

CRITIQUE #6

By

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An Examination of  
*Great Commission Credentials*  
and Other EMDA Articles

In this sixth and final article critiquing *GCC* in *GPP* (for other articles pertaining to other errors in *GCC* go to <http://ntbaptist-lizton.org/>) we take up Bro Fenison's claim in *GCC* that Mt. 28 teaches Essential Mother Daughter Authority (EMDA).

This attempt to make Mt. 28:19-20 teach EMDA is certainly one of the most convoluted arguments that I have ever seen! It actually runs on for 38 pages in *GCC*! Without going through the whole thing, it basically amounts to this. The author appeals to the Greek grammar of Mt. 28:19-20 in the attempt to prove this text

...designates an earthly administrator ("ye") that stand between Christ and all recipients ("them") of this commission. [*GCC*. iii].

He then maintains this demands EMDA!

What is wrong with all of this? My refutation of this irrelevant exercise is very simple.

Bro Fenison's problem is not grammar but the **application!**

Bro Fenison is bold to tell us EMDA demands an *earthly administrator* and an *earthly authority* [*GCC*. 123; iii.] to constitute a church! That is, an *ordained preacher* and a *mother church*, whereas Scripture demands a *heavenly Administrator* and a *heavenly Authority* and Christ is both! [Eph. 1:23; Re. 1:13;2:5; Mt. 18:20; 1 Pe. 2:5]. He is Administrator and Authority!

It is Christ who walks among the golden candlesticks—not a mother church—not an ordained man!

No man can do this! No ordained man can do it! No bishop can do it! No presbytery can do it and no church can do it! No group of churches can do it! No Association can do it! No *creature* on earth or in Heaven can do it—no one but Christ can enter into that holy domain to light or to snuff a church lamp! But EMDA, Uzziah-like, seeks to enter in where only Christ is permitted! And it cannot be for their honor to so intrude where they have no right to be! [2 Ch. 26:18]. For EMDA to be true it means that a church must enter into the place of Christ, take the scepter out of His hand usurp His place (Re. 1: 13) and light a church lamp—that is constitute it! How preposterous! How absurd! How un-baptistic! How impossible! How unbiblical! But Christ does not hesitate to tell us contrary to this false notion that

**....where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Mt. 18:20.**

That is that He himself and He alone constitutes a church! Bro Fenison argues that Christ gave authority to the church in its representatives the *ye* (Go *ye* into all the world....) and they are to teach the *thems* (teaching *them* to observe all things...) and that this establishes the necessity for EMDA! This is the basis of the whole argument by Bro Fenison. The whole thing is an elaborate grammatical exercise which amounts to zilch as far as I am able to see.

In fact, if the *ye* (s) teach all things Christ commanded then they must teach DA for this was Christ's teaching in Mt. 18:20 and these two texts must agree!

### **EMDA TOO LATE TO BE A DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE**

This twist on Mt. 28 is similar as the Universal Invisible church idea— which was 1500 years too late to be the true interpretation in spite of the veritable avalanche of materials given in its defense at the time of its first broaching and ever since! Protestantism swims in this idea and you find it in almost every commentary and every pulpit as if it were written in Heaven! Yet it was an invention which never saw the light of day before 1500 and that proves it a false system! It is certainly impossible for a doctrine to be scriptural and apostolic and yet be unknown for over a thousand years!

An improper interpretation of a passage as to its meaning will skew a man's thinking. This is what happened to Bro Fenison. EMDA distorts his perception! He sees everything with EMDA leanings.

### **ANY ERROR CAN BE PROVEN IN THIS MANNER**

Furthermore you can prove any erroneous doctrine to be true by using Mt. 28:19-20 as Bro Fenison does. All you have to do is plug the doctrine in question into the equation as he does EMDA and this text will support it as much as it does EMDA!

Of course this theory brings home uninvited guests!

Take the idea of popedom. Just plug it in as he does EMDA and there you have it! Take the primacy of Peter and this text teaches it as much as it teaches EMDA! Take Preterism. Just plug it into this passage as he does EMDA and lo and behold, Mt. 28 proclaims it! The *ye* give Preterism, the primacy of Peter to the *thems* just as sure as they do EMDA! His system not only permits such wild cards, but given his unjustified application, it demands them. If this is done in the green, what will happen in the dry?

There is not the slightest evidence of any such doctrine in this text. There is not the slightest *implication* of EMDA here! The whole theory of Bro Fenison is founded on a treacherous *application*! The whole idea is as foreign to the text as is the idea of

Purgatory!

## **APPLICATION OF A FALSE DOCTRINE TO SCRIPTURE DOES NOT MAKE IT TRUE**

The application of Scripture to a false doctrine does not make that doctrine true. Take the example of Eph. 4:9. Did Christ enter into Hades to free inmates or does this only refer to the grave? Either position is grammatical. Grammar then does not settle this issue. [Cf. Lange. Loco].

Take the idea of the primacy of Peter and Mt. 28. The Catholics say the *ye s* are the cardinals and they elect the pope. Does this passage teach this? They claim it is teaching their doctrine but the text teaches no such thing! Do they get this from the grammar? The grammar will support it as much as it does Bro Fenison's position. How do the RCs get this idea from this text? They get it exactly the same way he gets EMDA from it— by *application!* A *pseudo* application! Take Episcopalianism. It also appeals to this text. Does it teach their doctrine? No! How do they get their idea out of it? By application. So it is with EMDA.

Take the case of the laying on of hands as a church ordinance which Keach and others held to including the Phil Association. Because (as Bro Fenison claims) the *ye* were to teach all things to the *thems!* And then it would be just as logical to maintain the text commands and demands the laying on of hands as a church ordinance and without this act there is no true church!

Does this mean EMDA is taught here?

Does this mean that EMDA is the doctrine of Mt. 28:19-20 and the doctrine of the NT and has been the practice of Baptists ever since?

Not in the least!

First, We know that this has never been taught by Baptists before! The challenge given in *LUF* to produce one explicit reference to EMDA before 1900 has an empty mail box! Bro Fenison did not undertake to do it in *GCC!* He did not even take hold of the challenge! He gave many irrelevant quotes but an explicit statement of EMDA? Not a grain!

So far as we know no Baptist ever expressed this idea in the whole realm of Baptist literature! If any such quote had been found, then Bro Fenison would have touted it as if it were the holy grail! But has anyone seen any such attempt in *GCC* or anywhere else? If this does not write Icabod over the door of EMDA then I confess I cannot imagine how

it could be done! If EMDA was the doctrine of Christ and if Mt. 28 taught it or demanded it, then Baptists have either taught this doctrine or they have been most derelict in their duty for near two thousand years! But as Gill said of the doctor's degree Baptists never thought it, they never sought it and they never bought it! Hence Bro Fenison and others have come home with empty wagons!

But beside all this, if we press this stick-man grammar to such impossible lengths, we have the commission extending only to men! Why? Because the grammar demands it as much as it does EMDA for the plural pronoun for *them* (Mt. 28:19,20) is masculine (autous)! Press that with the same rigor Bro Fenison does and you cannot fail to see the absurdity of his position!

### **THIS VIEW OF Mt. 28 IS NEW LITE**

In all probability this theory that Mt. 28:19-20 teaches EMDA is not thirty years old! Did any man reading this article ever hear or read of this application of Mt. 28 before? Ask for its history. It has no history! It is just plain new lite! This proves it is not a Biblical doctrine!

What can we say?

Well, we are instantly struck with a lightening bolt of reality that makes the matter day-light clear! No Baptist ever taught EMDA from Mt. 28— or from any other passage in the NT! There is no explicit statement by any Baptist setting forth EMDA until our own times and more especially none from this text!

This indisputable fact lets the air out of Bro Fenison's claim and shows it to be mere wishful thinking. EMDA is not in this passage and consequently he cannot get it out of it! This is where his wagon hit the stump!

His theory then is just that— an unsupported claim and nothing more!

### **DIRECT VRS INDIRECT**

Take the call to the ministry. Is this included in the *all things* in Mt. 28? Of course! Does this mean that the call to the ministry is in the hands of the church? No Baptist ever thought so! The call to the ministry is **direct from Christ** in Heaven and so is the constitution of a church and we have direct Scriptures proving both, Mt. 18:20; Acts 26:16; 1:24; 2 Cor. 8:5.

Take revival. Is this included in the all things? Of course! Does this mean that revival is in the hands of the church? Only Arminians think so! Revival comes direct from Christ

in Heaven and so does the constitution of a church!

Take salvation. Is this included in the all things? Of course! Does this mean that salvation is in the hands of the church? Absolutely not! Salvation comes directly from Christ in Heaven and so does the constitution of a church!

### **MORE EXMPLES OF IMPROPER APPLICATION**

Take for example the text Matthew 26:52

**Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.**

Some men have given this text an improper application by saying this as an absolute and unqualified statement.

But it is not the grammar which drives this idea but *wrong application*. The grammar could mean absolutely that any man who uses a weapon will die by that weapon. But the grammar does not **demand this idea**. It is application which vaults men over the real meaning and maintains that every man who uses a weapon will die by that weapon. It is an application that is manifestly wrong.

Proof?

Jesse James was a notorious outlaw who lived by the gun and he died by the gun. Robert Ford shot him in the back of the head with a single action colt. So far so good. But the moment we look at Frank James, the application fails. Frank was as much an outlaw and lived by the gun as much as his brother Jesse did. But how did Frank James die? He died in bed with his boots on! This is a clear refutation of the application of this idea, grammar notwithstanding!

We need no outside help to repudiate such a false tenet! This meaning however plausible, however revered, however supported—by grammar, syntax, context, analogy or whatever— is proved false by this one single exception.

Take the example of Jn. 21: 22. Some of the brethren in the very shadow of our Lord's earthly ministry made a wrong application of these words. They may have appealed to the grammar also! What application did they make? They said Christ said John would not die before the Lord returned. John writing near the end of his life corrected this false application. So it is with EMDA but EMDA men refuse to be corrected in spite of facts.

Take the example of Acts 22:16 and the Campbellites. They appeal to the grammar. They argue that this teaches baptism is essential to salvation. Is this correct? Of course not! Where do they go wrong ? Application! Just as Bro. Fenison does with Mt. 28.

Take the example the Mormons and 1 Cor. 15:29. Mormons maintain this passage

teaches baptism for the dead by proxy. They appeal to the grammar. Does the grammar demand this idea? Of course not! How do they get this idea? By application! Is their application correct? No! It is totally false. The Scripture nowhere teaches any such thing! By the same error of application, Bro Fenison thinks to find EMDA in Mt. 28 but he gets this not by grammar but by a defective application and he may as well claim baptism by proxy is taught in the NT as well as EMDA!

Joyce Baldwin also appeals to the Great Commission to prove ordination of women to the ministry:

The great commission of Jesus (Mt. 28:18-20) involves all believers ...[Elwell & Weaver. Bible Interpreters of the 20<sup>th</sup> Cent. P.337].

Thus from the Great Commission Baldwin deduces women can be ordained and can preach! From this reference we see Mt. 28:18-20 can be used as the springboard for anything anyone chooses! Absolutely any doctrine or teaching can, in this manner, be injected into the passage and then it can be boldly claimed that it teaches that doctrine! Now this vividly illustrates Bro Fenison's method is false. Mt. 28:19-20 no more teaches EMDA than it does the ordination of women! One can claim this text supports the one as well as the other! The fallacy is manifest!

We also remember that infant baptism is said to be taught from the grammar of Mt. 28:19!

*Baptizantes*] Both these present participles are the conditioning components of the imperative aor. preceding. The *matheeteuein* consists of two parts###the *initiatory*, *admissory rite*, and the *subsequent teaching*. It is much to be regretted that the that the rendering of *math. 'teach,'* has in our Bibles clouded the meaning of these important words. It will be observed that in our Lord's words, as in the Church, the process of ordinary discipleship is *from baptism to instruction###*i.e. is, *admission in infancy to the covenant*, and *growing up into teerein panta k.t.l.###* the *exception* being, what circumstances rendered so frequent in the early Church, *instruction before baptism*, in the case of *adults*. [Alford's *Gk. NT*. Mt. 28:19].

Does the grammar of Mt. 28 teach infant baptism? It does so as much as it teaches EMDA! This illustrates the fallacy of Bro Fenison's claim!

Therefore, Bro Fenison's application of EMDA to this text utterly fails simply because it is not in the text, grammar, syntax, Greek, English or what have Ye! Nor is it found anywhere else in Scripture! It is not found in Baptist History! It is not found in any commentary! It is not found in any Church History! No Baptist ever heard of it before! As far as Baptist doctrine is concerned this novel theory is dead in the water! It is utterly refuted by the extensive records of Baptists.

No Baptist historian ever mentioned it!

No church historian of any kind ever mentioned it!

No Baptist Confession ever stated it!

No Scripture declared it!

No Landmark Baptist ever embraced it!

In fact Landmark Baptists tromp all over this false idea of a mother-church authority. Not only do they reject EMDA but they designate expressly and explicitly Direct Authority! Certainly no Landmark Baptist ever understood Mt. 28:19-20 to teach what they denied in word and practice!

J.R. Graves said Mt. 28 cannot be used to teach what is not positively commanded by Christ and He never taught nor commanded EMDA!

The law of Christ was specific. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever *I have commanded you.*" This most positively forbade them to teach or enjoin upon Churches they might gather, the observance of any thing Christ had not taught or commanded them, the Apostles, to teach, previous to his giving the commission. [GIW. 53].

But this is exactly what EMDA brethren are doing!

Graves said each church receives its authority **not from a mother church but directly from Christ!**

Each particular Church is independent of every other body, civil or ecclesiastical, and receiving its authority directly from Christ, it is accountable to him alone. [GIW. 552].

Of course it follows that Landmarkism does not leave EMDA any place for the sole of its foot to rest!

Thus this new spin on Mt. 28 is altogether novel, a new-fangled, new-lite doctrine and has the strong smell of new paint! I do not believe the idea is thirty years old! It therefore cannot be the stated, essential and constant doctrine of Baptists for 2000 years! This new idea of Mt. 28 is determined by tradition rather than textually derived. The Great Commission does not mention EMDA in any sense!

We have a more sure word. 2 Pe. 2:19-21.