

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 7

The Investigation.

Monday morning found Mellie engaged helping to get the housework done, so that everything might be in readiness for the examination of the subject of baptism. When through with the work, she arranged her toilet, fixed some flowers in her hair, then got her Bible, and said: "Come now, Buddie, you and mamma, and I'll show you what makes me a little Baptist. But, then, if you will convince me that I don't understand the book, I will not be a little Baptist any longer. I was so glad to see Laura Thompson baptized, and I did want to go to her and kiss her when she came out of the water - she did look so sweet and so happy, but there were so many people around her, I could not get to her. She didn't look happy that way when Mr. Hamilton lectured us about doing good for evil.

"No doubt," replied Mrs. Brown, "Laura is a very good girl, but I don't see any use for going to all the trouble of having a great pool of water to put her all over in, when a few drops would have done just as well."

"But, mamma," returned Mellie, "that's just like the Bible way of baptizing people - just for all the world, it is, and people ought to follow the teachings of the Bible, if it is some trouble. Now look here."

Mellie opened her Bible at the third chapter of Matthew, where occurs the first mention of baptism, and said: "Now see how it reads: the people went to John, the Baptist, and were baptized of him '*in Jordan*;' and then in the sixteenth verse it reads: 'And Jesus, when he was baptized, came up straightway *out of the water*,' just for all the world like Laura Thompson did yesterday. Then the Saviour says: 'If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me;' and, mamma, I think that was what made Laura Thompson look so happy yesterday; she was following the Saviour in obedience to His command, and she felt pleasant in the path of duty, for 'wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.'"

"Well, Mell, go on, dear," said Mrs. Brown, "and let us see how many witnesses you can find on the Baptist side. I intend that you shall decide the question for yourself. Your father says that he has a great curiosity to know what will be your conclusion after an impartial investigation. He said that had he not been compelled to go away on business, he would have stayed with us, and assisted us to arrive at an unprejudiced decision."

"But, Mellie," said Frank, "to save the trouble of turning back and going over the same ground twice, let us examine the evidence on both sides of the question. Look at the

eleventh verse, it says, 'I baptize you *with* water.' Now, if John, the Baptist, baptized the people *with* water, is it not plain that he put the water on them, instead of putting them into the water?"

"No, Buddie, if it did not say, 'they went down into the water.' and that they were baptized in the river, then, maybe, we would not know how it was done; but the Bible is too plain, Buddie. John said he baptized with water; distinguishing the water from the Holy Ghost, which he said Christ would baptize them. And, yet, when anyone baptizes in water, don't they baptize *with* water? When you saw Laura Thompson covered up in the water, could you not as well say, 'She was covered with water?' Either is proper. Mamma, didn't Polly, this morning, scald the chickens with hot water, and didn't she put the chickens in the water?"

"O, but hold on, Mell, the Bible don't say that John baptized the people in the river, it only says it was in Jordan; and how do you know but that Jordan was the name of a town or a place in some dry country?" replied Frank, more disposed to tease his sister than to give her instruction.

"Yes, but it does say that it was a river, somewhere," rejoined Mellie; and, quick as thought, she turned to the first chapter of Mark, and read: "And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." And again she read: "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John *in* Jordan. Now, Buddie, don't this prove that Jordan is a river, and that the people were all baptized *in* the river? And haven't I read in my geography about the river Jordan, and haven't I seen it on my map of the Holy Land? Let us take mamma's advice, and 'have the courage to stick to the truth,' Buddie."

Without waiting to hear any reply, Mellie ran into her father's library, and returned with a large book, called "Lynch's Expedition to the Holy Land." For, young as she was, she was familiar with almost every book in the library. "Look here," said she, "the man that wrote this book has been to Jordan, and travelled down it in a boat, and he ought to know whether it's a river or not; and I guess he was no Baptist: he was an officer of the United States Navy, and was sent out by the government. The people there showed him the very place where they said Christ was baptized. Now just see what he wrote while standing on the bank of the river looking at the water, and thinking about the Saviour having been baptized there" 'The mind of man trammelled by sin, cannot soar in contemplation of so sublime an event. On that wondrous day, when the Deity, veiled in flesh, descended the bank, all nature, hushed in awe, looked on - and the impetuous river, in grateful homage, must have stayed its course, and gently laved the body of its Lord.'" Mellie read this with a solemn air, giving particular emphasis to the words, "impetuous river," and "gently laving the body of its Lord."

Frank listened in silence, and Mrs. Brown seemed wholly unconscious that her knitting had fallen from her hands, so great was her amazement at the ease with which Mellie seemed to manage the subject.

While Mellie had looked a mere child, she showed a remarkable quick perception, and

was capable of solid reasoning. Though only in her fourteenth year, her mind was well cultivated, surpassing even many full grown men and women. So small, with such extraordinary knowledge, she was regarded, as indeed, a prodigy. The intention of her mother was to gratify Mellie and to amuse herself, contemplating no other result than a little pastime; but at every step her astonishment increased at the plain light in which she exhibited the subject of baptism, over which so many Doctors have disagreed.

Seeing that her mother and Frank did not question her testimony, Mellie turned to the eighth chapter of Acts and read: "And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip," etc. She continued: "Now, Buddie, you see that Philip went with the man into the water, and there, in the water, he baptized him, and then, both came up out of the water; and that's what made me ask Mr. Hamilton if Philip was not a Baptist. He did just like Mr. Coleman does when he baptizes people. Then the girls made fun of me, and called me "The Little Baptist." Now I know I am only a little girl, and not old enough to know everything, yet when I see anything *so plain*, I think I can understand it. Mamma says that holy men wrote the Bible, just as God directed them, and that God gave us the Bible to teach us our duty, so I think He must have meant for us understand what He wants us to do, and then to do just what He commands. I'm so glad that you gave me my Bible, Buddie; I've learned so much from it; and I want to do all that it tells me."

"Well, Mell," said Frank, "I see that you are determined to be a Baptist in spite of all we can do; but don't you know that when anybody gets into the Baptist church there is no way for them to get out again?"

"Why can't I get out Buddie, if I want to?" said Mellie.

"Because," said Frank, "they take their members in through the water, and I don't see how they can ever get out. I never heard of any other door to the church; so I suppose they have to remain there until they die out, unless they can be taken backward through the water again."

"Sprinkle 'em out, Buddie, sprinkle 'em out. Why, Buddie, don't you know dey sprinkle 'em?"

This was the prattle of little Anna, who had been playing on the floor unobserved, until she called out, "Sprinkle 'em out, Buddie, sprinkle 'em out."

She understood that the Baptist would not have "sprinkled" members; and as that formed a line of separation, she drew the conclusion that sprinkling their members would put them out of the church.

This interrupted the discussion for the time, and created laughter. Frank said that he would *hush*. Mellie laughed till the tears stood in her eyes. Mrs. Brown caressed Anna, and awarded her a high honor for the original and very novel idea of sprinkling the Baptists to get them out of the church.

Mellie had not thought as much on the subject of the door into the church, as she had about some other things, else she might have told Frank that baptism is not, strictly speaking, a door, but the initiatory rite that all entering the church are required to submit to, but the door that opens or closes against them is the WILL of the particular church. Thus, ingress and egress are obtained by the same door. Churches vote to receive members and they vote to exclude members. Each church is independent of all human authority, and subject only to her great Head and Lawgiver.

Frank Brown had never given the subject of baptism an hour's serious consideration, and at this time cared for little else than to annoy his sister with such difficulties as he could remember hearing suggested by others. He had been told that he had been baptized in his infancy, an act of his parents which he understood to somehow bring him into some kind of covenant relationship with God. Although unexplained he doubted not that there was some virtue to be derived from a practice to which so much importance was attached by the church in which he had grown up as a "sealed" member. He was moral, paid respect to the Sabbath, attended church, but was yet irreligious. After the discussion with Mellie had been suspended, he sat as if wholly absorbed in thought, turning the leaves of the little Bible until he was attracted by some marks that Mellie had made in the sixteenth chapter of Acts, and he said:

"Look here, Sissie: you have made your strong points; all that you can find, I guess; so now let us examine the other side of the question. Here I see there was a baptism in a prison, and in the night, too. I hope that you do not presume that they had a river there. I think this is one case where you will have to admit that there was no immersion. If you have proved that Philip was a Baptist, I will now prove that Paul was a Presbyterian. For, you see, they had Paul confined in the inner prison, and when the jailer asked, 'What must I do to be saved?' and Paul told him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, etc., that then and there Paul baptized him."

Mellie replied, "Yes, Buddie, don't you see how it reads? This jailer brought Paul and Silas out of the prison, and they spake the word of the Lord to him and all that were in his house. They were not in the jailer's house for they had come out of the prison. Then the jailer took them and washed their stripes; and was baptized. Now, don't it look reasonable that he took them where there was water to wash their stripes - to some stream or pool? After washing their stripes he was baptized. And after he had brought them into his house again, he set meat before them; so you see the jailer was not baptized in the house. But suppose they never went outside the prison walls, could there not have been a pool there to furnish water for the prison? When the Bible tells how anyone was baptized, it is always in a river or a place of much water; and where it just says 'they were baptized,' we ought to be satisfied that it was all done the same way. Now turn to the third chapter of John; there it says that 'John (the Baptist) was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water for John to baptize the people, don't you think it would have required *much* water for Paul to baptize the jailer? If you had not gone to church on yesterday, and had been told that Laura Thompson was baptized in the meeting house, you would never have thought, perhaps, that she was immersed. For you would have thought, no doubt, that there was not water enough for that, but when the pulpit was rolled back, you saw a pool of water - a baptistry they call it - and it is no more strange that there should be such a thing within the walls of a

prison, than in a meetinghouse."

"O, but I tell you, Mellie," said Frank, "Paul was a Presbyterian, because *he* was not baptized in any of your rivers, nor pools either. I have read about it somewhere myself, and I remember to have heard Dr. Farnsworth say that 'the presumption is very strong that Paul was baptized either by sprinkling or pouring, and that too, while he was standing on his feet.' And you remember that when Dr. Farnsworth baptized Mr. Snyder, he said: 'As Ananias said unto Paul, Arise and be baptized;' and when Mr. Snyder stood on his feet while Dr. Farnsworth poured the water on his head, it fixed the impression on my mind that that was the way Paul was baptized. But, here, take the book and find the place - we'll read it."

"Yes, I have it marked," said Mellie, "it's in the ninth chapter of Acts. After Ananias had gone to him, 'he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.' Then, again, in the twenty-second chapter, Paul says himself that Ananias said unto him: 'Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized,' etc."

"Well," said Frank, "do you see any immersion in this? Won't Paul do for a Presbyterian? He was baptized just like Dr. Farnsworth baptized Mr. Snyder."

"No proof, no proof in the book, Buddie," said Mellie. "If he were only sprinkled, it would not have been necessary for him to arise, yet he *must* have arisen in order to have been immersed; and Ananias's question, 'Why tarriest thou?' shows that it was necessary for him to get up and go with Ananias to some place. But, then, let us take another view of the subject. We have already seen that Christ was baptized in the river Jordan, and Paul being a follower of Christ, was, of course, baptized in the same way that Christ Himself was. This ought to be conceded, unless there is positive proof to the contrary, which we fail to find. But, then, I guess that Paul is capable of settling this dispute. He surely knew himself how he was baptized, and how others in his day were baptized. So we will take his answer from the sixth chapter of Romans. Hear, now, what he says: 'So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ are baptized into his death; therefore we are buried with him by baptism,' etc. Again, he reminds the Colossians, in second chapter and twelfth verse, that they were 'Buried with him (Christ) in baptism.' and says to them, 'Wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.' And I tell you now that Paul will not begin to do for a Presbyterian, but he was a Baptist, all over. He proved that himself; the jailer, and the Christians to whom he was writing, were all buried by baptism. So I say that Philip was a Baptist, and that Paul was just as good a Baptist as Philip, and that they both baptized just like John, the Baptist, did, and like the Baptist people do now - just like you saw Mr. Coleman baptize yesterday."

"Nonsense, Mellie, nonsense," replied Frank sarcastically. "Buried in baptism is only a figurative expression. No allusion is had to water baptism, at all. I have heard this explained often. Paul was talking about the baptism of the Spirit, and not about literal baptism. You must remember that much of the Bible is given to us in figurative language, and must not be interpreted literally."

"La! la! Buddie," said Mellie, "have you been all this time in college, and never learned

that figures are always representative? Why, Mr. Hamilton taught me this before I had been in his school six months, that a figure is like a picture, and as such must represent something. You can't have a shadow without substance nor can you express a figurative idea, without first having in view the thing from which the figure is drawn. Mr. Hamilton made this all so plain that I have never forgotten it; and mamma has taught me a great deal about the figures of speech in the Bible. Why, before I understood this, I could not make any sense out of many texts that I read. I found that in one place Christ was called the Sun, in another a Rock, and still in another the Door, but when mamma explained it to me it was all plain. I understood the nature of the sun, of the rock, and of a door, and could see at once how the figures conveyed the ideas. Then mamma explained to me what David in the Psalms meant when he talked about being overwhelmed with troubles, and when I got started in it I could understand a great many of the figures of speech. I could then understand that the reason that Christ called His sufferings a baptism, was because they were overwhelming. So, now, if Paul used a figure of speech to explain the work of the Holy Spirit, when he said, 'We are buried with Christ by baptism,' it then follows that the literal baptism is a burial also. If baptism is a literal burial and raising up, then I can understand the figure drawn from it to be a baptism too, when the idea expressed is going from death unto life. If Paul were speaking about baptism in water, of course he meant immersion, and if the works of the Holy Spirit was meant, and figuratively called a burial, it is just as strong - *just as positive proof*. If the figure of water baptism is a burial, that proves that the baptism is like that. So you may take it any way you please, but if you will only take it according to the laws of language on every other subject, you will find that the Bible means immersion every time baptism is mentioned."

"Well, Mell," said Frank, "if you are distinguished for any one thing in particular, it is for having a good memory. You have not only repeated Mr. Hamilton's lecture on figurative language, but you have supplemented it with some Baptist preacher's sermon. I think we had better adjourn now for a little recreation."

"All right," said Mellie, "if you are tired we'll stop, but I have been too much interested think about getting tired. I want to find out the *truth*; you know, Buddie, we should 'buy the truth and sell it not.' But what do you say about figurative language being always drawn from literal speech, like the shadow from the substance?"

"Well, I guess that is according to the books - I will study more about it," replied Frank, and the conversation ended.

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