

The Lifter Controversy.

ONE of the most interesting disputes which disturbed any section of the Church in Scotland was that known as the "Lifter" controversy, which for some years agitated the Anti-Burgher section of the Secession Church, and which indeed led to another split therein.

The *Book of Common Order* (John Knox's Liturgy) indicates that at the Communion service the minister is to "take the bread" before he offers the Prayer of Thanksgiving and Consecration. This action is not mentioned in the *Directory for Public Worship*; nor can it be said that it is explicit either in Henderson's or in Calderwood's account of the celebration of the Sacrament.¹ But there can be no doubt that it was widely, if not universally, practised in Scotland; and in time it was regarded as being of great significance. Boston² of Ettrick, for example, writes that "nothing is more distinctly mentioned than this" (the act of "taking" the elements).³

In some places it was the custom of the minister simply to lift the plate with the bread, and the cup with the wine, before offering the consecration prayer; but in others, he held a portion of the bread in his hands during the whole of the prayer. This was the custom of Dr Webster⁴ of the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh, the leader of the Evangelical party in the city in the 18th century. In the funeral sermon preached after his death we find: "Follow him next to the Communion Table holding in his hands the sacramental pledges of the broken Body and shed Blood of the Redeemer,⁵ and by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, setting them apart from a common to a sacred use."

¹ McMillan. *Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church*. Chap xiii.

² *Body of Divinity*. iii., 378. He tells us (*Ibid.* 380) that the significance of the consecrating of the elements was "the Father's setting apart, and consecrating His own Son to, and investing Him in the Mediatorial Office."

³ In the Catechism of the Dutch Divine Hermann Witsius (1636-1708), whose works were better known in our fathers' days than they are in ours, we have the following question and answer bearing on the subject in dispute: Q. "What is meant by taking the bread and the cup"? A. "Christ's voluntary assuming the human nature into union with His Divine Person (Hebrews, ii. 16), that therein He might be a sacrifice of infinite value in our stead (Eph. v. 2)."

⁴ Sprott, *Worship and Offices of the Church of Scotland*, 115.

⁵ Evidently Dr Webster held a cup as well as a portion of the bread during the consecration prayer.

About the middle of the 18th century, a number of ministers began to omit this first "lifting," leaving the elements untouched until after the prayer of consecration. Professor Bruce¹ states that Adam Gib, who was then the leader of the Anti-Burghers, was the first to introduce the innovation in that body; but according to Dr Sprott² it had been adopted by some parish ministers at an earlier date. The practice was not allowed to go on without protest. In 1776, Josiah Hunter³, the Anti-Burgher minister at Falkirk, published a pamphlet in which he held that to "take" the bread and cup, after the Saviour's example, was an essential part of the rite, and this may be regarded as the beginning of the controversy. Those who were determined that the "taking" should be continued, were termed "Lifters": those who opposed them were known as "Anti-lifters." It has to be remembered, however, that the latter did not take the view that the "taking" should not be practised; many of them were as careful about the matter as were their opponents. Their position was that those who wished to omit the "taking" should be allowed to follow their own desires on the subject.

Josiah Hunter had had a somewhat stormy career. He entered the Secession Hall in 1754, and was ordained at Falkirk four years later. Trouble arose between him and some members of his congregation; and, after listening to a number of complaints and counter-complaints, the Synod suspended him in 1780. The majority of his congregation supported him, and he went on his way without paying any regard to the sentence. On being called in question for his conduct, he informed the Synod that it was not a rightly and lawfully constituted court of Jesus Christ. The result was that the sentence of deposition was passed against him, a sentence which he regarded no more than the first.⁴

Hunter's pamphlet, published in 1776, bears the title, *An Inquiry concerning the Scriptural Order and Method of Dispensing the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*.⁵ It runs to 216 pages, and in it he shows himself a keen controversialist, well acquainted with the literature on the subject. Quite a

¹ *Review of the Proceedings of the General Associate Synod* (1808).

² *Worship and Offices*. 115.

³ He was the son of John Hunter, Secession minister at Morebattle, who was the first licentiate of that Church, and the first to be lost to it by death.

⁴ Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*. i. 661-2.

⁵ After his name on the title page Hunter placed the letters E. C. M., evidently for "Evangelii Christi Minister."

number of quotations are given in the original Latin, but "for the sake of the *English* reader a translation is subjoined." The pamphlet deals, not only with the question at issue, but also with a number of other matters relating to the Communion. In some places Hunter appears to be answering objections which appear to have been made in some other writing or writings, but unfortunately there are no titles given to indicate who were the authors thereof.¹ Hunter took the view that the "taking of the bread is not a meaningless or unnecessary action." The Sacrament, he held, did not lie in the consecrating the elements by prayer, but in the Divine institution, and in consequence no part of that institution could be omitted. He will not affirm that it is "essentially necessary for the minister, particularly and personally, to take bread before prayer, yet doubtless it must be essentially necessary, as a thing implied or understood, that bread be taken and presented by somebody. . . . But though it should be admitted along with some, that other ministers taking bread before the prayer is not essentially necessary to the being of the Sacrament, yet it appears necessary unto the more perfect order and beauty of dispensing of that Sacrament as being a keeping nearer unto Christ's example."

Hunter shows himself anxious that all things in connection with the rendering of worship should be done as well as possible. "As far as is attainable a careful worshipping of God with the best even in outward things is to be studied"—a sentiment which, had it been followed in Scotland, would have led to great improvement in the services of the sanctuary. He is not willing to debate simply for the sake of debating. He thinks there is no evidence to show whether Christ took all the bread in His hand, or only a part of it; and so it was only necessary for the minister to take "such a decent and suitable quantity as serves the purpose of a ministerial following of Christ's example." The bread used at the Passover was undoubtedly unleavened; but as the "Jewish Passover is not binding upon the New Testament Church," ministers may now use either leavened or unleavened "indiscriminately."² It appeared more proper to him that "leavened bread be used to shun a superstitious symbolising either

¹ It is, however, quite possible that he was answering objections which had been made verbally against the practice.

² Unleavened bread was undoubtedly being used at the Communion in Scotland at this period.

with the Jews or the Papists." We do not know, he explains again, that Christ meant that the bread used was always to be wheat bread, because through persecution or otherwise some part of the Church might be "deprived of access to that grain." Evidently Hunter knew of some cases where barley bread had been used for the Communion. Another point which he mentions is that of the minister holding a piece of the bread in his hand during the prayer of consecration. This, as we have noticed, was a common custom at that period. He points out that we have no evidence "whether Christ held it or not during the time of His blessing it"; and while his own opinion was that this should not be done, he declined to enter into any controversy regarding it¹: "for such disputing can only serve to involve in darkness these institutions, and to open a way for superstitious inventions in the worship of God."

But while he was quite prepared to allow latitude on such matters, he was determined that there should be no tampering with the action of "taking" the elements before the prayer of consecration.² He had no difficulty in pointing out that the Evangelists and St Paul represent our Lord as "taking bread," and he maintained that on no account should this be omitted. In addition, he showed that many meanings might be attached to this significant action. It may indicate "Christ's most cheerful and hearty entering upon, and going through with, these awful sufferings, which belong to the business of our redemption." Again it "may signify Christ's displaying of His Kingly authority and royal bounty. It might also be held to "represent the sovereign and blessed choosing of Christ by the Father"; or it may signify Christ's "taking of our nature into personal unity to Divinity in Himself."

Three years later Hunter issued another work entitled: *A Discourse concerning the Sonship of Christ*; to which he subjoined *A Short View of Administering the Sacrament of the Supper according to our Standards*. This latter is a much smaller work than his first, but it contains a goodly amount of information about the point at issue. He tells us that the omission of the "taking" of the elements was unheard of until about "35 or 36 years ago in a particular congregation in Edinburgh." Doubtless Adam Gib's is meant. But this variation was no matter of debate "until

¹ In a later pamphlet he took a stronger attitude on this point.

² The phrase, "prayer of consecration" or "consecrating prayer," is in regular use in the controversial pamphlets of the time.

at last one thought fit publicly at a sacramental occasion to condemn the common practice," and ever since it had been kept a living controversy, "in roundly charging those that did take the elements before prayer as being popish *elevators*, as pretending to sanctify the elements with their holy hands, and the like." The one who thought fit to condemn his brethren publicly is described in a footnote as "Mr O——v——r in C——g——n, who appears to delight much in the business of an incendiary." This person is to be identified as Alexander Oliver of Craigmailen who was ordained in 1763 and died in 1812.¹ Professor Bruce² tells us that it was at a Monday thanksgiving service (after the Communion) at Whitburn that Oliver made this attack on the Lifters.

In the *Short View* Hunter holds that there is sacramentally but one "taking," just as there is but one bread, though there may be many loaves; and that where the Church Standards mention the "taking" after the Prayer of Consecration "they ought not to be understood as excluding and condemning" the common practice. He takes the ground that our Standards are founded on Scripture, and that as the "taking" is quite indisputable "according to the Scriptural record of our Lord's practice on that occasion, our Standards ought to be viewed as admitting the same." The only thing which Hunter thought the Standards "appear fairly to exclude is the holding of the elements in time of prayer, as being but a piece of superstition; since the same is no part of the divine record and therefore no part of our Lord's example to be followed." Like his opponents, he was quite ready to make Scripture suit his own argument, for it could easily have been pointed out that the Scripture records say nothing about our Lord setting down the bread after He had taken it.

Adam Gib³ soon entered the fray, and in 1778 issued a pamphlet entitled: *Vindiciae Dominicae. A Defence of the Reformation Standards of the Church of Scotland concerning the Administration of the Lord's Supper, and the one Sonship of Jesus Christ.*⁴ Gib's position is set forth thus:

¹ He died on New Year's Day, 1812.

² *Review of the Proceedings of the General Associate Synod.*

³ He was known as "Pope Gib" from the prominent part he took in the controversies of his time, and also, one may suspect, from the views which he seems to have held of his own infallibility.

⁴ Hunter, dealing with this pamphlet, says: "The very splendid and pompous title, viz., *Vindiciae Dominicae*, i.e., *The Lord's Defence*, should have had the printed stamp of St Peter's keys appended; for it is pitiful to scramble about the papal chair without jumping into it all at once."

"As our Standards plainly acknowledge only bread and wine for sacramental elements, they as plainly acknowledge only giving and receiving¹ for sacramental actions, that is, actions symbolical or mystically significant." So to him "No religious action about these elements can properly intervene,² or come betwixt declaring the words of institution and prayer, or in the time of either." The elements further, according to the writer, "continue to be of a common use till after both the word of institution and prayer; so that it is not till after both, not one, but both, that any holy or religious use of them can take place." Gib was steadfast in his opposition to any "taking" of the elements at all, and his words give one the impression that he would have prohibited the Lifters from doing as they did if that had been possible. "There is no allowance," he observes, "for a first taking up of the bread and cup before prayer in order to a setting of them down again upon the table, till after prayer, and then taking them up a second time, so as to break the bread. But this last is the only allowed taking in the whole administration; the minister is to have no other taking of the elements for any other disposal of them; no taking but that which is for an immediate breaking and giving."

Gib claimed to have the Standards of the Church behind him in the position he took up; and he had no difficulty in showing that neither in the *Confession of Faith*, nor in the *Directory for Public Worship*, was the first "lifting" mentioned. These Standards, he maintained, "were not hasty, loose or raw productions, but were deliberately, accurately, and maturely digested under a manifest guidance of the Holy Ghost." He points out again that the compilers of the Standards "knew well enough that our Lord took bread before prayer; yet they had good reason . . . not only for (not)³ allowing, but for excluding a pretended imitation of our Lord's example in that matter." Gib was determined that the example of our Lord should not be the deciding factor in the controversy. "There is nothing scriptural," he says, "which can be opposed to this case, but the mere form and sound of expressions; the Lord Jesus took bread and when He had given thanks He brake it. But where will men land in other cases? If they

¹ This would rule out the "breaking" as a sacramental action.

² Evidently some ministers performed the first "lifting" while reading the words of institution.

³ There is little doubt that "not" should be added here.

should think it enough to run away injudiciously with the letter of detached Scriptures, they may run into all the foolery of some sectaries about having all things common, saluting one another with an holy kiss, washing the feet of the disciples yea, if one should take it into his head, he might as easily write a pamphlet about the necessity and importance of using unleavened bread only at the sacramental supper, as our Lord certainly did ; and in as plausible a manner as about the necessity and importance of taking the bread before prayer."

In 1780 Gib published anonymously *An Exposition on some late Reveries concerning the Sonship of Christ which are fundamentally subversive of the Christian Religion*. In this he refers to Hunter's reply to his former pamphlet *Vindiciae Dominicae*, but adds little to the materials of the " Lifter " controversy. His view is that Hunter's work is not worthy of particular notice, " being a most confused mass of unfair representations, sophistical impositions, and absurd confusions."

Perhaps the best answer on the part of the Anti-Lifters was that written by James Ramsay,¹ minister of the " Mother Anti-Burgher Church " of Glasgow.² He calls his work *Irenicum. An Inquiry into the Importance of the Present Debate amongst Seceders relative to the manner of administering the Lord's Supper, with a view to the Restoration of Order and Peace*. This work is worthy of its name *Irenicum*, for it breathes a spirit very different from that which is found in most of the polemical literature of the time.³ He tells us that he had been in the habit of practising the " lifting " ever since he had been " put in trust with the mysteries of God, having never deviated in a single instance from the common mode." He had, however, come to the conclusion that the matter was not one for dispute, but for kindly forbearance. He thinks that far too much has been made of the symbolism which was supposed to attach to the

¹ Ramsay came from Whitehaven to Glasgow. In 1778 he published a pamphlet in opposition to the Relief practice of free Communion. He afterwards developed independent views and was deposed by the Anti-Burgher Synod in 1801. For a few years thereafter he was pastor of an Independent congregation in Glasgow. He died in 1824.

² Now Cathedral Square Church. The title, " Mother Anti-Burgher Church," was bestowed in a History of the Congregation written by its late minister, Rev. James Primrose, D.D.

³ Ramsay in later days wrote much more sharply with regard to the Lifters. Probably he had suffered at their hands, or rather tongues. He says of them that they " would listen to no instruction, hear no reasoning, bear no contradiction. It seemed as if lambs had been transformed into wolves, and the tamed lion had become wild ; in short, as if all nature had run out of course." Small, *History*, ii. 530.

action, and pertinently asks whether the setting down of the bread on the table before the Prayer (as many ministers seem to have done, and as Hunter appears to have almost insisted on being done) could be construed to mean that "the Father very soon changed His counsels," seeing that the "lifting" was held to symbolise the Father's setting apart the Son to the office of Mediator. I have not observed that any of the Lifters replied to this suggestion. "Lifting" to Ramsay was a harmless custom, provided "no new and unscriptural doctrines about the Sacrament be founded upon it." He thought that it was necessary that the bread and wine should "be presented before reading the words of institution, at least before prayer . . . that the divine institution and appointment may be applied to the elements for sacramental purposes"; but he declined to hold that a ceremonial "taking" of the bread and cup was in any way necessary.

Ramsay's work is specially interesting from the light it throws on many of the Secession practices in worship. Thus we learn that it was the custom to begin public worship not with prayer, as the *Directory*¹ enjoins, but with the singing of a Psalm. At the Communion the bread was uncovered, and the wine poured into the cup after these had been brought to the Communion Table. While the French Reformed Church read the "warrant" after the prayer "setting apart the elements," it was the Scottish practice to read it before, as is still the custom. With regard to the point in dispute between the parties, Ramsay alleges that this difference in practice must have existed if not from the beginning of the Secession, at least from an early period in its history. He mentions that a minister who had served the Church for about forty years in the ministry had never once practised the "lifting," and that he had omitted it "in the presence of all the original members of the Associate Presbytery, except one, without the smallest altercation or alienation." He had also been assured by the "best authority" in the National Church, that while "some ministers in that communion take both the elements before prayer, many take the bread only, and some take neither the bread nor the cup, but upon reading the words of institution proceed immediately to the prayer and thanksgiving." The same difference of practice was to be observed among the Burghers; but, adds

¹ "The congregation being assembled, the minister after solemn calling on them to the worshipping of the great name of God, is to begin with prayer."

Ramsay, "the angry disputation and noise is (*sic*) all our own."

Ramsay's work was answered by another entitled *An Apology and Vindication*, which was issued by "a poor, illiterate, ignorant, and despicable handful of the Associate Congregation of Kilmaurs, Paisley, Kilwinning, and Beith."¹ Despite the way in which the authors describe themselves, there is not much sign of ignorance in their little work—containing, as it does, extracts from the writings of Justin Martyr, Amularius, Ursinus,² Calderwood, and others.³ The writers took up the position that the Church in Scotland was still bound by the instructions given in the *Book of Common Order*, and that to depart from these was a breach of the law.

Their pamphlet was replied to by John Thomson,⁴ minister of the Secession (Burgher) congregation in Kirkintilloch. He begins by informing the writers that while he observes their "spontaneous confession of ignorance and want of literature," they appear to make up for their want of knowledge by dogmatical pride. How often could such words have been repeated in Scottish ecclesiastical disputes! From Thomson's rejoinder it would appear that some of the opponents of the Lifters were alleged to have said that the first taking of the elements, not being a "piece of religious worship," was therefore a "profanation of the Lord's Day." To such an extent was religious bigotry prepared to go. Thomson tells us that the disputants spent "a great deal too much of their time on Sabbaths, and about sacramental occasions, in unedifying discourse about this affair, unchristianly venting their ill-nature and heart-grudgings against ministers and fellow-Christians who differed in opinion from you." "This was," he continues, "by no means a frame of spirit suitable to ascend the hill of God in the holy ordinance of the supper." In his pamphlet he has preserved a portion of what may be called the traditional liturgy of the Seceders. He mentions that in the Consecration Prayer these words were used: "We in the name,

¹ Kilwinning Seceders at one time formed part of Smyton's congregation at Kilmaurs. Neither there nor at Paisley was there ever a separate body of Lifters "congregated."

² Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583) was one of the authors of *The Heidelberg Catechism*.

³ Among the works quoted from are *The Heidelberg Catechism*, *Book of Geneva*, *First Book of Discipline*, *Jus Divinum Ministerii Evangelici*.

⁴ Thomson resigned his charge in 1790. When the Old and New Light controversy arose in the Burgher Synod he was one of the most active on the Old Light side.

&c., separate and set apart these elements of bread and wine from a common to a holy use."¹

That the dispeace caused by the controversy was not confined to the three or four congregations which broke off from the Anti-Burghers is shown by another pamphlet issued in 1782. This is stated on its title page to be published by a Committee appointed from the congregations of Denny, Cumbernauld, Craigmiling, Borrowstounness, Kernyhill (Cairneyhill), and Stirling. The Committee showed themselves sympathetic towards Smyton and Hunter, and indicated in no uncertain manner that, in their opinion, the proceedings of the Church Courts with regard to these two left much to be desired. The pamphlet falls into three sections. The first deals chiefly with the doings of the Secession Church Courts, and with the difficulties which were placed in the way of the Committee in getting their petition presented. The second deals with Adam Gib's pamphlet already mentioned, and the compilers follow Hunter in his methods and arguments in treating it. The third section is also taken up with Gib's work. Hunter, as has been said, issued a pamphlet dealing with the Sonship of Christ, and it is Gib's strictures on this which are dealt with in the third section of the Committee's pamphlet.

In the year that Hunter was deposed (1781), David Smyton² ("Father Smyton the Whig minister of Kilmaurs," as Burns³ called him) brought before the Anti-Burgher Presbytery of Glasgow the matter of "lifting" the elements. Smyton, whose Kirk Session joined him in the petition, was at this time a man of about 74 years of age. He had been one of the first group of six students of the Secession Church. (Incidentally, Adam Gib, his great antagonist, was another). At the Breach in 1747 he had sided at first with the Burghers, but afterwards threw in his lot with their rivals. His petition to the Presbytery was passed on by that court to the Synod, which, at its meeting in the

¹ "&c." here probably means "of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

² There is an interesting reference to Smyton in the Diary of James Caldwell, who was the first Moravian missionary to visit Scotland. He met Smyton (whom he terms Symeth) near Mauchline, and he has preserved the interesting fact that among the matters on which Smyton desired information "were the order of administering baptism and the Lord's Supper." Caldwell's answers did not please the Seceder, and "so he went away in a rage." *Records, Scottish Church History Society*. Vol. v. Part i. 57.

³ It has been suggested that Janet Smyton, wife of Alexander Pattison, who helped Burns in connection with the publication of the first Edinburgh edition of his poems, and with whom the poet stayed on the occasion of his two visits to Paisley, was the daughter of the Kilmaurs minister. She died in 1784. Pattison, we learn from a letter of Burns to Clarinda, was bred a "zealous Anti-Burgher."

spring of 1782, found that the question at issue was one with regard to which different opinions might be held ; and that mutual forbearance ought to be exercised on the matter.¹

The decision of the Synod ought to have settled the question, but the Seceders were not the men to exercise forbearance, when they considered that principles were at stake. Smyton and his Session came back to the Presbytery in May, 1782, and asked that an answer should be given to their petition. Naturally, the Presbytery expressed itself as satisfied with the finding of the Synod, whereupon Smyton protested in his own name and in the name of all who should adhere to him against the procedure adopted, declaring that to drop the lifting "laid aside the command, injunction, and example of our Lord in the way of appointing and administering the solemn ordinance of the Supper," and brought in "the Confession of Faith² as opposite to the plain Scripture rule above mentioned." He further intimated an appeal to the Synod ; and during the next few weeks quite a number of petitions were laid before the Presbytery, all of which, with Smyton's protest, were forwarded to the superior court. In the month of September the Synod met, but before this business could be entered upon, a protest was laid upon the table by Adam Gib in the following terms :—"Whereas several members of the Synod, of whom I am one, when dispensing the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in our congregations, do not practice the taking, or the lifting up, of a part of the bread or wine, with a laying or setting of the same down again, before consecration or before setting them apart by prayer from a common to a holy use ;³ only taking up these elements, when so consecrated, for breaking and distributing the same : in which method of procedure we reckon ourselves to be obligated by Scripture and reason and our subordinate standards : and whereas we have never attempted, as we never had any freedom, to disturb the peace of the church by stating and prosecuting any quarrel with our brethren of a different practice, leaving them to their own freedom as to the first taking or lifting up, while not grafting any doctrines upon that practice,⁴ unto a making any addition to the mystical signification which our Lord hath put upon

¹ McKerrow, *History of the Secession*, i. 422-9.

² The Confession of Faith says nothing about the ministers "taking" the elements.

³ This phrase is used in the Confession. Chap. xxix.

⁴ A reference to the views above mentioned.

the things and actions of the Sacramental Supper. . . . I do therefore hereby protest for myself and for all others upon whom this covert attack is made, that the said brother (Smyton) and his partisans cannot fairly and honestly bring this affair before the Synod, except in the way of a formal and particular complaint upon us."

The Synod pronounced no judgment on this protest, but, after considering the general question, dismissed Smyton's appeal. In dealing with the various petitions which had come up from congregations, the court advised again that brethren exercise forbearance one with another in such matters. When this decision was intimated to the parties, Smyton wanted to protest again, but on a promise being given him that he would have a chance to exonerate himself, he did not do so. At a subsequent meeting he asked the Synod to reverse its decision, and as the members refused to do so he renounced the authority of the court, declaring that he could no longer associate with persons who were prepared to act as they were doing. The Synod summoned him to appear at its bar, and as he declined to do so he was suspended from the office of the ministry, a sentence which in the regular fashion of the time he utterly disregarded. The bulk of his congregation sided with him, declaring that the question at issue was no trifle, but "whether the example of the Great Head of the Church is to be the rule of administration or not."^{1, 2}

The matter was not settled in the Synod by Smyton's withdrawal. It still continued to agitate several congregations, and in 1784, an attempt was again made by some members in Glasgow to get the former decision reviewed. The petition was dismissed, but the court appointed a Committee to prepare an explanatory statement regarding the attitude which it had taken up. This statement was duly prepared, and ordered to be inserted in the minutes of the Synod.

It is of more than usual interest, as it is probably the only one ever issued by a Church Court in Scotland on the

¹ Small, *History*, i. 278.

² There is an interesting tradition to the effect that on the first occasion of the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Kilmaurs after the withdrawal of Smyton and his congregation from the fellowship of the Secession Synod, the old minister actually forgot to "lift" the elements, thus omitting the very act which was to form as it were the "testimony" of the new denomination. There is every reason to believe that the tradition is well founded. My informant, Professor Watt, of New College, Edinburgh, received the information from an old man who was born about the beginning of last century, and who had known many of those who followed Smyton. It is an interesting fact that the Kirk Session records of the Secession Church at Kilmaurs contain very little reference to the controversy.

ceremonial to be employed at the Celebration of the Lord's Supper.

"First. There were various circumstances in our Lord's institution and administration of the Sacramental Supper, some of which always, and others of them for many hundreds of years by-past, have been generally considered as occasional circumstances, not belonging to the standing order in the dispensing of that ordinance: as it was then dispensed at night, and in an upper room, and after supper, and to all at one table, and to them in a leaning posture, and only to male communicants, though our Lord had then some very distinguished female disciples; and as Jesus blessed or gave thanks when He took the bread, He likewise again blessed or gave thanks when He took the cup.

"Second. The present difference of practice in the taking of the sacramental elements turns wholly on this point—that many of the ministers consider the aforesaid first taking as belonging to the standing order of the Sacramental Supper in the proper, complete, decent, and solemn manner of its administration, conformable to our Lord's example; while several others of them consider that first taking as an occasional circumstance of the first administration, not belonging to the said standing order, or not recorded for imitation more than the other occasional circumstances which are above-mentioned, nor warranted as such in our standards.

"Third. This difference of practice nowise imports, or means any difference about the matter or substance of that holy ordinance; while no material or substantial part thereof is or can be justly considered as lying in one manner of practice or the other; as it is agreed on both sides that the mystical or spiritual and symbolical significations of things and actions in that sacrament are not to be extended further than our Lord extended the same by the words of institution, and that they are not extended further on the one hand nor abridged on the other by the said difference of practice.

"Fourth. This difference of practice, as presently circumstantiated, is not known to have ever undergone any public discussion and decision in any Christian Church, so as to give a place to the one manner or practice preferably to the other under the terms of Church order and communion. The said difference is therefore most unquestionably of doubtful dispute, about which according to the plain rule of Scripture there ought to be a forbearing of one another in love—every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind, without presuming to judge and condemn others in that difference.

"The Synod's resolution of mutual forbearance in this matter has been most grievously and groundlessly caluminated, as if it meant a laying aside the command, injunction, and example of our Lord in the way of appointing and administering the solemn ordinance of the Supper, &c. . . . Wherefore it is evident that a persisting in the heavy reproaches which have been cast upon the Synod in this affair can only proceed from ignorance or misapprehension, and the working of a schismatical spirit, unto an unchristian judging or condemning of others."

This explanation appears to have settled the matter so far as the mass of the members were concerned, and the controversy, except in isolated places, came to an end.

David Smyton,¹ who took a leading part in the controversy, was ordained at Kilmaurs in 1741; and four years later he and his elders offered their services to the Government in connection with the rebellion. But they did so with the condition that they were not to be considered as countenancing anything that was wrong in the "administration or practice or any part thereof" of the country. It may be noted that part of the congregation consisted of a Praying Society which dated from covenanting times,² and which met at a place called Wallacetown in Glenmuir Water, near Muirkirk. It would be interesting to know whether Smyton's stand for the old paths could be connected with what he had learned of covenanting practice. After he was suspended from the ministry, an attempt was made to eject him and his supporters from the church in Kilmaurs; but the Lord Ordinary before whom proceedings were brought decided in their favour. Smyton continued in his charge; and, though a number of the members withdrew, their places were filled by sympathisers from surrounding parishes.³ Smyton did not, however, remain solitary. Josiah Hunter joined him and, though Hunter had by this time been deposed, this made no difference to Smyton and his followers. A third minister, John Proudfoot of Leith, threw in his lot with them, and a Presbytery known as the "Lifter Presbytery" was formed. Proudfoot had also had a stormy career ecclesiastically. He had been suspended by the Anti-Burgher Synod for irregularities in the Spring of 1785. At the autumn meeting of the court he informed the members that he had disregarded their sentence; and, having read a paper of protest, he declined their authority, whereupon they deposed him. He only lived two years after that, dying in 1787 from the effects of an accident.⁴

In addition to the three congregations (Kilmaurs, Falkirk, and Leith) which acknowledged the authority of the Lifter Presbytery, another congregation was set up at Dalry, Ayrshire, John Gemmell (who had been brought up in Kilmaurs) being its first and only minister. He would be ordained by the Lifter Presbytery, but as its minutes are not known to be in existence no particulars can be given.

¹ Mackelvie. *Annals and Statistics*. p. 401.

² Ibid. 404. Mackelvie says that the Praying Society had existed from the times of the Solemn League and Covenant, *i.e.*, from 1643, but this is most unlikely.

³ Alexander Millar, Parish Minister of Kilmaurs, writing in the *Old Statistical Account* (circa 1790), states that the number of Lifters in the parish (old and young) was 151, Non-Lifters 114.

⁴ Small. *History*, i., 496-8.

His stipend was to be £40, but apparently this amount was seldom paid. During his ministry in Dalry, Gemmell attended classes in Glasgow University, where he graduated as Doctor of Medicine. Later he established a printing press in Beith, where he published a number of books, mostly of a controversial nature. In 1819 an attempt was made to return to the Constitutional Presbytery, but it came to nothing, owing apparently to the refusal of that body to make the question of "Lifting" a term of Communion. In 1822 Gemmell left Dalry and settled in Lanark, Ontario, Canada, where he became minister of a congregation. He died in 1844. After his departure the congregation at Dalry seems to have faded away. When Dr Small was compiling his *History* he interviewed an old lady who remembered that before its close the members had frequent meetings "and a great deal of quarrelling."¹

At Kilmaurs, William Robertson was ordained as colleague to Smyton in 1787. The latter died in 1789, and Robertson remained for about ten months after the senior minister's death. He left the place, and what became of him afterwards is unknown. As has been said, a section of the congregation of Kilmaurs remained in communion with the Synod when Smyton was suspended. This section continued to flourish and in 1789 George Paxton was ordained as minister there. The Lifter congregation disappeared soon afterwards. Some joined Gemmell's congregation at Dalry, but the majority returned to their former allegiance.

Another congregation was set up at Perth, where David Wilson, from Muckart, was ordained in 1789. Four years later he was received by the Relief Synod, and inducted in 1794 to the charge of the Relief congregation in Pittenweem. The building in which the Lifters worshipped in Perth fell into private hands and, after an attempt had been made to have it used as a Chapel of Ease, it came into the possession of a number of seceders who had left the Relief Congregation in Perth, owing to some quarrel over the appointment of a minister. The dissentients petitioned the Relief Synod to be "congregated," and this was duly done. The probability is that the Lifter cause was never strong in Perth, and that after the loss of their minister, the members were scattered among the other churches in the town. The name given to the Lifter building was

¹ Small. *History*, ii. 303.

Paul's Chapel ; after it had been in the hands of the Relief Congregation¹ for about nine years it was again sold.

After the death of Proudfoot at Leith, Hunter and Robertson endeavoured to supply the congregation there with ordinances, but it was soon seen that such help could not be long continued. In September, 1787, the Burgher Presbytery of Edinburgh received a petition from a number of persons, who stated that they "were formerly under the inspection of the deceased Rev. John Proudfoot," asking that they might be admitted to the Burgher fellowship. They agreed to raise no questions as to the taking of the Burgess oath and the lifting of the Communion elements. They were therefore duly accepted as a congregation,² and Thomas Aitchison was ordained as their minister in December, 1788.

Another congregation of the Lifters was founded in Denny where, as we have seen, the party was represented. A meeting-house was built for them in or about the year 1787. There is some evidence that a minister was appointed, but his name is unknown. The congregation does not seem to have lasted after the year 1793. In that year the Burghers started a cause in Denny, and this congregation obtained the building which had belonged to the Lifters. Probably the remnants of the original body would be absorbed in the new cause. The first minister, James Harrower, was ordained in 1799.³

At Stranraer the Anti-Burgher minister, William Drysdale (1746-1810), had sided with Smyton in his controversy with the Synod but evidently he declined to secede from the Anti-Burghers with him.⁴ A number of his congregation, however, did so, and for some time there appears to have been a Lifter congregation in Stranraer. Writing about 1790, John Coulter, parish minister there, mentions that there were some "Smeatonians" in the parish, but that they were not numerous. In 1793 application was made to the Burgher Presbytery of Glasgow by twenty-three persons resident in Stranraer, asking that sermons might be supplied to them. These were apparently

¹ This congregation was dissolved in 1851.

² This congregation was for a time connected with an even smaller Presbytery than that of the Lifters. Oliver & Boyd's Almanac for 1848 gives among the Scottish Churches one bearing the name of the "Calvinistic Secession Presbytery." This consisted of three congregations of which Kirkgate was one. A little later in the same year the congregation was admitted to the United Presbyterian Church. It is now Kirkgate Church. Small, *History*, i. 499-500.

³ Small, *History*, i. 692-3.

⁴ Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics*, 285.

what was left of the original Lifter congregation in the place. Supply was duly sent, and in time a congregation of Burghers was established, the first minister, William Irvine, being ordained there in 1799. Evidently the meeting-house was erected just before his settlement. This congregation was afterwards (1868) united with what had been the Relief Congregation.¹ It is now St Ninian's Church.

One of the places where the controversy raged most furiously was at Beith in Ayrshire. This parish is no great distance from those of Dalry and Kilmaurs, and the Lifters seem to have obtained a strong footing there, although no congregation of the denomination was founded in that place. At a meeting of the Kirk Session of the Anti-Burgher Church in Beith,² held on 11th September, 1782, it was intimated that four elders and one deacon had left the congregation. Their leader was one Bryce Kerr,³ who took up a strong position on the Lifter question, and who some time previously had succeeded in having the Communion postponed, because his views were not accepted regarding this matter. The minister at this period was Andrew Mitchell (1740-1812), whose son, Dr John Mitchell, was afterwards minister of Wellington Church, Glasgow. Dr Mitchell used to relate how as a boy he had seen Bryce Kerr haranguing the members of the congregation with such vehemence that the foam flew from his lips, charging the people to stand to the position they had taken up, "else they would rot in their graves." As has been said, no congregation of the Lifters was formed in Beith; but the church there was so weakened by secessions that the Synod had to make a grant to it, in order that the minister should get his stipend paid.

After the break up of the Kilmaurs, Perth, and Denny congregations only two Lifter congregations remained—those of Falkirk and Dalry; but even these two could not live in harmony. Hunter, as has been said, held somewhat peculiar views on the relationship of the Son to the Father, and Gemmell refuted his opinions with some warmth in a

¹ Small, *History*, ii. 7-9.

² Small, *History*, ii. 529.

³ Kerr was an elder as was also his uncle, John Kerr. The Session minute refers to Bryce Kerr as "an incendiary in this affair." Small (*History*, ii. 304) calls him the "champion of the Ayrshire Lifters." Though Kerr himself was such a pillar among the Lifters in Dalry, his family appear to have joined the Relief Church in Beith, probably after his death. A relative, probably a grandson, Bryce Kerr, M.A., was ordained minister of the Relief Church, Largo, Fife, on 29th March, 1843. He died at Beith on 25th October in the same year.

pamphlet which he published in 1791.¹ In consequence they declined to have any further dealings with each other. Hunter died in 1813, and before his death applied to the Constitutional Presbytery,² asking to be taken with his congregation into their communion. Before this could be done Hunter died, but the members were received; only after they had agreed not to insist on "lifting" being made a term of communion. They were allowed to express the wish that uniformity would be kept in this matter. The congregation lingered until about 1827, when it seems to have been dissolved. This was the last of the Lifters as an organised body. Dr Spratt tells a story of how a friend of his paid a visit to one of the last representatives of the sect. Having asked him why he did not go to any place of worship and whether he thought there was now no visible church upon the earth, the old man replied, "There's ae auld man here, Sir." Amid the faithless faithful only he.³

That the action contended for by Smyton and his friends was continued is evident, though strangely enough there is no reference to it in any of the manuals issued for guidance of ministers⁴ during the greater part of the 19th century. Indeed the first mention of it that the writer has noticed is in the third edition of *Euchologion* (1874), where the following rubric is inserted in the pre-Communion address, "Here the Minister may take the paten and cup into his hand."

Spratt⁵ relates that on one occasion, evidently in the seventies, he was present at a communion in what he calls a "very old-fashioned church where several old-fashioned and decidedly anti-innovating ministers assisted a young man who had temporary charge of the Parish. When he proceeded to *take* the elements, before the consecration prayer, having learned the usage from his father, and having never known of any other way, quite a panic seized the venerable assistants, and one of them stopped him, supposing that he had forgotten the prayer and was about

¹ Small, *History*, i. 663.

² This was the Presbytery which was formed in 1806 by four ministers who objected to the action of the Anti-Burgher Synod in departing from its original testimony. The party was better known by the designation "Auld Licht Anti-Burghers."

³ *Worship and Offices*, 115.

⁴ The writer has examined the following:—*The Scotch Minister's Assistant* (1802 and 1822); Liston, *The Service of the House of God* (1843 and 1858); Brunton, *Forms for Public Worship* (1848); Bonar, *Presbyterian Liturgies* (1858); Lee, *Order of Public Worship* (1864); Arnott, *Prayers for Public Worship* (1877). It should be said, however, that there are few directions of any kind in these books.

⁵ *Worship and Offices*, 116-7.

to distribute without it." In Dr Mackelvie's *Annals and Statistics* there is an interesting footnote added by the editors (Messrs Blair and Young) regarding the Lifter controversy, to the effect that "Mr Smyton had no ritualistic idea in his mind: the point on which he stood was merely rubrical."¹ One is inclined to ask whether anything could be more clearly a bit of ritualism than the action which Smyton wanted to be enjoined on all. The editorial footnote, it should be said, was called forth by a statement made by Dean Stanley in his *Lectures on the Church of Scotland*. The Dean stated (also in a footnote) that the point raised by the Lifters was "exactly analogous to that which was recently raised by the English ritualists and their opponents respectively; the elevation of the consecrated Elements." As the Editors point out, the Dean was mistaken in his view regarding the point at issue. The elevation of the consecrated Elements (which is always done in those Presbyterian churches where the old paths are adhered to), comes at a later point of the service. The Dean altered the note in the second edition of his book.

It may be said in conclusion that, though Smyton and his friends were defeated in their attempt to make "lifting" obligatory, the action for which they contended has been enjoined by almost all the service books issued by, or in connection with, Presbyterian Churches in these later days.

WILLIAM MCMILLAN.

¹ 403.