

EDITORIAL: Bloggers should check their “facts”

May 29, 2009

Here’s a conundrum for you: How can bloggers keep on blogging if they’re unable to dial a telephone?

Beats me.

But unfortunately, that’s apparently the case. Three “prominent” Texas bloggers (I say “prominent” because they would have us believe they’re read widely. We don’t know for sure. They don’t document their circulation.) recently damned the Baptist General Convention of Texas for allegedly escrowing Texas Baptists’ gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. (See the news story on page 2.) If they’d have bothered to pick up the phone to check the facts, this never would’ve happened. Of course, that wouldn’t have been so much fun.

Here’s how your Lottie Moon Offering gift gets to the Southern Baptist Convention’s International Mission Board, where it’s used to support missionaries around the world: You give your gift, designated to the Lottie Moon Offering, to your church. Your church sends its contributions, including your Lottie Moon gift, to the BGCT Executive Board. The BGCT wires all SBC-related contributions—including money allocated for the Cooperative Program unified budget, Lottie Moon and the Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions—to the SBC Executive Committee. The Executive Committee transfers your share of the Lottie Moon Offering to the mission board.

In March, the BGCT was installing a new information management system when it wired its monthly collection from the churches—including the Lottie Moon Offering money—to the Executive Committee. However, the

BGCT inadvertently failed to send a document telling the Executive Committee how to distribute the Texas convention's money. That document didn't arrive before the end of the month, so although the Executive Committee had received more than \$3.3 million in Lottie Moon money from the BGCT in March, it went on the books as \$0.00.

Someone at the IMB got wind of this and told one of the bloggers, a pastor who had led his church to leave the BGCT and to join the competing convention here in Texas. Well, this seemed like a great opportunity to whack the BGCT over the head, and he did. Soon, a couple of other bloggers picked up the first blogger's accusation and joined the fray.

You would think at least one of these brothers would have thought to check his facts. They all claim to understand the intricacies of Baptist polity. So, even if they don't trust the BGCT, they should have known to phone the treasurer of the Executive Committee to learn the truth.

This is the problem with so many bloggers. Unlike a Baptist newspaper editor who is accountable to a board of directors and, ultimately, a convention, a blogger only is accountable to pay his monthly Internet bill. Bloggers aren't even accountable for genuine apologies. Rather than eat crow, they burp loudly and say, "That was from the crow I (wink, wink) ate."

I understand why these bloggers jumped on the BGCT without bothering to check the facts. The first blogger despises the BGCT and basically said so in his "retraction." (His blog actually parallels history. It's reminiscent of so many lies about the BGCT's positions on homosexuality and abortion that have been told to exhort churches to join the competing state convention he led his church to join.) A couple of others are disappointed in the BGCT and have become so jaded they only expect continued disappointment.

Still their animus does not justify their actions.

We should not judge all bloggers by this incident. But it should remind us not to take independent blogs at face value. Many blogs can and do provide helpful and needed information. But we must remember independent bloggers are accountable to no one. Readers must hold them accountable by demanding demonstrable verification.

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