

poise on the part of the minister than to any other one cause.

No minister has a right to distract the attention from the sacredness of a baptism, nor cheapen its appearance by ridiculous dress. We saw one devout and worthy college professor perform a country baptism. He was attired in a pair of plow shoes, a pair of too-short overalls, with a red handkerchief tied about his neck, and a large straw hat on his head. No one who witnessed that baptism ever forgot it, but the things remembered were not the right things. It were better had he ruined the only good suit of clothes he had, than to have left the impression of Christian baptism that he did. We here suggest that every one who expects to do any baptizing should appreciate its sacredness enough that he would honor it with decent attire. We suggest that a loose-flowing robe, similar to a college gown, is easy and inexpensive to provide, convenient to don, and convenient to use. It conceals the bulging rubber suit where used. If ordinary clothes are used, they should be such as to show proper respect for the occasion. In other words, this is a necessary part of the equipment.

PREPARATION OF THE CANDIDATE

Those about to be baptized should be made, so far as possible, to appreciate the deep and sacred significance of the act. The attitude of the minister and assistants will do much along this line. Loud and light talk while dressing should be quietly prevented. Levity is entirely out of place, but will occur frequently unless the assistants prevent it by leading the conversation in the right lines. A prayer by the minister with the whole group which is to be baptized is advisable. In many places elders always kneel in prayer with the candidates in the robing-rooms before they go to the baptistery.

While the mistake of improper attire will not occur often, it will at times. One time is once too often. Therefore, all candidates for baptism should be placed in charge of some one whose duty it is to instruct them as to their needs along this line, and assist in seeing that each candidate is properly prepared. The oversight of a pin may do irreparable harm. Again, we suggest that every church should be equipped with a sufficient supply of properly made robes, kept in charge by a lady whose special duty it is to look after them and have them prepared at all times.

Mental preparation concerns the state of mind of the candidate. Some will be in a state of bravado, others in a state of painful timidity and fear. It is a part of the minister's task to know how to eliminate these mental conditions. His own perfect calm and self-possession will help. Quiet words of instruction, occupying the candidates' attention, will help. Take plenty of time. Go slow. Let them get accustomed to the temperature of the water. Ask them to dip up a bit of the water and bathe their own faces in it. Instruct them and show them exactly how you want them to hold your wrist, how they are to handle themselves. Ask them to leave the matter entirely to you, as it is very easy. In case of very heavy people, assure them they need have no fear of your ability to raise them up, as they weigh only twenty pounds when under the water, etc.

All this can be done in a half-minute, and the time is well spent. All this should be done after going down in to the water, but yet concealed by the baptistery curtains, which are essential for this very reason. Be sure that

they and you are thoroughly ready before proceeding.

PREPARATION OF THE AUDIENCE

The minister can usually be ready for the baptismal service before the candidates, and the time can be spent well in preparing the audience. Standing in the baptistery, the minister can read or quote the Scriptures on baptism, offer a prayer, and give a few words of instruction.

Among other things, almost every audience needs to be told plainly, but sweetly, that a baptism is not a spectacle, but a sacred service, a burial service, and demands the greatest reverence. They should be instructed that every one must be seated and that during the entire service there must not be one word spoken, even in a whisper. All this helps the audience to appreciate the meaning of the act.

At a baptism in an open stream, all should be induced to get out of their conveyances, assemble in one group, and remove their hats during a preparatory word and prayer. This will soon educate a whole neighborhood to respect for the service.

THE BAPTISMAL FORMULA

While the essence of the formula is always the same, there is not a universally used formula. The following is a good form that has wide usage: "And now, upon your confession of faith in Jesus Christ, and by His authority, I baptize you, my brother, John Brown, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Many do not use the name of the candidate, but it has these advantages: it calls the candidate's attention to his own act, and impresses it as individual. Where a large number are coming into the church, it enables the record-keeper to take the name of each as he is baptized, and thus keep the records perfect. In addition, it helps keep the audience in a happy and undisturbed frame of mind, from the fact that each one thus knows who is being baptized, without any worry or wondering or the tendency to whisper and ask some one. This is especially true where gowns and caps are used upon the candidates. These make them more difficult to recognize from the audience.

THE ACT OF BAPTIZING

If the minister, the candidate, and the audience thoroughly appreciate that the act to be performed is a burial, a sacred burial in semblance of the burial of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if the act is performed with that in mind, it will be rightly performed, and carry its message to the candidate and all present.

The one general error is haste; the one instruction is "go slow." If the minister hurries, it will tend to excite or frighten the candidate. Every move should be deliberate. The candidate is probably under the impression, since he is going to have his face under the water, that he will be without breath overlong. Very often the minister is thinking of the same. Bear in mind that, even though you baptize as slowly as possible and dip the candidate deeply, yet even then the face will be under water only a fraction of the time that any one is capable of holding the breath. Any sudden move or thrust, however, is liable to make him catch his breath and strangle. Water too cold or too hot will do the same.

When the baptismal formula has been pronounced, let the candidate back very slowly,

remembering that it is a burial you are performing. Some ministers go slowly until just as the head is near the water, then make a sudden plunge and withdrawal. This is a serious mistake. Go slowly all the way down and all the way up. Bury the candidate deeply. These suggestions are based on experience in thousands of baptisms.

While there are many ways, there is no perfect manner of holding the candidate. The one point is to cause the candidate to have perfect confidence in the minister, and the minister to have perfect control of the candidate. Therefore, precaution should be taken to accomplish two things: the candidate's hands must be under control to prevent their lashing out to catch at the minister's garments, and the nose must be protected from the rush of water as the face submerges.

To avoid strangling, use two cloths the size of men's handkerchiefs. Place one cloth in the front of your robe where easily secured when needed. Hold the other in the left hand, so as to cover both the back and palm of the hand. With the left forearm pointing upward in front of the candidate, ask him to grasp your wrist with both his hands, locking his fingers together on the back. Instruct the candidate to grip and hold your wrist tightly. The locked fingers will prevent his losing his hold, and his grasp will give him assurance and assist you to raise him.

After pronouncing the baptismal formula, place the right hand on the back of candidate's neck, move your right foot well to the right to preserve balance, and very slowly lower the candidate, remembering that it is a burial you are performing.

Just as the face submerges, press the palm of your hand tightly over the candidate's mouth and grip his nose shut between your middle fingers. The handkerchief conceals this action.

By all means do not speed your movement at this time. The sudden thrust and consequent splash will cause the candidate to gasp and strangle. Bury deeply, and raise the candidate slowly. Immediately use the extra cloth to remove water from candidate's face.

To preserve the beauty and sacredness of the act, see that the candidates still go slowly from the baptistery. Step immediately behind them, facing them until they are handed to the assistants.

If this is practiced, strangling will be avoided, splashing will be avoided, the appearance of throwing the candidate into the water will be avoided, and harmful impressions will be avoided. Above all, a sacred service will have been made sacred, beautiful, and impressive. All present will have been taught a lesson in reverence for sacred things.

A Sample of Christianity

EVERY Christian a sample of Christianity! I am persuaded that here is a thought that should give us pause. Here is an idea that should rivet our attention.

What kind of sample am I holding up for the inspection of the world? Does my life cause people to want Christianity? Do I draw people or repel them? Do my words and conduct adorn or disgrace "the doctrine of God our Saviour"?

Most people, who come to Jesus, do so because of another's influence. Most people who reject Jesus do so because of some one else. It is the "sample" that counts, either for Christ or against Him.—E. C. Baird, St. Joseph, Mo., in "The Church Up to Par."