

D.B. RAY AND CONTEXT

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Letter 2

In the Voice in the Wilderness for December 2006, (Hereafter, page only) there is an article “Where is The Authority” i.e., for church constitution [p. 25, which is the front page] by Bro William Stang. This article was also picked up by BBB, Jan. 5, 2007.

D.B. RAY Taken out of Context

This letter will deal with Bro Stang taking an old Landmarker out of context. He says:

One may quote Graves or Ford or Jarrel on what they believed on perpetuity, but to go from that to say that they did not believe in succession is like accusing them of not believing in salvation in that context, for in the context of perpetuity they mentioned not salvation. Our antagonist ought to be ashamed of such chicanery! [p.33. col. 4, par. 1; p. 32. col. 4, par. 2].

Bro Stang then says:

Now one of those ‘great Landmark Baptists of the past,’ D.B. Ray, wrote a book entitled *Baptist Succession, a Hand-book of Baptist History*. Now what did he believe? What did I underline? Is it no wonder that he has not been referred to by our antagonists? [p. 34. col. 3. par. 3].

He then gives the publishing data of Ray’s book, mentions some who recommended it, including J.R. Graves, and other unrelated matter in an attempt to fix in the mind of his reader the false idea that this book was the ultimate EMDA organ of its day. [p. 34. col. 4, par.1].

One keeps reading and reading and reading Bro Stang’s article to find what led him to think Ray believed EMDA. Bro Stang rings the dinner bell time and again but never puts anything on the table!

He never gives us the quote—any quote from D.B. Ray!

He keeps racing the engine but never puts the car in gear and the fan won’t pull it. He tells how many pages *Baptist Succession* has and when it was written, who reprinted it; all well and good in its place. But what Ray says on the subject he giveth not a line! He circles it, points to it, praises it, emphasizes it, dances around it, but never gets around to telling us what it says!

He says I (or we, or some who oppose his position) never refer to D.B. Ray’s book. But it makes no matter to whom he refers, I gladly respond. Unlike Bro Stang I have read Bro Ray’s book and I will give references. Ray’s book *Baptist Succession* is a good book and I agree with it. Had Bro Stang read *LUF* he would have known that **I did refer**

to Ray's book and specifically to the page where Ray gives his definition of what constitutes a scriptural church! [*LUF*. P. 190.]. Bro Stang could have prevented himself from making this blooper (that Ray taught EMDA in his book) had he read all of either *Baptist Succession* or *Landmarkism Under Fire*. But because he read neither, he made a rash rush to condemn me, *LUF*, and self constitution and grabbed up D.B. Ray's book in his effort knowing most of his readers would never bother to check it out! This is Bro Stang's predicament and it is the general method of EMDA writers. Here is Ray's statement which proves my contention:

RAY'S DEFINITION OF CHURCH

"We here give the literal definition of a New Testament church, thus:

A church of Christ is an assembly of baptized believers joined together in the doctrine and fellowship of the gospel.

Of this definition, J.D. Murphy, D.D. says:

'You have believers, baptized, joined and hence 'church.' Here you have a 'threefold cord' that cannot be broken. Such a definition is exhaustive and final, and defies criticism.'" D.B. Ray. *Baptist Succession*, p. 10.

Exhaustive! This means it includes everything essential to constitute a scriptural church. But it does not include what Bro Stang includes! EMDA is not in this definition! How then can it be exhaustive or final if it leaves out any essential? Who is right: Ray or Stang?

How is it that Ray quotes Murphy saying this definition *defies criticism*, when Bro Stang's position not only criticizes his definition but rejects it? If Ray had meant to include what Bro Stang claims is the all important essential for constitution—EMDA—then how could he have left it out of his definition of a church as he did? If Ray believed EMDA why does he not express it in this definition? How is it that his definition not only does not embrace EMDA but excludes it? Why is EMDA not in Ray's book which is on the subject of Baptist Succession and must include how churches are constituted? But the fact of the matter is , no one would ever know there was any such thing as EMDA from reading Ray's book! This means *succession* and EMDA are two different things! Of course, if Bro Stang had found where Ray embraced EMDA he would have touted it all over the land!

The proof of my assertion that Bro Stang did not read Ray is that this quote is found in the first chapter and on **the second page** of that chapter [p. 10]and is entitled: *The Church and Kingdom Defined!* Where do you go to find the meaning of church and how it is constituted in an author? Why you go to his definition of a church! Will Bro Stang say we have taken this quote out of context because it does not express his position?

Apparently Bro Stang got no further than the title of Ray's book. As he thought he had found what he sought on the cover of the book, he read no further! Then he **assumed** Ray embraced EMDA! Then, he **implied** Ray believed EMDA! Then he **asserted** he

believed it but without any proof! Bro Stang speaks of *succession* and thinks this can be *substituted* for EMDA as if it were impossible for a man to reject EMDA and believe succession! That will fool some people even though it proves Bro Stang does not even know what the issues are! Such *logic*(!)any fourth grader would reject without supervision. All of this leaves us wondering if Bro Stang knows what he set out to prove? Does he know what **context** means? Clearly, Bro Stang's idea of **context** and mine are distinctly different!

Here then is a book which Bro Stang cites as a support for EMDA. **He has not read the book. He does not quote the book.** He does not know what the author believed on the subject for which he is contending. Yet he is bold enough to claim it **substantiates EMDA!** This is how many EMDA men operate.

Ray's book plainly refutes EMDA and establishes self constitution! This proves Bro Stang took Ray's *Baptist Succession* out of context—the very thing he accused me of doing to others!

It is also significant that Ray says on p. 209:

If they design to be united in church capacity, it is necessary for persons to express themselves, at least on all those points which are essential to church organization; for if persons should assemble together simply on the profession that they believe the Bible, the we might have Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Methodists, with all other Pedobaptists; and also we would have Unitarians, Universalists, Quakers, Campbellites and Mormons, all united with Baptists on the vague profession of believing the Bible. [*Succession*. P. 209-210].

Here clearly we have organization discussed. *If they design to be united in church capacity* then he goes on to speak of covenanting together. There is not a scintilla of EMDA here or in the whole book!

Bro Stang says :

“Those who try to prove doctrine from history will always find themselves in such a position” ! [p. 34. col. 1, par. 2].

DO WE QUOTE HISTORY TO PROVE DOCTRINE?

As I have before observed, never have I attempted to prove what I believe from history. This charge is often made by EMDA brethren because these quotes from Baptists in history are too hot for them to handle. Bro Stang never made this charge against Bro Cockrell and SCO, I venture to assert, although he quoted historians. What is the difference? Did Bro Cockrell quote Baptist history? He did. Bro Stang's article contains a considerable amount of historical references, most irrelevant. Was he trying to prove his position from history? What the difference? What I am attempting to prove when I quote history on this subject is what our fathers taught. What they believed on this subject does not establish what the Bible teaches but it illustrates what they *thought*

the Bible taught and it is quite clear they thought the Bible taught self constitution in opposition to EMDA! This was my point. It is a point which EMDA men cannot explain!

We have given D.B. Ray's own word on church constitution out of the very book Bro Stang has referred to. It is opposed to EMDA. Thus Bro Stang has given us the most sterling example of taking an author out of context! Hereafter any teacher who wishes to illustrate this fallacy will have the most remarkable example at hand! Bro Stang merely refers to the title of Ray's book. Is that quoting an author in *context*? Bro Stang's reference to D.B. Ray and his book, *Baptist Succession* to prove EMDA by **the mere title** of the book without reading the book reminds me of what Bro Cockrell said: "To assert such denotes a degree of prove-something-at-all-costs unexcelled in the history of theological debate." [SCO. p. 71].

Bro Stang's façade is most unreasonable but it will no doubt mislead many.