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EDITORIAL: Mountain of facts, molehill of truth

Does fact necessarily lead to truth? Do pieces of verifiable information always direct toward accurate conclusions?

That's what leaders of the Texas Baptist Laymen's Association and their political beneficiary, the 1-year-old Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, would have us believe. The groups have been circulating reams of material highly critical of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Their fliers and fact sheets cite and document alleged evidence to affirm their assertion that the BGCT has grown increasingly liberal and unworthy of Texas Baptists' support.

This week's Baptist Standard takes an [in-depth look](#) at these documents and the person who prepared most of them, Roger Moran, president of the Missouri Baptist Laymen's Association. Moran has used his material to spearhead a successful campaign to steer the Missouri Baptist Convention on a more conservative course--more closely in concert with the Southern Baptist Convention and away from its perceived nemesis, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Managing Editor Mark Wingfield has spent much of the past month talking to Moran and many of his allies and adversaries in Missouri. Wingfield also has analyzed Moran's material and asked a libel attorney to review it. He has interviewed several targets of Moran's assertions, as well as Moran's strongest collaborator in Texas.

You may ask why we would devote so much space to a Missouri layman and his claims. The answer is simple: The material generated by Moran--particularly a document of about 20 pages and a videotape of his presentation--are major weapons used by Southern Baptists of Texas to convince churches they should loosen ties to the BGCT and support the new SBTC. Consequently, Texas Baptists should take a careful look at the person who pulled the material together as well as the material itself and the way it is being used in the Lone Star State. To do less would be negligent. The Standard's articles this week provide the only resource for allowing proponents of both perspectives to express their views. Please read prayerfully and carefully.

Back to the original question: Do facts necessarily lead to truth? A study of Moran's materials reveals they do not. Moran typically "proves" a Baptist is a liberal because that person has some sort of association with a known liberal. For example, his material asserts David Currie, head of Texas Baptists Committed, has liberal tendencies because he serves on the board of the Interfaith Alliance with a lesbian activist-- never mind that homosexuality is not part of the alliance's agenda and never has come up as an issue. By the same reasoning, Moran also must label as liberal Richard Land, president of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, who also has worked with the alliance. Is Land a liberal? Only if you apply Moran's faulty logic.

Guilt by association is not new. One prominent Baptist served on an organization called the Council for National Policy with Joseph Coors, scion of the brewing family. When a journalist connected the two men negatively through their affiliation with the council, the Baptist leader called foul. "Just because I am a member of an organization with several hundred people and one person happens to be in a certain business does not align me with the business of that person," Paul Pressler, a prime leader in the SBC, wrote in his autobiography. "That is a gross form of guilt by association."

Just as Pressler's affiliation with Coors does not mean Pressler affirms the use of alcohol, Texas Baptists' occasional second-, third- and fourth-degree relationships with people who hold other theological views does not mean Texas Baptists are liberal.

The charges detailed in Moran's material are serious. They are being promoted in churches across the state. These churches owe it to themselves and to their relationships with the BGCT to seek the truth, not simply a collection of "facts." If your church is presented with this material, seek the truth. Begin by contacting the office of BGCT Executive Director Charles Wade and asking for a reply to the charges. Call (214) 828-5300 or write to him at Baptist General Convention of Texas, 333 North Washington, Dallas 75246-1798.

Marv Knox