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**BOOK REVIEW**

**Bishops and Covenanters: a modern  
Episcopal version of Scotland's  
Glorious Revolution**

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Ann Shukman, *Bishops and Covenanters: the Church in Scotland, 1688-1691*  
(Edinburgh, Birlinn, 2012), 186pp.

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Modern historiography has not been kind to the Presbyterians who helped to shape, secure and advance the religious settlement of Scotland's Glorious Revolution. Historians have tended to point an accusing finger in their direction and to highlight religious intransigence, intolerance, and persecution as key features of the period. The recent historical consensus has been that the time was ripe for the age of Moderatism and with it, in time, Toleration. Thus, if for nothing else, the period is thought to serve as a cautionary tale of religious bigotry and spiritual darkness against which unfavourable comparisons can be made with Scotland of the mid-eighteenth century – the age of the religious Moderates and of Enlightenment.

*Bishops and Covenanters: the Church in Scotland, 1688-1691*, by Dr. Ann Shukman continues this historiographical tradition. Dr. Shukman had an academic career in Russian studies, and was then ordained in the Church of England in 1994, moving to Scotland in 2000 and ministering in the Episcopal Church in Dumfries. This present work is the fruit of an M.Phil. at Glasgow University but, despite its academic origin, the book

is seriously defective as far as rigorous academic research is concerned. The wealth of readily available primary source material relating to the political and religious debates and events in Scotland during the period 1688-90 is largely ignored, and instead the author has restricted herself to the use of a handful of Episcopalian pamphlets from the period. The Presbyterian perspectives on events, and their responses to Episcopalian claims, are disregarded, and Presbyterian historians are dismissed as unworthy of serious consideration. According to Dr. Shukman, when reading their works “one quickly enters the world of hagiography”.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Shukman regards the religious settlement of 1690 as a mistake, a retrograde step secured by ideologically motivated and reactionary Presbyterians determined to take Scotland backward to the old paths rather than forward towards the world of the Enlightenment. She writes warmly of a group of men whom she refers to as the “royalist intelligentsia”, and which included the likes of Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh. As Lord Advocate, Mackenzie’s notorious prosecutions of Covenanters earned him the title of “Bluidy Mackenzie”. According to Dr. Shukman, these men “believed in a kingdom, ruled by Law, stable and prosperous, under a monarch where freedom of ideas and rationality of religion could take root”.<sup>2</sup> This is the Episcopalian utopia that Scotland supposedly lost when Presbyterians triumphed at the Revolution. Thus it was that their proto-Enlightenment was nipped in the bud and the “atmosphere darkened” in Presbyterian Scotland of the 1690s. Shukman’s evidence for this is the prosecution for blasphemy and the execution of Thomas Aikenhead of 1697.<sup>3</sup> The Aikenhead case has often been referred to by historians of the period as symptomatic of a backward-looking and benighted age, but such writers generally omit to mention that it was an isolated case and not typical of the period. Dr. Shukman points out that the 1694 Act used in the prosecution was a renewal of a “little-used” Act passed in 1661, and she cannot, therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> Shukman, *Bishops and Covenanters*, p. 5. The example of hagiography given by Dr. Shukman, rather puzzlingly, is John Warrick’s *Moderators of the Church of Scotland from 1690 to 1740* (Edinburgh, 1913), which in fact is a most impressive and thoroughly researched piece of work. Warrick’s minute knowledge of Scottish Church history can be seen in his ‘Critical Examination’ of the *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* which appeared in the *Kilmarnock Standard* (1918, 1921). Shukman praises the *Fasti* as “magnificent” (*ibid.*, p. 5), but Warrick, from a more informed reading, characterized the work as “a bottomless pit of inaccuracies”.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 133.

have been unaware that the royalist Parliament that passed the legislation included the Scottish bishops that she holds in such high regard. Scotland's descent into darkness is supposedly further evident in the revival of witch-hunting. While the 1690s did see a series of examinations and prosecutions for witchcraft, such episodes were not exclusive to Presbyterian Scotland. Periodic outbursts of witch-hunting and trials were a phenomenon common to early modern Europe generally, regardless of political and religious affiliations, and in Scotland they had been particularly fierce under Episcopalian regimes in 1628-30 and 1661-62.

The pages of the book resonate with the usual Presbyterian stereotypes and caricatures. Presbyterians are described as “vindictive”, “immoderate”, and “ruthless”. They are regarded as hard-liners for seeking a settlement that reflected the principles of the Reformed Faith in doctrine, discipline, and worship. The author's lack of originality is typified in her treatment of the much maligned William Lindsay, eighteenth Earl of Crawford. A staunch Presbyterian, Crawford worked hard in Parliament and at court to secure a Presbyterian settlement, and he has been a regular target for historians. On more than one occasion he is described in the book as a “hothead”. According to the author, under the presidency of Crawford, the Privy Council became “an instrument of extreme Presbyterianism” (it would seem that there was hardly a Presbyterian in Scotland who was not “extreme”).<sup>4</sup> The final Presbyterian settlement was an example of “Scottish extremism”, and the legislation upon which it was based was “unfair”.<sup>5</sup>

## II. THE “CHURCH PURGE” OF EPISCOPALIAN CLERGY

A central feature of the book is what the author describes as the “Church purge” of Episcopalian clergy. Of this “purge”, she identifies three distinct phases.

1. The rabbling of the curates in the south west, predominately in 1688.
2. The deprivation of clergy in 1689 at the hands of the Convention of Estates and the Privy Council.

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 93, 132.

3. The purges of the universities and parishes initiated by the 1690 General Assembly.

### **1. The rabbling of the curates**

According to the publishers, the book “explores for the first time the background and influences that led to the rabbling of the curates in south-west Scotland, and the purging of the parishes after 1690”. The “rabbling” refers to the events in late 1688 and early 1689 in which the people, emboldened by William’s invasion, drove the Episcopal incumbents out of their parishes. Dr. Shukman describes the rabblings as “a series of bizarre, unprovoked and illegal attacks” on the parish clergy, and asks, “why did this happen in the south-west?”. The answer, she concludes, must lie “partly” in the fact that the south-west was a “seed-bed of radical Presbyterianism”. Attempting to demonstrate this radicalism, she discusses briefly the covenanting movement in the region, from the Whiggamore Raid through to the United Societies, who played a leading role in the rabblings. The Societies were by no means alone in this work but they were, by their own admission, the “most active” in the rabblings and they acknowledged that their actions created terror among “Papists, malignants and Curates”.<sup>6</sup> However, they were not driven to it by their “radical Presbyterianism”; they were driven to it by a sense of injustice born of many years of state-sponsored persecution.

While the attacks can be regarded as illegal, to describe them as “bizarre” and “unprovoked” is to ignore the historical context in which they took place. Presbyterians had been subjected to twenty-eight years of persecution that culminated in the notorious “Killing Times”. Their persecution included a lengthy list of oppressive legislation produced by Restoration Parliaments and Privy Councils, sanctioned by the bishops, supported by the clergy, and designed to deprive Presbyterians of their civil and religious liberties and to force them to worship against their conscience. In addition, there had been the unjust taxes, the depredations wrought upon them through the actions of the

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<sup>6</sup> 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. Together with An account of the State of the land in general, and of the Society people in particular, in the intervals betwixt each of their general meetings, with some pertinent remarks upon these historical occurrences, and many letters to and from the general correspondent meetings &c.* (Glasgow, 1780), pp. 368, 371. At Douglas on 3rd January 1689, the United Societies drew up a paper justifying their actions.

notorious Highland Host, and the deliberate policy of provocation intended to produce a response such as the Pentland Rising, in order to justify the use of force and an increase in the size of government forces.

Dr. Shukman makes much of the sufferings of Episcopal clergy at the hands of Presbyterians after the Revolution, and regards their complaints as legitimate, but is dismissive of the sufferings of Presbyterians in the years before the Revolution. An address from a general meeting of Presbyterians presented to William early in 1689 included references to the sufferings and persecutions endured under the previous regime. Dr. Shukman's unsympathetic comment is that the Presbyterians "harp on the grievances" they had suffered.<sup>7</sup> This is hardly an appropriate term to describe the efforts of a group of persecuted people in seeking legal redress for their sufferings.

Far from being part of a concerted and deliberate plan, the rabbling of the curates was a spontaneous outbreak of anger directed at the hated representatives of a discredited Church establishment at whose hands the Presbyterians had endured great persecution. One English observer of the events pointed out that considering the debauched lives of the curates and the violence that people had suffered under them it was a wonder that people were so restrained and not exacting a more serious revenge. He marvelled at "how these gentlemen [Episcopalians] have the confidence to complain of the turbulence of Presbyterians when many of them may remember what their cruelty has been".<sup>8</sup> The list of provocations was a lengthy one, and if it was obvious to observers then and has been ever since, why ignore them now and blame the reaction on ideology? Adherence to Presbyterian Church government, the reformed faith, and the Covenants – regarded by the author as radical Presbyterianism – was not the reason why the Society People rabbled the curates, but it was the reason why they themselves had been persecuted by an authoritarian, vindictive, and oppressive Episcopal Church and state.

Despite the abundance of evidence available, the author's detail, analysis, and interpretation of the rabblings is simply a repetition of what was written in 1690 by John Sage. Episcopalian writers such as Sage and Thomas Morer published graphic and emotive accounts of the events,

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<sup>7</sup> Shukman, *Bishops and Covenanters*, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> *Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC), Report on the Manuscripts of the Duke of Roxburghe, Sir H. H. Campbell, the Earl of Strathmore, and the Countess Dowager of Seafield* (London, 1894), p. 171.

designed to win moral, political, and financial support from England.<sup>9</sup> There is no attempt in this book to compare the claims of Episcopal writers with those of contemporary Presbyterians like Gilbert Rule.<sup>10</sup> Is Rule an unreliable witness? What is the evidence for this? He was appointed to respond to the accusations, and he produced detailed accounts on each of the cases outlined by Sage and Morer. Presbyterians never denied that the curates had been attacked, but Rule produced enough evidence to demonstrate that Sage and Morer had in many cases been economical with the truth. Rule concluded that the rabblings were the actions of a minority and could not be attributed to Presbyterians generally, most of whom believed that unfit ministers ought to be removed by Church courts and magistrates. The events had taken place during a period in which there had been a breakdown in civil and Church government. People had taken the law into their own hands because there was no power at the time capable of either restraining them or of acting on their behalf. They had acted under the greatest provocation because the curates had been imposed upon them, had denied them the form of gospel ordinances to which they had been accustomed, and had been implicated in the persecutions and bitter sufferings that they and their families had endured for many years. It is extraordinary that the author fails to interact with this material and to mention these considerations.

## 2. Deprivations by the Convention and the Council

According to Dr. Shukman, the second wave of deprivations was initiated by the Scottish Convention of Estates and continued by the Privy Council.<sup>11</sup> Treatment of this subject is as cursory as that of the rabblings in the south west. There is no detailed study of the work of the Convention or the Privy Council, which is dismissed as an

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<sup>9</sup> [John Sage], *An account of the present persecution of the Church in Scotland, in several letters [the first by Thomas Morer, the second and third by John Sage, and the fourth by Alexander Monro]* (London, 1690); [John Sage], *The case of the present afflicted clergy in Scotland truly represented; to which is added . . . the attestation of many unexceptionable witnesses to every particular; and all the publick acts and proclamations . . . relating to the clergy* (London, 1690).

<sup>10</sup> Gilbert Rule, *A vindication of the Church of Scotland; being an answer to a paper, intituled, Some questions concerning Episcopal and Presbyterial government in Scotland . . . by a minister of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1691), 35pp.; *A second vindication of the Church of Scotland; being an answer to five pamphlets* (Edinburgh, 1691), 104pp.; *A farther vindication of the present government of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1691), 34pp.

<sup>11</sup> E. W. M. Balfour-Melville (ed.), *An Account of the Proceedings of the Estates in Scotland, 1689-1690* (2 vols., Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1954-5), Vol. 1, pp. 57, 65-71.

instrument of Presbyterian extremism, nor of the cases brought before either, nor of the clergy involved, nor of the political debate that the deprivations produced, in particular at court in London. Instead the author merely repeats the accusations, suspicions, and complaints of the Episcopalian apologists of the day. Like them, she claims that the climate in which the deprivations took place was vindictive and the attacks on the Episcopal ministers were “harsh and relentless”.<sup>12</sup> The proclamation issued by the Convention on 13th April 1690, which was the basis of the subsequent deprivations, is described as “illogical and premature”, and ushered in what Dr. Shukman describes as the “national campaign of depriving all the episcopally ordained clergy”. The thinking behind it, she adds, was, “no doubt to nip any nascent Jacobitism among the clergy in the bud, but most likely the motive was to provide a pretext for evicting those who did not comply”.<sup>13</sup>

The proclamation is important, and to ascertain whether or not Dr. Shukman has a point it is necessary to rehearse its main features. All subjects were forbidden by the proclamation to acknowledge James as their king, or to serve, assist, or correspond with him in any way. None were to impugn or disown the royal authority of William and Mary, and all ministers of the gospel (Presbyterian and Episcopalian), on pain of being deprived and losing their benefices, were required to pray publicly for William and Mary as king and queen of Scotland. The terms were reinforced by a second proclamation that threatened deprivation, but also promised security and protection to all ministers who obeyed. In response to the rabbling of clergy that had taken place, the Council ordered that all ministers in possession of their churches since 13th April were to be allowed to continue to exercise their ministry undisturbed, and that any minister who had been dispossessed illegally since that day was to be restored to his church. The terms did not apply to any minister forced out before 13th April. The heritors and parishioners of ministers who disobeyed the proclamation were invited to cite them before the Council.<sup>14</sup>

When placed in the context of what was happening in Scotland at the time, it is clear that the proclamation was designed to test loyalty to the new regime and support for the revolution, and that it was deemed

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<sup>12</sup> Shukman, *Bishops and Covenanters*, p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>14</sup> H. Paton (ed.), *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland (RPC), 1689* (Third series, Vol. 14, Edinburgh, 1933), pp. 77-8.

necessary for the security of the kingdom.<sup>15</sup> The outcome of the revolution was by no means certain. It faced the threat of counter-revolution from France where James was preparing a large multi-national military force intent on reclaiming his crown. Furthermore, there was a significant threat from within in the shape of Viscount Dundee, the notorious “bloody Clavers”, and his Highland army. Finally and crucially, there was a large body of Episcopal clergy, suspected of being disaffected to the new regime, who held positions of great influence over congregations across large swathes of the country, especially in the north. They were in a perfect position to turn people against the new regime and encourage support for the Stuarts. Faced with such a serious situation, it would have been negligent of the authorities not to have acted as they did. The regime was not concerned about whether a minister was Episcopal or not; it was more concerned to know what side he was on. Ministers were deprived, not because they were Episcopal, but because they refused to comply with the terms of the proclamation. It has been well documented that a significant number of the Episcopal clergy supported William and the Revolution, and are known as Orange or Williamite Episcopalians.<sup>16</sup>

Evidence relating to the deprivations has long been in print and is readily available in the published records of the Privy Council for 1689-90. While cited in the bibliography and once in the footnotes, these records appear to have been largely ignored. This may be because Dr. Shukman, having dismissed the Privy Council as an instrument of Presbyterian extremism, may regard its records as unreliable. Or it may be because the evidence in the records fails to corroborate the claims of John Sage, whom she champions. A few examples will suffice. In the Presbytery of Strathbogie, Sir James Strachan of Keith, Arthur Strachan of Mortlach, John Henderson of Deskford, John Hay of Rathven, Patrick Chalmers of Boyndie, John Innes of Gamrie and Alexander Ker of Grange, were all deprived for not praying for William and Mary and for praying for James and his restoration. Arthur Strachan also “did press and make goe” men in his parish to join the rebellion under Dunfermline.<sup>17</sup> Patrick Chalmers was reported for speaking against the

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<sup>15</sup> C. Innes and T. Thomson (eds.), *Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland (APS)* (12 vols., 1814-1875), Vol. 9, pp. 43-4, *Proclamation against the owning of the late King James, and appointing publick Prayers for William and Mary, King and Queen of Scotland.*

<sup>16</sup> Tristram Clarke, “The Williamite Episcopalians and the Glorious Revolution in Scotland”, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 24/1 (1990), pp. 33-51.

<sup>17</sup> *RPC*, Vol. 14, pp. 466-7.



government, describing Parliament as a pack of devils and rebels, and for stating that all who supported William should renounce the name of Protestant and assume that of rebel.<sup>18</sup> John Lammie of Ecclesgrieg was accused of having maintained a correspondence with Dundee and other rebels. He was accused of having conveyed Dundee's brother, David Graham, from a house at Morphie to Mariekirk and of causing the minister there, Robert Rate, to send his reader to the rebels to inform them that Sir John Lanier was marching from Brechin to Forfar to attack them. Lammie subsequently received an indemnity on taking the Oath of Allegiance.<sup>19</sup> John Philip of Comrie was accused of taking up arms with Viscount Strathallan against the government, of whom he was reported as having said, "Are not our rullers as Soddom and our judges as Gomorah?"<sup>20</sup> William Murray of Crieff was said to have received notice of the battle of Killiecrankie between sermons and had the congregation sing Psalm 118 in celebration: "this is the day that god hath made, in it weel joy triumphantly".<sup>21</sup>

There is nothing to suggest that the Privy Council's records are unreliable or that the charges were "trumped up". Indeed, they reveal that a significant proportion of the ministers who appeared before the Council and who were deprived, acknowledged and admitted the charges against them, in particular their refusal to read the proclamation or to pray for William and Mary. Furthermore, not all who appeared were deprived. Dr. James Canaries of Selkirk, one of the leading Episcopalians of the day, was absolved because the case against him that he had prayed for James was unproven.<sup>22</sup> John Blair of Scoonie was accused of claiming upon the death of Dundee that the "greatest bulwark for the Protestant religion and against popery was gone". Blair denied the charges and claimed he had fulfilled the terms of the various Acts, and was absolved.<sup>23</sup> Simon Couper and James Graham of Dunfermline were described as being of disloyal, perverse, and pernicious principles. They were accused of having responded to news of the defeat of Mackay at Killiecrankie by saying that "better could not come of those who had

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 467; *HMC, Report on the Manuscripts of J. J. Hope Johnston, Esq., of Annandale* (London, 1897), pp. 140-2.

<sup>19</sup> *RPC*, Vol. 14, pp. 240-1, 247, 10th September 1689.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 304, 17th September 1689.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 305, 17th September 1689.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 294-6, 17th September 1689.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 176-7, 3rd September 1689.

rebelled against a lawful king". The Council argued that the statements against the two men were unproven, and both were absolved.<sup>24</sup> James Adamson of Ettrick was accused of having been an instigator against Presbyterian ministers during the former reign. Adamson appeared before the Council, denied the charges, produced a petition to that effect, and was absolved.<sup>25</sup>

### **3. The purges of the universities and parishes**

The third phase of deprivations referred to in the book took place in the universities and parishes under the auspices of what are described as the "purging bodies". Once again there is no attempt at a balanced investigation, and there is little by way of evidence to substantiate the claims made. A great deal of the chapter consists of lists of names. These include the fourteen bishops deprived at the Revolution with some very brief biographical details relating to each. Dr. Shukman acknowledges that

none of the bishops was threatened with assassination, or trial, and none was rabbled or molested; several of them retired to Edinburgh where they lived out their lives without interruption. The worst that happened to the bishops was that they were simply removed from office, lost their revenues, and their title disappeared from the Scottish constitution. One reason for this lack of molestation could be that none of them seems to have attempted to help their ousted clergy, either in their defence or by challenging the purging bodies, though records are missing for this period.<sup>26</sup>

It is invariably the case, when researching a particular event or period, that one finds that there are missing records, and the work of the committees appointed to visit the universities and parishes is no different. However, while there are missing records, there is still a wealth of printed primary source and manuscript material available, none of which has been referred to for the purposes of this book.

The names of members of the "purging bodies" to which the staff of the universities and the parish clergy fell victim are listed with the

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 185-7, 4th September 1689.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 331, 24th September 1689.

<sup>26</sup> Shukman, *Bishops and Covenanters*, p. 104.

explanation that they “give a good indication of those in Scottish society who were promoters of the hard-line Presbyterian policy and who in fact were agents of the cultural and ecclesiastical revolution of this period”.<sup>27</sup> It is unfortunate that the work of those charged with the visitations of the universities and the consequences has never been the subject of academic study. The only work known to this reviewer is an article on the visitation at Edinburgh University in 1691, written in 1915.<sup>28</sup> Dr. Shukman does not refer to this but takes all of her information and analysis from a pamphlet written by Alexander Monro. Monro worked at Edinburgh University and was one of those deprived of his post by the committee.<sup>29</sup> Dr. Shukman acknowledges that Monro was writing as a victim, and with an eye to an English audience, but nevertheless accepts that he “is attempting to give an accurate account of what happened”. Furthermore, she says: “What happened to him, such as accusation by unnamed witnesses, was to be repeated in many other cases by the commissions interrogating teachers and clergy.”<sup>30</sup>

Monro’s account of his treatment is questionable, not just because of the context in which it was written, but also because what he says about the proceedings of the Commissions is not typical of their work as a whole. The university visitations were not established for the purpose of ejecting Episcopalians. The sources clearly demonstrate that not all of those examined at Edinburgh lost their post, a point that Dr. Shukman fails to mention. Likewise at Aberdeen, well known as an Episcopalian stronghold, the vast majority of the faculty at both Kings College and Marischal College seemed to have had no qualms about accepting the terms of office offered to them.<sup>31</sup> At Glasgow it was a similar story where the terms of office offered by the commission were accepted by some and rejected on grounds of conscience by others.<sup>32</sup> The terms of office had been outlined by Parliament in its *Act for Visitation of Universities*,

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>28</sup> R. K. Hannay, “The Visitation of the College of Edinburgh in 1690”, in *The Book of The Old Edinburgh Club*, Vol. 8 (1915), pp. 79-100.

<sup>29</sup> [Alexander Monro], *Presbyterian inquisition as it was lately practised against the professors of the Colledge of Edinburgh, August and September 1690, in which the spirit of Presbytery and their present method of procedure is plainly discovered, matter of fact by undeniable instances cleared, and libels against particular persons discussed* (London, 1691).

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>31</sup> National Records of Scotland (NRS), PA 10/3, Minutes and papers relating to the visitation of Aberdeen.

<sup>32</sup> NRS, PA 10/5, Minutes and papers relating to the visitation of Glasgow.

*Colleges and Schools.* The Act was designed to ensure that all educational establishments in Scotland had a reformed Presbyterian ethos. The rationale behind the Act was the necessity that educational establishments had pious, able, and qualified professors, principals, regents, masters and others bearing office within them who were well affected to the established government of Church and state. It was therefore enacted that no one was to be admitted to any educational office, “but such as do acknowledge and profess, and shall subscribe to the Confession of Faith”. They were required to take the Oath of Allegiance, to be of excellent character, to be suitably qualified, and to submit to the government of the Church settled by law. The Act nominated visitors to the universities empowered to examine the present office-bearers and to remove those disaffected to the government, who refused to subscribe to the Confession of Faith, to take the Oath of Allegiance, or to submit to the government of the Church. Visitors were also empowered to set down rules for the effective management of educational establishments.<sup>33</sup>

Only at St. Andrews did the entire faculty refuse to accept the terms required for office as set out in the Act. On 20th August 1690, they presented a declaration to the Commission in which they acknowledged the terms for office as set out in the recent Act and continued,

And though we are not ashamed nor weary of the honour we have had in serving God in these our stations, yet seeing we hope never to exchange the peace and integrity of our consciences (which every man must consult for himself and for his own actions) with any worldly enjoyments, we take this occasion to declare here, and are ready to declare to all the world, that as yet we are not in conscience clear to take these ingagements.<sup>34</sup>

The Commissions set before the faculties of the universities the terms required by Parliament for holding office and it was up to each individual to either accept or decline those terms; and in the case of St. Andrews, they declined.

It could be argued that the terms were deliberately chosen in the knowledge that they would be unacceptable, with a view to purging out the undesirables – a form of constructive dismissal. However, it is necessary and important once again to look at this in the context of the

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<sup>33</sup> *APS*, Vol. 9, pp. 163-4, *Act for Visitation of Universities, Colleges and Schools*, 4th July 1690.

<sup>34</sup> NRS, PA 10/6, Minutes and papers relating to the visitation of St. Andrews.

times. A revolution had just taken place, a change of dynasty, government, Church and political ideology, and the new regime in Church and state faced the threat of counter-revolution internally as well as externally. Were state and Church realistically going to allow the universities, schools, and colleges to remain under the control of men disaffected to both? Could the Church reasonably be expected to accept a scenario in which its future ministry would be educated by men not only disaffected to the state but also wholly unsympathetic to its doctrine, discipline, worship, and government? The purging of Jacobite Episcopalians was a cultural and ecclesiastical revolution that was entirely necessary, and one from which Scotland and Britain benefitted greatly.

Dr. Shukman's treatment of the work of the two Commissions appointed to visit the parishes begins with a misrepresentation of its remit, which in her view "was to get rid of all of the pre-Revolution clergy", and the grounds for which are described as "ill-defined".<sup>35</sup> In fact the remit of the Commissions was to remove those clergy who upon examination were deemed morally, spiritually, and academically unfit for office, who were not orthodox in doctrine, and who were negligent in ministerial duties and functions. The reputation of the pre-Revolution clergy was poor and it was reasonable that the post-Revolution Church should test their competency. It needs also to be remembered that such visitations and tests of competency were also applied to Presbyterians.<sup>36</sup> Visitations by Presbyteries and Synods to Presbyterian ministers and parishes were a common feature of the period; in fact, as one contemporary put it, they had been the "constant practice of the Church since the Reformation".<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the Commissions were also instructed to receive into ministerial communion and a share of Church government those considered to be orthodox in doctrine, of good life, and who had qualified according to law. This is something which the Commissions did frequently, but this aspect of their work is not mentioned in this book.

The accusation that the terms of the Commissions were ill-defined is also without foundation. In fact the exact opposite was the case.

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<sup>35</sup> Shukman, *Bishops and Covenanters*, p. 90.

<sup>36</sup> See for example, NRS, CH1/2/2A, fols. 26-50, Extracts from the minutes of the committee at Aberdeen, Forres, Elgin, Montrose, and Dundee, 1698; CH1/2/2A, fols. 51-60, Minutes of committee of Commission of the General Assembly for visiting the bounds of the Synods of Dumfries and Galloway; CH2/557/14, fols. 237-279, Minutes of visitation by Synod of Argyll to parishes in Skye, 1695, and Outer Hebrides, 1696.

<sup>37</sup> National Library of Scotland (NLS), Wodrow Quarto iv, fol. 249v.

A sub-committee was appointed to draw up a detailed remit for the Commissions covering a wide range of issues relating to their ministerial competence.<sup>38</sup> Dr. Shukman provides a list of those appointed to the Commissions, the implication being that these were hard-liners before whom no pre-Revolution clergyman stood a chance. The brief narration that follows fails – as such brevity must – to give a detailed account of the work of the Commissions. However, brevity is no excuse for a lack of balance. The proceedings of the Commissions are described thus:

Hearsay evidence was accepted and the accused had no right to question witnesses. The wording opened the way for the eviction of the remaining established ministers, even those who had conformed, very many on trumped-up charges. In many cases the purge degenerated into a kangaroo court of character assassination.<sup>39</sup>

These are serious charges and like others made in the book, are made without producing any evidence to substantiate them. If anything, due to the political circumstances prevailing at the time and the constant Episcopalian propaganda directed against the Commissions, the Commissions were very careful to ensure that their proceedings followed due process and were beyond reproach.<sup>40</sup>

### III. 1690: PARLIAMENT AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The work of the Commissions was initiated by Parliament and by the 1690 General Assembly. Discussion of both bodies is covered in chapter five, “The Presbyterian Victory”. The chapter has two sections. The first deals with events in Parliament between April and July 1690 when the bulk of the legislation relating to the religious dimension of the settlement was passed. The author is critical of the settlement, regarding

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<sup>38</sup> NLS, Wodrow Quarto lxxiii, fols. 26-8, Report of the sub-committee appointed to consider what is fit to be enquired by a Commission of the General Assembly for discussing references and appeals for purging and planting the Church.

<sup>39</sup> Shukman, *Bishops and Covenanters*, p. 126.

<sup>40</sup> For a study of the work of the two Commissions, see J. Stephen, “The Commissions for Visitation North and South of the River Tay, 1690-1695”, *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 4 (2014), pp. 97-133; J. Stephen, *Defending the Revolution: The Church of Scotland, 1689-1716* (Farnham, 2013), chapter 3, pp. 113-152.

it as having been passed in a spirit of “vindictiveness” and as being too radical by establishing “Presbyterianism of a narrow kind”. She argues that the type of settlement sought by Presbyterians was one that was “purged of dissidents and intolerant of other denominations” and that by granting membership of the 1690 General Assembly to the remnant of those ejected in 1661 and those approved by them, Parliament put power into the “hands of the extremists, or at least those extremists who were prepared to do business with the new government”.

Dr. Shukman repeats the oft-made criticism of anti-Erastian Presbyterians accepting a settlement brought into being by Parliament, “a body in which the Church was not represented”, rather than the Church itself. However, some very important points are ignored. Firstly, the Church was represented in Parliament, but not in the same manner as the Episcopal Church had been. The former regime had bishops in Parliament, although it has to be said that, as royal appointees, they were there to represent the monarch rather than the Church. Presbyterians had no such ambitions: they were utterly opposed to clergymen in Parliament, one of the main points of the National Covenant. The Presbyterian approach was rather modern, like today’s various interest groups: when Presbyterians sought parliamentary action or support, they lobbied Parliament, lobbied individual members, petitioned Parliament, presented addresses, and sought by other means such as pamphlets, preaching, and organising their supporters, in particular Presbyterians in Parliament, to achieve their goals. Secondly, the author ignores the fact that the legislation relating to the settlement directly reflected Presbyterian addresses drawn up by the general meetings, the impact of lobbying and preaching in pressing those requests, and the role of ministers in framing the legislation. When one compares the settlement with the address presented to Parliament in June 1689, it is clear that the Presbyterians got pretty much everything they asked for and lobbied for.

The second section of the chapter deals with the 1690 General Assembly. For this the author relies heavily on the biased and propagandist account written by the Episcopalian polemicist John Cockburn. There has been no attempt whatsoever to strike a balance by using other sources. There is an acknowledgment that Cockburn’s account is biased and second-hand, but that does not stop the author from using it authoritatively. Its use is justified by her on the grounds that it contains material lacking from the official account. What official account does she refer to? While Acts of the Assembly were published

annually, accounts of its proceedings were not. Manuscript accounts of the proceedings are extant but do not appear to have been used by Dr. Shukman. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that just because the official account does not contain a specific piece of information related by Cockburn, that Cockburn is reliable. The author's accusation that the Assembly was disingenuous in its expressions of moderation is a repetition of Cockburn's.<sup>41</sup> According to Dr. Shukman, the expressions of moderation were nothing but a smokescreen behind which Presbyterians hid their persecuting tendencies: "in effect what happened was that the Assembly preserved the facade of moderation and reasonableness, while the commissions deployed to eradicate the undesirables were immoderate and ruthless."<sup>42</sup> These are strong words, and while Dr. Shukman is citing the historian Patrick Riley, she clearly agrees with his assertion. In truth, if those words are applicable to any period of Scottish history one need look no further than the regime that exercised dominion between 1660 and 1688.

Finally, on the subject of General Assemblies, the author refers to what she regards as "perhaps one of the more serious 'might-have-beens' of Scottish Church history". This was an address presented to Parliament by Episcopalian ministers from the Synod of Aberdeen in the summer of 1689. A key element of the address was their request for a full and free Assembly to be called for the purpose of "healing breaches" between the two sides and joining against the common enemy, Popery. They sought a union with Protestant brethren who differed only in point of Church government and recommended discussion between both sides meet to promote unity and peace in the Church.<sup>43</sup> The author laments the fact that Parliament ignored the address and its calls for an Assembly, believing that, had such an Assembly been held, the settlement may have been very different.

It is perfectly legitimate to ponder on what might have been, but surely a more pertinent response would have been to question the motives of the Aberdeen clergy. Healing breaches, seeking union with their Protestant brethren, promoting peace and unity in the church, are all laudable aims, but why were they seeking to do it now? Is there not a

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<sup>41</sup> [John Cockburn], *A Continuation of the Historical Relation of the late General Assembly in Scotland, with an account of the Commissions of last Assembly, and other particulars concerning the present State of the Church in that Kingdom* (London, 1691), p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Shukman, *Bishops and Covenanters*, p. 99.

<sup>43</sup> Balfour-Melville, *Proceedings of the Estates*, Vol. 1, pp. 205-7.



deep sense of irony in their request for a full and free General Assembly? The petitioners had been very content to live without an Assembly for the entire duration of the Restoration regime and happy to live and work under an ecclesiastical settlement that regarded General Assemblies as anathema. Throughout that time they did not call for, petition for, or pressurise their bishops, Parliament, or monarch for an Assembly. Nor during that time, with few exceptions, were they interested in healing breaches or seeking unity with their Protestant brethren; rather they shared the view of the authorities that non-conformity and religious dissent ought to be suppressed, by force if necessary. Now, with the political and religious pendulum appearing to swing the other way, they were suddenly converts to General Assemblies!

The Episcopal address, submitted when Parliament was debating a draft Act for abolishing prelacy, was part of a sustained attempt to pre-empt a full Presbyterian settlement by promoting the idea of an accommodation between the two communions under a moderate Episcopacy. One Episcopalian writer argued that the two sides were substantially united on issues of doctrine and worship but divided on the question of Church government, and urged Presbyterians to accept an accommodation that was effectively a moderate Episcopacy. They were warned not to neglect “this opportunity of shewing your abhorrence of wilful separation”, while the “Episcopal clergy are of reconciling inclinations”.<sup>44</sup> In light of the events of the previous twenty-eight years, Presbyterians had every right to question the sincerity of the new overtures for union. Daniel Defoe, in a very different situation, made the following comments in “The Shortest Way With Dissenters”, which seem to sum up the Episcopalian position in 1689:

There are some people in the world, who now they are unpercht, and reduc'd to an Equality with other people, and under strong and very just apprehensions of being further treated as they deserve, begin with *Aesop's* Cock, to Preach up Peace and Union, and the Christian Duties of Moderation, forgetting, that when they had the power in their hands, those Graces were Strangers in their gates.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *A letter to a Reverend Minister of the Gospel of the Presbyterian Perswasion, Edinburgh, 4th March 1689* (Edinburgh, 1689); see also *A Letter from the West to a Member of the Meeting of the Estates of Scotland* (1689).

<sup>45</sup> Daniel Defoe, “The Shortest Way with Dissenters”, in J. T. Boulton (ed.), *Daniel Defoe* (London, 1965), p. 88.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In light of the modern historiography and the spirit of the age in which we live, it should come as no surprise to those who are Reformed and Presbyterian, to find yet another publication that is hostile to their history and heritage, and to the doctrine, discipline, worship, and government that they seek to maintain and defend. While not surprising, it is nevertheless sad to see the Reformed heritage that has done so much good for this nation, so consistently denigrated. Those who are Reformed and Presbyterian have nothing to fear from, and should never be averse to, a rigorous, even critical, assessment of their history, provided of course that such an assessment is grounded upon thorough and balanced research of the available archival and published sources. The history of Scottish Presbyterianism is by no means perfect, and there is no need to conceal the sins and faults of those that have gone before.

The Revolution of 1688-90 was an important event in Scottish and British history, and new research and writing into that period is to be welcomed. However, there is nothing in this book that is either new or original, and very little that might add to our understanding. Indeed, far from being original, many of the sentiments held and views expressed in the book are as old as the Revolution itself. The book is largely an uncritical repetition of the complaints of contemporary Episcopalian polemicists such as John Sage, John Cockburn, and Alexander Monro. These writers portrayed Presbyterianism as a persecuting creed, and so does this book. When discussing the rabbling of the curates, Dr. Shukman takes her lead from John Sage. Indeed, Dr. Shukman repeatedly asks if the series of purges between 1688 and the 1690s were part of a concerted and deliberate plan. Having produced no evidence that they were, apart from the ruminations of Sage, she ought to have concluded that they were not. When discussing the 1690 General Assembly, she revives the partisanship of John Cockburn; when discussing the purging of the universities, she relies on the testimony of Alexander Monro. There is very little by way of an attempt to provide or understand the Presbyterian perspective on events. The sufferings and persecutions that Presbyterians had endured under the Episcopalian regime, and that were a significant factor in shaping their response to the Revolution, are ignored, as is their contribution to the debates between the two sides. Thus the book lacks balance, and

would sit well alongside many of the anti-Presbyterian polemics of the period in question. It is regrettable that the opportunity for a thorough and balanced study – particular from an Episcopalian perspective – of the people, events, and ideology that helped shape the Revolution settlement has been missed.