

A CRITIQUE
By
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An Examination of
Great Commission Credentials
and Other EMDA Articles
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MISREPRESENTATION OF AUTHORS QUOTED

The next thing I will take up is Bro Fenison's misrepresentation of other authors he has quoted in *GCC*. This is a serious charge but I will set before the reader the quotes and he may judge for himself according to the evidence. T.T. Eaton in the Introduction to Christian's book *Did they Dip?* Said this:

The most unpleasant thing in connection with replying to Dr. Whitsitt's "Question in Baptist History" is calling attention to his unauthorized use of documents, owing largely to his misplaced confidence in Dr. Dexter. And yet whoever replies to any book must needs call attention to its misuse of authorities where such misuse exists....When a man enters the lists of controversy he must expect his statements to be challenged. [Christian. *Did They Dip?* P. 2].

We are not here inquiring whether the men quoted are correct in their positions or not but rather we ask, does Bro Fenison quote them correctly? My contention is that he has misrepresented these men to an astounding degree.

J.G. Jones

Bro Fenison quotes J.G. Jones:

In this simple analysis of the commission is presented the very process by which Baptists are now made, constituted into churches, and governed. That it was the process by which the first preachers made converts, and constituted churches, is beyond question. [T. G. Jones. *The Baptists* p. 27; *GCC* p. 50].

This sounds as if Jones could possibly be referring to EMDA. Is that the case? This is Bro Fenison's claim because he says:

In that book he [Jones] claimed that the Great Commission as given in Matthew 28:19-10 was a process that included authority to constitute churches. [*Ibid.*].

Bro Fenison is reading EMDA into Jones. To be sure, Jones does not say churches must be constituted with EMDA yet it is possible this was what he meant. Is this Jones position? We shall see. To verify Jones' position we will examine statements found in the very book Bro Fenison quotes. Jones says:

So far from the Scriptures sustaining this theory of 'uninterrupted succession,' they show its utter futility. [Jones. *The Baptists*, p. 37].

Since when does EMDA repudiate 'uninterrupted succession'? Uninterrupted succession is the essential heart of the system! But Jones denies it and says the Scripture does not sustain it but shows its *utter futility*. A man who does not believe in 'uninterrupted succession' cannot believe EMDA, call it what you will! But there is more. Again Jones says:

We wonder not, then, that this theory of 'uninterrupted succession' finds no real support in the writings of the ablest and best of the Christian Fathers. That, though often quoted in support of it, many of them, Tertullian, Jerome, Ambrose, Gregory Nazianzen, Augustine, and others, repudiated it--all contending that succession of doctrine and of faith, of principle and spirit, is the only true succession, and that without it, however important outward and formal succession may be, ...it is of no avail, and not worthy of regard--being often claimed by heretical teachers and apostate churches. Jones. *The Baptists*, p. 39.

Now here Jones says the only true succession is of doctrine and of faith!

Again Jones quotes Dr. Ripley with approval:

Yet more fully and with rare elegance and ability are the views of the Baptists, upon this subject of succession, expressed by another distinguished Baptist. Referring to their churches, he says "Amongst their sister churches they are related by sympathies and kind offices, but they own no subjection, and acknowledge no dependence either on contemporary churches of their own country, or upon the churches of other lands or other times, except as those churches have held the same truth, clung to the same Head, and have exhibited the same spirit. [Jones. *The Baptists*, p. 41-42].

Does this distinguished Baptist say churches must get authority from another church?

No!

How are they related to each other? *By sympathies and kind offices*. But are they not subject to the mother church? No! Do they not depend on other churches to get their start? No! They,

...acknowledge no dependence on contemporary churches...

But Bro Fenison claims every church depends upon the mother church for its existence! And that mother to mother, to mother and mother after mother, for as many as it takes to get back to Christ and the first church in Jerusalem! Are we to believe Bro Fenison or are we to believe Jones as to what Jones believed? Certainly, Bro Fenison has chosen quotes without knowing what the author believed, which is not good scholarship. Or if he knew what Jones believed, then his situation is worse!

But this is not all. We quote again:

They [Baptist churches] claim to hold directly of the ever-living, almighty, and omnipotent Spirit, and to lean, without interposition of chains of succession and lines of spiritual descent, immediately and for themselves on the bosom and heart of the Savior, who pledged his presence to the end of the world, where two or three are gathered together in his name. [Jones. *The Baptists*. p. 41-42].

Note how Dr. Ripley, whom Jones is quoting with approval here, excludes *chains of succession* and *lines of spiritual descent*, but says the churches hold directly to the Lord and then he appeals to Mt. 18:20 which Bro Fenison claims has no connection to church constitution! [GCC. 202].

Clearly Jones does not believe EMDA! Nothing in this book indicates he did. Bro Fenison has merely grabbed up a few scraps taken out of context from Jones and claimed them as supporting what his words could never mean!

Is it wrong to quote a man to prove something you know he does not believe? Is it wrong to quote a man as believing some doctrine when he expressly says he does not believe it? The only time this can be done is when one is preaching to the choir! It is rejected and repudiated at all times by those who value truth and scholarship!

T.T. EATON

Another man quoted by Bro Fenison is T.T. Eaton. In fact he was so fond of quoting this author he gives the same quote two different times in GCC. The italicized words are Eaton's and the regular are Fenison's:

“If Baptist succession be the bad thing some brethren say, then certainly it ought to be given up. There should be no more of it.”

However, if they were to be CONSISTENT and give it up, what would that include and how would that have to occur among the Baptists of Dr. Eaton's day? What would it take to make an end of it according to Eaton? He goes on to explain:

“When a new church is organized, it should have no sort of connection with other churches, or relations to them. Let churches be organized anywhere, anyhow, by anybody. Just let people be believers, and let them baptize each other and start a church.

This does away with Baptist succession. And if it be the bad thing that is charged, it ought to be done away with at the earliest moment. Those who oppose Baptist Succession have no logical ground to stand on in organizing a church out of material furnished by other churches, and with those baptized by regularly ordained Baptist ministers.” Dr. T. T. Eaton. (Quoted by Milburn Cockrell, Scriptural Church Organization, Second Edition, pp. 57-58).

First note that Bro Fenison does not give the source of this quote. He cites it as quoted

in *SCO* 2nd edition. The quote is actually from *My Church* by J.B. Moody, [189-190] but Moody does not identify the source.

The next thing to note is that this quote does not exactly say what Bro Fenison wants it to say. He prefaced this quote with these words:

Now, you have made your case [for Direct Authority], you have stated what you believed to be true have you not? Now, to be consistent, would it not be reasonable that you practice exactly what you sated you believed? Well, this is exactly what Dr. T.T. Eaton told those people who rejected organic church succession: [GCC. 50, 97].

Organic church succession is what Bro Fenison says Eaton believed and he infers this is what Eaton was saying in this quote.

Is this true?

First, let it be noted that Eaton uses no such term as *organic succession*, nor do I believe he ever did use any such term. What Eaton was saying and what Bro Fenison are saying are two entirely different things. Of course Eaton did not mean that new churches have no connection to other churches. Bro Fenison suggests that this is what we believe also. Because of such claims I corrected this in *LUF* [60] so why does Bro Fenison continue to misrepresent our position? But Eaton is not talking about EMDA for he speaks of men baptizing themselves and starting a church by se-baptism. This is not what we believe and never has been our position and Bro Fenison knows it!

Did Eaton believe EMDA? This is what Bro Fenison strives to make his readers believe! But he gives no evidence for it except in this barrowed quote. Is this claim a fact or a fiction? It is a fiction. Professor Moore gives his understanding of Eaton's position:

Nor did Eaton believe in succession—that is an unbroken chain of Baptist churches, with each congregation giving birth to another. He simply believed that somewhere at any given time since the ascension of Jesus, there was a body of regenerate believers, practicing biblical baptism, church membership, and the Lord's Supper—and preaching the authentic gospel of grace. – Professor Russell D. Moore. Dean, School of Theology, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. *Dr. T.T. Eaton*. A speech given for Founders Day Address at Union University Jackson, Tennessee February 16, 2007. p. 3.

Professor Moore does not agree with Eaton's view of succession but he gave Eaton's position and it does not line up with EMDA. But both Bro Fenison and Bro Cockrell quote Eaton as if he believed EMDA when there is no evidence whatsoever that he believed any such thing! Again we must take strong exception to this kind of misrepresentation. What these brethren need is to find where Eaton explicitly stated belief in EMDA! This they have not been able to do but they shower us with these unfortunate misrepresentations!

Jesse Mercer

Bro Fenison also quotes Elder Jesse Mercer as believing EMDA. He could have saved himself from this error had he read *LUF* [82-83] because Mercer believed in DA! But we must constantly go over the same ground over and over either because EMDA brethren refuse to read or they forget. Bro Fenison is quoting from an electronic version of *The History of the Georgia Baptist Association*, p.126. *SCO* gives the reference from the actual book, p. 196. I have never seen this book but have it in electronic format. I do have the *Memoirs of Mercer* and it includes the quote which Bro Fenison has used. Bro Fenison makes several quotes and capitalizes with large letters and emphasizes other words and phrases without letting the reader know these are his additions and not those of the author. I give some examples:

Our reasons therefore for rejecting baptism by immersion, when administered by Pedobaptist ministers is that they are connected with churches clearly out of the Apostolic succession, and therefore clearly out of the apostolic commission. [GCC. 107. The emphasis belongs to Bro Fenison].

Again he quotes Mercer:

That all churches and ministers, who originated since the apostles, and not successively to them, are NOT IN GOSPEL ORDER; and therefore cannot be acknowledged as such.[GCC. 108. Bro Fenison's emphasis].

Bro Fenison then goes on to say:

Here Mercer uses the old phrase 'gospel order' to define his position on church succession and church authority in regard to the great commission. [GCC. 108].

Please note that Bro Fenison does not here, nor anywhere else in his book, define *gospel order*, (nor any other term!) which is a serious flaw. What did Mercer mean by the term? What did he mean by *Apostolic succession*? We intend to come back to these terms later. For now we need only to consider Mercer's position on constitution.

Bro Fenison is trying to prove Mercer definitely held to EMDA although these words do not say so! Unfortunately for Bro Fenison, Mercer left on record his understanding of what and how a church is constituted and from whence it receives its authority and his statements demonstrate that both Bro Cockrell and Bro Fenison did not know Mercer's position and have misrepresented him in an unfortunate manner! When writing on the Differences between church authority, and that of an Association, Mercer said:

II. Differences.—1. Church authority is from Christ, as Head and King *alone*; but that of an Association is from the churches *only*. [Mallery. *Memoirs* . 455. Mercer's emphasis].

The authority is from Christ! Is that from Christ through a mother church? No! for Mercer says it is from Christ *alone*! This is DA! A little further on the same page Mercer says:

No church, Association, or ecclesiastical body, has any *power to excommunicate, or injure, or unchurch* a church of Christ; or even to dissolve one. This last act can only be done by the mutual consent of the members, by whose will *alone* they were constituted a church. [Mercer's emphasis].

Again Mercer's words leave no room for the EMDA twist! It is perfectly transparent that he means to drive home the idea that a church is constituted by their own will alone—i.e., the will of those who constituted themselves a church! This demonstrates Jesse Mercer has been misrepresented by these brethren!

But Mercer goes even further and tells us what he believed a church to be:

What constitutes, in our judgment, any number of believers in Christ a church, is their coming together into one body, according to the rules and faith of the gospel. And wheresoever any body of professed christians is found so walking together, they should be acknowledged and received as a true church. [Memoirs. 455].

Now these quotes prove beyond refutation that Mercer embraced DA for church constitution as opposed to EMDA. It proves conclusively that Bre Cockrell and Fenison have leaped upon on any semblance of a suggestion which might somehow support EMDA without checking for the author's real position! But there is more. In an article written for the *Christian Index* in December of 1833 Mercer said:

There is not even any direct scriptural authority for such an organization as an association. The church, on the other hand, receives its power and authority directly from Christ. [Hogue. *Antecedents of Landmarkism*, p. 231].

The church receives its power and authority from whence? Another church? An Association? A preacher? A church letter? A Presbytery? Mercer expressly states the case— **Directly from Christ!**

Bro Fenison and Bro Cockrell both quoted Mercer. They both claimed he believed EMDA. Yet these quotes demonstrate their misunderstanding of Mercer! These quotes were given in *LUF* [82-83] so Bro Fenison's failure to recognize these facts indicates an anxious disposition to rush to press without examination of the sources available and this is a characteristic which he repeats *ad nauseam* throughout *GCC*!

Mercer believed the authority for the constitution of a church came *directly from Christ!* This is our position! This misrepresentation of Jesse Mercer is a glaring example of what happens when men set out to find EMDA in Baptist History and cast honest investigation to the bats and owls! Bro Fenison may be able to fool the choir, but for how long?

Because Bro Fenison informs us we are to read *SCO* with his book, he should not

object if I here insert a quote from that book which illustrates the error just referred to.

Any person who alleges that either of these two men [Roy Mason and J. R. Gilpin] did not believe in a link chain of Baptist churches has knowingly and deliberately misrepresented the views of these old brethren. To assert such denotes a degree of prove-something-at-all-costs unexcelled in the history of theological debate. [SCO. 71].

Just before this quote the author of *SCO* on the same page said of Bro John R. Gilpin:

And I know this is a terrible misrepresentation of his views on ecclesiology.

It seems certain to me that both of these men once stood where I now stand, that is for DA. [LUF 171-176]. But what I wish to emphasize here is that it is wrong to misrepresent any man's position no matter what his position is! Yet this is what I believe both Bre Cockrell and Fenison have done whether intentionally or not I leave others to judge. As I pointed out in *LUF* I counted some thirty six authors quoted in *SCO* who did not believe EMDA. Let me clearly state that Bro Cockrell did not say everyone of these men believed EMDA. But he implied it. Look at the quotes by Ben Bogard, John Bunyan, G.H. Orchard and John T. Christian to mention a few [SCO. 58,59, 78].

In *GCC* there has been a plain misrepresentation of the authors quoted. (The Lord willing I will review other men who were misrepresented in *GCC* later). Is it wrong to misrepresent men? Will EMDA men approve this? Will they be silent? Most of them heretofore have been mum when they should have stood up like men to be counted even though they believe EMDA! If a man deals falsely for EMDA they give approval by their silence! I am disappointed! If, as Bro Cockrell contends, it denotes *a degree of prove-something-at-all-costs unexcelled in the history of theological debate*, to misrepresent Gilpin and Mason then how can it be proper to distort Graves, Jones, Eaton and Mercer? Can any man approve this pretension as to what these men believed? Is it right because *SCO* did it? Is it appropriate because *GCC* did it? But if *GCC* is not censored by *SCO*, and if conscience does not convict, yet the procedure of both books is judged by a higher law, even the law of Christ! [Ex. 20:16; Mt. 19:18].