

**A PEDOBAPTIST CHURCH
NO HOME FOR A
BAPTIST: AN ARGUMENT**

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A Pedobaptist Church No Home for a Baptist: An Argument by Robert T. Middleditch

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INTRODUCTION.

SHOULD a reader of the Bible, unskilled in the controversies of the age, go forth on the Sabbath by the river side, and see a minister, after leading the solemn devotions of a large assemblage, go down into the water, and, in the hallowed name of the TRINITY, bury a fellow-being in baptism, his heart would be naturally touched with the solemn beauty of the scene. But he would certainly receive a very unpleasant impression by learning, afterwards, that the act in which the administrator had engaged, was performed by him, not from a belief of its having any peculiar acceptability with God, but in order to satisfy the erring conscience of man. He would be still more surprised if informed that the candidate, who believed obedience to Christ rendered this observance impe-

rative, had needlessly sought the services of an administrator who, so far from personally viewing it with favor, regarded it as originating in ignorance or weakness, if not in formality and bigotry, and himself neither had submitted, nor would submit to the ordinance.

The plea for this inconsistent course, by both parties, is charity. Christian men are often willing to incur odium on any account more readily than by a charge of uncharitableness to the opinions of others. It should, therefore, occasion no surprise that in the excess of unregulated Christian zeal, some, who are Baptists by conviction, are willing to throw the mantle of charity over their unbaptized brethren; and thus, while hiding the supposed nakedness of their faith, not only flatter themselves in their own eyes, but obtain great estimation with others of similar opinions.

On the same plea of charity to a "weak brother," many unimmersed Pedobaptist ministers consider themselves justified in administering baptism contrary to their own views of propriety. Paul never attained to such a charity as this course of procedure indicates. He taught those among whom he had labored, to abstain

from a course by which a brother "stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak;" and with regard to the observance or non-observance of certain days, he says, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." He, however, knew nothing of that fallacious charity, which would foster a brother's delusion, or become a partaker of it. * *Abstinence*, from respect to a brother's conscience, is a very different thing from *action*. When we go beyond the bounds which the inspired Apostle prescribes, so far from exhibiting true Christian charity, we betray a laxness of principle which must be highly offensive to the Head of the Church.

All Christians ought to obey the Apostolic exhortation, "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good, unto edification." This, however, cannot be quoted in defence of an irregular administration of immersion; for few ministers who reject Baptist sentiments think there is anything "good," or tending to "edification," in the act of a believer's being "buried with Christ in baptism."

If the writings of Pedobaptists are to be regarded as an exponent of their principles, many of them believe "Sprinkling the only mode of

Baptism." The Rev. Dr. Peters has lately issued a work with this very title. Another, with extraordinary biblical perceptions, has discovered that "Baptists can produce neither express command, nor an undeniable example of baptism by immersion in the Bible." Not a few, it is to be presumed, agree with the Rev. Dr. Murray, in his opinion of immersion: "To insist on it, is like Popery in this respect—it teaches for doctrines the commandments of men."

Such writers, no doubt, believe immersion a service which God has not required at their hands, and would refuse to administer the ordinance. Others, however, professing precisely the same opinion, engage in the service; although, according to their own consciences, they are acting in a similar way to those who were guilty of offering "strange fire" before the Lord.

One writer, whom we have quoted, has recorded his opinion of immersion, that "with too many it is the one thing needful." Another writes, "the native tendency of the doctrine is to superstition and abuse." The countenance and high honors which have been awarded them

by their brethren, and that portion of the religious press under Pedobaptist influence, affords reason for the belief, however unwelcome to Baptists, that these sentiments are entertained by the majority of Pedobaptists. To administer immersion with such views, so far from being in accordance with Christian liberality, is positive wickedness. As well might a Protestant pastor endeavor to relieve a burdened soul by extreme unction, as by thus conniving at immersion, and taking an active part in what he holds is not only a "superstition and abuse," but one which tends to foster "arrogance and exclusion."

If any man is not satisfied that immersion is of Divine authority, he must believe that it is an invention of men. In this case there is awful sacrilege in administering the ordinance. The use of "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," in an observance which it is thought the Sacred Three do not regard with complacency, would fill any truly Christian mind with horror. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

A sincere Pedobaptist minister in sprinkling a child, upholds an observance in which he has

faith. Although a Baptist may consider his defence of the rite altogether insufficient to justify it, he will yet respect him for carrying his belief into practice in a prayerful and orderly manner. Far different, however, is the effect likely to be produced when that minister renounces what he believes the true or preferable mode of baptism, for what he regards as but a pernicious form.

In baptism, a believer presents a penitential, grateful, and confiding surrender of himself to Jesus Christ. A glaring inconsistency is evident when a servant of the Saviour makes himself an instrument in the solemn dedication of a soul to his Lord, without any conviction on his part of the obligation, propriety, or acceptableness of the service. In the whole transaction he is an automaton. In pronouncing the form employed in baptism he degrades himself as a minister of Christ. Instead of appearing as the living minister of a living faith, he acts in a way which does little to "magnify" his office, for he is scarcely more to be accounted of in the spiritual house than the Organ in the material—that of an auxiliary to a worship in which no interest is felt. The difference is cer-