

J W McGarvey On The Individual Cups

The following quotation is from J W McGarvey, late president of the College of the Bible, Lexington, Kentucky, and acknowledged to be one of the great scholars of his day:

“About two years ago, I think, I published an article under the head of ‘Microbes’, in which I ridiculed, in the manner I thought it deserved, the pretense by which the use of individual cups in the Lord’s Supper is defended. The ‘sanitary feature’, as Brother Keeler styles it, is proven to be a pretense by the fact that though the use of cups in common has been universally practiced for nearly two thousand years, not a single instance has been produced of persons contracting contagious diseases from it. And if there had been a few instances, or a few thousand among the multiplied millions, what is that compared with the strict observance of an ordinance appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ?

Shall we dare to change or modify such an ordinance for fear that one of us may prove to be the one out of millions who shall thus suffer? The ‘sanitary feature’, as everybody knows, has been arrayed with great pertinacity against the ordinance of baptism as it was instituted by Christ, and it has been paraded as a justification of those who modify this ordinance. The shallowness of the reasoning in both instances forces the suspicion that want of faith, and not real fear of disease and death, lies at the bottom of it. If there is danger of swallowing microbes by drinking from the same cup with consumptives, what about being baptized in the same pool of water? Shall we have the baptistery emptied, washed and chemically disinfected after every baptism? If not, shall we always resort to a running stream, in which a dead dog may be floating some distance above us? Or shall we abandon baptism altogether, for the sake of keeping our immaculate persons from coming into contact with the invisible bugs which exude from our neighbors?

Some people are too nice for this world. They ought to carry a smelling-bottle all their days and pray the Lord to take them as soon as possible to a healthier country. It is my opinion that when the Lord instituted the Supper he knew as much about microbes as does any modern medical alarmist.”

Ignatius on the one cup

The one cup practice, as instituted by Jesus, dates back in history almost to the days of the Apostles, as Ignatius wrote the latter part of the first century:

“For there is one flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his blood which is shed for us is one. One loaf is broken for all, and one cup is distributed among them all.”

(Anti-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, Page 81)