

V. THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

A. The Ordinances in General

1. Definition of Ordinances

a. Baptist Definition

"By the ordinances, we mean those outward rites which Christ has appointed to be administered in his church as visible signs of the saving truth of the gospel. They are signs, in that they vividly express this truth and confirm it to the believer.

"It will be well to distinguish from one another the three words: symbol, rite, and ordinance. 1. A symbol is the sign, or visible representation, of an invisible truth or idea; as for example, the lion is the symbol of strength and courage, the lamb in the symbol of gentleness, the olive branch the symbol of peace, the scepter of dominion, the wedding ring of marriage, and the flag of country. Symbols may teach great lessons; as Jesus' cursing the fig tree taught the doom of unfruitful Judaism, and Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet taught his own coming down from heaven to purify and save, and the humble service required of his followers. 2. A rite is a symbol which is employed with regularity and sacred intent. Symbols became rites when thus used. Examples of authorized rites in the Christian Church are the laying on of hands in ordination, and the giving of the right hand of fellowship. 3. An ordinance is a symbolic rite which sets forth the central truths of the Christian faith, and which is of universal and perpetual obligation. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are rites which have become ordinances by the specific command of Christ and by their inner relation to the essential truths of his kingdom. No ordinance is a sacrament in the Romanist sense of conferring grace; but, as the *sacramentum* was the oath taken by the Roman soldier to obey his commander even unto death, so Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments, in the sense of vows of allegiance to Christ our Master.

-- Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* Volume III
(Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1909), p. 930.

"The two symbols of primary significance in the Christian faith are baptism and the Lord's supper. It is difficult to set forth a term that will properly categorize these symbols because any word selected can be defined in various ways. To avoid the term "sacrament," we have used "ordinance" to specify baptism and the Lord's Supper. The word "ordinance" in the King James Version is a translation of the Greek word meaning "traditions" (I Cor. 11:2). However, Paul, in the use of the word "traditions" in this verse, had reference to all that Jesus said and taught, and the synonym for "ordinance" in the dictionary is "sacrament." We have avoided "sacrament" because of the magical implications of the word. However, the word, when originally used by the Romans, meant a pledge of allegiance of a Roman soldier to