

## **The Little Baptist**

By J.M. Martin

*"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15*

### **Chapter 16**

#### **Communion**

"Mellie," said Nannie Gordon, "There is one thing that will always keep me from being a Baptist. I believe in immersion, but I can't approve of your close communion. Why, last Sunday when Dr. Farnsworth invited all Christians of every name to come to the Lord's Table, there sat you and your mother, and a number of other Baptists, all looking on, and not one of you accepted the invitation. I can't see how you can do so. Does your mother think that because she has joined the Baptists, she is too good to commune with Presbyterians any more!"

"Now, Nannie," said Mellie, "wouldn't it have looked strange for her to have gone and communed with them? Had they not just excluded her from their church? and for nothing else only because she said that nothing but immersion was Scriptural baptism, and that infants ought not to be baptized at all? Do you suppose they wanted her to commune with them?"

"O, yes, Mellie; she is now a member of another church, and we invite all members in good standing in other churches to come to our communion," said Nannie.

"But, Nannie, do you think that being a member in another church makes my mother any better than she was when they excluded her from their communion? She has joined a church holding the very same doctrines for which she was excluded from the Presbyterians, and now, where is the consistency in inviting her, or any other Baptist, to their communion? Why should any church invite to the communion, members of other churches holding doctrines for which they would exclude one of their own members? The Baptists, Nannie, are consistent. They would exclude a member for teaching or practicing infant baptism; or for sprinkling and pouring for baptism, and they will not commune with the members of any church that believes and practices these things. Do you see any consistency in a church excluding a member one day, and the next day inviting that excluded member to commune with them, without asking any confession? If this is consistency, it is strange consistency."

"Well," said Nannie, "I don't know anything about it. I always thought the Baptists wrong about communion; perhaps it's only because I have heard others say so. I never took the trouble to look into the cause myself. It may be, after all, that they have a good reason for their course."

"You know very well," said Mellie, "that all my partiality for the Baptist church has been derived from the Bible; it was not so from choice, but because my understanding of the

Scriptures compelled me to do it. My early teachings were opposed to everything in that direction, but since I came to read and understand for myself, I can only wonder that all Christians are not Baptists. I can't see how they can take the Bible for a guide and be anything else."

"Now, Mellie, tell me candidly, don't you think that all Christians ought to commune together?" asked Nannie, with much earnestness as though she had the whole argument in a nutshell.

"*Certainly I do,*" replied Mellie, "but the very argument that proves that they ought to commune together, proves that they ought to live together in the same church. They ought all to do just what the Bible tells them to do, and if they did they could all live together and commune together, too. But how can we have harmony without agreement, or communion without union? We do not want a mere pretended union where no real union exists. While each denomination as opposing doctrines and practices from each other, I can see no better way than for each to attend to its own business in its own way, and let the others do the same."

"I think they do that near enough," said Nannie.

"Yes," said Mellie, "they do in everything except communion. Other denominations never invite the Baptists to take a part in their church matters only when it comes to communion, and then it sometimes looks like they do it just to get an excuse to abuse us for not participating; and if they thought we would, perhaps they would not give us such pressing invitations. But then you know, Nannie, that the denominations are generally agreed that none but baptized persons have a right to partake of the Lord's Supper. And they agree, too, that immersion is Scriptural baptism. Therefore, on this ground, others can, without a sacrifice of principle, invite the Baptists. But while the Baptists deny that anything else than immersion is baptism, they can't invite others without sacrifice of principle that would bring them into confusion. Don't you see that upon this common ground, the Baptists must remain close communionists, or else endorse sprinkling and pouring as valid baptism?"

"Well, but Mellie, your church don't invite every one that has been baptized by your own ministers. There is Mr. Halladay, who once belonged to your church, you know, but since he quit and joined the Methodists *to be with his wife*, he is not invited to the Baptist communion, any more than if he had been only sprinkled by the Methodists. And you can't say that he has not been baptized, for Mr. Coleman, your own pastor, baptized him."

"Yes, yes," said Mellie; "I am glad that you mentioned that case, for it brings out the question on its merits. There is the point that other denominations can't see, or, rather, as it seems, *won't see*. It is not baptism *alone* that gives the right to a seat at the Lord's Table; if it were, every baptized reprobate that had ever been excluded from the church might claim it. It is, strictly speaking, membership in the church that gives the right. Baptism only gives a *conditional* right. No one can be a member in a Baptist church without baptism, and none can come to the Lord's Table without membership. So you see there are two conditions to be considered, instead of one. Baptists hold that

repentance and faith are prerequisites to baptism, and that baptism is a prerequisite to communion. Baptists do not assume the authority of legislating for the Lord. They regard Christ as their Head and Lawgiver, and the church His executive, to see that His laws are properly enforced. They regard the communion table as the Lord's, and not theirs; and they, therefore, feel authorized to only admit those who have the legal qualifications."

"Well," said Nannie, "I declare I never thought you had such arguments as these in your favor. I have always heard it charged that it was just a kind of bigoted inconsistency in the Baptists that made them so restricted in communing, but you seem to offer a *reason* for all you do."

"O, yes," replied Mellie, "but you begin to see that the bigotry and inconsistency are on the other side, if any there be. It is strange that they should manifest such an earnest desire to commune with us, when, if we were members with them, holding and teaching as we do, they would exclude us as they did my mother."

"Come, Mellie, don't charge us with more than we are guilty of. I hope we are not so inconsistent as that," said Nannie.

"Why, Nannie, have not the Presbyterians refused to let my mother live in the church with them? And, then, have they not afterward invited her to commune with them, and some of them even abused her for not doing so? Now, the Baptists will not commune with any that they will not live with, nor will they live with those that they will not commune with, and, again, they will not commune with those who will not live in the church with them. And this I call true consistency," said Mellie.

As Nannie stood reflecting and seemed to have nothing more to say, Mellie continued:

"I investigated all these things before I joined the Baptist church, and I fully understand and approve of them. I think that we are much nearer right, and a great deal more consistent, than those who abuse us for our convictions of duty, and then invite us to commune with them, contrary to our known wishes. Now, there is Mr. Smith, the Methodist preacher, who always invites the members of all denominations to participate in the Lord's Supper, but if you have noticed him closely, you have seen that he almost invariably says some hard things about the Baptists, as though he wished to hurt their feelings, so as to be sure to keep them back. And, then, too, he said in a sermon that the doctrine of Predestination and Election, as taught by the Presbyterians, 'had its origin with the Devil,' and that to it 'thousands would owe their damnation in hell.' He is a very rough spoken man, you know, and Dr. Farnsworth felt his cuts so sensibly that he said 'the people ought not to go to hear such a man preach.' Still they invite each other to the Lord's Table, and partake of the elements together, just as though there was a perfect agreement between them. Mamma says that she thinks open communion, so-called, is a *hobby* to delude the people, and keep up a prejudice against the Baptists. Any one can see that there is no consistency in abusing and accusing each other of teaching false doctrines, and then coming together to celebrate the Lord's Supper. By this they say to the world, 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity,' and yet there is no unity, nor do they dwell together. They publicly profess what

does not exist. As they profess in communion that they dwell together in unity, why don't they bury their differences and all unity in one church organization? Baptists says, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism - hence, one church, or order of churches, and, then, one communion table. Those who will not agree with them in this, they leave to their own choice. They strive to obey the laws of Christ as they understand them, and ask nothing of their opposers but to be left to follow their honest convictions of duty."

"Well, indeed," said Nannie, "I confess that you have greatly enlightened me on the subject. I never before saw the standpoint from which the Baptists look at the communion question; and I find that looking from different standpoints very materially changes the appearance of things. I must agree that the practice of the Baptists is entirely consistent with their faith in the premises. I never thought about membership and fellowship in the church, nor about unity of faith having anything to do with it, nor that open communion churches commune with those whom they will not live in the church with, and who, if permitted, would not live with them. This is such a ridiculous absurdity, that I don't see why they have not abandoned it long ago. I, for one, will never again speak harshly of the Baptists for their restricted communion"

"I am right glad to hear you say so, Nannie," said Mellie, "and I wish that all others could arrive at the same conclusion. It would greatly advance the cause of religion if all attended strictly their own business and let others alone. You girls in school, a long time ago nicknamed me, you know; I did not like it then, but now I am proud of the honor of being called 'THE LITTLE BAPTIST.'"

"I *do wish* that all could agree and go along together, it would be *so much better*," said Nannie.

"I do with all my heart," replied Mellie. "Christ prayed that all His people might be ONE; and if they were only united, they would form a mighty host, before which infidelity and all the powers of evil would be bound to give way, and the knowledge of the Lord would soon cover the earth. It is the dissensions among Christians, begetting jealousies and envyings, that fosters the spirit of infidelity, and retards the conversion of the world. If all would unite upon the teachings of Christ and the apostles, the Baptists would stand in harmony with them, and strife would be at an end. Baptists are not to blame for the multiplicity of sects, for they believe all that the Scriptures teach, and are willing to practice it. Others believe all that the Baptists do, and if they would only stop there, we could all easily unite, but they will go beyond what is revealed in the Bible, and teach 'for doctrines the commandments of men.' Then because we will not follow them in these traditions they turn upon us with the cry of 'bigotry,' 'selfishness,' and 'close communion.' For instance, the Scriptures teach that believers in Christ are proper subjects for baptism; Baptists say this, and other Christians agree with them. No one questions this position; it is undisputed ground. But, then, others persist in teaching that unconscious infants are also proper subjects for baptism, and as Baptists cannot find authority for it in the Bible, they cannot agree to it. Again, all Christian denominations agree with the Baptists that immersion is Scriptural or valid baptism. At least, they accept the immersed as Scripturally baptized; and if they would only practice what all, in common, agree is right upon this point, there would be an end of controversy. But they go beyond this and practice forms that have neither example nor precedent in the Bible;

hence Baptists object to them as infringements on the laws of Christ, and do not adopt them. If all would consent to only practice that for which a plain precept or example can be shown in the New Testament, then, as a band of soldiers in one common cause, we might go forward under the Saviour's banner, to conquest and victory."

"I am afraid," said Nannie, "that you attach too much importance to baptism. If it does not wash away sin, but consists only in the use of water as a ceremony, what difference can it make whether there is much or little water used?"

"The difference, Nannie," said Mellie, "is that Christ told us what to do, and went Himself down into the river Jordan, and gave us the example. Another very striking difference is in the design of the ordinance. Baptists use water, or perform the action in water, with an entirely different design from all others. Somebody is wrong - somebody is unscripturally baptized; first, in the mode or action, and secondly, in the design. A wrong design must destroy the validity of the ordinance, as well as a wrong mode. Therefore, if the Baptists are right as to design and mode, all others are wrong; but if others are right as to design and mode, then the Baptists are wrong, and hence, unscripturally baptized."

"You will confer a favor by enlightening me relative to the difference in design," said Nannie.

"Well, if you will patiently hear me," said Mellie, "I will try to do so. Without confining certain Pedobaptist denominations to their written creeds, but allowing that they have outgrown them, we will suppose that all agree that baptism is not a saving ordinance, but only declarative in its significancy. With the Disciples, unless designed as a saving ordinance, it means simply nothing, except as an illustration of death and the resurrection. As regards the person baptized, it declares nothing, past, present nor future. Though Scriptural in action, it is incomplete in design. Pedobaptists are confined to no specific mode or action, therefore, it must be the water alone that declares the design. Some say that by the pouring of the water, they illustrate the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the heart. Others assume that the water represents the purifying influence of the Spirit; while others, still, say it is merely a dedicatory ceremony, employing the use of water, at the hands of a Priest or Minister, and that its virtue, efficacy, significancy, or whatever it may be called, is derived from the official position of the Priest or Minister applying it. But it is clear that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is not in form, but only in power, and this action can no more be represented by the pouring of water, than could the pouring down of the heat of the sun on a hot summer day. Water, in itself, does not represent or illustrate purification, for this is only done by washing - immersing or submerging. Purification or cleansing comes by the *act* of washing the thing *in* or *with* water, and not by pouring or sprinkling water on the object to be cleansed. Nor can we believe that the hands of the Priest, his official position, or his prayers, add any holy influence to the water; to do so would be to admit baptismal regeneration at once.

"Baptism consists of an action in water, or of a performance declaring the subject's death to sin, and resurrection to a new life. To show that it is *the action* and not the water, that represents and declares a thing or fact, let me give you some examples by

way of illustration. Pilate declared his innocence of the blood of Christ by the simple act of washing his hands in the presence of the people. It was not the water but the act of washing in the water, that declared his innocence. Christ washed His disciples' feet as a declaration of humility. Humility was here expressed; but how? Did the water, or the application of the water express it? Could sprinkling or pouring water have done it? No, none of these; but the act of washing the feet expressed it in a beautiful and striking figure. Baptism, in one place, is referred to as 'the washing of regeneration,'\*\* and again, as a ceremony symbolizing purification. But what is it that gives it this signification? It is simply because things are cleansed or purified by being washed in water, and the submerging - immersion - washing of a person, in water, figuratively declares a spiritual cleansing or purification. But *the figure is always in the action, never in the water*. As Pilate declared his innocence by washing his hands, and Christ exhibited His humility by washing His disciples' feet, so in immersion we declare a death to sin and a rising again to a new life. Immersion declares the washing of regeneration, the cleansing from sin, and expresses faith in a once dead but risen Saviour. Coming up from the watery grave, we profess a renewal of heart, and exhibit a purpose to walk in newness of life. Like the children of Israel, who, by the passage through the Red Sea, renounced the land of Egypt, and confirmed their allegiance to Moses as their deliverer, and exhibited their confidence in him as their leader, we, in baptism, renounce the dominion of sin, pledge allegiance to Christ, and take upon us the obligation to follow Him as our leader. The parallel is so striking, that the apostle could justly say that the children of Israel were 'all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.' In the days of Moses this would have been an unmeaning expression, because baptism, as a religious illustrative ceremony, was then unknown. But when known, and its teachings understood, as in the days of the apostles, the two afforded a beautiful analogy.

*\*\*Editor's Note: Titus 3:5 is not referring to water baptism at all, but to the washing of the Holy Spirit done at the moment of salvation, being washed in Christ's blood.*

"Christ instituted in His church two ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These two, figuratively illustrate all the important doctrines of the gospel. Baptism is emblematical of Christ's death and resurrection; declares a death to sin, and a purpose to lead a new life, and typifies the death and resurrection of our bodies; while the bread and wine used in the celebration of the Supper are emblems representing Christ's broken body and shed blood, by the use of which we declare our faith in His second coming. The participation in this is not to show our love for family and kin, our respect for our friends, nor confidence in the Christianity of our neighbors. It was instituted in the church, and should be observed by the church only in a church capacity. The right of a church to administer communion extends no further than her right to exercise discipline. Those who are not under her discipline cannot claim her most sacred privilege. The purpose is remembrance of Christ crucified for us, and as oft as the church exhibits these emblems, she shows forth the Lord's death, and declares to the world that Christ will come again. Baptism is a prerequisite to membership in the church, which must be legally and Scripturally obtained prior to the granting of the right to a seat at the Lord's Table."

"Then, you presume to say that there is but one church, I suppose," said Nannie.

"I presume to say," said Mellie, "just what you and all others must admit is true: that is, *there is not, and cannot be, but one Scriptural church*. I say nothing against the piety and religious deportment of the many Christian denominations, or churches, if you prefer the term; but for a church to be *Scriptural*, it must conform its doctrine and practice to the Scriptures. If you grant that any one denomination is Scriptural in its faith, practice and organization, you can but admit that all others are unscriptural in proportion as they differ from this one. No two that differ can be equally Scriptural. Two opposites cannot be alike, or in the same place."

"I understand you, now," said Nannie, "and begin to see that you Baptists are not so illiberal after all, as you are usually charged of being. You mean that errors in the doctrine and practice of a church, do not necessarily destroy its claim to Christianity, but only invalidates its claim to be a Scriptural organization; that while a wrong design and wrong action in baptism may destroy its claim to be a Scriptural church, this does not unchristianize the membership, nor render them unworthy of confidence and respect as Christian people. It is not about whether we are *Christian* churches or not, that the Baptists raise the question, but as to whether we are *Scriptural* churches. Well, that's not so bad. If we are strictly Scriptural in our practice and organizations, the Baptists are not, as a matter of course. And, I suppose if they are right we are not; because it is impossible for all denominations to be exactly right and yet differ as they do. To be Scriptural is to be right, and to be contrary to Scripture is wrong. Therefore, somebody is wrong, because there is a disagreement. If the Baptists immerse, and the Pedobaptists sprinkle and pour for baptism, one or the other is wrong, sure. Now, both might be wrong, that is possible; but for both to be right, is *impossible*. Then, if the *design* as to the thing signified in baptism, is different, one or the other is mistaken; and if the design of the one is Scriptural, that of the other is unscriptural - this is plain. I think this question ought to be settled before there is any more *fuss* about close communion. But tell me, Mellie, how do you get up so many ideas, with some text of Scripture always ready to apply as proof?"

"The main reason," replied Mellie, "is that I always *think*, as well as read."

### **An Address To The Reader.**

We now leave our little heroine to a life of duty, that is just opening up before her. The general lot of mankind must be her's - a life of trials, temptations, labors, and duties. But she is armed for the conflict, for "she has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her." She has given her heart, and submitted her will to God, in whom she trusts for direction and support. She is a Christian, not for popularity or convenience, but from principle. She is not a Christian by profession only, *but a Christian in fact*. The Bible is made her guide in all matters of duty. By her, it is accepted as a revelation from heaven, and adopted as the rule of her faith and practice. And whether her life be spent in the quiet home, in the more public activities, or in teaching the way of life and salvation in lands of heathen idolatry, she has an assurance that the God whom she serves will never forsake her. She has enlisted in the army of the Lord with a firm and steady purpose that insures fidelity to His cause; and whether she lives to a good old age, or is early called to her reward, we leave her with an assurance that her end will be

peace.

How many of the readers of this little book will strive to follow the example of little Mellie Brown, by reading the Bible to learn what it teaches, and obeying its commands? Perhaps there is not but one that is ready to answer: "I want to understand the Bible, and to do whatever is right." Then begin to learn while you are young. You have seen how easy it is for a child, who reads without prejudice, to understand the plain commands of Christ. Also, how hard it was for Mrs. Brown to give up her prejudices, and embrace the truths that were so easy for Mellie to receive. You have seen, too, that as good as everybody called little Mellie Brown in her childhood, and as good as she really thought herself to be, she yet needed a new heart to qualify her for the church and for heaven. You have also observed that Colonel Brown, in his old age, just awoke to the truth that he had all his life been deluded with the thought that he would be saved by his morality and honesty. He discovered at last, that his faith had been resting on a false foundation, and must be directed to Christ for salvation. We left Frank Brown, who had been baptized in his infancy, and had grown up *nominally* in the church, a moral, but haughty, independent and self-willed young man, serving the god of worldly popularity. I trust that he, and all such characters, may early see and feel the necessity of being born again as a preparation for the kingdom of heaven. The Lord has said, "Son, give me thine heart," and has promised, "they that seek me early shall find me." The dying advice of the Psalmist David to his son, was, "Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off forever."

Destruction's dangerous road,  
What multitudes pursue;  
While that which leads the soul to God,  
Is sought and known by few.

Believers enter in,  
By Christ, the living gate;  
But those who will not leave their sin,  
Complain it is too strait.

If self must be denied,  
And sin forsaken quite:  
They rather choose the way that's wide,  
And strive to think it right.

Encompassed by a throng,  
On numbers they depend -  
So many surely can't be wrong,  
And miss a happy end.

But numbers are no mark,  
That men will right be found:  
A few were saved in Noah's Ark,

For many millions drowned.

Obey the gospel call,  
And enter while you may:  
The flock of Christ is always small,  
And none are safe but they.

Lord, open sinners' eyes,  
Their awful state to see,  
And cause them 'ere the storm arise,  
To Thee for help to flee."

~ end of chapter 16 ~

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