

Yesterday's Baptismal Service

by
Ortha Green

The new converts who believed in complete immersion would gather with friends at a chosen place. A farm pond or a nearby river. Each candidate for baptism dressed for the occasion. The men wore loose shirts and washable trousers. The ladies usually wore white dresses (some made for this service). The older women worked diligently pinning the skirts to the stockings of the ones to be baptized. This was to prevent the skirts from floating on top of the water. All loosened their shoe strings for quick removal.

The pastor waded out into the water, stopping at the all ready tested place where the water was waist deep. Two or three of the deacons or prominent members would lead the converts, one at a time, to the minister who had a talk to many of the women, calming their fears of the water. Taking the converts hands he folded them over each other and placed a folded white handkerchief in one. The watching people on the banks began singing "Shall We Gather At The River" or "What a Friend We Have in Jesus". When the minister raised his right hand, the singing ceased. Placing his left hand on the back of the converts neck, he said,

"Brother (or sister) upon your confession of Faith, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen." Expertly he pressed your hands over your nose and mouth and before you knew it you were plunged backward and under the water you went. (many would struggle and yell in fright) As you were quickly brought to the surface, the singing began. You were ushered toward the bank where the kindly church ladies threw a blanket or sheet around you (if you were a woman) so that you could not be seen with wet clothing clinging to your form. You were helped up the bank where you went to a nearby home to change your clothing, or you stood on there shivering and watched the others being baptized, which every one most likely did.

When all were immersed the entire congregation joined in singing another song, the minister prayed, people shook hands with you and welcomed you to the ranks of a divine believer, for you had been converted from your sin, if you ever had any, and had now been baptized into the service of the Lord.

"Blessed is he who walketh with the righteous."

CHURCH OF MY CHILDHOOD

In my treasured garden of memories,
That cling like a beautiful dream,
The dear old church of my childhood
Is an anchor in life's troubled stream.

Though the hastening years bring treasures,
And my dreams like a flower unfold,
The joys of the church of my childhood
Are ones that can never grow old.

I may wander over life's bright highways,
And choose the whole wide world to roam,
Still the church of my childhood memories
Is calling me -- calling me home.

Each peal of its bell is a message,
"Oh, sin-weary traveler stay,
Christ, the Light of the world is waiting,
Just turn and accept Him to-day".

Its doors are opened in welcome,
Its sight brings a mist of glad tears,
For I know that the church of my childhood
Has guided my life through the years.

Blanche Coates,
now Mrs. Paul Fuller.

SMILE LITTLE CHURCH

by
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Go if you must, little church
Back down the trail of time,
Let wild grass cover
Your resting place.
But smile in your sleep.
You are remembered
By God's loving people.

For GOD so loved the world that he
gave his only begotten son, that who-
so-ever believeth in Him should not
perish, but have everlasting life.
John 3:16