Empires from the Fifteenth Century to the 1780's* (London, 1998), 220.

to fulfil a pressing economic need and further enriched the wealthy sugar barons. It had the added advantage of diverting prisoners from the English American colonies where their punishment was not assured. Barbados became the destination for Societies prisoners with transports directed to the island in late 1685 and 1687.⁸⁴

The Societies were probably aware of the general conditions in parts of the Caribbean. Some Jamaican experiences may have been related to the Societies by John Howie of Lochgoin, the ancestor of the editor of *Faithful Contendings Displayed*, who was banished with Milroy. He returned to Scotland at some point before the Revolution and his farm in Fenwick parish is known to have sheltered Renwick, Kersland, Kinloch and Alexander Shields.⁸⁵ Howie's and Mathieson's returns must have increased the Societies' awareness of the conditions the banished endured, but there was still no change of attitude towards banishment until Renwick's death allowed a change of heart and news of the specific conditions in Barbados arrived.

The return of John Russell and John Stewart in June 1688 altered the convention's attitude. Russell was from Shotts parish and probably the same as the John Russell taken in 1684 for posting seditious papers on church doors with other members of the Societies. He had been sentenced to death, but reprieved by the death of Charles II, before finally banished to Barbados in 1687.⁸⁶ Stewart may be the John Stewart of Bara parish, Haddingtonshire, who organised Renwick's conventicle in Berwickshire in July 1686.⁸⁷ Alternatively he could be John Stewart of Underbank, near Lanark, who was connected to Cargill and a delegate in the convention in 1682 who had been captured when John Steel of Logan Waterhead, one of founders of the United Societies, escaped an ambush near Lanark in 1685.⁸⁸ In either case, John Stewart was a prominent activist.

Stewart and Russell had their freedom purchased for them by their banished brethren in Barbados 'in order to relieve them'.⁸⁹ On arrival in Scotland they related the 'conditions' of their friends in Barbados, an appeal which moved the thirty-ninth convention in June 1688 to order a collection for those 'last banished' in order 'to relieve some of our brethren under bondage of slavery in Barbados'. This call was reiterated at the fortieth convention on 1 August. The impetus behind this new initiative had come from the banished in Barbados. There was little the Societies could do about the process of banishment, but they could counteract the effects of the sentence.

84. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 530-1. *Cloud* mistakenly lists a third voyage in 1685 to Barbados, but this was the Henry & Francis which went to New Jersey.

85. Simpson, *Traditions*, 397-403; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 218.

86. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 151; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 531.

87. Brown, *Covenanters of the Merse*, 229.

88. Walker, *BP*, II, 25; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 502-3.

89. Shields, *FCD*, 344-5.

Russell and Stewart took an active part in raising the funds required, probably through touring local prayer societies. Their tour was in one sense a precursor of the nineteenth century anti-slavery campaigns, but it is unlikely that the Societies' objection was against the institution of slavery per se, as the development of the concept of universal rights or of the immorality of slavery had yet to emerge. The Societies probably objected to the subjection of their brethren to slave status. The banished prisoners were not in fact slaves, but were forcibly indentured servants on the sugar plantations, a form of *de facto* slavery which lasted until the terms of the indenture were worked off, at which point the indentured servant would be granted a small quantity of sugar, but the harsh conditions of the work regime, climate and disease also made death a strong possibility.⁹⁰

The adoption of the rhetoric of 'slavery' and 'bondage', as opposed to forced indenture, highlights how the Societies exploited the ambiguous status of the banished to attack the Scottish regime. Indentures were freely entered into by contracting parties. Those under sentence of banishment were forced into indenture without their consent, in effect into a state of 'slavery' and equivalent to being kidnapped, in direct contravention of the liberties which the Societies believed a subject should have, and which pointed to the tyrannous and coercive nature of the regime. Russell and Stewart's audience would also probably have believed that slavery was something which existed under Roman, Sicilian, Turkish, Tartarian, or Indian tyrants, not lawful Christian rulers, which made obvious parallels between the rule of James VII and tyrants. The use of 'bondage', which was loaded with the biblical overtones of the Babylonian bondage of the Israelites, also added to that picture, as it evoked the suffering of the godly under the yoke of a tyrannous government.

In all a sum of 4,300 merks (roughly £2,860 Scots) was raised, which was probably just short of the maximum sum the Societies could raise beyond their normal running costs as it was described as 'all that can be got' with some having 'stretched themselves very far' to achieve the amount. It was collected through the normal mechanism with every prayer society to 'collect money' within their 'respective bounds' according to their ability to help. From June until August the money was then passed through the chain of societies to Edinburgh, the financial centre of the Societies' network, and into the hands of Michael Shields and Dr Ford, and probably Walker.⁹¹

The Societies then used legitimate international credit networks to launder their money and

90. Calder, *Revolutionary Empire*, 176.

91. Ford had experience of banishment. In August 1685 he had subscribed a joint testimony on Pitlochrie's ship in Leith Roads. It is unclear if he was banished and returned or simply escaped before he attended the convention on 24 June 1686. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 531; 'Letter from John Foord to Mr ?, 1685.', NLS MS. Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 104; Shields, *FCD*, 246, 380. Walker was in charge of 'contributions and distributions' and throughout his lives of Society figures frequently refers to individuals who were banished.

surreptitiously to make transactions in Barbados. In late August, Shields and Ford passed the money on to a sympathetic agent in Edinburgh to secure their brethren's relief, under the condition that it was to be given as security to redeem the banished or to be returned. The agent then sent a bill for the sum to a correspondent of his in London who was involved in the sugar-slave trade, who passed it on to 'a gentleman' or 'man of credit' who was experienced in the slave/indenture market in Barbados who was to transact for the relief of the banished. The 'man of credit' then helped the banished to purchase their indentures from their masters at individually agreed prices, under the guise of a normal business transaction. It is not clear if he or the London agent in the chain knew of the source of the finance or its ultimate political purpose.

To secure the secrecy of their efforts the fortieth convention wrote a letter to two of their banished brethren in Barbados, James Baxter, a former conventicle organiser, and another unnamed friend, which was to be communicated to fourteen named others. In the letter the convention urged them to do their 'utmost' for their relief by keeping the information 'as close from your masters as you can' until the bargain was made 'lest they getting notice of the money is come for your relief, do heighten your price ... so that the sum is not sufficient'. Clearly, the Societies had done some market analysis into the value of the banished, as they knew that 4,300 merks should be sufficient to purchase fourteen individuals at an average price of about £200 Scots or 300 merks each, including passage home. Two others had their relief secured by their kin. To ensure they maximised their return, the convention urged the banished to accept the 'advice and assistance' of the 'man of credit' in that matter. What was left over was to be used to garner supplies for their homecoming, but an account of their expenditure was to be kept. According to Shields, 'most' of those listed came home a little afterwards.⁹²

Among those the Societies rescued were a few experienced and capable hands. James Baxter was probably the smith in Edinburgh who organised Renwick's conventicle at Greencleugh in 1686.⁹³ John Buchanan, a maltman in Glasgow and one of the Societies' students, had previously escaped from Dunnottar with William Boyd before he was recaptured in Glasgow returning from a Renfrewshire conventicle held by Renwick in January 1687. He was also a correspondent of Colin Alison.⁹⁴ However, most were simply rank and file supporters who had dutifully given testimony on their banishment.

The Convention could afford to rescue only fourteen out of forty-four prisoners banished to Barbados. Its efforts were confined to those banished in 1687 and did not extend to those

92. Shields, *FCD*, 336-7, 344-5.

93. Brown, *Covenanters of the Merse*, 233.

94. 'Letter from John Buchanan to Col, Alason [Colin Alison], 1687', NLS MSS Wod.Qu.XXXVI. item 69; EUL MSS La.III.344, Vol. 2, item 125; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 17n., 412.

sentenced in 1685.⁹⁵ The convention's endeavours were complemented by those of kin networks. John Aitken and William Hannay's relations took an independent financial route to secure their relief, as perhaps did those of Isobel Steil, a relative of the martyr David Steel of Skellyhill (d.1686) and part of one of the central kin networks of the Societies, who returned to Lesmahagow parish soon after the Revolution.⁹⁶ Kin may also account for four others who returned from Barbados among those shipped there in 1685. John Gemmel in Nether Blackwood, who had escaped from an attack on Paton of Meadowhead's farm, was captured in November 1685 in Thomas Wylie's House at Darwhilling, Fenwick parish, during the operation which resulted in the martyrdom of Hardhill. Gemmel was taken with Thomas's son, William Wylie 'in Little Blackwood or Groudar'. Both were banished to Barbados and remained there for three years until they purchased their liberty.⁹⁷ John Mack in Evandale parish, also banished in 1685, had returned to Scotland prior to 4 January 1689 when he was part of a delegation sent to negotiate with societies in Carrick.⁹⁸ James Gavin in Douglas, who was taken hiding in the burn below the house of James Wilson, a significant figure in the convention, had his ears cropped and was transported to Barbados in 1685. After the Revolution he returned to Douglas where his house bears a memorial to his ears being cropped dated 1695.⁹⁹ This may indicate that relative wealth, in both senses of the term relative, rather than status within the Societies may have been a factor in the Societies' selection process. In all, out of forty-four Society people sent to Barbados, twenty-three may have regained their liberty. Only four of them came from the 1685 transport, a testament to either their high mortality rate in Barbados or to the difference the Societies' new strategy made to the survival of their brethren transported in 1687.¹⁰⁰

The Societies had no strategic interest in developing a network in the New World. Several factors contributed to that outlook. In the English North American Colonies their banished brethren had met with a mixture of sympathy and brutality, but there was no substantial Scottish presbyterian base on which they could build a network. Even the Scots colonial settlement in Carolina was unpromising terrain, due to its founding by their moderate opponents. The scattered nature of the banished Society people prohibited effective communication, and the lack of persecution and

95. See Appendices 6.1 to 6.3.

96. Greenshields, *The Annals of Lesmahagow*, 116; Shields, *FCD*, 345.

97. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 20n; Campbell, *SW*, 147-51; Howie, *Scots Worthies*, 597, 597n. Darwhilling OS Ref. NS 485 420.

98. Shields, *FCD*, 369.

99. Simpson, *Traditions*, 415-20; James Gavin, 'Account of his apprehension and having his ears cropped 1686.', Wod.Fol. XXXIII. item 89; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 217, 220.

100. See Appendices 6.1 to 6.3.

relative toleration between Protestant denominations left little purchase for the Societies' message. Some of those conditions prevailed in Barbados and Jamaica, but it was in the especially hostile conditions of the Barbadian sugar plantations that some of the Societies' banished brethren organised independently of the convention to achieve their deliverance.

The alien culture and conditions in Barbados marked it out as different from previous banishments. Stewart and Russell's tour of societies spread word of their brethren and raised finance. They also harnessed the power of lay membership to promote their cause within the Societies and reversed the convention's policy towards banishment. The convention's new strategy was not interested in the New World as an area for expansion of their cause; rather it was interested in furthering their cause in Scotland. The Societies' use of transnational structures of capital to liberate their brethren in Barbados, like their corresponding efforts in printing, demonstrated an enhanced level of sophistication in the conduct of their struggle. Their strategy to counter persecution in Barbados reduced the effectiveness of the persecution in Scotland and highlights that the locus of their struggle was no longer restricted to Scotland, but increasingly took place in the international domain.

IX. Conclusion

From the moment that Hamilton left his Lanarkshire cave he embarked on a career as an exile that provides an insight into the map of the Societies' European interests and which reshaped the Societies' Continental outlook. From Hamilton's early schemes for Transylvania, Sweden and Brandenburg-Prussia it is clear that some Societies' militants believed that they were engaged in an apocalyptic struggle with the forces of Counter Reformation at home under the tyranny of Charles II and across Europe at the hands of the Catholic monarchs of France and the Holy Roman Empire. Although some militants understood the conflict in global and apocalyptic terms, the Societies' initial focus at their creation was on more limited and immediate local strategic objectives in Scotland and England. It was Hamilton's breakthrough in Friesland which diverted the trajectory of the Societies' strategy away from England in mid 1682 and his re-establishment of contact with Voetian Calvinism which extended their Continental support base to Groningen, Leeuwarden, Emden and Brema where the Societies' sufferings for their cause were well received.

The first phase of the Societies' European engagement was centred on what their contacts could do for the Societies in Scotland, whether by raising funds among their congregations or educating and ordaining the Societies' students. It had a profound effect on the Societies in Scotland through Renwick's ordination, as discussed in chapter two, but it also led to internal tensions within the Societies and with the moderate presbyterian exile community. In this first phase, the Societies

failed to reach beyond the personal contacts and networks of Hamilton through printed works. This limited their capacity to communicate with a wider audience and left them vulnerable to misrepresentation by their moderate opponents, which was precisely what brought about the destruction of their Continental network in 1684 and left them isolated from the Continent for the next two years.

Two external factors altered the Societies' fortunes and led to a second phase of European contact. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in France in late 1685 and the introduction of toleration in the British kingdoms in 1687 altered the prevailing European political climate as the destruction of the Protestant churches and states seemed to some to be a possibility. The former led to the high profile persecution and destruction of the Huguenot and Waldensian communities which attracted the Societies' attention. Peden's preaching linked fears of Catholic French hegemonic power and the fate of the Societies into one seamless apocalyptic drama. And Hamilton's journey to the exiled Waldenses in Geneva brought home the realities of the destruction of a similar Calvinist community and the dangers of toleration. Their actions mark the beginning of the Societies' strategic thinking in broader European terms, rather than viewing Europe simply as a support network. As toleration was introduced at home, the Societies began to reach out to their brethren at home and abroad through the media of print and preaching in which they expressed their solidarity with the oppressed Calvinists of France, Piedmont and Transylvania, and linked the issues of Catholic absolute monarchs, toleration and resistance to oppression to this commonwealth of suffering Calvinist communities. This not only strengthened the Societies' shared sense of suffering at home, it also revived sympathies abroad, especially in the United Provinces.

However, the Societies deemed the testimony of some churches more worthy than that of others. Although in theory the persecuted Calvinist churches were united in their sufferings, the Societies believed that they were in the vanguard of further reformation and that their own testimony was superior. To an international readership they portrayed themselves as one among equals, but in preaching at home they pointed to the special place their community occupied in the Lord's apocalyptic plan. Their linkage of the issues of Catholic absolute monarchy, toleration and resistance further highlighted the differences amongst suffering churches. Although they saw the Huguenots as their brethren, Huguenot acceptance of absolute monarchy and pleas for toleration did not make them a suitable exemplar for the Societies. Instead the Societies lauded the resistance of the Waldensian secular communes which had defied their compliant ministry and which provided a portent of the fate of their own Protestant community if they accepted toleration. Where persecution was absent, Hamilton and the Societies in their correspondence differentiated between theological factions. Among the Dutch Calvinists they clearly favoured the Voetians or *Nadere Reformatie* movement and avoided contact with Cocceians where possible, while in the case

of the Swiss, the Societies' tone was one of general disappointment with their worldly policies, although Hamilton found some worthy of correspondence. In general, the Societies admired European Calvinists who were either seeking further reform, such as the Voetians, or actively resisting persecution, like the Waldenses and the Hungarians, but they did not find a perfect church amongst any of the European Calvinist or other Protestant communities to compare with their 'pristine' reformation. Their aim was not to unite the Calvinist or Lutheran churches against Catholicism, but to encourage a revolutionary Calvinist international within the Calvinist churches, which would stand firm on Calvinist orthodoxy and uncompromisingly resist all aspects of Counter Reform.

The Societies' stance against toleration also brought rapprochement with some remaining moderate Scots exiles in the United Provinces. In the martyrology project, a working relationship was established which aimed to present a unified picture of the sufferings of Scottish presbyterians to a wider audience. Although the project was not realised, it produced several significant legacies. First, it laid the foundations for the presbyterian factions' cooperation in William of Orange's invasion of 1688 and the defence of the Convention of Estates in 1689. Second, it ultimately led to the final schism in the Societies in 1690 over union with the moderate presbyterians within the restored presbyterian church. And third, it led to the adoption of the Societies' martyrs by the wider presbyterian tradition and deployment of them in anti-Jacobite propaganda. Its other legacy was the raising of the Cameronian Regiment in 1689, which was an amalgam of the Societies and moderate elements. Although the regiment had been born to defend the overthrow of James VII and garnered a formidable reputation for its fanatical dedication to the presbyterian cause, it went on to serve the Protestant cause in Europe during the Nine Years' War. Thanks to the Societies' commitment to a Calvinist International, it was a small ideological step for its rank and file from the Societies' resistance in the uplands of southwestern Scotland to war with Louis XIV in the trenches of Steinkirk and Namur. The Societies had come a long way from Hamilton's cave at the head of the Douglas Water.

Conclusion

I. The ‘Madd Men’?:

The Societies’ Response to the Revolution

How many earnest rugged Cromwells, Knoxes, poor Peasant Covenanters, wrestling, battling for very life, in rough mirey places, have to struggle, and suffer, and fall, greatly censured, be-mired, – before a beautiful Revolution of Eighty-eight can step over them in official pumps and silk-stockings[?]

Thomas Carlyle in *On Heroes and Hero Worship*.¹

In August 1689, the ‘Cameronian’ Regiment, formed out of the United Societies soon after the Revolution, were barricaded into the strategically important town of Dunkeld. Following the rout of the Williamite forces by Jacobites at Killiecrankie, it fell to the Society men to prevent a Jacobite breakout from the Highlands and defend the Revolution which had brought William to power in Scotland. Yet, doubts persisted about the Societies. In the words of one observer, they were ‘madd men not to be governed even by mastr Sheils ther orachle’.² That image of the Societies as ungovernable, inflexible and disputatious fanatics drew on the perceptions of moderate presbyterians and the authorities during the militants’ struggle between 1679 and 1688, and it continued to have currency for centuries to come. However, the Societies’ response to the Revolution contradicts that image and demonstrates that they had learnt lessons from their struggle up to 1688.

After William of Orange landed in England on 5 November 1688, there were numerous acts of

1. Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero Worship*, Lecture IV. Quoted in Hewison, *Covenanters*, II, 542.

2. William Fraser, *The Melvilles Earls of Melville and Leslie Earls of Leven*, (Edinburgh, 1890), II, 115-6.

popular anti-Catholicism and large-scale desertions to Orange's standard in England. James's grip on power had slipped on 23 November when he ordered his army to retreat and by 9–10 December the 'game was up' and he fled London. In England, the Revolution was quick and had substantial popular support.³ However, one of the conundrums of the simultaneous Revolution in Scotland in late 1688 has been that the English Revolution was virtually over before protests broke out in Scotland, a state of affairs which has led some historians into the impression that the Scots were reluctant parties in a revolution made in England and the United Provinces and exported to Scotland.⁴ However, as Harris has pointed out, not all Scots were 'reluctant revolutionaries', but the popular protests in Scotland were not on the scale of those witnessed in England.⁵ Why?

One reason for the lack of popular action in support for Orange in Scotland was the decisions taken by the United Societies in advance of his invasion. As the crisis between the European powers deepened, Linning's return had brought news that Hamilton intended to return to Scotland 'upon the first breaking out of wars ... to share your lot' and doubtless intelligence of the Dutch invasion preparations.⁶ There is no evidence that the Societies corresponded with the Dutch regime prior to the invasion, although William was said to have given favours to 'severall of our sufferers'. More important to the Societies' support for the Dutch venture were their existing contacts with Scottish exiles in the United Provinces and the re-establishment of their support network among the *Nadere Reformatorie*, as discussed in chapters five and six. As the Revolution unfolded, those responsible for those connections – Alexander Shields, Linning, Boyd and Kersland – played leading roles in guiding the Societies into supporting the Revolution, while the Societies' hawks, such as Hamilton, Earlstoun and Houston, rejected owning Orange's cause.⁷

As the time of the invasion drew nearer, the kingdom was 'full of commotions and rumours of war; everyone looking for changes and revolutions, some hoping for, and others fearing the same; and almost all were expecting the ensuing of these calamities that attend war, as its inseparable companion'.⁸ Strange prodigies were observed by some Society people. Alexander Shields noted

3. Harris, *Revolution*, 273-307.

4. Bruce Lenman, 'The poverty of political theory in the Scottish Revolution of 1688–90', in Lois Schwoerer ed., *Changing Perspectives on the Revolution of 1688–89* (Cambridge, 1992), 244–59; Ian B. Cowan, 'The Reluctant Revolutionaries: Scotland in 1688', in Eveline Cruikshanks ed., *By Force or by Default? The Revolution of 1688–89* (Edinburgh, 1989), 65–81;

5. Tim Harris, "'Reluctant Revolutionaries': The Scots and the Revolution of 1688–89", in Howard Nenner ed., *Politics and the Political Imagination in Later Stuart Britain* (Rochester, NY, 1997), 97–117. See also Lionel K. J. Glassey, 'William II and the Settlement of Religion in Scotland, 1688–1690' in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1989), 317-29.

6. Shields, *FCD*, 362-4.

7. Wodrow, *Analecta*, 185, 186.

8. Shields, *FCD*, 360.

that the westerly winds which prevented invasion had continued 'soe long as like was rarely ever heard of' and that a shower of blood was seen at Langholm when Scotland's standing forces crossed into England, leaving the militia alone to defend the kingdom.⁹ For the first time since 1685, the conditions were favourable for a rising. Once again, the Societies were faced with a similar dilemma to that faced before the Rye House Plots and the Argyll Rising: should they participate or not? The Societies' response demonstrates that they had learnt from previous failures.

At the forty-first convention on 24 October 1688, the Societies decided against indifference to a Dutch landing and that they would rise, but only in a 'defensive posture' in order to avoid 'snares', by which they meant committing themselves in advance to Orange's settlement, and to prevent their own 'destruction'. If the Dutch landed in England, as was expected, the Societies would not suddenly appear in arms. Only when the Dutch expedition was 'advanced' in Scotland, the kingdom 'in combustion' and the Societies were pressed to declare which side they were on, would they rise in the 'part of the country commanded by the Dutch'. The convention also sent a watching committee to Edinburgh to gather intelligence and to call a general meeting to advise them on the time and place for the Societies to rendezvous in arms.¹⁰ The Societies' decision to await developments before rising helps to explain why there was so little Scottish popular protest in late 1688, as they were probably the best positioned of the presbyterian factions to organise it.

Unlike in previous attempted risings, the Societies also agreed their position towards their potential partners in advance. The same convention unanimously concluded not to associate with the Dutch in one body or come under their command, but after 'some debate' it agreed to cooperate with them against their common enemy, accept arms and to take Dutchmen to teach them 'the art of war'. There was also 'much doubt and debate' over the old thorny question of admitting 'compliers', a reference to their former presbyterian brethren, to join with them in arms. However, the convention agreed that they could join with them as long as they assented to the Societies' declaration when it was emitted, participated in their planned day of humiliation over the steps of defection and renewed the Covenants, which engaged all renewers against such defections in all 'time coming', along with the Societies. If compliers took such steps, then only 'gross compliers' would not be taken as officers; even they would be admitted as soldiers.

The convention's compromise resolutions maintained unity. For the hardliners, it fulfilled their desire to remain separate from what they termed the 'promiscuous conjunction of reformed Lutheran malignants and sectaries' which made up Orange's coalition: for the more moderate wing, it offered scope for cooperation with moderate presbyterians in support of the invasion. The

9. Wodrow, *Analecta*, 180-1.

10. Wodrow, *Analecta*, 183-4.

Societies had subtly altered their position. At the time of the Rye House Plots and the Argyll Rising they had been isolationist. Now they would allow cooperation with the Dutch, appoint moderate exiles returning with William of Orange as officers and admit any presbyterian to join their rank and file.¹¹ For once, unity of purpose had overcome their desire for division.

The collapse of unpopular tyrannous regimes are often presaged by symbolic acts of popular defiance which quickly lead to disorder and defections among the ranks of the authorities. Such was the case with Scotland in 1688. In the run up to them, rumours spread of a Jesuit plot and that Catholics intended 'ane universal massacre'.¹² On 30 November, Glasgow students burnt effigies of the Pope and the Archbishop of St Andrews 'without opposition'.¹³ A few days later, Edinburgh students also burnt the Pope in effigy, entered Parliament House crying 'No Pope, No Papist', held a mock trial of the Pope which sentenced him to be publicly burnt at the Cross on the 25 December, and demanded a free parliament. The students' choice of date may signify some Societies' participation or that the Societies took note of the appointed date for further popular protest, as it coincided with the launch of the Societies' campaign in the West.

Before that, on 9 December, rumours circulated of a Catholic uprising in Edinburgh. Again, 'boys' ran through the town crying 'No Pope, No Papist, No Popish Chancellor', broke the windows of Catholic houses and proclaimed a free parliament at the Cross. Like the Societies, in proclaiming a free parliament the Edinburgh students had adopted the theatre of royal proclamations. In response to their open defiance, they feared that Highlanders stationed outside the burgh and troops commanded by a Catholic at Holyrood Abbey, a centre for Catholic worship and printing, were planning an 'ill design'. However, the next day popular protest turned into revolution when the Chancellor, the Catholic Earl of Perth, fled the city. In the evening, a mob attempted to burn the Abbey, but were met with a volley of fire and suffered twenty killed or wounded. At that crucial point, 'several west country gentlemen encouraged them to prosecute revenge', possibly some of the Societies' members who were described as 'active' in the Edinburgh tumults. Their intervention forced the Privy Council to order the Town Guard to storm the Abbey, whereupon 'the rabble' ransacked and burnt its chapels, the Jesuit College and printing works, and Perth's lodgings and other Catholic houses, burning all their contents at the Cross. As a result of the mob's anti-Catholic purge, the Catholic Earl of Traquair and others who remained loyal to James fled into Edinburgh Castle, effectively ending James's control of Scottish government. However, the next day the Privy Council acted to prevent further disorder and Edinburgh became

11. Wodrow, *Analecta*, 183-4. Shields, *FCD*, 364-6.

12. Wodrow, *Analecta*, 185.

13. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 472; 'Account of what past after burning the Pope at Glasgow', EUL, MSS. La.III.350. No. 221.

quiet.¹⁴

The fact that it only took a few pope-burning processions and the tumults in the capital to bring about regime change shows just how fragile James's Scottish regime had become, but his position was not hopeless as the country was divided in its support for him. Nonetheless, the purge of Catholics from positions of power had placed Scotland's constitutional settlement in flux. The question for the Societies was not simply how would it settle, but how they could influence the outcome?

Within a few days of the tumults, the Societies' Edinburgh committee wrote to the convention advising them to issue a remonstrance to Orange 'in our old Scots Presbyterian strain', acknowledging him and the Dutch States General 'as the instruments of stopping, for the time, the inundation of popery and persecution' and 'declaring our good will' towards them, but also 'admonishing him of his duty' in coming to reform, to 'beginn at home', a reference to the Societies' support for their Dutch brethren in the *Nadere Reformatorie*, and 'take heed whom he employ in trust or counsell', probably a warning against over reliance on moderate presbyterians. Its main aim remained reform in Scotland, as it was to contain a Societies' testimony so 'that forraigners may have ane information of the state of our cause' and state their cause as it was in Church and State 'our purest times'. The Societies' Remonstrance was to seek a Covenanted settlement, but despite it later being drafted and sanctioned, and Alexander Shields and Kersland appointed to take it to London, it was never delivered. According to Michael Shields, it was not dropped due to some 'evil design', but was not sent due to Alexander Shields and Kersland being caught up in the rush of events until William was declared king. After that, Shields claims, some considered the need for the Remonstrance 'doubtful' and, although others continued to support it being sent, it was again 'laid aside' due to the press of events.¹⁵

The sidelining of the Remonstrance demonstrates that the Societies' leadership had learnt from the failures of the Rye House Plots and the Argyll Rising when the Societies' demand for a Covenanted settlement had prevented cooperation with moderate presbyterians and isolated them from the rest of the British radical underground. Right from the beginning of the Revolution, there was an awareness by elements of the Societies' leadership that the age of protests and remonstrances had come to an end and had been replaced by one of deft diplomatic manoeuvres and influencing outcomes. Instead of directly petitioning Orange for a Covenanted settlement, the

14. Anon., *Five Letters from a Gentlemen in Scotland To his Friend in London: Being a True Account of what Remarkable Passages have happened since the Prince's Landing; the manner of the taking of the Chancellor and his Lady in Mans Apparel, the burning of the Pope, Demolishing of Popish Chapels &c., with the total overthrow of the Roman Catholics* (London, 1689), 1-3; Shields, *FCD*, 367.

15. Wodrow, *Analecta*, 186; Shields, *FCD*, 375, 380, 386-7.

Societies would renew the Covenants themselves in early March 1689 and press other presbyterians to accept a Covenanted settlement through negotiation. Ultimately, that strategy failed. The pursuit of a Covenanted settlement within the fractured denominational landscape of post-Revolutionary Scotland was unrealistic, and in 1690, Shields, Boyd and Linning would lead the majority of the Societies to accept a uncovenanted presbyterian settlement of the Church under protest.

Immediately after the Edinburgh tumults, the Societies also turned their attention towards undermining what remained of James's regime and Restoration settlement by 'turning out' the episcopal clergy and purging Catholics from public life. They planned to begin in Glasgow on 27 December by capturing the Bishop and his clergy, and tearing their 'canonically coats off their backs', but were dissuaded by a letter from Alexander Shields 'sheuing the unseasonableness and danger of it'.¹⁶ Shields had learnt from the Societies' expulsion from the Rye House Plots and was concerned that the Societies should not be seen as constitutional extremists promoting instability and disorder during the interregnum caused by James's flight. However, on 18 December, false rumours that Irish Catholics had raised fire and sword at Kirkcudbright led 'many hundreds' to take up arms in the West', especially from within the Societies.¹⁷ Since 1683, the Societies had planned to mobilise in the event of a 'massacre by Papists', as discussed in chapter three, and it is likely that they put their long-standing plan into effect and rendezvoused to resist the phantom Catholic landing. The dyke had broken.

According to Walker, the Societies then modified their plans.

[When] York fled, and the Crown was vacant, in which time we had no king or judicatories in the kingdom; the United Societies, in their general correspondence, considering this ... thought it some way belonged to us, in the interregnum, to go to all popish houses, and destroy their monuments of idolatry ... and to put [Catholics] in prison.¹⁸

Society people appeared in 'great numbers' in Nithsdale and Galloway in late December, where they destroyed 'relics of idolatry' at the cross of Dumfries.¹⁹ It was probably the same band of Society people which lay behind a report of 25 December, that as a result of the false reports of an Irish landing that:

the whole country is in arms, and apprehends the papists, and at Dumfriese they have taken and imprisoned the Provost, with some other papists and priests, and guard their town with six companies a-night [about 360 men].²⁰

16. Wodrow, *Analecta*, 186.

17. Shields, *FCD*, 367, 384; *Five Letters*, 4; Wodrow, *Analecta*, 187.

18. Walker, *BP*, I, 279-80.

19. Shields, *FCD*, 367, 370; Walker, *BP*, I, 280; *Five Letters*, 4.

20. *Five Letters*, 4.

At some point early in 1689, Kersland led a 'considerable number' to search Traquair's house for 'Romish wares', but finding none, he sent James Harkness to search the house of the deprived presbyterian minister of Galashiels, where he found 'a golden candle, with Mary and the Babe at her bosom' and the robes of Traquair's priest which they publicly burnt at the mercat cross of Peebles.²¹

Having appeared in the field, the Societies coordinated their next move. On 25 December, the Societies' forces acted in tandem across their heartlands in discharging episcopal 'curates' in what they termed 'a military way of reformation', but known pejoratively as 'rabblings'. In Ayrshire, ninety armed Societies' men forced the minister of Cumnock into the churchyard, discharged him from preaching, ordered him to remove from the manse and glebe, and to stop uplifting his stipend; they also rent his gown. On the same day they discharged the ministers of Auchinleck and Mauchline in a similar fashion. On 27 and 28 December they did the same at Galston, Riccarton and Tarbolton parishes. The same force also seized Robert Bell, the minister of Kilmarnock, who gave some idea of their ideological justification for appearing in arms and removing the ministers. According to Bell, his captors appeared in arms 'by the rule and law of the Solemn League and Covenant, by which they were obliged to extirpate prelacy, and bring all malignants to condign punishment', and that they intended to fulfil their Covenanted oaths 'not by virtue of any civil power nor ecclesiastical power, but by military power, and the power of the posture they were now in'. They then publicly burnt Bell's copy of the Book of Common Prayer at the mercat cross, lifting it high on a pike to shouts of 'down with prelacy, idolatry and superstition of the churches of England and Scotland' before they publicly tore off Bell's gown as 'the garment of the Whore of Babylon'.

The 25 December also saw the Societies in Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire begin to remove 'curates'. In Cathcart parish forty-five armed Society people kindled a bonfire in the manse, turned out the minister's wife and children, and discharged the ministers of Govan and Carmunock. On 27 and 28 December, an armed Societies' band removed the ministers of Evandale, Kilbride and Rutherglen in a similar fashion, and removed the gown of the absent minister of Stonehouse. North of the Clyde the ministers of Cadder and Cumbernauld were also removed on 27 December and the minister in Carluke was removed and 'robbed' by Society people. In Renfrewshire, too, almost all of the ministers were removed or forced into hiding and on 13 January 1689 Houston preached from the pulpit of Eastwood parish church where the minister had been expelled by armed Society people.

The Societies were not responsible for all rabblings; some, like that at Kilbarchan, were the

21. Walker, *BP*, I, 280; *Fasti*, II, 177.

spontaneous actions of the local parishioners, but they were responsible for 'most' of the rabblings, with the result that by February, there was 'scarce one' of the episcopal ministers dared to preach in the 'five western shires' of Lanark, Ayr, Renfrew and Galloway or in Nithsdale and Annandale.

Only in Glasgow did the Societies' campaign meet some resistance. Episcopal worship had been stopped in the burgh when a 'rabble', mainly consisting of women, had attacked the ministers of the Cathedral and Barony Kirk and torn their gowns on 17 January. According to a presbyterian source, Provost Walter Gibson then made a local compact in which the keys to all the burgh's churches were handed over until the forthcoming Convention of Estates determined the settlement of religion. However, the compact broke down after William issued a proclamation which allowed the free exercise of religion as enjoyed in 'October last' until a church settlement was reached. As a result, the Glasgow magistrates decided to restore episcopal worship on 17 February, the day of the Proclamation's publication in Glasgow. On that day, the 'rabble' hindered the ringing of the Cathedral's bells, threatened churchgoers and attacked one minister in the streets, and a group of forty women gathered before the Cathedral door. As the Provost's brother, Baillie James Gibson, led the congregation into the Cathedral a fight broke out in which thirty-two of the protesting women were injured. The latter group included Elizabeth Linning, who had been kidnapped by the Gibson brothers aboard the *Carolina Merchant* in 1684, as discussed in chapter two. Her presence indicates that some, if not all, of these women rioters were supporters of the Societies. All sources agree that the Societies led what happened next, but disagree over the role of moderate presbyterians in support of them. As episcopal worship took place, Kersland's Societies' force quartered in the burgh took up arms and marched on the Cathedral, where they opened fire, forced their way in and seized the minister. When Baillie Gibson ordered them to dismiss, Kersland ignored him and demanded that they had over the people who had assaulted the women, as they would 'not desert their sisters' gathered outside in 'great numbers'. According to an episcopal source, Kersland then threw the congregation out in small groups, with the result that many of the 'best quality' were set upon and beaten or had their clothes torn from them, in which one was seriously wounded by a scythe, another had his sword stolen and a third pelted with over a hundred snowballs.²²

Concerns over the violent methods involved in rabblings and the image of disorder they created led the Societies to formalise the process, but only after most of the western parishes had been purged of their incumbents. At the forty-fourth convention on 13 February they drafted a letter to

22. Anon., *First Collection of Papers. Relating to the Practice of the Rabble, before the Convention Met. A Just and True Account how sadly the Regular Ministers within the Presbytery of Air have been Treated since Christm[as] Last* (Edinburgh, 1689), 1-4, 33-7, 39-42, 50-2; John Sage, *The Case of the Afflicted Clergy* (London, 1689), 5, 8-10, 16; *Fasti*, III, 382; Shields, *FCD*, 367, 370-1, 379.

be issued by their supporters to their local parish minister advising him of their intentions to fulfil their obligations under the Solemn League and Covenant and which warned that if he refused to desist from preaching he would be 'forced to do it'.²³ A month later, Walker records that he and three others came close to a fracas with the bishops in Edinburgh, but were restrained from 'tearing off their gowns' by their orders to 'guard against giving the least occasion to mobs'.²⁴ However, some Society people continued in a violent manner where ministers held on to their parishes. During Easter, James Harkness was the 'captain' of a party of armed men and women involved in the rabbling of the minister of Kirkpatrick-Durham for praying for the 'Tyrant York' in which the minister was pistol whipped, dragged into a 'nasty puddle' and had his wife hit with the butt of a musket, before the 'female Janizaries' stripped him naked and burnt his clothes 'to the broken Covenant', and Harkness aimed a 'great reforming club' at the cowering minister's 'vital parts'.²⁵

The Societies took advantage of the collapse of the Scottish regime to harness popular anti-Catholicism and anger at the 'curates' to sweep the episcopal order away in nearly a quarter of all Scottish parishes. Their creation of what was in effect a presbyterian pale, undermined William's free hand in the settlement of the Church, as the facts on the ground created by the Societies's purge of episcopal ministers meant in practice that William would have to reimpose episcopacy across a large swath of southern Scotland.

At the same time, the Societies also helped to publicly to legitimise Orange's deposition of James. The 25 December also saw the Societies proclaim their support for William. In Glasgow, Boyd and other Society people proclaimed William's Declaration to the People of Scotland, William as the 'Protestant Protector' and espouse his 'quarrel' in the Societies' name.²⁶ Remarkably, the Societies' Glasgow proclamation was possibly the first public proclamation of William's Declaration to Scotland. It was also the Societies' opening move in their public campaign in support of regime change, which probably indicates some form of co-ordination between elements of the Societies and moderate Scottish exiles who had returned with William, especially given Boyd's close ties to moderate exiles.

However, Boyd's support for William was not shared by all in the Societies. Around the time William landed, Houston had publicly prayed for William's army's success to deliver the Societies from tyranny, popery and massacre, but he also feared that William would bring Erastianism and

23. Shields, *FCD*, 375-6.

24. Walker, *BP*, I, 222.

25. Sage, *Case*, 59-61. Harkness also rabbled the minister in Moffat. Simpson, *Traditions*, 141-2.

26. Shields, *FCD*, 370, 373-4; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 472; *Five Letters*, 4; *Fasti*, III, 382; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 470n.

preached 'against the Dutch'.²⁷ According to Bell, when he challenged his captors on the legality of his rabbling without the backing of Parliament or Orange, they replied that 'they would not adhere to the Prince of Orange, nor the Law of the Kingdom, any further than the Solemn League and Covenant, was fulfilled and prosecuted by both'.²⁸

The public proclamation of the Declaration divided the Societies. On hearing of it, Earlstoun wrote from prison to James Wilson asking him to protest against it. At the forty-second convention at Douglas on 3-4 January, Wilson's protest was joined by other voices, but the convention, while dissatisfied, was decidedly muted in its condemnation of Boyd. It resolved that Boyd's reading of the Declaration was 'rashly gone about without common consent' and that to 'espouse' it 'so abruptly' as their declaration, when it made no mention of the Covenants, was 'lame and defective'. However, it also decided that it would 'not meddle' with Boyd's action, as it was William's Declaration.²⁹ At the next convention, Earlstoun and Boyd continued the debate, but Earlstoun's motion, to exclude Boyd or anyone else who had read William's Declaration from sitting in the meeting for espousing the 'malignant interest' was defeated and he walked out.³⁰ The proclamation of William's Declaration in the Societies' name would not be publically challenged and the Societies never issued their own planned declaration to contradict it.

A minority within the Societies, such as Hamilton and Earlstoun, would continue to reject William's kingship, but the majority, including their ministerial leadership, either tacitly or openly accepted it. That split proved to be fundamental and led to the great schism in the Societies in 1690, when Hamilton and a minority of the Societies refused to accept the Revolution settlement of Church and State, and, ultimately, publicly rejected William's authority in the Sanquhar Declaration of 1692.³¹

Once again, some of the Societies' leadership had shown they had learnt lessons. In the Argyll Rising they had refused to espouse Argyll's cause and their expulsion of those who did had led to a bitter schism. At the Revolution, the Societies managed publicly to espouse William's cause, even though William's Declaration did not accord with their Covenanted platform.

The Societies also took steps to secure the Revolution by offering military support. In late December 1688, at least 800 Society people were in arms. Three hundred of them from Lanarkshire attended the forty-second convention in early January 1689 where the Societies began to organise them into regular companies with officers to prevent further 'disorders'. Discipline had begun to

27. Walker, *BP*, I, 264; Wodrow, *Analecta*, 185.

28. *First Collection*, 34.

29. Shields, *FCD*, 370.

30. Shields, *FCD*, 371-3.

31. Walker, *BP*, I, 126; Shields, *FCD*, 411-2, 418-9.

be brought to the Societies' use of military power.

The militia of Society men formed a separate structure within the Societies to avoid the charge of Erastianism. Local societies provided the manpower for its companies, that were designated according to the numbers raised in each shire and which commissioned their own officers who met separately from the convention and reported to it.³² They were quickly deployed in defence of the Revolution.

In March, the Societies sent men to guard the Convention of Estates in Edinburgh, which was to decide on the future settlement of the Scottish crown, from counter revolution. Their specific aim was to protect leading moderate former exiles attending the Estates in support of William from assassination, such as Polwarth, who had supported Argyll. The decision to protect the Estates shows again that their pursuit of achieving the Revolution overrode some of their long-held principles. The inclusion within the Estates of many of their most prominent persecutors and 'malignants' had led the Societies to reject Parliament's authority in 1682 and 1685, but in 1689 they grudgingly ignored their presence and opted to protect the Estates in the confident expectation that it would depose James. The Apologetical Declaration's war and the justifications for the assassination of prominent persecutors of *A Hind Let Loose* were also ignored. Instead, as discussed above, the Societies' men avoided confrontation with the bishops. The Societies declared war on their persecutors had been quietly abandoned. However, others in the Societies clearly hoped that they would maintain their war of testimonies.

Alongside the Estates, the Societies also sent a delegation of their ministers and representatives from each of the five western shires and Teviotdale. It was supposed to protest against the admission of their persecutors to the Estates and to petition it to 'make choice of Prince of Orange to be king ... upon such conditions and provisions as religion and liberty might be secured', yet it opted to lay both designs aside in favour of informal approaches which did not interfere with the progress of the moderate presbyterians' designs which forfaulted James of the Crown and proclaimed William as king without a guaranteed settlement of religion. The delegation's apparent inaction caused 'perplexity' among the Societies, but it further demonstrates the Societies' leaderships close cooperation with the returning exiles.

There is no better symbol of the Societies' cooperation with the returning exiles than the formation of Lord Angus's Regiment, which later became known as the Cameronian Regiment. After the Societies' 'good service' to the Estates, Alexander Shields was approached by Cleland and William Lawrie, Laird of Blackwood, with the approval of the Estates to raise a regiment of 1,200 men from among the Societies. From the beginning, Shields, Linning and Boyd were suspected of

32. Shields, *FCD*, 368-9, 374, 376.

complicity in the matter with Cleland, Polwarth and Blackwood. However, their initial efforts were rebuffed at the convention at Douglas on 29 April, when the majority rejected joining the 'sinful association' with William's army, as it contained former persecutors and malignants. However, after some persuasion, the Societies drafted two papers laying out the conditions under which they and their officers would serve; these specifically mentioned the Covenants as the cause they were fighting for.

The possibility of a repeat of the Bothwell debates loomed, especially given the Regiment's composition which included all the presbyterian factions. Colonel Cleland, Major James Henderson and Captain John Haddow had been militant captains at Bothwell, but later associated with Argyll and returned from exile with William; Dick, Cathcart and Dun, who had led the breakaway societies, were also commissioned; and from the Societies, both the more moderate wing and the hardliners were represented by captains such as Kersland and John Mathieson of Closeburn, with Alexander Shields appointed as the Regiment's chaplain. There were some notable exceptions: no role was found for Hamilton, who objected to the regiment as 'a sinful association with malignants', and Earlstoun, who probably turned down the offer of a commission to be a major.

Once again, the Societies' leadership proved that they had grasped the lessons of the past. On the day before the Societies' convention on 13 May which would decide on engaging in the Regiment, Shields preached to the men on Judges 5.23, 'Curse ye Meroz – because they came not to help the Lord – against the mighty', and he incited the men to engage in the Regiment with the cry of 'come, let us go and pull down the gates of Rome'. Although the majority of the Societies' convention remained opposed to joining William's army, 'lest the testimony (for owning of which they had been suffering) might be wronged', Shields, Boyd and others came to an agreement with Polwarth and Cleland that a paper drafted by Polwarth would be read to each company before they engaged. What followed has all the hallmarks of a carefully choreographed exercise. The next day, Cleland read Polwarth's paper to each company. It stated that they were to be engaged for the 'purpose of resisting Popery and Prelacy, and arbitrary power' and to 'establish the work of reformation in Scotland ... till the government in church and state, be brought to that lustre and integrity which it had in the best of times'. No mention was made of the Covenants, but Shields reassuringly explained to each company that its ambiguous wording meant the Covenants, that they were against any association with malignants and that they would bring the persecutors responsible for 'our brethren's blood to condign punishment'. After that, Shields, Boyd, Linning and Cleland conferred and orders were issued to the Regiment which were obeyed.³³

33. E. W. M. Balfour-Melville ed., *An Account of the Proceedings of the Estates in Scotland, 1689-90*, 2 vols (SHS, 3rd Series, xlvi-xlvi, 1954-5), I, 18, 21; Walker, *BP*, I, 221; Shields, *FCD*, 390-1, 393-404, 419; Appendix 1.4.

The integration of the Society men alongside their former presbyterian brethren in Lord Angus's Regiment effectively marked the rebirth of a unified presbyterian movement. The Societies' isolation was at an end, and over the coming months their ministers would open negotiations for union with the presbyterian ministry to which, despite the disillusionment of some, the majority of the Societies assented in late 1690.

In retrospect, it is clear that elements of the Societies' leadership had come to an agreement with the moderate exiles returning with William to co-ordinate their efforts to overthrow James's regime: the forty-first convention had laid the groundwork for cooperation with their exiled presbyterian brethren; William's Declaration was publicly proclaimed in the Societies' name; the Remonstrance demanding a Covenanted settlement was sidelined; the Societies guarded and worked with the presbyterian leadership in the Estates; and the Societies' leadership integrated their forces into William's army. Only in the rabblings had the Societies acted out of concert, but even then, steps had been taken to maintain discipline and to present an acceptable image to their presbyterian brethren. The Societies' role in the Revolution proves that their leadership had learnt from the failures of the presbyterian movement as a whole since 1679.

However, some of the hardliners within the Societies drew the opposite conclusion from the Societies' struggle. For hardliners like Hamilton, the 'under-hand-dealings' of Shields, Linning and Boyd and the Societies' connivance in the Revolution settlement broke their Covenanted obligations and diluted the Societies' testimony which they had so faithfully maintained. In 1691, Hamilton and some societies revived the Societies' general correspondence or convention to maintain their former testimony in every 'pendicule' and to stand 'alone' until their cause was vindicated. Later known as the Macmillanites, the continuing Societies would go on to form the Cameronian or Reformed Presbyterian Church. The continuing Societies' formed part of a patchwork with other existing fragments of the wider militant movement which rejected the Revolution settlement. They included the rump of the Cameronian Russellites, who maintained their split from the Societies after the reunion of 1688, and the non-Cameronian Hebronites, the followers of John Hepburn, who rejected the Erastian nature of the Revolution's presbyterian settlement.³⁴ The continuing Societies, the Russellites and the Hebronites marked the beginning of what Colin Kidd has collectively called 'conditional Britons', the growing band of dissenters in the eighteenth century who rejected the Revolution settlement of church and state until the Covenants were reinstated. All those sects originated in the schisms of the United Societies and, like the post-

34. Appendix 7.1; Shields, *FCD*, 463-81; Walker, *BP*, I, 119-26, 220-36. For the Hebronites see William Macmillan, *John Hepburn and the Hebronites. A study in the post-revolution history of the Church of Scotland* (London, 1934).

Revolution Church, laid claim to the Societies' heritage.³⁵ Alongside them were one other fragment of the militant movement, the remaining Gibbites who did not renew the Covenants with the Societies in 1689. Unlike the other fragments of the militant movement, they did not lay claim to their Cameronian heritage.³⁶

The Societies' response to the Revolution also helps to put the motives for their struggle up to 1688 into perspective. Intense religious conviction, or fanaticism as it was often pejoratively termed, was undoubtedly a key motive in the extremities the Societies reached during their struggle with the Restoration regime. However, as an over-arching explanation for the Societies' struggle it is unsatisfactory. As the discussion of the Societies' politics in previous chapters reveals, the Societies' platform was reshaped by the differing contexts they found themselves in, either in a hardline or moderate direction. Their response to the Revolution, in particular, reveals that persecution was a major factor in shaping their militancy. When persecution was removed at the Revolution, the majority of the Societies were able to moderate their demands and co-ordinate their actions with other presbyterians. Far from being the ungovernable and inflexible fanatics that others feared, the Societies were, in some respects, a democratic organisation whose politics and platform were shaped as much as by internal and external factors, as by intense religious conviction.

The Societies were not Carlyle's 'poor peasant' onlookers in a revolution manufactured by a silk-stockinged elite. They had learned from their experience of their struggle up to 1688 and were one of the midwives of the Revolution. Even though the Revolution sidelined their Covenanted platform, the leadership and majority of the Societies accepted and supported it in the hope that it would place Scotland on a better path than it had been under the Catholic King James and the Restoration regime.

35. Colin Kidd, 'Conditional Britons: The Scots Covenanting Tradition and the Eighteenth-century British State', *English Historical Review*, 117, (2002), 1147-76.

36. A meeting with the remaining Gibbites failed to win them over. Shields, *FCD*, 260-1.

II. The Societies, the Killing Times and the Presbyterian Tradition

Blows the wind today, and the sun and the rain are flying —
Blows the wind on the moors today and now,
Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying
My heart remembers how!

Grey, recumbent tombs of the dead in desert places,
Standing Stones on the vacant, wine-red moor,
Hills of sheep, and howes of the silent vanished races,
And winds, austere and pure!

Be it granted me to behold you again in dying,
Hills of home! and to hear again the call —
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the pee-wees crying,
And hear no more at all.

Robert Louis Stevenson.³⁷

It is a testimony to the power of the Societies' story that it gripped the imagination of some of Scotland's finest writers. From his youth, Robert Louis Stevenson's reassuring companions were the works of Walker, Wodrow and Shields but, like many post-Enlightenment authors he was at once fascinated and repelled by the Societies' fanaticism. He sympathetically described his unfinished novel, *Heathercat*, which dealt with 'Clydesdale blue bonnets – under the influence of their last trial, when they got to a pitch of organisation in madness that no other peasantry has ever made an offer at', as 'another chance for the Societies'.³⁸ In a similar way, Robert Burns at once admired the Societies' pursuit of liberty and felt distanced from their sectarian politics:

The Solemn League and Covenant
Now brings a smile, now brings a tear.
But sacred Freedom, too, was theirs:
If thou'rt a slave, indulge thy sneer.³⁹

Stevenson and Burns reflect the dual image of the Societies in later centuries as either fanatics or liberators. As Stevenson's poem, indicates, the martyrs of the Killing Times were central to their memory. Although twentieth-century Scottish historians tended to concentrate on the mid-seventeenth century Covenanting revolution as by far a more significant event than the later Remnant's struggle, it was the mythos of the Societies' struggle in the Killing Times which endured

37. Stevenson's poem is from a letter to S.R. Crockett, c. 15 August 1893. Printed in Robert Ernest Mehew (ed.), *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London, 1997), 558-9.

38. Mehew (ed.), *Selected Letters*, 5, 558, 586.

39. Andrew Noble & Patrick Scott Hogg (eds.), *The Canongate Burns, The Complete Poems and Songs of Robert Burns* (Edinburgh, 2004), 875.

and eclipsed the former for centuries to come: first, as a justification for the Revolution; then, as anti-Jacobite propaganda in defence of the Revolution; and, finally, as patriots who had resisted tyranny in pursuit of political and religious liberties.

From the moment of the Revolution, the sufferings of the Societies under Stewart tyranny had political traction and they were rapidly swept up into presbyterian justifications for the Revolution. It was the Societies' cooperation with their moderate brethren in the martyrology project of 1687 to 1688 and in securing the Revolution which had laid the basis for the rapid rehabilitation of the Societies, from dangerous schismatics into the epitome of presbyterian sufferings under Stewart tyranny. As discussed in chapter six, prior to the Revolution, the Societies had used the Killing Times to validate their resistance against James and as part of an apocalyptic struggle of global significance. However, with the Revolution, the Killing Times' martyrs were either subsumed into justifications for the Revolution in the vigorous debates over the legality of the Restoration regime's persecution between presbyterian and episcopalian pamphleteers, or were used by the Societies, in works such as Alexander Shields' *A Short Memorial* (1690), in their endeavours to have their persecutors punished.⁴⁰

From 1714, when the Societies' martyrology project was finally realised by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in *A Cloud of Witnesses*, the Killing Times reached a popular audience. It was quickly followed by two works which sought to defend the Revolution and Union settlements by deploying the sufferings of presbyterian under the Stewarts. Daniel Defoe's *Memoirs of the Church of Scotland* (1717) and Robert Wodrow's *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution* (1722), firmly established the presbyterian martyr tradition in opposition to Jacobite tyranny and fixed the Killing Times in the popular imagination as a byword for the sufferings of all presbyterians under indiscriminate persecution.

The first serious cracks in that representation came in the nineteenth century clashes between the Presbyterian and Jacobite traditions. Wodrow's sanitised version of the martyrs was adopted by radicals and reformers who reinvented them as patriots seeking political and religious liberties, and recalled the emotive example of the Killing Times as a shorthand for tyranny. The Jacobite tradition, by then shorn of a political threat to the British state, was inherited by reactionary legal figures. They began to question presbyterian historiography, viewing the martyrs in the wake of Enlightenment historiography as representative of the dark age of Scottish religious intolerance before the Union of 1707.

The first substantial blow came in 1816 with Sir Walter Scott's novel *Old Mortality*, which caused

40. Shields, *A Short Memorial*, 30-8. For examples of presbyterian pamphlets which discuss the Killing Times in passing, see: Gilbert Rule, *A Second Vindication of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1691); George Ridpath, *An Answer to Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence* (1693?); Anon., *Poperie Reviving* (1714).

a storm of presbyterian protest on account of its sympathetic portrayal of Claverhouse, the most infamous persecutor of the Killing Times, and its depiction of some presbyterians as hardened fanatics.⁴¹ Scott's attack on presbyterian tradition was generally successful, despite the ire of presbyterian historians and the sympathetic portrayal of the Societies in James Hogg's *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (1818) and John Galt's *Ringan Gilbairze, or the Covenanters* (1823), and it encouraged Sheriff William Aiton to equate the dangers posed by the fanatical presbyterians of the Killing Times to those posed by political radicals demanding reform in his *History of the Rencounter At Drumclog and the Battle of Bothwell Bridge* (1821).

The sceptical tradition reached its apogee in Sheriff Mark Napier's *The Case for the Crown* (1863), an investigation into the evidence for the Wigtown Martyrs which concluded that presbyterian historians were purveying a fiction. Napier's cross-examination of the Wigtown case undermined the evidence for the Killing Times, and he soon drew presbyterian historians back into the archives. The Reverend Archibald Stewart was sure he had refuted Napier in *History Vindicated* (1869), but the presbyterian and sceptical traditions remained entrenched, essentially along political lines into the early twentieth-century works of James King Hewison and W. L. Mathieson.⁴²

Such is the historical prominence of the controversy over the Wigtown Martyrs, that it is virtually incumbent on a historian of the Societies to take a view on their executions, even though it was only an obscure incident in the Killing Times. Recent scholarship remains divided over the veracity of their execution.⁴³ However, in the debate over the Wigtown martyrs, all historians agree that they were real people who once existed and who at some point stopped existing. The question is, at what point?

Margaret Lauchlison or Lauchan came from Drumjargon in Kirkinner parish, Wigtownshire, and was the sixty-year-old widow of a wright named John Milliken and mother of a daughter, Elizabeth. In October 1684 Lauchlison was marked as 'disorderly' in the parish list submitted to the authorities by Kirkinner's minister, Andrew Symson. Margaret Wilson was the twenty-three-year-old daughter of Gilbert Wilson in Glenvernock in Penningham parish, Wigtownshire. She, too, was noted by her

41. Douglas M. Murray, 'Martyrs or Madmen? The Covenanters, Sir Walter Scott and Dr Thomas McCrie' in *The Innes Review*, Vol 43, No. 2 (1992), 166-75.

42. Gordon Pentland, 'Scotland and the creation of a national reform movement, 1830-32', *Historical Journal* 48:4 (2006), 999-1023; W. Scott, *Old Mortality* (1816); William Aiton, *History of the Rencounter at Drumclog and the Battle of Bothwell Bridge in the month of June 1679* (1821); Mark Napier, *The Case for the Crown in re the Wigtown Martyrs Proved to be Myths* (1863); Archibald Stewart, *History Vindicated in the Case of the Wigtown Martyrs* (Edinburgh, 1869); James King Hewison, *The Covenanters*, 2 vols. (Glasgow, 1908); Mathieson, *Politics and Religion*, 2 vols. (Glasgow, 1902).

43. c.f. Edward J Cowan's entry on the Wigtown Martyrs in Elizabeth Ewan, Sue Innes, Sian Reynolds, Rose Pipes eds., *The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women: From Earliest Times to 2004* (Edinburgh, 2006) and S. Adams 'Wilson, Margaret (1666/7-1685, alleged covenanter martyr)', *Oxford DNB*.

local minister, James Colquhoun, as withdrawing from public worship in his parish list of September 1684, alongside her younger siblings.⁴⁴

All the later presbyterian sources corroborate an initial narrative of events in which Lauchlison was taken by dragoons in her house and imprisoned and that at some point Wilson and her sister were arrested while visiting Wigtown tolbooth.⁴⁵ The few surviving legal documents prove that they were tried on 13 April 1685 and condemned to death, at least in Lauchlison's case, for refusing the Abjuration, for which the law specified drowning. Both women petitioned the Privy Council, but only Lauchlison's petition has survived in which, despite her clear sympathies for the Societies, she recanted and offered to take the Abjuration and to live regularly if liberated. On 30 April, the Privy Council issued a stay of execution stating they:

hereby reprieve the execution of the sentence of death, pronounced by the Justices against Margaret Wilson and Margaret Lauchlison, until the ____ day of _____ and discharge the magistrates of Edinburgh from putting of the said sentence to execution against them until the foresaid day, and recommend the said Margaret Wilson and Margaret Lauchlison to the Lords Secretaries of State, to interpose with his most sacred Majesty for the royal remission to them.⁴⁶

At that point, the contemporary records cease and the debate centres on the veracity of later sources and traditions. For the sceptics, the women were released at this juncture to an unknown fate. However, the Privy Council's decision is not as conclusive as it at first seems on several grounds. First, a stay of execution was only the first stage of seeking a pardon and no further correspondence on the matter has been discovered. Second, the reprieve was of limited duration, unspecified on this occasion, but usually for a month after the initial date appointed for their execution, which was probably set for early May. During the stay of execution, which probably stretched into June, the Privy Council had to receive confirmation that the women had sworn the Abjuration before they ordered their liberation, but no further correspondence exists to prove that the oaths were sworn or that they were liberated. Finally, the Privy Council misdirected their reprieve to the magistrates in Edinburgh, not Wigtown, making it of questionable legal validity if it ever reached Wigtown.⁴⁷

44. W. Scot, *Parish Lists of Wigtonshire and Minnigaff, 1684*, 28, 52; Elizabeth Milliken was alive in 1704 when she reported a dream of her martyred mother to a local minister. Thomas Wilson is supposed to have fled to the hills in 1685 and later served in Flanders for William of Orange. He was alive in 1704, Stewart, *History Vindicated*, 86-7, 88, 91.

45. Anon., *Popery Reviving*, 26-7; Morton, *Galloway and the Covenanters*, 424-5; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 261-2. According to the minutes of the Penninghame session, Agnes Wilson, who was a minor, was also 'condemned' with her sister but released after her father gave a bond of £100 Sterling to produce her when called which he had to go to Edinburgh to provide. Stewart, *History Vindicated*, 88.

46. Morton, *Galloway and the Covenanters*, 418-9.

47. I am grateful to Dr Louise Yeoman for her clarifications of these arguments.

Napier claimed that the women had been moved to imprisonment in Edinburgh, but there is no evidence that they were and Lauchlison's petition came from Wigtown, where it would have been normal for them to remain awaiting the outcome of their petition.⁴⁸ The court which dealt with Wilson and Lauchlison also dealt with Margaret Maxwell, Lauchlison's neighbour in Kirkinner parish, who also appears on Symon's list for disorderly conduct and was probably picked up by the dragoons who captured Lauchlison. She was the servant of Alexander Vans, Laird of Barwhannie, and his wife, who owned Lauchlison's farm. According to Walker, who took down her version of events relating to the Wigtown executions, Maxwell expected the same sentence, but was instead publicly scourged in Wigtown before she was sent to Glasgow for banishment. Maxwell's circumstances were very similar to those of Lauchlison, and it seems likely that the other two women were retained in Wigtown awaiting the outcome of their petition, rather than sent to Edinburgh for execution.⁴⁹ As discussed in chapter two, executions were carried out in Edinburgh until January 1685 but, after that point, the condemned were held in the principal burghs of their respective shires, such as Wigtown, rather than brought to Edinburgh for execution. It is likely then, that both women were held in Wigtown until their case was resolved, which in the case of a pardon would have taken several weeks.⁵⁰

After 30 April, all official sources fall silent and all the presbyterian sources are emphatic that they were executed, traditionally on 11 May, which would have been well before a pardon could have been obtained from the King. The presbyterian accounts are not very reliable on the details, but only on the broad thrust of what they assert happened. In that respect they are similar to the presbyterian sources for the execution of John Brown of Priesthill in May 1685, that provide substantially differing versions of events from each other. Thus, in the Wigtown case, the fact that the sources differ as to the details of the court and drowning should not necessarily detract from their consistent assertion that the two women were drowned.⁵¹

The sceptics also argue that the presbyterian sources build one upon another based on the initial falsehood that the women were drowned. Or they claim that later local kirk sessions which asserted that they were drowned, were too credulous of hearsay evidence or motivated by a desire to manufacture local martyrs. However, there is a weakness in the argument that the alleged evidence snowballed from a lie and that is that it would have required a massive conspiracy of deception within the local parish communities where the women lived. If the women were not executed, then

48. Napier, *Case for the Crown*, 40

49. Walker, *BP*, I, 288-9; Scot, *Parish Lists*, 28; Stewart, *History Vindicated*, 81n, 85n.

50. Scot, *Parish Lists*, 28; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 221, 322-3; Stewart, *History Vindicated*, 81n.

51. Wodrow and Walker disagree on the details of Brown's killing, c.f. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 244-5; Walker, *BP*, I, 72-5.

either no one locally who knew them ever heard of them again or the local community as a whole and their relatives knowingly participated in a deception. The sheer numbers involved in all three parishes makes the latter highly improbable. The theory that they died or disappeared soon after the trial is a convenient fiction with no evidence to support it.

Given the sceptics' argument, it is worth examining the origins of the first reports of the executions. As discussed in chapter six, the Societies made efforts to gather accounts of the Killing Times from October 1685 and they were the first to claim that the women were drowned. In 1687, the hand of Alexander Shields lay behind a series of publications which mentioned their martyrdom. *An Informatory Vindication* records that their persecutors inflicted 'according to the worst of their own laws; drowning women, some of a very young & some of an exceeding old age', and in *A Hind Let Loose* that 'neither were women spared, but some were hanged, some drowned, tied to stakes within the sea mark, to be devoured gradually by the growing waves, and some of them very young, some of an old age'. It also included them in an etching depicting two women being drowned 'at stakes in the sea'. Shields was also the first to name the perpetrators and victims in *A Short Memorial* in 1690:

The said Col: or Liev: Gen: James Dowglas, [Drumlanrig] together with the Laird of Lag and Capt: Winram, most illegally condemned, and most inhumanly drowned at stakes within the sea-mark, two Women at Wigtoun, viz. Margaret Lauchlan, upwards of 60: years, and Margaret Wilson, about 20: years of age.⁵²

Napier argued that the Societies did not initially name the victims out of fear of contradiction, but prior to the Revolution the Societies maintained strict anonymity in all their publications. The Societies' fabrication of the Wigtown incident is also unlikely, as all the other forms of persecution they mention in their publications in proximity to the Wigtown case actually occurred and can be corroborated. For Shields, the Wigtown case was simply one case in a long list of others. He did not invent the Wigtown martyrdoms for propaganda purposes, especially delivered in such a brief and matter-of-fact manner; rather, he merely deployed an incident reported to him through the Societies' network in the attempt to get Societies' persecutors punished.

The Societies' claims that the women were drowned is also corroborated by Mathias Symson, the son of the minister who had informed against Lauchlison, in an episcopalian pamphlet published in 1703. To rebut accusations that the victims were drowned 'without any form of process of law', he acknowledged that his opponents

generally talk of two Woman in *Galloway*: drown'd they were indeed, but not *tyed to stakes, within the flood-mark, till the Sea came up*, as this malicious vindicator misrepresents; who, it seems, has had no better informer than the frontispiece of ... *A Hind Let Loose*.

52. *An Informatory Vindication*, 33-4; Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 234; Shields, *A Short Memorial*, 35-6.

What bothered Symson was not the fact that they were drowned, but the specific method of their drowning and the legality of the authorities' actions. Symon claims that 'hundreds in Galloway' could testify to the legality of the action as

they [the women] were judicially condemned, after the usual solemnities of procedure. The judges were several Gentleman commissioned by Authority, of whom Mr D[avid]. G[raham]. Brother of the then L[aird]. of Cl[averhouse]. was one'.⁵³

Symon was correct in his assertion that due process of law was followed, as drowning was the required sentence for women who did not take the Abjuration Oath, as discussed in chapter four.

Symon directly linked the drownings to the verdict of the trial. However, his account highlights a crucial contradiction over the form of trial they faced. The legal documents and some sources refer to a local trial where the Abjuration was put to the women. That is almost certainly the court held on 13 April by David Graham and involving Baillie John M'Keand referred to by Symon, but other sources also refer to a quick execution after the women failed to say 'God save the King', a standard interrogation question, before Lagg, Captain Winram and Drumlanrig or Captain Strachan, who were military officers commissioned to apprehend and execute suspects before two other witnesses if found guilty in the field.⁵⁴ Of the officers listed above, Drumlanrig was certainly close to Wigtown on 10 May, as he shot Adam MacQuhan, a captured fugitive, nearby at New Galloway in Kells parish.⁵⁵ The sources appear to have conflated or confused two trials, one a local court with civilian judges and the other with military officers, which were held at differing times, the latter after Lagg and his fellow officers arrived in Wigtown. It was almost certainly the second summary trial which was responsible for their executions, rather than the first which produced the stay of execution. Interrogation, trial and execution by military officers in the Killing Times, as discussed in chapter four, were swift processes and did not require consultation with the Privy Council in order to proceed; nor were they obliged to produce any formal legal record. However, the hypothesis that they faced a second summary trial leaves one obvious question: Why, when the women had probably been granted a stay of execution, were they tried and executed?

The answer lies in the change to the laws regarding those who were indicted for treason, as the Wigtown women were, between their first trial in April and the date of their execution on 11 May. On 6 May, royal assent was given to emergency legislation which allowed commissioners for

53. Mathias Symson, *A Short Character of the Presbyterian Spirit, in so far as it can be gathered out of their own Books; Especially, out of the Letter from a Gentlemen to a Member of Parliament, concerning Toleration; the Vindication thereof; and the Remarks upon the Case, &c.* (Edinburgh, 1703), 6-7.

54. Stewart, *History Vindicated*, 94-6; Morton, *Galloway and the Covenanters*, 440. Shields mentions Drumlanrig and their gravestones Captain Strachan. Shields, *A Short Memorial*, 35-6; Thomson, *MGoS*, 421, 424; Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 592-3, 606.

55. Thomson, *MGoS*, 389-90; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 22n.

justiciary to proceed against ‘pannels already in prison indicted for treason’ within two days, forced witnesses to depone against those guilty of church irregularities or conventicles or they would be deemed guilty of the same crimes, and prescribed death for anyone owning the Covenants. This was followed on 8 May by a further clause tightening the punishments for attenders of field conventicles.⁵⁶ Although the women had agreed to take the Abjuration, the case of John Browning in the Priesthill incident, as discussed in chapter four, shows that offering to take the Abjuration was not sufficient in itself to prevent execution when other treasonable crimes, such as attending conventicles, were discovered. That accords with the claims of some of the presbyterian sources that the women were condemned for attending conventicles and failing to say ‘God save the King’, evidence which points towards a second trial before judicially commissioned military officers carrying out the recent changes to the law.⁵⁷

The military officers also had a strong motive to execute them. On 28 April, Scotland was placed in a state of readiness for Argyll and the next two weeks saw a rapid intensification of the Killing Times as more government forces moved west. Three cases from around the traditional date of the Wigtown executions on 11 May appear to show officers in the field following their new orders to deal with prisoners ‘indited for treason’ within two days. Major Balfour summarily shot two fugitives and a weaver on 11 May at Polmadie in Renfrew, Claverhouse shot Andrew Hislop in Annandale on the 12 May and Captain Bruce shot James Kirko of Sundaywell on the sands at Dumfries on 12 or 13 May.⁵⁸ The Wigtown martyrs fit into that pattern of killing prisoners before the government forces dealt directly with the threat from Argyll.

Another motive for their execution may have come from the threat posed by Argyll. The women came from parishes which far outstripped other Wigtownshire parishes for ‘disorderly conduct’ and for staunchly presbyterian social networks.⁵⁹ In Kirkinner, Lauchlison was a tenant of the Laird of Barwhannie and his wife, who were reported for disorderly conduct, and a neighbour of Kinsture, a leading figure in the Societies.⁶⁰ Another neighbour, William Sprott in Cultag, who was also guilty of disorderly conduct, was sent to Dunnottar and banished.⁶¹ Similarly, in Penningham parish, Margaret Wilson’s home in Glenvernock was close to that of Lady Fintilloch, who had withdrawn from worship and had attended conventicles. Other parish worthies had also withdrawn from

56. Wodrow, *History*, IV, 269-70, 272.

57. Thomson (ed.), *CW*, 261-2; Stewart, *History Vindicated*, 81; Defoe, *Memoirs of the Church of Scotland*, 227-8; Anon., *Poperie Reviving*, 27; Walker, *BP*, I, 288.

58. Thomson, *MG&S*, 69-70, 389-90, 453; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 14n, 17n, 249-50.

59. See Appendix 7.7.

60. At the start of July 1679, some of the assassins of Sharp also took refuge in the parish at the house of Dunbar of Baldoon and at ‘Barchanary’, probably Barrachan. Kirkton, *History*, 472.

61. Scot, *Parish Lists*, 28; Wodrow, *History*, IV, 198-9, 221, 322-3; Stewart, *History Vindicated*, 81n.

worship, including Elizabeth Gordon, Lady Castle Stewart, who owned the Wilsons' farm, and Janet Dunbar of Craichley, whose husband, James Gordon, had been a captain at Bothwell and forfeited for his role in the rising. The Societies, too, were active in the parish. The sites of Peden's preaching at Glen Trool and the killings at Caldons Wood lay nearby, and Renwick had a safe house in the parish. Nearby Kirkcalla and Fintilloch were also the homes of those executed for killing Captain Urquhart and of Gilbert and William Milroy, who were banished in 1685. Archibald and James Stewart, who were involved with the Societies, also lived in the parish, as did two others involved in wreck of *The Crowne of London* and six other declared fugitives.⁶² In particular, prominent disorderly women were a problem in both parishes and both victims were tenants of prominent presbyterian women who refused to attend worship. In the context of Argyll's imminent invasion of the West, the social elite and staunch presbyterians within both parishes would have been under suspicion of rousing the area to Argyll's standard. Such fears were well founded, for in June 1685 Peden assembled a large force at Wigtown in support of Argyll.⁶³ In that context, the execution of two women connected to dissenting local elites may have been a useful way of terrorising those parishes into submission.

On balance, the weakness of the sceptics' case and the weight of evidence suggests that the Margaret Lauchlison and Margaret Wilson were indeed drowned. The debate over the Wigtown case was the last great set-piece clash between the Jacobite and Presbyterian traditions of historiography. The close association of the presbyterian sufferings tradition in support of the Revolution and Union settlements led to the decline in its political utility as that vision of a presbyterian Scotland foundered in the twentieth century. In an era of religious pluralism, mass democracy, civic nationalism and secular democratic politics, the sectarian and apocalyptic sufferings tradition lost the majority of its force. When twentieth-century Scots reached for a constitutional tradition in support of a Scottish parliament, they instinctively deployed the collective, moderate and parliament-centred presbyterian traditions of the earlier Covenanters or of the Revolution settlement: these were seen in the names of petitions such as The Covenant of 1950 and the Claim of Right in 1989, but they were now devoid of their Protestant associations. Only a small minority who continued to uphold Britain as a Protestant entity kept the standard of the sufferings tradition aloft, especially in Northern Ireland, in their endeavours to deny Catholics political equality.⁶⁴

62. *RPCS*, VI, 159-60; Scot, *Parish Lists*, 52; Defoe, *Memoirs of the Church of Scotland*, 227; Simpson, *Traditions*, 241-242; Campbell, *SW*, 202; Wodrow, *History*, III, 114n, 180; IV, 22n, 185-7, 217, 220.

63. Walker, *BP*, I, 75-6.

64. For a Scottish tradition which still venerates the Later Covenanters, see William S. Marshall, *The Billy Boys: A Concise History of Orangeism in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1996).

The Societies' struggle also represented a significant turning-point in the political history of Scotland. As David Stevenson recognised, it represented an important step change in the impact of the Reformation. In 'taking responsibility for their own consciences ... ordinary Scots men and women' in the later Covenanting struggle were willing to 'defy simultaneously both landlords and ministers they disagreed with'. Even though their debates were often 'bigoted and narrow', it is difficult to argue with Stevenson's conclusion that 'the power to reason, the confidence to debate and uphold opinions' was an 'important legacy' for future social organisation.⁶⁵

The Societies also marked a significant development in lay politics. Their conventions were the first forum in which commoners, rather than the social elite, publicly debated matters of church and state. Although the Societies' conventions were undemocratic in the sense that they were representative of only male godly militant presbyterians, they were democratic in terms of their structures and the Societies' platform, declarations and actions were subject to the democratic approval of their delegates. Thus the convention's outlook was responsive to changing contexts within the strictures of their adherence to their Covenanted reformation. The Societies' believed in an alternative model of the state to that which emerged in Scotland. From the reign of James VII until the Reform Acts of 1832 the state became socially more liberal in tolerating the private life, but was politically conservative in retaining power among the elite. In contrast, the Societies were socially conservative and intolerant of the private life, but were politically radical in opening up political and ecclesiastic processes to godly commoners.

Today, the Societies' sufferings in the Killing Times are barely remembered. Yet, perhaps, the Societies deserve better. In a world faced with the challenges of the war on terror and global *jihad* or "regime change", the relevance of the Societies' story for our times is increased. For Scots, too, the story of the Societies helps to elucidate why a presbyterian vision of Scotland was created at the Revolution and why some Scots preferred the refuge of the Union of 1707 to secure it, than a Jacobite restoration.⁶⁶ However, the Societies had struggled for a different exclusive and apocalyptic vision of Scotland and Britain, but one also based on the fear of Catholicism and arbitrary government. They hoped to restore the Covenants, which limited the power of the king who ruled over all the British kingdoms and secure the freedom of the Scottish parliament, and to restore the Church to what they perceived as its presbyterian perfection in former times. Now, the great presbyterian tradition of historiography which bore the memory of the martyrs' sufferings for over two centuries in defence of the Revolution and Union has faded into obscurity. Quietly, the

65. Stevenson, *The Covenanters*, 71-2.

66. For a similar view of the importance of the Revolution to the Union, see Christopher A. Whatley & Derek J. Patrick, *The Scots and the Union* (Edinburgh, 2006).

Societies' martyrs have slipped into history and returned to the 'grey, recumbent tombs of the dead in desert places'.

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