Daniel Defoe and the Scottish Church

HOLLY FAITH NELSON AND SHARON ALKER

DANIEL DEFOE published on the Church of Scotland over a considerable period of time and from a particularly complex position. The works of Defoe that dedicate significant attention to the Scottish church are chiefly published between the years 1706 and 1717, first appearing shortly before the Union of 1707. In these works Defoe balances his pro-British position in the Union negotiations, his private dissenting beliefs, and the anxieties of both his Scottish and English readers that the ‘true religion’ would be under threat if and when Scotland and England incorporated. Despite this precarious balance, Defoe’s works on the Church of Scotland are remarkably consistent: they admire its sacred origins and evolution, endorse its doctrine and discipline, defend its past and present actions, and argue for its protection through the Union. This stability of opinion suggests that while Defoe’s positive stance on the Church of Scotland is politically motivated in part—given his commission from Robert Harley to eliminate Scottish resistance to the Union—his view of the church does not simply shift with the political winds of the moment. It may well be true, as Evan R. Davis contends, that Defoe was “[t]he most strategic manipulator of national identity,” including religious identity, “in the union debate” (140n14) and that Defoe’s commendation of the Kirk at certain historical moments “was solely for propaganda effect to put the Scots in a good humor,” as David Macree claims (77). Nonetheless, Defoe’s stable view of the Kirk in works published over a twelve- year period, continuing long after the Union, imply that his writings on the subject are also oriented toward his own personal religious beliefs.

Although Defoe had both political and personal reasons for praising the Kirk, his civic hopes rather than his confessional stance—his desire for a united Britain—first inspired him to rewrite the history of the Church of Scotland and to produce numerous polemical works on its current state. Defoe had to write at length on the Church of Scotland in the early eighteenth century because the violent history of religious conflict and coercion during the Civil War, Interregnum, and Restoration still haunted the present, disturbing his ability to weave together a modern British
nation during Union negotiations. As W.R. Owens notes, despite the best intentions of Charles II, religious division was raw in the years following the Restoration. He writes, “[A]ll efforts at agreement and a tolerant religious policy were swept aside by the determination of the Cavalier Parliament of 1661–1678 to settle old scores” (9). In a similar vein, Anne Whiteman reminds us that “the ferocity of the attack on the bishops at the beginning of the Great Rebellion bred its own reaction” (qtd in Owens 87). The residual anger in England at the Dissenters, which manifested in a series of prohibitive and repressive Acts in the early eighteenth century, was a real obstacle to a union that would recognize and empower a Presbyterian church in Scotland. In an age of print media, in which alarmist English voices widely circulated criticisms of the Kirk to undermine the Union and many Scottish clergy rapidly spread claims that the Union threatened the Kirk and Solemn League and Covenant,¹ it was vital to Defoe that the history of religion in Britain be rewritten to reduce anxiety and permit new models of religious tolerance to evolve. It was also crucial to the Union project that Defoe intervene directly in the fast moving political debate of the moment to map out his vision of an incorporated nation that would comfortably and practically accommodate two churches under one monarch. These writing projects allowed Defoe to establish, in the process, the legitimacy and worth of a Presbyterian worldview.²

Building on the early work of such scholars as David Macree and the more recent research of D.W. Hayton and N.H. Keeble, editors of the latest editions of Defoe’s Scottish writings, this essay examines Defoe’s detailed defense of the Church of Scotland in terms of its historical development as an institution and its contemporary standing against the backdrop of the Union and its aftermath. It closely attends to the strategies used by Defoe to link the past and present in his narration of the Kirk in the interest of engendering and maintaining what he sees as the best possible future for the British nation. It further proposes that the nature and extent of Defoe’s ongoing defense of the Kirk suggest that he also sought to promote Presbyterianism as a more evolved form of Christianity.

Defoe’s writings on religion in Scotland are often self-professedly historical in nature, part of a larger historical impulse in his work. The Defovian works that include a significant account of the birth and early development of the Church of Scotland include A Short View of the Present State of the Protestant Religion in Britain, published in the year of the Union, sections in the History of the Union, published in 1709, and The Memoirs of the Church of Scotland, drafted shortly after the Union, but not published until ten years later.³ With respect to the circumstances of the publication of the Memoirs, Paula Backscheider reminds us that this document was issued in April
1717 “to support the parliamentary presentation of a delegation from the Commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland,” given that some Scottish ministers “were again appealing the imposition of the Oath of Abjuration,” which some English falsely attributed to Jacobite sympathies (405). These three works engage in what Robert Mayer calls “genetic” history: works that chart the history of a subject from its inception onward in an attempt to understand it (163). As Defoe explains at the beginning of A Short View, “the only way to come at a Clear Understanding of Particulars, was to go back to their Generals; to search the Original of things, and see from thence not how they are represented, but how they really are in their mere Nature, and Native Circumstances” (3). Likewise, in the History of the Union, Mayer finds Defoe “promis[ing] to trace the origins of the idea of the Union back to ‘the very original of it,’ so as to reveal ‘all the several steps which have been taken’ that led him to conclude that the Union was ‘the only harbor the ship of state could safely come to an anchor in’” (Mayer 163; Defoe qtd. in Mayer 163). Such passages support Mayer’s conclusion that “Defoe repeatedly insists upon the need to trace the development of a problem, an institution, an idea, or a person, from its beginning” (163).

Defoe’s search for ecclesiastical origins responds—as he often informs us—to the “noise” of misinformation from English historians that he fears has caused many to believe that the Episcopal structure of the Church of England is “a farther Reformation of the Church, meaning the Church of Scotland” (Memoirs 176). Defoe notes that English historians consign the Scottish church to an earlier stage in the reformation trajectory, viewing it as less evolved and more errant than the more advanced, and thus holier and purer, English church. He calls to mind the English image of the Scottish church as a young man who has died prematurely: they maintain that “Presbytery was often hatch’d in Scotland and nursed up. But was never Major, never came to be of Age; alluding to a young Man, who tho’ carefully brought up, dies before he attains to the Age of One and Twenty” (Memoirs 324). Defoe argues that according to this flawed history the Scottish church has failed to advance. He invokes this argument only to counter it by “turn[ing] the very accusation” made by the agents of the English church “back against them” (Burton). It is the English church, he says, that took a ‘wrong-turn’ in the evolutionary process and ended up Episcopal. It is the English church that failed to properly evolve and is thus inadequately reformed. In A Short View, Defoe explains that this evolutionary failure caused “our English Church [to be] reformed into Episcopacy, and a Pompous Hierarchy, rather than a Calvinistical Parity” (8). In contrast, he writes, the Scottish “Reformation being made by the People themselves….they reform’d at once into the compleat Model, both as to Discipline and Worship” (16, 17). Having witnessed the flawed English ecclesiastical model, the Church of Scotland was able to forge a more pure and holy Church.
The history of each stage of the development of the two churches, Defoe argues, is inextricably connected to the socio-political context in which it emerged. Therefore, he considers the manner of the birth of each church, concluding that the Kirk is inevitably purer because it was tainted neither by power nor personal desire. Whereas the Scottish church totally disassociated from the unacceptable Catholic royal representative, “the Regent the Queen Mother” as well as “the Pomp, the Magnificence, and the outside of the Matter” (Short View 8), the Church of England was firmly coupled with a somewhat more problematic monarch, “Henry VIII, A meer Tyrant, a Man of no Religion in his inside, and but very little in the out side” (Short View 7). Had he been a different sort of king, Defoe explains, an “Enlightened” man full of “Religious Zeal” rather than a “Fury” of a different sort, he would have “erected the true Gospel Supremacy of Christ Jesus” (Short View 6). But he was not and the result is “brooding Snakes of Ecclesiastick Tyranny, which this part of the World has been plagued with ever since” (6). In his Memoirs, Defoe explains that the deferral of the full reformation of Scotland because of its split with the Regent gave “Scotland … an unforeseen Advantage, viz. That … they had Leisure … to see the Defects of the English Reformation” (11). Thus, Defoe claims that the Kirk is no youth who died before reaching maturity, but rather a woman in the prime of her life, and he details the “Flourishing and Glorious state she is now in” (Memoirs 333). To reveal her true state, Defoe must strip off the misshapen garments in which she has been forcibly and falsely clothed by unreliable historians. As he writes in the Memoirs, the Kirk “has been represented to the World in so many monstrous Shapes, drest up in so many Devil's Coats, and Fool's Coats, charged with so many Heresies, Errors, Schisms, and Antichristianisms by the Mob of this slandering Generation” (2).

To establish his credibility as a reliable ecclesiastical historiographer in such works on the Scottish church, Defoe represents himself as a rational and objective historian who privileges what Mayer describes as Baconian historiography—history that claims to be “the repository of matters of fact” (26). Defoe’s “advocacy of the union,” Mayer argues, “taught him a good deal about the efficacy of [ostensibly unbiased] historical argument as a means of persuasion” (160). For example, in Part II of the Memoirs, when recording the suffering of the Kirk in the early years of the reign of James I, Defoe writes of his account of the Hampton Court Conference (1604), “it is necessary the Reader should have it faithfully and fully stated; I say, for this Reason, I shall impartially relate the Fact …. [for] above all, that the Truth of Fact may impartially be handed down to Posterity, that they may have a true Notion, and be able to make a right Judgment of so remarkable an Event” (158, 159). Defoe pulls off this portrayal of himself as a disinterested recorder of past events here and elsewhere in the Memoirs by shifting between temporal and spatial concepts. He is not only a skilled chronicler of times past, as noted above, but also a skilled cartographer and navigator of Scottish culture, on which disturbing English fantasies have been projected. At the inception of the Memoirs, Defoe explains that the Scottish church is
now a “Terra incognita, a vast Continent of hidden, undiscovered Novelties” (1). Like the ‘dark continent’ of Africa, the Scottish church has been represented as “monstrous,” demonic, and threatening, that which should be feared and avoided; but Defoe’s corrective rhetoric notes that it is rather like the Americas prior to discovery, an unknown territory full of precious things in wait of unearthing (1). Defoe, by extension, is an explorer who can cut through the “Mists and Darkness” cast over this ecclesiastical “Terra incognita”—that “thing[,] so near” that is “so entirely hid from us” (41, 1). He can properly map out and traverse this religious landscape to make it known to and navigable by others so it will not be overlooked or forgotten. In so doing, “things of … Consequence” will be rescued “from the Grave of Forgetfulness” (Preface).

As it happens, for Defoe those things forgotten about the Presbyterian Church in Scotland or erased from English memory are (rather predictably) almost entirely praiseworthy. In chronicling and navigating the Church of Scotland’s past, Defoe accentuates its civilized nature by turning to the discourses of bravery and zeal, reasonable action and lawful duty, suffering and sacrifice, and spiritual and ecclesiastical refinement. He routinely situates Reformed Scots in both “glorious Scene[s] of Action” and “dismal Scene[s] of Suffering” as they boldly, but dutifully and peaceably, cast off “the burthens of Ceremony, Forms and Hierarchys,” despite persecution and death, leaving only “Purity in both Worship and Discipline” in their Church (Preface, Memoirs; Short View 22). The intrepid drive of the Church of Scotland for religious purity is exemplary, Defoe argues, because it is scripturally sound and popular in nature (Short View 10). It is the “People of Scotland” who “express[ed] their Detestation of the Innovations which had been put upon them before” and demanded that the Kirk be restored to its primitive state (Memoirs 184–85). For Defoe, the Scottish People have managed, thereby, the near impossible: to cleanse the Church of the stain of history so that it now resembles the Primitive Church of the early Christians (Short View 23). As a result, Defoe argues with some hyperbole, the Kirk is “the best regulated, national Church in the World,” as chiefly, though not solely, measured by “the Soundness and Purity of her DOCTRINE, the Strictness and Severity of her DISCIPLINE, the Decency and Order of her WORSHIP, [and] the Gravity and Majesty of her GOVERNMENT (Memoirs 2). By unveiling the Scottish church in this fashion, Defoe emphasizes its difference from the Church of England as an institution and theological entity, yet in an unthreatening way. He evokes sympathy for the Kirk’s past sufferings, blunting claims of Episcopal suffering at Presbyterian hands in Scotland; and he suggests that members of the Scottish church are very like those in the English church in their desire to worship a Protestant God and to be faithful to their national church.

In an inversion of the naturalized hybridity and mongrel tendencies Defoe previously celebrated and encouraged in regard to the Union and in his poem The True-Born Englishman: A Satyr (1700), Defoe privileges purity and natural
development in discussing the Scottish church with both the language of fact and fear. In setting forth this history of the Church’s “compleat Reformation,” inspired by the populace, Defoe repeatedly stresses that, unlike the English church, “the Church of Scotland was in its original PRESBYTERIAN,” despite the fact that “the first Reformation” has been made to “look as if it had been Episcopal” (Memoirs 90, 49). Ergo, any attempt throughout history to introduce episcopacy to Scotland is an unnatural act, carried out by, or generative of, “Motley” or “mongrel” bodies, terms that appear in relation to attempts to persecute or impose any alien policy or practices on the Kirk (Memoirs 76–77, 87, 153). For Defoe, such an imposition is akin to an invasion of toxic weeds in an ecclesiastical Garden of Eden, hence the need for present Scottish ministers to commit “to pull[ing] it up by the Roots” (Memoirs 89). That Defoe establish this historical point is essential for contemporary debates on the kind of Union that should occur and the nature of the two distinct parties to be incorporated.

Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scots were often painted as a bloody, irrational, and lawless lot in resisting the rightful monarch’s religious policies. Having established the Kirk as “natural,” Defoe can then associate past royal policies with the unnatural and the criminal in order to defend Scottish Presbyterianism. Defoe argues that the few “Tumult[s] and Rebellion[s]” in which Presbyterian Scots found themselves were caused by “Unjust” and “Unnatural” “oppressions” that rendered them desperate and uncharacteristically “[d]istracted” (Memoirs 148–49). Citing “a known Scots author,” Defoe describes, for example, the High Commission set up in Scotland during the reign of Charles II as “a Hotch-potch-Mongrel-Monster of a Judicatory . . . against the Laws of GOD and MAN, Illegal in its Constitution, and Arbitrary in its Procedure” (Memoirs 151). Forced to contend with such mongrel and monstrous bodies, the peaceful and charitable Church of Scotland made every effort to resolve disputes amicably, according to Defoe. Citing in A Short View a letter of 1566 “from the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to the Bishops in England,” Defoe reminds his reader that the “Church of Scotland . . . did not at all break off their Charity from the Persons of the [Episcopal] Bishops and Pastors, whom they still call’d Brethren, and own’d they profess’d with them the Lord Jesus” (19–20). While representatives of the Church of Scotland exhibited a bold defiance in keeping the true faith, they preferred to make “peaceable Applications” to reigning monarchs rather than to take up arms against them; they were always eager “to hearken to Reason” (Memoirs 36, 25). Scottish Presbyterians defended themselves physically against immoral laws or unlawful policies only as a last resort, Defoe informs us, since “Nature . . . dictate[s] to all People a Right of Self-Defence, when illegally and arbitrarily attack’d in a manner not justifiable either by the Laws of Nature, the Laws of God, or the Laws of the Country” (Memoirs 159). While judged harshly in their own time, the light and truth of history reveals that the Scottish Presbyterians saw what the blind English failed to see, according to Defoe: “What a shame it is to us,
An advantage to presenting the Scottish church as a distinct, unpolluted entity with its own natural origins is that in doing so its members can be differentiated from the English Dissenters, alleviating concerns that the Union might empower Dissenters south of the border. Defoe frequently downplayed any sense that there was a past or present unity between Scottish Presbyterians and English Dissenters or even between English dissenting groups in order to make them appear less of a threat. In the Review of November 17, 1705, Defoe writes,

> The Dissenters, however, considered under one Denomination, are not, nor ever were in England, one United Body; they differ in Interest, as they discord in Opinion; the Charity they profess, even one for another, does not abound; they never acted in Concert in any one thing as I remember….In short, they are not a Body; they are a dispers’d Multitude, without Form, without Engagement, without Correspondence, and indeed without Agreement… (2.733)

In emphasizing in the Memoirs that the Church of Scotland has always been deeply embedded in a national (Scottish) culture and ideals, and that it is not aligned with this motley crew of English Dissenters, or with England at all, Defoe hopes to show that it has never been, nor will ever be, involved in a quest to undermine the Church of England.

When he writes of the present rather than the historic nature and status of the Kirk, Defoe unsurprisingly focuses on the ecclesiastical impact of the Union in the majority of his writings, stressing that the Union will only strengthen and uphold the distinct belief system of the national churches in North and South Britain. In several of his six Essays at Removing National Prejudices (1706–1707) and in parts of The History of the Union (1709), Defoe logically outlines the ways in which the contemporary Church of Scotland benefits from the Union, again turning most often to ‘objective’ political and legal discourse, but appealing to the emotions of his readers when needed to strengthen his case.8 John Richetti remarks of Defoe’s writings generally that in some works Defoe “sound[s] like an objective analyst” while in others he appears to speak as “a partisan religionist” (82); Defoe’s writings on the present state of the Scottish church demonstrate that both discourses can also occur in a single Defovian work.9 When, for example, refuting the claim of anti-Union Scots that the Union threatens the Church of Scotland’s security, Defoe turns his opponents’ argument on its head, asserting in both forensic and fiery language that the Kirk is presently in “a precarious,
unsafe, and unsettled Condition” from which only the Union can save it (Essay III 98). Once the Union is in place, “[i]t is for ever rendered impossible to Overthrow the Settlement of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland; But by Subverting the constitution, by absolute Arbitrary Government, and the openest Bare-Fac’d Tyranny” (Essay III 96).

Defoe continues to blend the language of logic and emotion when proposing that in order for Parliament to “Overthrow the Settlement,” it would have to “Dissolv[e] “their own being” or “Annihilat[e] their own Body” (Essay III 96–97). Disturbing terms and images are incrementally built up, one upon the other, in painting this picture as Defoe moves toward a rhetorical climax that highlights the heinousness and improbability of the repeal of the Act or Treaty set in place to safeguard the Kirk: “it can never be altered but by meer Tyranny, Perjury, Violence and Usurpation” (Essay III 102). Though Defoe admits that anything is possible, including the “overthrow” of the Kirk, he often returns to the discourse of probability, characteristically citing figures to prove that after the Union, there will be insufficient members of Parliament to annul an Act or Treaty involving the Church of Scotland’s security. Any claims made to the contrary, he insists in the sixth Essay, are improbable, illogical and absurd and their proponents cannot win an argument by “strength of Reasoning” (188). To increase the authority of this argument and to voice the intensity of his feelings on the subject, Defoe routinely repeats words and phrases, lifting them from the Act for Securing the True Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Government (1707) when needed, as is evident in the following passage from The History of the Union:

By the UNION then, and the several Acts of Parliament, for the Security of the Presbyterian Church, which are Confirmed by and made Part of that Union—; The Purity and Uniformity of the Worship, Discipline and Government of the Church of Scotland to be Preserved to the People of Scotland WITHOUT ANY ALTERATION, Mark these Words, I Repeat them again, WITHOUT ANY ALTERATION to all Succeeding Generations. (“The Preface” xxviii) ¹⁰

In defending the ways in which the Union benefits the Kirk, Defoe not only stresses the security it offers but also regularly reminds both his Scottish and English readers that it solidifies and guarantees ecclesiastical difference, often pointedly avoiding the language of incorporation when describing the impact of the Union on religion in Scotland and England. In his sixth Essay (1707), which as D.W. Hayton notes “focused on religious issues” and “on Presbyterian opinion,” Defoe derides the notion that

the Union of two Nations in their meer Civil and Politick Concerns, can affect their Religious Concern….These Things are not only divided and distinguish’d in their own Nature, but they are expressly distinguish’d in the Treaty it self, which professes to
unite the two Kingdoms in their Civil and Politick Capacity, as to Oeconomy, Government, Interest and Commerce; but expressly reserves to each, the Separate State and Absolute Independency of all their Religious Affairs. (191)

The trope of a united, healthy, and vital body politic upon which Defoe often depends in his general defenses of the Union is in such passages abandoned or openly repudiated in relation to religion.

However, paradoxically, Defoe’s discourse of ecclesiastical difference is sometimes offset by the language of resemblance as he struggles to articulate declarations and generate tropes in support of “the beneficial intersection of related yet distinct entities” (Alker and Nelson 43). In the first Essay, which Hayton explains was “ostensibly written to persuade the English of the virtues of Union” (9), Defoe suggests that there is a form of synthesis already between the churches because both state churches are Protestant, “Orthodox in Principle, and equally opposite to Popery, and Antichristianism” (49). Defoe intricately crafts in several of his Essays the precise relation of the churches he is at pains to delineate elsewhere, noting that the national churches of England and Scotland are alike in “Religion” but dissimilar in “Religious Circumstances” (49). In his fourth Essay, which sought to alter Scottish anti-Union sentiment voiced by the likes of George Ridpath (Hayton 21), Defoe takes a similar representational approach, announcing that

there is not an Oneness of Ecclesiastical Interests, as to the respective Principles of the Churches, as Episcopal and Presbyterian, but there is an Oneness of their General Interests as Protestant; and it will for ever Unite their Interests, so as to make them one Body, with one general Interest, against all sorts of Superstition, Atheism, Idolatry. (117)

In this passage and elsewhere, Defoe repeats that the two churches constitute one Protestant body of Christ, figuratively speaking, even if the Union cannot or should not “Literally” or “Mathematically and Numerically” merge them into a single body (117). In this way, Defoe is skilfully able to maintain that the Union “will make them one Body” metaphorically—benefitting both in the process given their similar “General Interests” and need to differentiate themselves from the Catholic Church—while ensuring that their two bodies remain literally different, neither altered by the other (117).

Defoe justifies the need for these two distinct ecclesiastical bodies with a tentative theory that is akin to that of the Fortunate Fall. He maintains that the breach between the churches may well be a felix culpa, or ‘fortunate fall,’ because it has rendered British Christians more virtuous:

Perhaps these Things are suffer’d in the Church of Christ, for the Exercise of Charity, Forbearance, and mutual Temper, of Christians, to prevent worse Inconveniences,
In light of this ‘fortunate fall’ there is an opportunity for communion or confederation without incorporation, which Defoe indirectly depicts through the powerful Miltonic image of going hand-in-hand after the Fall, in a gesture of forgiveness and reconciliation. “Charity, Forbearance, and Love” will characterize the churches who, though two distinct bodies, “agree to go Hand in Hand, the direct Road to Heaven” (Essay I 55). And yet, though they are depicted figuratively holding hands after the Union, Defoe reminds his reader in his sixth and last Essay that “the Business of the Union is not to bring them together, but to keep them asunder; not to bring them into one Government, but to secure them in their being two” (191–92).

Those who would attempt to undermine this happy, if complex, ecclesiastical confederation are demonized by Defoe. He maintains, especially in The History of the Union, that anti-Union discourse circulating in Scotland is the product of an unholy Trinity—the Jacobites and the Episcopal and Popish parties—as well as a sinister body of powerful gentlemen, “fatal people” who devilishly united these forces through an act of “monstrous conjunction,” deceiving “honest, well-meaning” Presbyterians along the way: “they undertook to join Cameronian and Persecutor; Presbyterian and Papist; Protestant Succession and Jacobitism; parties as opposite as the elements, as distant as the poles” (History of the Union 220, 219, 220). Relying on the suspicions of his readers, the individuals who make up this body are presented as dangerous fearmongers, alarmists who stir up “an unspeakable disorder in the minds of the people.” It is these parties who falsely deceived the pious Scots into believing that the Union would allow Parliament to “encroach upon the Church” of Scotland (History of the Union 222). Defoe insists that the arguments of such nefarious parties are not only irrational, but perverse. In a similar fashion, in his third Essay, Defoe casts aspersions on the “Church of England Men, High-Church hot Episcopalian Disputants” who claim that the Church of Scotland’s security is threatened by the Union. To warn off the Kirk from giving ear to these men, Defoe turns to analogy, proclaiming that to listen to their opinions on the Church of Scotland’s security is analogous to a goose trusting a fox who wants to eat it (105). The Scottish church, Defoe consistently maintains, should instead rest assured in its current “Civil Right” to “Ecclesiastic Immunity” confirmed by the Union (“The Preface,” History of the Union xxviii).

It was not enough, however, for Defoe to establish the distinct nature and secure status of the Church of Scotland while imagining it walking hand-in-hand with its English compatriot. He also had to dedicate an enormous amount of textual space to combatting the misrepresentation of the Church of Scotland as a present-day persecutor of Episcopalians. As with his historical writings on the Kirk, Defoe’s works on the contemporary Church of Scotland must expose “false Reports” of the Scot as a brutish oppressor and produce a new narrative of events that relies only on “true
Matter of Fact” in order to close the “Breach between the Nations” (Scot’s Narrative 360, 357, 360). English churchmen before and after the Union argued that the Kirk was intolerant of Episcopal Dissenters and cruelly persecuted them, a topic relevant to Defoe not only as an apologist for the Kirk, but also as a Dissenter from the Church of England. Defoe had to balance once again the roles of “objective analyst” and “partisan religionist” in defending the Church of Scotland while recognizing religious Dissenters’ right to freedom of religious belief within certain parameters (Richetti 82).

In his ironically-titled An Historical Account of the Bitter Sufferings and Melancholy Circumstances of the Episcopal Church in Scotland (1707), Defoe lucidly and characteristically sets forth his objective: “to clear up the Reputation of the Church of Scotland among her Friends,” which will be carried out by “an Impartial Account of the general Proceedings of the Church of Scotland, in the Matter of Establishing the Presbyterian Discipline, and Deposing Episcopacy” (271, 276). In a later document on the same subject, The Scot’s Narrative Examin’d (1709), he renders the account of a persecutory Kirk unreliable by labeling it the narrative of “Jacobite Clergy,” thereby associating it with the unnatural, disorderly and treasonous subjects who have been ousted by the government from their church livings “for refusing to take the Oaths to the Government” (Historical Account 282). Defoe thereby conflates the present-day “Scots Episcopal-Man” with the Jacobite dissenting clergyman who has been rightfully deposed by civilized and necessary political means—“and not at all [by] the Act or Concern of the Church of Scotland” (274–75, 283).13

Defoe supplements his systematic reasoning on this subject with insinuations of the monstrous acts of the Jacobite Scottish Dissenters, whom he markedly distinguishes from English Episcopalians. Some of these acts, he cautions, should never be named in the interests of “the whole Protestant Body of Christians in the World,” but he does link them with unnatural sexual deeds, including incest, repeated fornication and adultery that would lead to “Confusions in Families” if allowed to develop unimpeded (Historical Account 290, 292). Appealing to the fears of his readers, Defoe resolves near the end of An Historical Account that “Tolleration” of those Jacobite clergy who are the “Refuge of the Vitious, the Skreen of the Adulterer, [and] the Protectors of Immoral and Prophane Persons” is nothing less than the ruin of the family, the foundation of every nation (292, 293).

In his efforts to distinguish English and Scottish Episcopalians, and to disparage the latter, Defoe censures Episcopalian ministers who have been deposed in Scotland to undermine any circulating victim narratives. Each deposed minister—and he lists them name by name—is rendered not a victim of conscience, but a “Scandalous, Ignorant or Immoral person” (Historical Account 278). In The Scots Narrative Examin’d, Defoe provides an appendix, “Containing an exact Draught of the several Proceedings lately made against the Episcopal Ministers in the city of Edinburgh,” to support his case with what he views as irrefutable evidence of guilt (Scot’s Narrative 345). In case this legal documentation is held insufficient to prove that “[n]o Man was
ever since the Revolution, Deposed by the Church, meerly for being Episcopal” (Historical Account 279), Defoe appeals to legal fact: the Church of Scotland cannot persecute or depose the Episcopal clergy on matters of conscience, because it does not have the lawful power to do so (Historical Account 281).

Despite Defoe’s criticism of Episcopalian Dissenters in Scotland, as well as his clear attempt to distinguish them from English Dissenters, in An Historical Account he at the very least feigns sympathy for them in the interest of defending Dissenters generally. He assumes the role of advisor “to both Kirk and Dissenters,” arguing that the Kirk should continue “by their Moderation, Charity, and Tenderness” to “suffer and permit the Episcopal Dissenters to Exercise their separate way of Worship, without Exerting their Power of Government to their Disturbance” (292, 295), while the Dissenters should act as true “Christians and Ministers” and simply “stand just where” they “are and be satisfied”; to ask for more, such as “Legal Tolleration,” is to merely entangle themselves in the legal web in which English Dissenters have found themselves (Historical Account 293). In showing a measure of sympathy to the very few ‘truly Christian’ Dissenters in Scotland, Defoe hopes to prove his impartiality and even-mindedness while carving out a legitimate space for Dissenters in British society. He accomplishes this while still upholding the “naked Truth” that the Scottish government suppressed Jacobite clergy and conventicles for the security of the nation and that all other Dissenters have been allowed to speak and hold meetings (Scot’s Narrative 357, 358). The narrative of the “Persecution of Episcopacy” in Scotland is thereby cleverly replaced by Defoe with the narrative of the “Prosecution of Jacobitism” (Scot’s Narrative 314).

As an apologist for the Church of Scotland, Defoe adeptly moves between and balances his narration of the historical and the contemporary in the service of greater myths: a united and unified Britain and a fully reformed Christian Church. As Novak recalls, it was not unusual for Defoe to conflate the historiographic and the journalistic in his works. Of his periodical, the Review, for example, Defoe remarked that he was “writing History sheet by sheet, and letting the World see it as it went on” (qtd in Novak 31). His diachronic and synchronic accounts of the Church of Scotland function symbiotically to establish it as a natural, pure, and heroic institution that has survived the violence and false accusations of unnatural, monstrous, polluted, and duplicitious adversaries.14 These accounts are undergirded by Defoe’s claims to be an ‘impartial’ historian and journalist uniquely equipped to chronicle the times and navigate the terrain of the Kirk. His accounts are not only rendered more persuasive by this appeal to his character, but also by his skillful use of both reasoned argument and passionate literary figures. These rhetorical strategies serve Defoe well as he works
out for the reader how, despite a shared DNA, the national churches of Scotland and England are, and will remain, distinct from each other in a united nation, ensuring the security of both religious bodies as well as individuals who legitimately dissent from them.

Though there is no doubt that Defoe was partially motivated to mount such a skilled and passionate defense of the Scottish church for political reasons, the extent to which he consistently and enthusiastically defends the Church of Scotland in his writing until 1717 suggests that his personal beliefs also came into play. After all, more than once Defoe suggests that the Kirk is a complete model of the true Christian Church, with its fully realized Protestantism. In reflecting on God’s special blessing on the Kirk from its inception onward, Defoe writes in the Memoirs, safely published many years after the Union,

such was the signal working of divine Providence, as has been seen more than once in the Case of the Church of Scotland, that the Oppressions and Persecutions of this Church were made the Means of overturning, not the Bishops only...but even the King himself, and all his Family....God so ordered it even from the Beginning of the Reformation in Scotland, that no Men, or Party of Men, have ever yet fallen upon the Church of Scotland, but it has been at length their own Destruction; the Church has been like the Stone in the Gospel, and on her religious Establishment may be written, as is upon her Banners, Nemo me impune lacessit [No one attacks me with impunity]. Ever may it be so and may her Enemies take the Warning, that they never more make the Attempt. (173, 191)

In contrast to the “Primitive Plainness” of the Church of Scotland, which likely resulted in such divine favour, stands the Church of England with its “Pomp and Jingle” awaiting “further Inlighten[ment] from Heaven” and “Compleat Reformation” (Short View 32; Essay VI 195). In such phrases we surely hear the voice of Defoe the committed Presbyterian alongside that of Defoe the strategic Propagandist.15

Trinity Western University
Whitman College

NOTES

1 For a more detailed account of the anti-Union sentiments espoused by a number of Scottish clergymen, see Macree, “Daniel Defoe, the Church of Scotland, and the Union of 1707” and D.W. Hayton’s introduction to Vol 4: Union with Scotland in the Polemical and Economic Writings of Daniel Defoe.
Though Defoe was a Presbyterian, it is important to remember, as Macree rightly argues, “that Defoe’s brand of Presbyterianism,” at least in terms of “Church government,” “was not by any means identical with that practiced in the Church of Scotland” (63). Drawing on *English Presbyterians*, edited by C. G. Bolam et al, N.H. Keeble also writes that “English Presbyterianism was a very different creature from Scottish, in ecclesiology and increasingly in doctrine” (11).

The title of a Defovian work that discusses the Church of Scotland can be misleading in that it may suggest a historical focus despite the fact that it dedicates a great deal of space to current events and vice versa.

The version of *Memoirs of the Church of Scotland* published in 1717 is notably different from the one Defoe claimed to have written shortly after the Union. As Keeble notes, the text of *Memoirs* clearly “underwent at least some revision” between its composition and publication, since the 1717 edition “included references to the 1715 Jacobite uprising” and included an appendix entitled “Of the State of the Church since the Union” (2).

This strategy in classical rhetoric, a subject in which Defoe received training, was called *anti-categoria* (see Gideon O. Burton’s exceptionally useful resource *Sylva Rhetoricae*, http://rhetoric.byu.edu/, for this and other terms). For recent essays on the rhetorical sophistication of Defoe’s prose, see the first three essays in *Positioning Daniel Defoe’s Non-Fiction: Form, Function, Genre*, edited by Aino Mäkikalli and Andreas K. E. Mueller.

See also Leith Davis, *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation 1707–1830*, on the subject of the new kind of ‘objective’ prose style employed by Defoe in the context of Union.

Keeble writes that “[t]he popular English image” of the Scots in general at this moment was of “religious fanatics, rebellious subjects and wild, uncivilized Celts” (4). He argues that after 1660, the English often viewed Cameronian resistance to monarchical directives, in particular, as “intransigent barbarism and anarchic unruliness” (4).

In his introduction to *Volume 4: Union with Scotland in the Polemical and Economic Writings of Daniel Defoe*, D.W. Hayton identifies which of these Essays were written with an English readership and which with a Scottish readership in mind.

Leith Davis and Anne M. McKim highlight the rational discourse employed by Defoe in the service of the Union. While Davis contrasts what she sees as Defoe’s logocentric, iconoclastic, and rational prose style with the iconophilic and excitable style of Lord Belhaven, McKim contrasts Defoe’s style (as set out by Davis) with the “highly emotive and emotional rhetoric” of George Ridpath (43). We have argued elsewhere (“Pamphlet Wars”) and continue to argue in this essay that while Defoe routinely makes use of the discourse of reason (*logos*) in his rhetorical works on the Union and other subject matter,
he also supports rational argumentation with the language of emotion (pathos) and personal character (ethos).

10 Reduplication of such claims (conduplicatio) is a frequent trope in Defoe’s writings on the Church of Scotland. Glynis Ridley has recently proposed that Defoe’s reliance on repetition is characteristic of his argumentative prose, given the influence of his instructor Charles Morton who taught that “potentially contentious material” should be restated “three different times and in three different ways” (7). McKim and Keeble draw attention to the use of this rhetorical figure in Defoe’s History of the Union and Memoirs of the Church of Scotland respectively (McKim 43; Keeble 15–16).

The section in the Act of Security that Defoe cites is as follows: “Therefore Her Majesty with advice and consent of the said Estates of Parliament Doth hereby Establish and Confirm the said true Protestant Religion and the Worship, Discipline and Government of this Church to continue without any alteration to the people of this land in all succeeding generations.” The whole Act is posted on the legislation.gov.uk website: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/aosp/1707/6?view=plain

11 For a comparison of features of the rhetorical strategies of Ridpath (among others) and Defoe, see McKim’s “War of Words: Daniel Defoe and the 1707 Union.”

12 For Defoe, these three groups overlap in some measure.

13 Defoe also points to the irony of English High Churchmen accusing the Church of Scotland of persecution for carrying out the very act they committed in deposing Dissenting ministers “who would not take …[certain] Oaths” (Historical Account 283).

14 The synchronic and diachronic, however, always intersect, since the present is always understood in relation to the past and the historical envisioned and re-written in and for the present. As Reinhard Koselleck explains, “The conditions and determinants that, in a temporal gradation of various depths, reach from ‘the past’ into the present intervene in particular events just as agents ‘simultaneously’ act on the basis of their respective outlines of the future…In actu all temporal dimensions are always intertwined” (30).

15 Macree believes that Defoe only came to truly admire the Church of Scotland by 1707 (77); we believe that he had always admired it, despite his criticism of some of its anti-Union leaders and the anti-Union Scots more generally. For a brief overview of Defoe’s opinion of the anti-Union Scots during his fifteen months in Scotland (October 1706–December 1707), see Backscheider, Daniel Defoe: His Life, 251.

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