

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 2

The Parents.

Colonel Brown had been reared in the Presbyterian church; but when he settled in the town of H___, in Mississippi, he claimed no church relation, and was entirely a "man of the world." He was an upright and honorable man, of excellent morals, kind, affable and social in his intercourse with others. His noble and generous traits of character had gained him a large popularity, and he seldom failed to be chosen to some important official position. In regard to religion, he became a *Liberalist*, conceding orthodoxy to all creeds, and catholicity to all sects. To experimental Christianity he was wholly a stranger, and was a living monument to the fact that being baptized in infancy, and growing up in the church, give no guarantee of an inward work of grace. Col. Brown lacked the "one thing needful" - true piety - and knowing not the power of godliness, he had discarded its forms, and held himself aloof from his church.

Mrs. Brown was very different. Though of almost opposite temperaments, they lived together with but little discord, and well illustrated the possibility of "harmonious differences." She had reserved humility, patience and kindness, that commended her as the model wife, the exemplary Christian, affectionate mother, and kind neighbor. She knew the power of experimental religion, and in her intercourse with the world, although herself one of the brightest ornaments of society, she sought not for honor, but was governed by her sense of duty. She did not inquire "What can I do?" but "What ought I to do?" and wherever duty pointed the way she did not hesitate to follow. She was devoted to her church, and her heart and hands were open to the poor. In her, meekness, courage, and humility were beautifully blended; and her Christian influence was felt throughout the circle of her acquaintance.

Mrs. Brown was not reared in the church, but under the influence of Presbyterianism; so when she married into a Presbyterian family, and professed religion, she very naturally united with that church. Notwithstanding, her mind was superior, and her education liberal, she had one failing that was inexcusable. Like thousands of others, she let other people do her thinking in religious matters. In regard to doctrines, ordinances, and church polity, especially, she accepted the conclusions of others, without taking the pains to investigate for herself. Instead of giving personal attention to these things, it was enough for her to know that the church endorsed a doctrine or a practice. The decisions of her church satisfied both her mind and her conscience. Or, rather, it satisfied her judgment, for as a matter of course, the conscience approves whatever the judgment pronounces right. Although she could see no reason for controversy on the subject of baptism, and, in candor, could but admit that the Bible was silent in reference to any other than believer's baptism, and decidedly plain as to the action having been

immersion in apostolic times, yet, she would say, "Others of more extensive learning and research have agreed that sprinkling and pouring are of equal validity with immersion, too, and I suppose they have good reasons for thinking so, else, as honest people, they would not teach and practice as they do." Thus she "pinned her faith to the sleeves" of other people, and quietly floated on with the current of her church, giving the subject but little serious attention, thinking that so many persons of exalted piety and wisdom could not be deceived. And, since so many people had gone to Heaven with no other baptism than that which her church administered, it would be sufficient for herself also.

When her little daughter expressed such surprise on discovering what she supposed to be a Baptist Bible, she was no less astonished than amused, but as she reflected the subject assumed a more serious aspect. Said she, "If the Bible is so plain upon this subject that even a child can understand it at a glance, I may be guilty of gross neglect."

It was hard for her to consent that her church was in error, and she resolved that none but the most positive testimony should convince her of it. A thought had been awakened, however and though she resolved only to think silently herself, she would be no hindrance to an impartial investigation of the Bible by her child. She felt anxious to see what conclusion an unprejudiced mind would reach, exempt from all other influence than the Bible. Like other fond mothers she doted on her child. She knew her intellect was more than ordinary, and she desired to see that intellect thoroughly cultivated; hence she determined to aid her in making improvement in every way possible.

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