

The Order of the Ordinances.

Read by Rev. W. N. Hutchins, M. A., Before the Maritime Baptist Institute at Amherst, N. S., Aug. 19.

Unlike moral commands ritualistic commands are not susceptible of habitual or incessant obedience. In the nature of things one cannot give an uninterrupted or incessant obedience to the commands, "Be baptized," "This do in remembrance of me." One may observe the Lord's Supper almost innumerable times, but one cannot be always sitting at its table. Occasional obedience is all that one can give to ritualistic commands. This gives us the necessity of determining the occasions and the order of observance. When, therefore, and in what order shall we observe these ritualistic commands? With the first part of that question we are not concerned at present. We content ourselves with the second, and take as our subject, "The Order of the Ordinances."

I. We note first the historical order. Behind and in and over all history and all historical order the eye of faith discerns the presence of God. In every historical event some thought of God is embodied, some truth of God is expressed. In a manner surprising to one who leaves God out of this world and its movements, the movements of history are timely in their occurrence and natural in their order. Nature's order is the order of reality. "The laws of nature are the habits of God." So historical order is the order of reality. The events of time always slip from the hands of God at the right moment and in their appropriate order. Man sometimes makes a mistake. He does a thing at an untimely moment and out of its proper order. But God is always timely, His deed and the hour fit, and God teaches the order of nature by the order of time which He follows. God had a thought and a reason in creating Adam before He called Eve into being, Judaism came before Christianity, Mount Sinai stands anterior to Mount Calvary, Cæsar antedated Jesus and it were easy to recognize the timeliness of their order. We cannot think of Mount Calvary standing before Mount Sinai, of the Atonement preceding the Incarnation, of Pentecost occurring previous to the Crucifixion or Ascension. In the very nature of things the order of nature must be law and gospel; Incarnation and Atonement, death to sin and resurrection to newness of life. "Reverse the order and we have nonsense; we have deliverance with no previous bondage, pardon with no existing guilt, cleansing with no antecedent pollution." Those two sublime facts of history, that on Sinai and that on Calvary, occurred in the order they did from the necessary priority of law over gospel. Were the events of history not thus linked as cause and effect, as antecedent and consequent history would be an unintelligent jumble, and no revelation of God's thought would be possible in history. God in history means history moving in order.

Turn now to the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and which historically comes first? The Lord's Supper was instituted on the night previous to the Lord's crucifixion. The institution of baptism goes back to John, the forerunner of Jesus. That the baptism of John was essentially Christian baptism few will deny. For its heavenly origin and authority we have the word and example of Jesus and that were our argument for it as Christian. Historically then baptism precedes the Lord's Supper. Why it does so we may not know or may not care to discuss. But historically baptism precedes the Lord's Supper and historical order is the order of nature. God teaches the order of nature by the order of time which He follows, and in the order of time baptism precedes the Lord's Supper. We can understand why the Incarnation should historically precede the Atonement. Why baptism should historically go before the Lord's Supper may or may not be equally clear, but there was a reason for the order, a reason grounded in nature, and the proper order, the order of reality and the order of nature is the order followed by history in placing baptism first and the Lord's Supper second in order of time. As baptism and the Lord's Supper are related in time so are they related in nature. The order of time is the order of nature.

But if the order of history is the order of nature should not the order of history be the order of observance? If the order of nature places baptism before the Lord's Supper should not the order of observance place it there too? To run contrary to nature were folly, to act in harmony with nature were wisdom. So we adopt the order of history which is the order of nature and place baptism first and the Lord's Supper second. We do not dogmatize upon this point. We simply call attention to the light which history throws upon the question. In history baptism precedes the Lord's Supper, and as the order of history is the order of things as they should be we adopt the historical order. Neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper were instituted at the wrong time nor out of the proper order. Believing in a God of history we believe that all things happen at the right moment and appropriate order, and so, though others may choose to depart from or ignore the historical order, we prefer to abide by the order followed in history as the proper order, the order of nature, the order of reality.

II. We call attention secondly to the Required Order. By Required Order we mean the Order Required by

obedience. In the New Testament there are two commandments, obedience to which requires that baptism should go before observance of the Lord's Supper. The two commandments of which we are to speak we have chosen not because they are the only ones, but because in one there are directions which no administrator of the ordinance dare overlook, while the other demands attention of all asking, as did the multitudes at Pentecost, men and brethren what shall we do?

The first command that requires observance of baptism before observance of the Supper is the imperative command of the Great Commission. In His closing words to His apostles Jesus said, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," Matt. 28:19, 20. The word "teach" occurring here twice, represents two different and discriminated words in the original Greek. In the phrase "teach all nations," "teach" is an inadequate rendering of the verb, for the verb enjoins more than instruction or the imparting of knowledge. It enjoins the persuading to the acceptance of the teacher's ideas and doctrines and principles. "Teach all nations" means, to adopt the language of the Revised Version, "make disciples of all nations." So the command reads, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." In this comprehensive command there are three parts. The first part is, "Go and make disciples of all the nations." The second part is, "Baptize those thus disciplined or converted." The third part is, "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." Adopting the principle of obedience—with this command before him—what is the first duty of the servant of Jesus Christ? Without question his first duty is to convert or disciple all men, of whatever nation, into disciples of Jesus. Prior to all other duties Jesus imposed upon His servants the duty of disciplining men everywhere. To place baptizing before disciplining were to deviate from the order of the duties in the command and so to deviate from the command. Make disciples and baptize those thus converted—that is Christ's order and the order is as binding as the different duties which the command enjoins.

But if we observe the order which makes disciplining go before baptizing are we not bound to observe the order which makes baptizing go before teaching to observe all things? Were it logical, were it consistent to insist upon the order which places disciplining prior to baptizing and not insist upon the order which places baptizing prior to teaching to observe all things, when one is the order of the command as much as the other? In the command disciplining goes before baptizing and baptizing goes before teaching to observe all things and if the observance of the order were obligatory in any way it were obligatory in all parts of our Lord's command, and we must insist that baptizing go before the Lord's Supper as we insist that disciplining go before baptizing. Obedience demands that disciplining precede baptizing but obedience also demands that nothing but disciplining precede baptizing. As it were disobedience to preface baptizing with less than a persuasion to discipleship so it were disobedience to preface baptizing with more than a persuasion to discipleship. "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all things." That was the command and the order of Jesus. In that command baptizing is named as the second duty incumbent upon His servants, and if the servant is obedient the order of the ordinances will be established for him, and administering the Lord's Supper will be subsequent to baptizing.

The second command that requires observance of baptism before observance of the Lord's Supper is the answer of Peter to the convicted multitude at Pentecost, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" people were asking. "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye and be baptized." To the anxious inquirer what then is the first duty awaiting performance? Without question his first duty is to repent. Nothing can take the place of and nothing should detain him from prompt, immediate repentance. First in importance, first in order of time, the immediate thing which God demands and the immediate thing to which obedience would lead him is repentance. But having repented what becomes his second duty? "Repent and be baptized," says Peter. Following repentance comes baptism and as repentance, should immediately follow the cry for pardon so baptism should immediately follow repentance. By Peter's word baptism was made to follow repentance and made to follow it in immediate succession.

But if repentance were our first and baptism our second duty then repentance and baptism must go before partaking at the Lord's table. As surely as our first duty is repentance, so surely is our second baptism, and as we would not place the observance of the Lord's Supper previous to repentance neither can we place it prior to baptism. "Repent and be baptized," said Peter, and is not the order of the ordinances settled if that command is obeyed as it reads? What the command requires is

immediate repentance and upon repentance immediate baptism, and when were there time for partaking of the Lord's Supper if our repentance were immediate and repentance were followed, as the word of Peter requires, by our immediate baptism in avowal of repentance. Refusing immediate repentance is disobedience. To repent but to defer baptism to suit our own convenience were also disobedience. Repentance ought to be immediate and baptism immediately subsequent to repentance and how were it possible to observe them with that promptness without postponing our sitting at our Lord's memorial table until a later time. Do as Peter requires of the multitude at Pentecost and the unavoidable consequence is a postponement of an observance of the Lord's Supper until after our repentance and baptism. Therefore the required order, the order demanded by at least two New Testament commands, places baptism as prior in order of observance to the Lord's Supper.

III. In the third place we direct your thought to the Observed Order. By the observed order we mean the order observed in New Testament times. In these days baptism is often deferred. Months and years are allowed to intervene between obedience to the first and observance of the second part of the command, "Repent and be baptized." What was the custom or practice in apostolic days? Turn over the apostolic record and is there anything more uniform or more impressive in connection with baptism than the immediateness with which it followed conversion. At Pentecost the three thousand were baptized the same day of their repentance. "Behold here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" questioned the Ethiopian eunuch as soon as he came to an acceptance of Christ. "And they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." "Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized?" asked Peter, as soon as he saw that Cornelius and his friends were made partakers with himself of the Holy Ghost. "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Of the Philippian jailor, we have this account, "And he took them (Paul and Silas) the same hour of the night and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his immediately." Equal in promptness was the baptism of the people of Samaria, of Saul, of Lydia and her household, of Crispus and his family. Baptism was always presented as the first duty of the believer. In no case is it said, "then they that gladly received the word came together to break bread," or "who can forbid bread and wine, that these should not eat the Lord's Supper, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" or, "believing in God with all his house, he sat down at the table of the Lord he and all his straightway," or "repent and receive the Lord's Supper everyone of you." In all cases baptism, not the Lord's Supper was presented as the first duty of the disciple. As it is not with us, in New Testament times men obeyed the command, "Repent, and be baptized." Baptism followed repentance and followed it in immediate succession.

But if baptism were placed so early in the Christian life in apostolic times, then where must the observance of the Lord's Supper have been placed in apostolic practice? To that question there can be only one answer. The place of baptism in apostolic practice determines the place of the Lord's Supper in apostolic practice. If apostolic practice made baptism stand at the beginning of the Christian life, then apostolic practice placed observance of the Lord's Supper at a period later than baptism. With a uniformity from which they never varied—as seen in the New Testament record—the apostles baptized their converts immediately upon a profession of faith and so with a uniformity from which they never varied, the Apostles placed observance of the Lord's Supper as subsequent to baptism. Faith, baptism and then the Lord's Supper, that was the order observed in apostolic practice.

And if that were apostolic practice, then that should be our practice too. "Since the apostles were inspired, New Testament precedent is the common law of the church." New Testament precedent as well as New Testament precept ought to govern our actions. It is as important to follow the foot-prints of the apostles, as to hearken to the words of their lips. On New Testament precedent then for a third reason, we base our adhesion to the order of the ordinances, in which baptism precedes the Lord's Supper.

IV. In the fourth place I ask you to consider what I have termed the Ecclesiastical Order. The Lord's Supper is a church ordinance. Unlike prayer or praise or Christian beneficence it is not designed for private observance. "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait one for another," was Paul's counselling word to the Corinthian Christians. As often as we read of the baptism of single individuals, as of the Ethiopian eunuch and Paul, or even of the baptism of households, as in the case of Lydia, of the Philippian jailor and of Crispus at Corinth, there is not the slightest intimation that these baptisms of individuals or of households, were followed by the administration of the Lord's Supper. Observance of the Lord's Supper must be in a church capacity, not in an individual capacity. "When ye come together in the church" 1 Cor. 11:18.

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