

more controversies

extract from Proposition XIII § vii

§ vii. It is strange that those who clamor so much for the ceremony of bread and wine, and stick to it so much, nevertheless take the liberty to do away with the manner in which Christ did it. I never heard of anyone one who does it now, that practices it in the same way that he did. Christ did it at supper, while they were eating, but they only do it in the morning, and by itself. What rule do they follow that causes this change?

*Objection:* Someone could say that these things are only details, and not the central purpose, and if one keeps to that purpose, the change in details has little importance.

*Answer:* But what if one said that the whole story is only an event which happened at that particular time when Christ ate the Passover? What if we think about these words, “Do this in remembrance of me” — this is the only thing which could be an argument for making this an ordinance. These words can be interpreted to refer to the manner of doing it, as much as to the central purpose. How can they prove by reason that the words “Do this” only mean *eat bread and drink wine*, but that it doesn’t matter when you eat it, nor how you eat it. You have seen me eat it at supper with you, and I took bread and broke it, and gave it to you, and took the cup and blessed it, and gave it to you. Do you do the same? Since Christ doesn’t specify what he means by “Do this,” it cannot be reasonably interpreted in any way except to mean “Do it all.” If that is correct, all those Christians who practice this ceremony have not obeyed this precept, nor fulfilled this ordinance, despite all their clamor concerning it.

*Objection:* If it is said that the time and manner of Christ's doing this was only by chance, that is to say, it was after the Jewish passover, which was at supper.

*Answer:* In addition to that, it can be answered and easily proved that the whole thing was by chance, since it was the practice of a Jewish ceremony, as is noted earlier. Could it not be argued that the drinking of wine was by chance, since it was a natural product of that country; and so it could be advocated that, in countries where wine does not grow, for example in our nation of Scotland, we may make use of *beer* or *ale* in this ceremony, or *bread made of different grains* from the bread Christ used? And yet, wouldn't our adversaries think that this was an abuse, and not the right way of performing this "sacrament"?

Haven't scruples of this kind caused a lot of contention among the professors of Christianity? What a lot of controversy and strife have happened between the Greek and Latin churches concerning the bread! One of them wants to have unleavened bread, thinking that it was that kind of bread that Christ broke with his disciples because the Jews made use of unleavened bread in the Passover; the other wants leavened bread. The Lutherans use unleavened bread and the Calvinists use leavened. When the Reformation was beginning in Geneva, this controversy was so hot that Calvin and Farellus were forced to flee because of it. Because of these uncertainties, don't the Protestants open a door to the Papists who exclude the people from the cup? Does "do this" positively imply that they should do it in the same way, and at the same time as Christ did it, and imply as well that they should use the cup, and not just the bread? What reason do they have to dispense with one, more than the Papists have to dispense with the other?

Oh! What strange absurdities and inconveniences Christians have brought upon themselves by superstitiously adhering to this ceremony! It is impossible for them to extricate themselves from these difficulties except by laying

the ceremony aside, as they have done with others of similar nature. And besides what is mentioned above, I would like to know how they can prove by the words that “Do this” must be interpreted for the clergy, “take, bless and break this bread and give it to others,” but for the laity it is interpreted as only “take and eat, but do not bless, etc.”

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition XIII § vii (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 394-396 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 304-305.