

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

SANCTIMONY AND PROJECTION GONE TO SEED

Dub McClish

Introduction

In recent articles originating from the eastern edge of Memphis, TN, certain writers have spent considerable ink describing and reproving the behavior of certain brethren. The writers at times name and at other times do not name their reprehensible (to the writers, at least) targets. Only those incredibly dull and/or incredibly ignorant of brotherhood events over the past four-plus years will fail to comprehend the intended recipients of their barbs, even when they remain unnamed.

The Forest Hill (FH) church in Memphis sponsors (and its elders oversee) Memphis School of Preaching (MSOP), and the FH preacher, bro. Barry Grider, serves on the MSOP faculty. Since the summer of 2005, various brethren have been calling upon the director of Memphis School of Preaching (first, bro. Curtis Cates and now his successor, bro. Bobby Liddell), its faculty, and the FH elders to “**give an answer**” (1 Pet. 3:15) concerning their new position of defense and support of our well-known erring bro. Dave Miller. (For the uninitiated, **before** the May-June 2005 Apologetics Press (AP) crisis [precipitated by the dismissal of bro. Bert Thompson, its director at the time], the MSOP folks opposed Miller’s elder re-evaluation/reaffirmation error; **after** Miller succeeded Thompson at AP, MSOP’s opposition abruptly turned to defense and support of Miller, and by implication, of his error.) Though they are culpable in these matters, all of the FH/MSOP are brethren beloved whose behavior has deeply saddened their former close associates (among whom I am one) in the greatest Cause.

Many interested saints have plied these brethren and their think-a-likes with questions concerning their amazing turnabout, only to receive woefully feeble answers, if any at all. At least four distinct overtures have been made to them (and to those of their mindset) to meet with some of their querists/accusers in a public forum to discuss these problems to the end that the sundered fellowship caused by their behavior might be repaired. Reminiscent, however, of apostate Israel in Elijah’s day, “**they answered...not a word**” to such invitations (1 Kin. 18:21).

Pressing the Issue

Bro. David Brown, editor of *Contending for the Faith (CFTF)*, has rightly continued to press these matters through its pages (as has the Bellview church, Pensacola, FL, through its *Defender*, edited by bro. Michael Hatcher). Agreeing with this policy, I have addressed these grievous barriers to fellowship in several articles, many of which have appeared in these pages, especially during 2009. One of those articles, “Is This What They Mean by Balance?” appeared in the 4/09 issue. It particularly exposed the compromising articles Grider wrote/published in the 2/10/09 issue of *The Forest Hill News (FHN)*. My article inquired if the FH elders and/or the MSOP faculty were going to imply their agreement with these compromises by remaining silent, or would they let a concerned brotherhood and MSOP alumni association know of their disapproval. Every family at FH received that issue of *CFTF*. Not one word of disapproval of the Grider material was ever issued by the FH elders or any of the MSOP faculty, at least not publicly.

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH is published monthly. P. O. Box 2357, Spring, Texas 77383-2357 Telephone: (281) 350-5516.

Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917-October 10, 2001

Editorial...

DOES PROVING CHARGES REALLY MATTER? (1 THESS. 5:21)

In the 1/2010 *CFTF* we began a review of two articles by bro. Barry Grider. These articles are printed in full in the 1/2010 *CFTF*. They originally appeared in two issues of the *The Forest Hill News (TFHN)*—12/1&22/2009. *TFHN* is the official bulletin of the Forest Hill Church of Christ (FH) for which Grider is the preacher. As most of our readers also know the Memphis School of Preaching (MSOP) is the work of FH in which Grider also serves as a part time teacher. ***If you have not read the 1/2010 CFTF we urge you to read it in order to get the background for this issue of the paper.***

Backed up by the FH elders, the MSOP and their friends, Grider made some very serious charges against bro. Dub McClish and your editor. But at best they were generic charges that Grider needed to prove. However, he did not even attempt to do so. *Our incorrect positions, we corrected, but to date the FH elders and Grider have not acknowledged said correction.* It should be noted that Grider has failed to give specific examples (persons, places, dates, times, etc.) of the sins of which he alleges we are guilty. Surely, he has certain instances in mind concerning who, what, when, where, and how said alleged sins were committed. How is it that the FH elders do not see the snarling words Grider carefully chose to describe us and to reference our actions, but almost in the same key stroke condemned brethren for referencing others in the same way he does? Also, why cannot those same men see Grider's failure to even make an effort to prove his rank charges? How is it that they do not see that Grider's conduct at best is inconsistent and at its worst is hypocrisy? How is it that the FH elders and their friends fail to see that to judge people guilty without proving them guilty is not only unchristian but unAmerican. But the FH eldership should have extra help, if such is needed, in two of their elders because they are also attorneys. Surely they know the difference between accusations, assertions or charges and that which is proved to be the case. *Whatever happened to one being innocent until proven guilty?* One would think that before the FH elders produced such a statement as found in the 12/1/09 *TFHN* they would have complied with such Scriptures as Col. 3:17 and 1 Thes. 5:21. *Moreover, they were asked to be specific in said charges, but they have thus far refused to do so. A strange way for officers of the court to think and act, much less unbiased and nonprejudicial elders.*

In examining the statements wherein Grider alleged, charged or affirmed that we had sinned, we will note some of the necessary things involved in proving one's case. By placing his generic charges in precise statements he helped us in our examination because, in effect, he has put them into propositional form. Knowing that every precisely stated proposition is either true or false (there is no middle ground), Grider has affirmed what he thinks is true about us in his statements, propositions,

or assertions. In studying Grider's affirmative propositions (for in reality that is what they are), we can see what Grider has obligated himself to do if he is to be successful in proving his charges/propositions. (1) He must define the terms of his propositions/charges. *This Grider did not do.* (2) In affirming his accusations/propositions Grider has obligated himself to *prove* (not simply assert) that they are true. *Grider did not discharge that obligation, either. Moreover, he cannot do so.* To begin the proving process (3) he must appeal to and employ the proper authority governing the case. *Although he cites the Bible as the proper authority, he makes no effort to show how we violated any one of its direct statements, approved examples or implications, which violations are necessary to prove his accusations/propositions—he simply asserts and asserts and asserts that we are guilty of various and sundry sins.* (4) He must also provide adequate evidence and/or credible witnesses in order to prove his case. *This he did not and cannot do.* (5) In order to prove his case he must set up an argument proving that what he has affirmed, alleged, and asserted in his statements about us are true. *This he failed to do and he cannot do.* Of course when one thinks a proposition is false, he is declaring that such has not been proved to be true. By his actions it is clear that he thinks all he needs to do in order to "prove" his case is declare, **"I, Barry Grider, have declared repeatedly in the strongest of terms that Brown and McClish are wicked because they have violated God's Word. More than that no one needs to know and no one has the right to question my assertions, 'thinking' (?) and conclusions about them."**

1. T F Brown and McClish "have been on a vendetta attacking faithful brethren throughout the Lord's church with venomous articles." *Grider should define his terms and provide proof that such is the case? Please name the brethren who are not guilty of unrepented of sins that we, as Grider says, have "attacked."* Does Grider say that the apostle Peter attacked Simon, the former Sorcerer, when he rebuked him as he did in his efforts to bring Simon to repentance? Also, prove that we have failed to correct our errors. We certainly have the proof to show that we have corrected any error of which, according to the Scriptures, we were guilty. We wish we could say as much about Miller, Crowley and all those who fellowship them in their sins.

2. T F Brown and McClish "have no respect for the truth whatsoever." A) Grider is affirming a negative. B) *The term "whatsoever" covers all things pertaining to truth. Therefore he is affirming that we "have no respect" for any and all truth no matter the subject.* C) *Does bro. Grider not realize he is claiming omniscience in order to affirm said statement?* D) *How would he go about proving this statement? But, he must think he can prove it—talk about an exercise in futility.*

3. T F By Brown and McClish's "writing and behavior they have demonstrated an attitude that is totally devoid of anything Christ like." *Give us an example of such "writing and behavior."* *If this statement is true where is the proof of it?*

4. T F Brown and McClish "continually violate the clear teachings of our Lord concerning love, kindness, truthfulness, and forgiveness." *Give us an example of such a "violation."* *Where is the proof that such is the case?*

5. T F Brown and McClish "cannot love the church for which Jesus died and behave as they do." *If this statement is true where is the proof that such is the case?*

6. T F Brown and McClish are rude. What does Grider mean by "rude"? Why does he not readily define his terms? Why will he not give us an example of our "rude" conduct? *If this statement is true where is the proof that such is the case?*

7. T F Brown and McClish are crude. How does Grider define "crude"? *We give the same response to this assertion as we did to question #6.*

8. T F Brown and McClish are hateful. *We give the same response to this assertion as we did to question # 6.*

9. T F Brown and McClish are "haughty." *We give the same response to this assertion as we did to question # 6.*

10. T F Brown and McClish are preoccupied with the affairs of others. *We give the same response to this assertion as we did to question # 6.*

11. T F Brown and McClish "behave like spoiled children who don't get their way." *If this statement is true where is the proof that such is the case? In order to answer this question he must define his terms.*

12. T F "We gave them one of their last platforms of influence, through our lectureship and *The Gospel Journal*." *If this statement is true where is the proof that such is the case?*

13. T F Brown and McClish "must pitch a fit in order to be heard." *If this statement is true where is the proof that such is the case? Why does not Grider give us an example of what he means by our "pitching a fit" and if his example differs from his 12/1 article?*

14. T F It is a "fact" that "no one pays them [Brown and McClish] much attention nor should they." *If this statement is true where is the specific proof that such is the case? Besides, Grider's logic means that Noah was a failure. Out of all of those living at the time of the flood how many people believed Noah's preaching? How many even listened to him? We are not in the nose-counting business in determining who is right and who is wrong. One would think that such a one as bro. Grider would have learned that long before now.*

15. T F "The two [Brown and McClish] have been isolated and marked, as they should be." *For one to be able to answer this question one must know what bro. Grider means by "as they should be."* Does he mean "isolated and marked" on the sole basis of *his and his friends' mere assertions, for that is all they have thus far offered.* We acknowledge that those who refuse to prove their case have marked us, but that does **not prove** that God takes the same view of us as the **Griderites** do—*brethren who seemingly do not know the difference between proving and asserting something to be thus and so.* But I do know who continues to call for "transparency," openness and compliance with 1 Thes. 5:21; Col. 3:17, et al. I also know who works for "nondisclosure" and surreptitious conduct. **Thus we, not they, are writing the history of these matters—of those who have proved their case and those who have not proved it.**

—David P. Brown, Editor

Having known these men over many years, bro. Brown and I could not imagine that the FH elders and the MSOP director and faculty could approve of the practices Grider had endorsed in 2/2009, yet the months dragged on and they remained mum. In the 10/2009 issue of *CFTF*, bro. Brown repeated the challenge to these brethren to disavow the practices their preacher had endorsed, quoting at length from my April article. He also stated his opinion (with which I fully agreed) that (1) those 2/10/09 articles in FH most likely produced some objections from the MSOP faculty and the FH eldership and (2) bro. Grider's 9/1/09 resignation announcement that he would leave the FH pulpit to enter mortuary training at the end of the year was likely not merely a coincidence. Each FH family also received the October *CFTF*.

Still No Answers, But a Response

After attempting to ignore us (or at least our pleas for answers) out of existence, it seems that our pleas and questions have not been altogether ineffective. Our persistent questions and our insistence that these men were Scripturally obligated to give some answers finally moved them to **respond**, if not to **provide answers**. In the 12/1/09 issue of *FHN*, the FH elders announced that they, based on Romans 16:17, had "marked" brethren Brown and me for "the continual pursuit of sowing discord" and "for their outright lies" relating to the FH church, its elders and preacher, and MSOP. *They have thus far neglected to be more specific in their accusations, although we have asked them by certified, return-receipt mail, to do so, as have the elders of the Spring, TX, congregation (see these letters in the 1/2010 issue of CFTF)*. They also conveniently overlooked the specific procedure Scripture mandates before marking such sowers of discord as they perceive us to be—at least two admonitions before the marking (Tit. 3:10). Although Scripturally we deserved none, from their point of view we apparently did not even deserve one, much less two admonitions (obviously, certain passages do not apply when the brethren involved are undeserving).

As *CFTF* readers noted in the 1/2010 issue in that same 12/1/09 *FHN*, bro. Grider spent the first paragraph of his lengthy "From the Preacher" article (about ¼ of it) praising himself and his accomplishments the two previous months. He spent the remainder of the article praising the elders for their "marking" action against bro. Brown and me, calling our names (three times) so there would be no mistaking to whom he had reference. Among other things, he assured his readers that he, the FH elders, and the MSOP faculty "have operated in peace and harmony to this present hour." He thus denied Brown's suggestion that at least some of the FH elders and some of the MSOP faculty must have been displeased with the 2/10/09 *FHN* material. He also thereby denied that his Feb. bulletin material had any bearing on his leaving the FH pulpit for mortuary school. *Of course, his statement also meant that the FH elders and MSOP faculty*

agreed with Grider's advocacy of some strange practices, including the broadening of his fellowship "circle."

In his article, he raked us and/or our behavior over the coals with such terms as *vendetta, attacking, venomous, evil surmisings* (twice), *fabrication, lies* (twice), *protectors of truth, no respect for truth, un-Christlike, haters of the church, rude, crude, hateful, haughty, spoiled children, fit-pitchers, innuendo, unity-disrupters, and discord sowers*. (I will assume that all of these appellations were written from a heart overflowing with love and goodwill and in a Christ-like spirit.) One is tempted to ask, "Bro. Barry, why don't you tell us what you really think of us?"

However, he has not been alone in his loving descriptions of those who have dared point to bro. Miller's errors and call to account those who insist on defending and fellowshipping him. Grider's compadres have not spared the colorful brandings of their questioners over the past four years, including *self-proclaimed defenders of the faith, radicals, caustic, arrogant, unkind, obnoxious, disagreeable, far right leaning, judgmental, censorious, self-righteous, unforgiving, fight-pickers, slanderers, damaging, vicious, those who are seeking to crush others, intent on making someone look stupid, are more dangerous than liberals, and are wholly obsessed with fulltime heretic detection, not to mention the toxic loyalty group moniker*.

Is it not passing strange that this brother and his kind can aim all of these intemperate judgments at us and in the same breath say of us: "They continually violate the clear teachings of our Lord concerning love, kindness, truthfulness, and forgiveness"? Let me see if I understand: It is unloving, unkind, and unChrist-like when we ask him, his elders, and his fellow MSOP faculty members legitimate questions and use plain terms to describe their stonewalling, but they remain loving, kind and Christ-like, whatever verbal blasts they aim our way. Is that it? This implied double-standard is the stock-in-trade of every liberal and/or wannabe-liberal—in politics and religion—who ever lived.

In a certain way, I do not blame the FH elders, bro. Grider, or the MSOP brethren for finally reacting. They must be very weary of having the mirror of God's Word held before them (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 4:16). They must be tired of being reminded that we are only holding them to the same standard to which they held (and presumably hold) such men as Rubel Shelly, F. LaGard Smith, Max Lucado, Buster Dobbs, and Mac Deaver. Our refusal to allow them to hide in the shadows, stained by the sins of compromise and fellowship with a false teacher, must be a severe thorn in the sides of those engaged in training men to preach the Gospel. (How do the MSOP faculty quote and apply such passages as Eph. 5:7, 11 and 2 John 9–11 in their classroom lectures without choking on the words?) So what is their reaction? Instead of responding to the message of Truth that should produce repentance (or at the very least some answers), they attempt to shoot the messengers. They should be apprised:

We are not dead yet.

In the course of Grider's 12/1/09 diatribe there is much material worthy of response besides the preceding material. Among such is the following astounding statement concerning Brown and me:

We gave them one of their last platforms of influence, through our lectureship and *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL* [TGJ] and now that has been taken away and so they must pitch a fit in order to be heard.

Raw arrogance and condescension are on parade in these words: "We gave them one of their last platforms of influence...." My, how **big** of "them"! It was especially "big" of Barry Grider, since he had **nothing whatsoever** to do with our invitations to be on even one of the numerous MSOP lectureships on which I spoke every year (1985–2005). The invitations came the first several years from bro. Curtis Cates and the last three or so years leading up to 2005, from bro. Bobby Liddell. Grider not only misrepresents matters by implying that he had a voice in our invitations, he makes it almost appear that Brown and I were graciously granted, perhaps even grudgingly because we were in fact unworthy, the privilege of speaking on MSOP Lectures each year only after we begged for the invitations. He could not be more wrong—and *he knew it when he wrote it*. Brethren Cates and Liddell eagerly invited the lectureship participation of both David and me and lavishly praised (as did the FH elders and all of the MSOP faculty—including bro. Grider, mind you) our manuscripts and our preaching therein.

Bro. Grider needs to go back and read and heed his own article, "A Time To Be Silent" (*FHN*, 7/28/05), in which he advised certain folks (who dared tell the truth about why Bert Thompson was forced to leave AP) to sit down and shut up. He makes matters worse by making it sound as if he had something to do with my becoming editor of *TGJ* and that I was granted that post upon applying for it, both of which deny the facts. As with the lectureship invitations, Barry Grider had **not the least** little tiny bit of a sliver of say-so in the inception of *TGJ*, much less in my becoming its founding editor. Furthermore, I never **asked** to be editor of *TGJ* (which his words imply). I in fact resisted the invitation to become such, as those who became the original board could testify if they would, but they (**Curtis Cates included**) insisted that I alone should fill that post and would have it no other way. *Grider ought to be ashamed to imply what he did, but pride is a huge stumbling block to experiencing shame or accepting blame*. They **gave** us such platforms! What a crock! They were overjoyed to have us working with them **as long as we were promoting them and their projects and not questioning their endorsement of Dave Miller and AP**.

I call your attention to an incidental, albeit significant admission (shall we say, a big "oops") in Grider's condescending statement. He said of *TGJ* and my editorship of it: "Now that has been taken away...." Oh, but hold on,

bro. Grider. Have you forgotten? *TGJ* was not **taken away** from bro. Dave Watson and me; we simply up and resigned out of the clear blue...Why, our resignations were a big surprise and mystery to TGJ board. The Grider statement stands as a **direct contradiction** of TGJ board's position, as bro. Tommy Hicks (TGJ board member) stated in his 7/26/05, e-mail to bro. Kent Bailey:

You did not use the word "fired," but you used "dismissal" which, to me, implies the same. Neither Dub nor David [Watson] was "fired." Furthermore, neither was asked to "resign." **By their own volition, both did resign** (e-mail to Kent Bailey, 7/26/05, emph. DM).

Now which is it? Both of these statements (Grider's and Hicks's) cannot be true (unless one is a postmodernist, of course). Apparently, Hicks reflected the "official" TGJ board position. Only one who was on TGJ board at that time, bro. Michael Hatcher, has contradicted the Hicks "spin" on these events, thus the rest of them apparently agreed with his assessment. In his resignation statement from TGJ board, Hatcher confirmed the Grider claim that *TGJ* was "taken away" from us (which only TGJ board had the power to do) **by means of the pressure put upon us to resign**. He wrote to TGJ board on 7/29/05:

The "spin" that the board has put on this is just that—"spin." The fact is everyone knows that it is also. While we are stating publicly that there had not been a vote taken (there had not) thus no decision had been made (technically there had not), we all knew that basically there would need to be a change made regarding the editor and associate editor. The differing terms used ("fired," "dismissed," "accepted their resignation") all boil down to the same thing, and brethren know that. Dub (and David [Watson]) were placed in a position in which they were forced to resign....

Now, by his statement, Grider has inadvertently, but most certainly, blurted out the truth of the matter, just as Hatcher originally stated it, contrary to the board's errant explanation. This Grider slip tells us that he and TGJ board have been telling brethren a tale they knew to be false all along, namely, **that we had no choice but to resign**. Bro. Grider needs to straighten things out with TGJ board, with which he is still intimately associated (bro. Cates is *THE NEW GOSPEL JOURNAL*'s current editor). Had these men any honor, they would issue a public statement correcting their attempts to deceive brethren about the circumstances of our departure from *TGJ*'s editorial chair.

Here We Go Again

Grider just could not let well enough alone. As noted earlier, he indicated a few months ago that he would leave the FH pulpit at year's end to enter mortuary school. It appeared that the temptation was simply too great to resist taking one last blast at his favorite targets before he ceased writing material for *FHN* (subsequently [1/12/10], he has announced a change of plans to remain the FH preacher and has thus "buried" his undertaking career). He titled his

12/22/09, article, “Let Them Alone.”

If I may be permitted a bit more “evil surmising,” it somehow seems a bit more than coincidental that his article came on the heels of the FH elders’ having received a letter from Brown and me and a separate letter from the elders of the Spring, TX, congregation (mentioned earlier). Further, it is possible that all of the FH members had by 12/22/09 received a copy of the “Special Bulletin” the Spring elders prepared (published in the 1/20/10 *CFTF*), mailed to every FH family. (All of these documents were sent to their respective recipients in response to the 12/1/09 “marking” by the FH elders and the accompanying article by bro. Grider.)

The title of the Grider article comes from the Lord’s charge to the apostles, pertaining to the Pharisees who had been offended by Jesus’ straightforward rebuke of them. He called them blind leaders of the blind, both of whom were bound for the pit (Mat. 15:14). Now bro. Grider did not name any names, but as I indicated above, only the dull or the ignorant can fail to comprehend his intended targets. I get the impression that he does not like us very much, as he identifies us with those Pharisees that constantly bedeviled the Lord. I suppose if Brown and I are the Pharisees, then Grider perceives himself and his companions-in-compromise as the Lord (or at least the apostles) in the parallel. So, as those Pharisees hated the Lord “with every passion of their being,” lied about Him, engaged in “evil surmisings and innuendo,” and “urged him vehemently . . . to provoke him to speak of many things,” Grider depicts us in relation to him and his colleagues.

We have no interest in truth. We despise the Lord (and, therefore, them). We twist and pervert words and actions to suit our “own evil agenda,” only seeking to destroy them. In a further grievous misapplication of Scripture, Grider then seeks refuge from earnest questions behind the Lord’s refusal to answer the chief priests and elders on one occasion (Mat. 27:12). Grider recalls an article written about him “several years ago” that was “filled with ugliness, sarcasm, and smartalackness [*sic*.]” (he must have a larger dictionary than mine). (I am confident I know to which article he refers.) He mentioned a late Gospel preacher who advised him not to respond to or even acknowledge the article.

Granted, silence is appropriate in some circumstances, but by far, it was the exception in the way the Lord responded to questions and accusations. This has become the ironclad rule with these brethren. Bro. Grider and his crowd had never before 6/05, at least to my knowledge, sought to avoid completely justified, Scriptural questions about Biblical issues by thus wresting the Scripture. I believe they do so “to their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16), rather than to ours, as they seem to intend.

If there were any doubt about who he had in mind in his tirade, he makes it clear as he mentions the necessity of marking “certain brethren” because “they engage in lies,

innuendo, evil surmisings, and divisive conduct.” He then admonishes, “**Let them alone.**” Pardon me if I find it a bit strange that he continues to call so much attention to (and with such virulent terms and arraignments) those concerning whom he advises all others: “**Let them alone.**” *He cannot bring himself to follow his own counsel.*

An “Amen” to Brother Grider

When bro. Bobby Liddell became director of MSOP, he also became editor of *The Yokefellow*, the school paper. With his 12/2009 article (no. 2 in a series on “Longsuffering”), he could not resist the temptation to join his brother across the FH driveway. As with others who have not dared to attempt any defense of their fellowship compromises (after all, they are indefensible), he attacks men and attempts to destroy their character instead of dealing with the pertinent issues involved.

What he writes in defining *longsuffering* (and what it is not) is good material (I have never seen anything but good material from this beloved brother, incidentally). However, with the application of his terms of definition and description, I do most heartily demur. Here we go again, with strident terms thrown out with no named objects, but objects clearly in mind and implied. To bro. Liddell, the “unlongsuffering” (shortsuffering?) men are *haughty, egotistical, angry hasty accusers, unwilling forgivers, brethren destroyers, discord sowers, congregation dividers, malicious speakers, evil surmisers, deceivers, heresy/heretic seekers, disagreeable, distasteful, hypocrites, arrogant, ungodly, and fruitless* (whew!). Text message to our brother: You really should learn some new pejoratives; almost all of these are merely well-worn repeats.

I think it fair to ask if Liddell was “haughty and egotistical” when he planned and directed those several lectureships at the Bellview congregation (Pensacola, FL), so many of which were very forceful in their exposure of errors and compromises (at least some of which he now finds permissible). Was he guilty of “shortsuffering” when he was “unwilling to forgive” the Ensley, Florida congregation across town for their acceptance of those who divided the Bellview church before he arrived there? Was he perhaps “unwilling to forgive” (and rightly so) **because they refused to repent**? Could Liddell be implying, in his *unwilling to forgive* slam at us, that Dave Miller has repented, but we old hard-hearted Pharisees just will not forgive him? Hmmmmm? *We continue to beg and plead for the first ounce of evidence of his repentance.* Our unwillingness to forgive is not the problem. **His unwillingness to repent is the problem.** Next to that problem is the willingness of so many hundreds of otherwise rational brethren to pretend either that he never sinned or that he sinned, but has repented (take your choice). If bro. Miller would make a clear, without-excuse statement of his repentance, we would almost stampede in our rush to forgive.

One other thing Liddell said was indicative of an exceeding contempt for at least some of his brethren who have dared question him and others about their change of direction. He referred in a very uncomplimentary way to those who “end up meeting with a handful in their own homes.” Before the summer of 2005, I think this brother would never have cast such aspersions on those who, for sake of conscience and faithfulness, have been forced to begin new congregations where they live. Is it now his conviction that only congregations larger than one family and/or that meet somewhere besides in a home can be considered faithful to God? If so, perhaps he will tell us the minimum number of families/members or the minimum size of their meeting places that now qualify by his *ipse dixit*.

But, please understand, we are not to suppose there is any display of arrogance in such declamations! Only those who dare declare that the FH elders and preacher and the MSOP faculty are sinning by fellowshipping Dave Miller and by fellowshipping those who fellowship him (2 John 9–11) are arrogant, unforgiving, and.... It pains me to say it, but in Liddell’s attitude we see arrogance personified.

Conclusion

My dictionary defines *sanctimony* as “affected piety or righteousness.” The definition of *projection* is “the act of ascribing to someone or something else one’s own attitudes, thoughts, etc.” I suggest that we are seeing both traits in these untoward reactions to our earnest and honest questions. The sanctimony of these brethren is seen in their holding themselves “above” questioning and accountability. They obviously consider themselves to be the chief exhibitors and arbiters of “piety and righteousness,” but affectation is a poor and pitiful substitute for actuality. In their minds, they have taken “the high road.” Contrariwise, how does fellowshipping error and refusing to answer questions about it represent “the high road” for people who profess to honor the command to be “**ready always to give answer**” (1 Pet. 3:15)? Their assumed piety and righteousness does not comport with their attitudes and behavior. They display, in a word, *sanctimony*.

Likewise, they are projecting upon us their own attitudes and behaviors. I have neither seen nor heard from their questioners most of the terms they have repeatedly employed to describe us, as quoted in this essay. Rather, the very attitudes and behaviors they ascribe to us are found to be the ones they continue to evince. “Arrogant,” they say of **we** who have invited **them** multiple times to discuss the issues that divide us. Where is the arrogance in such sincere invitations, and even in our continued questions about their convictions and behavior? I suggest that **the height of arrogance** is seen in their ignoring our invitations and offering no answers to our questions, but after four years responding by “marking” us (without any call to “repentance”) and verbally scourging us for daring to question them. They have **projected** their own arrogance upon us. These, incidentally, are the very

tactics of the ultra-liberals (such as Rubel Shelly) when faithful brethren have called them to account.

Bro. Liddell calls us “church-dividers.” *I tell you who the actual church-dividers are: Bro. Dave Miller and those who have exalted him as their unassailable spiritual hero, such as brethren Grider, Cates, Liddell, and company have done and continue to do.* Their behavior has divided and continues to divide brethren (both on a personal and a congregational level), yet they project their own behavior to others. Various others of their tactics illustrate the same phenomenon.

*It appears that a large segment of our brotherhood has adopted a philosophy Washington politicians arrived at in late 2008—the **too-big-to-fail** philosophy of government and economics.* Certain banks, insurance companies, and auto manufacturers were just “too big to fail”; they therefore had to be propped up, supported, defended, and salvaged at whatever cost and regardless of their transgressions. This large group of brethren actually got the jump on Congress by more than three years (maybe Congress learned from them!). When it appeared that Apologetics Press might fail because of a scandal involving its director, 60 brethren rushed to sign a statement of support; **AP was “too big to fail.”** When an erring bro., Dave Miller, was appointed to be its new head (some of whose errors had been widely known and publicly exposed for years), he then, with AP, became “too big to fail.” (Never mind that some of those who signed the AP “Statement of Support” had been opposing his errors before he became the head of AP.) The attitude of many “notables” became that, **at whatever cost, and regardless of transgressions,** he (and AP) must be propped up, supported, defended, and salvaged. The cost to the Lord’s body has already been inestimable, and it is still mounting.

Mark it down: *No person who has ever been or ever will be in the kingdom is “too big to fail” when he errs.* Paul did not believe Peter was “too big to fail” when he dissembled with the Jews at Antioch (Gal. 2:11–14). Likewise, no human religious institution is “too big to fail” when it (or its head) goes astray. If/when we reach the point that a paper, a school of preaching, a college, or a so-called “para-church” organization is “too big to fail,” we have lost our way, perhaps so badly we will not find it again.

The FH elders need to understand that in marking Brown and me, they have marked a much larger number of brethren than the two of us. They have, indeed, marked some of their own alumni from MSOP (some of whom have requested of these men that they issue a revised “marking” announcement that will include them). Some alumni have been stunned by the behavior of the men who taught them as they have seen their fellowship compromises and their refusal to respond to Bible questions with Bible answers. Now some of the ex-students are in the position of having to try to teach their instructors who have let various factors (friendships, family members, money, prestige, power,

pride, et al.) blind them to their duty.

My heart breaks to have to write such things, but it breaks more so because of the dreadful events that have caused the great schism in a once harmonious conservative brotherhood. Refusing to answer questions, hurling verbal mortars at perceived enemies, and marking the sincere

questioners will not correct the problems or bring us together. Until we begin to get some answers, our erring brethren must expect us to keep asking the questions, as uncomfortable as this may make them.

—908 Imperial Dr.

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How Far Will They Go?

John West

During the open forum of the 4/08 Dresden, TN Church of Christ lectureship, bro. Larry Powers, the preacher for the Sharon, TN Church of Christ, who is also active in the Memphis School of Preaching (MSOP) Alumni Association, challenged David Brown and Dub McClish's views on fellowship. *Although Powers opposes bro. Dave Miller's false doctrines, he believes the Bible authorizes Christians to continue in fellowship with those who defend Miller and advocate fellowshiping him, which MSOP, his alma mater, does.*¹ Although 2 John 9-11 teaches it is sinful for the faithful to even bid God's speed to false teachers, for in doing so one partakes of their error, Larry teaches to the contrary. Thus, he refuses to fellowship those who do not fellowship MSOP because the school is in fellowship with Miller.

It is putting it mildly to say that Powers did not like David, Dub and many others withholding their fellowship from MSOP because, in part, MSOP continues to fellowship the unrepentant Miller. After using faulty "logic" concerning the application of 2 John 9-11, Larry asked Brown and McClish, "**How far are you going to go?**"

Now that FH has marked Brown and McClish unworthy of fellowship, Larry and others who hold his false view on fellowship must ask **themselves**, "**How far are [we] go-**

ing to go?'" Based on *Power's convoluted, confused and unscriptural application of 2 John 9-11, how can he and those who think (?) as he does consistently oppose anyone who continues to fellowship those men FH has marked?*

Also, since Powers embraces Grider's large circle of fellowship found in his 2/10/09 FH bulletin article (dismissing worship for Superbowl Sunday, and so on), then surely he and Barry can draw a circle large enough to accommodate those who remain in fellowship with those brethren FH has marked. If that is not following Powers' example in his continued fellowship of those who remain in fellowship with a proven unrepentant false teacher (as MSOP is doing with Miller), then what is it?

Where is Larry's proof that FH, MSOP, and friends are Scripturally fellowshiping Miller? Also, where is his proof that we are wrong in withholding fellowship from those who extend it to Miller—a brother whom Larry admits is a false teacher. **How far will Larry, and those who believe as he does, go in marking all those who remain in fellowship with those brethren FH has marked?**

They Got Used To It

When someone starts wavering in his faith, practice and respect for the authority of God's Word (Col. 3:17), he al-

lows himself to get used to things that he formerly would have condemned. That is the case with FH/MSOP, Grider and others. I have already referred to bro. Grider's 2/10/09 FH bulletin. It is entitled, "I Got Used To It". In it he refers to many "errors, innovations, and apostasies" people often "get used to" and eventually accept. Although early on in the article he condemned certain sins he later wrote,

Unfortunately there will always be an element in the brotherhood who because of their weak faith are always resistant to any kind of change. While some changes are unnecessary, inexpedient, and unscriptural, not all change is bad ("I Got").

What kind of change does Grider consider Scriptural? In his article Grider refers to singing in the assembly and to some songs under the area of "expediency and judgment" ("I Got"). He writes that "most can sing 'We Praise Thee O God, for Thy Spirit of Light' but refuse to sing 'Sweet, Sweet Spirit.' Why, he asks? According to Grider they are used to singing one, but the other they are not used to singing. Clearly in this matter Grider *fails to understand the words of his own mother tongue*. To praise God "for Thy Spirit of Light" is simply to praise God because of what he has done **for** (on behalf of) us in revealing to us his enlightening Word (Psa. 119:105; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:4). Thereby Christians are "children of light" because they live as the New Testament teaches them to live (Eph. 5:8, 14; Col. 3:17). However, note some of the words from *Sweet, Sweet, Spirit*, a song Grider says is no different from the song *We Praise Thee O God*—save for the fact that we have not "got used to it."

Sweet Holy Spirit
Sweet Heavenly Dove
Stay right here with us
Filling us with your love

If words have meanings, and they do, then these words of the song have the singers asking for the Holy Spirit to come to them personally for the express purpose of directly impressing upon their inward man a "sweet spirit"—whatever the writer of those subjective words meant by them and whatever the singer today thinks they mean. This direct action of the Holy Spirit will bring, so the song says, "sweet expressions on each face." (If such is the evidence of a spirit working on one's inward man or spirit, from some of the facial expressions of certain brethren I have seen, the ghost that was after them was not holy.—*Editor*) Such words as previously quoted are requesting the Holy Spirit to do something **to them** (to their own spirits) so "that certain feeling" can be created in them and enjoyed by the singers. Note more of the words from the song.

There's a sweet sweet spirit in this place
And I know that it's the spirit of the Lord
There are sweet expressions on each face
And I know that it's the presence of the Lord

The singers of *Sweet, Sweet, Spirit* are asking God to do something directly to their inward man in order for those

"sweet expressions to appear on each face." Never mind that there can be other reasons for such facial expressions, none of which can be attributed to a direct or, for that matter, an indirect work of the Holy Spirit on the singer. But, for emphasis we again note that the song, *We Praise Thee O God* is expressing praise and thanksgiving **for** God's guiding light of Truth found only in His Word (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; John 12:48). "Sweet, Sweet, Spirit" is asking the Spirit to do something **to** the singer to bring a smile to his face.

Are brethren "weak" in their faith because they refuse to sing a song which is unscriptural? While I was a student in the MSOP, the song *Sweet, Sweet Spirit* was discussed in a class in which the instructor (Keith Mosher, if my memory is correct) condemned, as only bro. Mosher can do, to be unscriptural. He told us it would be wrong to sing it.² It makes me wonder if MSOP has now just "got used to it." So, Mosher must, per Grider's view, think *Sweet, Sweet, Spirit* is now scriptural. Since the FH elders and the MSOP fully approve and endorse the sentiments expressed by Grider in his 2/10/09 FH bulletin articles (the one he wrote and the one he recommended), they must now be "used to it".

How far will FH/MSOP and their support-at-any-cost-friends go with Grider's new doctrine? Will they get used to singing *Just A Little Talk With Jesus* or *Jesus Is Coming Soon*? (*Jesus is Coming Soon* is now endorsed by Malcolm Hill, president of TN Bible College. It is one of many songs on a DVD being sold by TN Bible College to raise funds for "needy students" who desire to attend the Cookville, TN school—*Editor*). Those were songs that were also condemned while I was a student at MSOP, but given the changes taking place at FH and MSOP, those songs may be acceptable now or in the future per Grider's doctrine. One must remember, according to Grider, "we must be very careful not to bind where our Lord did not bind" ("I Got").

With the new Grider mandates in place that the FH elders, the MSOP, and their support-the-school-at-all-costs-friends fully endorse, when will "praise teams" or the like, be brought in? If one can go as far as accepting unscriptural songs in the worship, who is to say that praise teams, etc. are not in the future for FH? If they do not do these things it will not be because Grider's "get used to it" doctrine does not imply their use—it is *only a matter of enough time to get used to them before they do*. According to Grider, one must be careful not to "legislate for others where God has not legislated, simply because we may not be used to doing something a particular way" ("I Got"). What does he really mean and how far will they go with the Grider doctrine?

On page two of the 2/10/09 FH bulletin, Grider ran an article by Tyler Young titled, "Binding Where God Has Not" in which Young gives his view on matters he considers optional and expedient. This article was an excerpt from Young's manuscript for the 2008 South Side Church of Christ Lectureship, Lubbock, TX. *It was edited out of Young's manuscript (ms) for the book by the editor, Tommy*

Hicks. This was done because Hicks thought the material was erroneous. Nevertheless Grider, saw fit to include the excised part of Young's ms in the FH 2/10/09 bulletin. This placed Grider and Hicks in opposition to one another regarding Young's material. Remember Grider had been the co-editor of *The New Gospel Journal (TNGJ)*. From the paper's beginning Tom Hicks has served and continues to serve on the The Gospel Journal board. Why would Grider, former co-editor of *TNGJ*, put an article in his bulletin that had been rejected because of its error by the editor of his lectureship book—who is also the director of the Lectureship and one of the Gospel Journal board members. Furthermore, when the speaker included the excised material in his oral presentation, the director was compelled to follow him into the pulpit and refute that material. But seeing that all of them continue in fellowship with one another, one cannot help but wonder if Hicks has also “got used to it” in order to keep peace within their larger fellowship circle?

Young's article carries the Grider torch by accusing others who oppose them of being “guilty of legalistic distortion of God's law” for requiring or forbidding what God has not and “elevating them above God's law” (Young 2). Young places the blame on the “past generation or so by those who erred in forbidding what God's word authorizes” (Young 2). In his examples, he discusses the “anti” brethren who bind where God has not bound on certain issues. Further in the article he writes that “we can also become legalists if we bind our judgments or preferences on others, making them ‘test of fellowship’” (Young 2). Yes, we can. But what he offers and Grider endorses is not proof that it has happened in the areas of concern he mentions in this article.

What does Young believe to be a matter of judgment? According to the article choosing a translation of the Bible is only a matter of your preference. He asked “Which translations of the Bible are permissible for teaching and preaching?” (Young 2). While I was a student in MSOP, the school, as did the church, had a policy on what version was to be used. Only the KJV or ASV versions of the Bible could be used. *If that position was expeditious when I was a student what has changed to make it inexpedient now?* How far will FH/MSOP go with their version policy (per Tyler Young's article)? I would not have a problem with the NKJV being added to the list for the same reason that the KJV and the ASV are permitted. But, will the NASB, NIV, or other modern (per)versions be permitted? Does anyone actually think that the Living Bible Paraphrased is a true translation of the original languages? Since the FH elders and the MSOP agree with Grider, will they announce a new version policy in the FH bulletin or in the *Yokefellow* (MSOP's publication)? In the 12/01/09 FH bulletin, Grider wrote that the elders, preacher and faculty “have operated in peace and harmony to this present hour” (“From the Preacher”). Since they are all in “harmony to this present hour,” there must be full agreement about Young's article as it applies to Bible version issue. Since so many changes are taking

place at FH/MSOP it will not be a surprise to many of us if the Bible version policy changes too. If not, then according to Young (and Grider by implication), they will be binding “judgments” or “preferences” and will be “legalists.” *And, with the new broader fellowship circle they have drawn they cannot afford to be called legalists.*

Young continued in the article and asked: “May we have small group meetings on Sunday night instead of a second general assembly?” (Young 2). Curtis Cates (former Director of the MSOP) wrote a book titled, *Worship: Heaven's Imperative Or Man's Innovations?* in which he stated that “Fellowship today is of vital importance. . .How long would faithfulness continue if we went our separate ways?” (31). In this section of his book he dealt with divided assemblies and continued by saying that

“we work together, study, sing, pray, give, edify each other. If we met separately, what would be the result? Love would wax cold, we would stumble with no one to lift us: it would be ‘every man for himself’ and the Devil would be the only beneficiary!” (31).

Has Cates changed his thinking about this subject? Does he now fall in line with this new Grider/Young doctrine on small group worship rather than the whole church coming together into one place? According to Grider, not only are he and the FH elders in “peace and harmony to this present hour,” but also the faculty of the MSOP. If there is no disagreement, then Cates no longer believes what he wrote in 1993. In his book, Cates gave certain implications of this false doctrine that include: (1) bringing about “seeds of congregational destruction; (2) causing “many to miss great blessings”; (3) failing to “encourage family togetherness and worship”; and (4) bringing about “destructive implications upon church organization, function and growth” (34). He concluded this section by asking: “Brethren, are you ready for this? You can be assured of one thing—the Lord is not ready for it!” (Cates 35). Amen, bro. Cates! The Lord is not ready for it, but the Grider/Young doctrine is ready for it as soon as enough time passes for brethren to get used to it. Once again, since the FH elders, preacher and

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the faculty of the MSOP continue to be “in peace and harmony to this present hour,” how far will they go in advocating “small group” worship on Sunday night? As a matter of fact, when will they start practicing it on Sunday morning with “children’s church”? According to the implication of Young’s article, both are parallel and can be practiced at FH. *If they do not do so it will not be because their doctrine does not imply that they can do it when they get used to the idea.*

Young’s article also advocates changing or dismissing evening services on “Superbowl Sunday.” (Young 2). Remember, Young states that a person is a legalist by binding “judgments or preferences” and making them “tests of fellowship” of which the above mentioned activity is included. It seems to be getting more popular to dismiss or abbreviate the evening service on Superbowl Sunday. Many congregations are doing this to appease the young people and sports addicts. However, where is the authority for this (Col. 3:17)? Who are we to put first—the Lord or football? I wonder if Grider, Young, or those who believe this foolishness have read Matthew 6:33. How can we put the kingdom first in everything when services are dismissed for football games? If it can be done for football, can the same be done for holidays, birthdays, anniversaries? I know of denominational churches who dismissed their Sunday services entirely because it fell on Christmas day. When will Tyler Young write and advocate this doctrine? If he does, surely Barry will be on the bandwagon to run the article in the FH bulletin. If not, why not? How far will they go with this doctrine? We have already seen how far they have gone with their fellowship of Miller. Why not go farther and add Young’s suggestions?

Young also advocates having “coffee and doughnuts during Bible class” as an area of judgment. I wonder which deacon or deacon’s wife will be pushing coffee and doughnut carts up the aisles at FH during Bible class. Since the students at MSOP must stay active at FH, they may have to do their duty and push the beverage and refreshment cart from time to time. Surely since they have “operated in peace and harmony to this present hour,” the elders and faculty are in full agreement with this new idea. Again, I must ask, “how far will they go”—*till they get used to the idea?*

Tyler also advocated that it is not a sin to miss services to compete in sporting activities and to travel. He writes, “Is it necessarily a sin to miss a weekly service of the church to compete in a sporting event, or a second Sunday service while traveling?” I wonder what he and Grider were taught in preaching school about this idea. Has either of them studied Heb. 10:25? Or, maybe the question to them should be, do you believe what you read? Since God’s Word condemns the willful forsaking of worship, should he even include

this in the article? I heard one of Barry’s favorite preachers, Wendell Winkler, advocate this false doctrine several years ago. He said he allowed his son to miss some assemblies occasionally because he wanted him to be “normal.” The other kids on the ball team would think he was not “normal” (according to Winkler) if they missed a ball game in order to attend worship or Bible study. The question that really needs to be asked is, “What does God think is normal when it comes to forsaking the worship of Him for sporting events or even traveling?” Christians are to seek first the kingdom (Mat. 6:33). We are taught that willfully forsaking the corporate worship assemblies of the church is sinful (Heb. 10:25). And, again, Mat. 6:33 teaches that God’s business comes before our business. How is God being put first when one believes and teaches that it is not “necessarily a sin to miss” worship for sporting events and traveling. *How far will Grider/FH/MSOP take this new doctrine?*

The article closes by Tyler issuing his opinion about the matter. He writes:

We may have strong convictions about these and other, similar issues (and this writer most definitely has serious concerns with several of these items); but can we demand conformity to our views in areas where there is room for judgment or disagreement within the boundaries of God’s law? To do so moves us beyond the law of God into legalism, legislating for God (Young 2).

Tyler must not have too many strong convictions about these matters, other than to defend them. How can he write that he has serious concerns “with several of these items” if they are all in the realm of judgment? According to him, if our views do not match his in the areas about which he wrote, we are moving “beyond the law of God into legalism.” Who has made Tyler Young the authority about what is or is not judgment? Where is his authority for advocating some of the foolishness he did in this article? Furthermore, where is the authority of Barry Grider, FH elders, and the MSOP faculty for supporting such baseless arguments? Since they are all in agreement, per Grider, then all parties mentioned must fully support all that Tyler Young wrote and that Barry Grider “graciously” ran in his bulletin.

There are more implications to the Young article than most at FH/MSOP want to support. However, we must continue to ask, since they are in full agreement, *How Far Will They Go?* They have set their course and only time will tell what all they can get used to that at one time they thought was sin. What is to stop Grider’s fellowship circle from expanding (per his page 4 article *I Drew My Circle Again*). And it looks as if he is taking the FH church and the MSOP with him. How far will they go under the guise of “unity”

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before some jump ship or before Grider is removed from the controls of the “good ship fellowship”? Since all seem to be in agreement, and as they get used to new things, they will continue to sail the ship into destruction (Mat. 7:13).

NOTES

1. Powers wrote a chapter in the 2005 Bellview Church of Christ Lecture-ship book marking and opposing Miller’s doctrine to be false. He also printed the same in a series of articles in the Sharon Church bulletin. He placed the whole series of articles on the Sharon Church of Christ website, <http://www.sharonchurchofchrist.com/bulletin.php>. At this writing those articles continue to be on the Sharon Church web sight, where it has been for about four years.

2. I contacted a fellow alumnus who was in school at the same time I was and he verified this detail.

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—22823 Red Leo Lane
Spring, TX 77389



An Open Letter To the Forest Hill Church of Christ Elders

Dennis “Skip” Francis

Dear Elders,

I have read your 12/1/09 edition of *The Forest Hill News (TFHN)*, in which bro. Barry Grider, with your full support, cast aspersions on the persons and character of David P. Brown and H. W. (Dub) McClish. Also found in *TFHN* was your own statement marking these two men.

It seems to me that you bypassed certain necessary steps in the scriptural process of marking those in error. Clearly the Scriptures teach that such action is a “last resort” preceded by other necessary steps. Since you accused them of “sowing discord,” which is equivalent to being heretical, a signal passage that you should have considered is Titus 3:10, “**A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject.**” Again I must ask when you, or your preacher, Barry Grider, or anyone associated with works you oversee, have made the first effort to admonish brethren Brown or McClish regarding these matters? Also, when did you make the second admonition? One does not mark brethren as you did precipitously, but only as a last resort—*after every other available option has been exhausted. Let us examine whether or not such options have been available to you.*

In 2006, you and all the key persons involved with the MSOP were invited to participate in the Open Forum held at the Spring Church of Christ in Spring Texas during the Spring *Contending For the Faith (CFTF)* Lectures. Not one of you or anyone from FH or MSOP attended. This invitation was not without precedence as several of those you elders oversee attended the 2005 Spring *CFTF* lectureship. They were: Keith Mosher, Daniel Cates, Billy Bland, Bobby Liddell, and B. J. Clarke. Until the 2006 open forum invitation was issued, the Memphis School of Preaching (MSOP) was well represented among the speakers on the Spring *CFTF* Lectures. Similarly, in 2007, you and *MSOP*, were invited to attend the Open Forum of the Mountain City, TN Church

of Christ lectures, but again you were no-shows. That same year bro. Lynn Parker of the New Braunfels, Texas Church of Christ sent you a letter dated 4/3/07. It was a request for a meeting be held in your own building on these matters and that a recording of it to be made available to the public. But you have, to date, not responded to bro. Parker’s invitation. I am not certain whether it was because of your lack of desire to meet, or because of the requirement to make the results public, or some other reason, but you failed to respond to bro. Parker’s plea. There have been efforts put forth to keep statements by and/or discussions with brethren Curtis Cates and Garland Elkins secret. This kind of action further indicates a desire on their part, and dare I say your’s too, to remain out of the public eye in dealing with these matters. Since you have the oversight of these men, was it your decision they were following when they sought to keep there comments from the public? Hopefully you will not consider the previous question to be “evil surmising” on my part. And, regardless of who started it, it is the basic policy governing your dealing with this matter. Since I personally know brethren Brown and McClish, as well as others who made those overtures for a meeting with you, I can say un-categorically that they and we have no fear of the light of day on this or any other like matter.

Your preacher, Barry Grider, obviously does not like to come into the light either. In one of his latest efforts in *TFHN*, 12/22/09, entitled “Let Them Alone,” he makes an impassioned plea for you and everyone to let us alone and not listen to a thing we have to say. Now that is what you call “being open and above board”? No wonder you do not have an open forum during your lectureship any longer. What is incredible, however, is that he attempted just that very thing in his 12/1/09 *TFHN* article! But he and you FH elders are the ones who spoke up in that same *TFHN*. Then

Grider did it again in his 12/22/09 *TFHN* article. *In handling this matter all of you are like the fellow who throws dust in the air and then complains to all that he cannot see.*

Further, Grider gives far more credence to a now deceased preacher, Wendell Winkler, than he does to the Scriptures. It matters little what advice someone else may offer, *what does matter is that one is fully compliant with the demands of the Bible.* 1 John 4:1 reads: **“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”** Does bro. Grider think that he and certain others are above such testing? Those who can stand the light of day will not hesitate to step into it for a fair examination. Barry is trying to avoid such scrutiny. Thus, in vain he attempts to side step it by misuing Proverbs 26:4-5. The passage reads: **“Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.”** It is interesting that Grider adheres to the first half of this statement while ignoring the second half. If he were truly knowledgeable of this passage he would know that the passage teaches us to exercise wisdom in answering people—but he must answer them. However, not only does he fail to answer, like you elders, he does not provide evidence of his generic accusations, nor does he provide specific instances of what he thinks constitutes sinful conduct in other peoples lives. But he certainly knows how to *assert* guilt!

Clearly you and those who stand where you do in these matters have had several opportunities to meet with Brown, McClish and others, but you rejected them. As far as I know, you have not attempted to meet with these men even once since Curtis Cates, then the Director of MSOP, in 2005 publicly endorsed *Apologetics Press* and its Director, bro. Dave Miller—still an unrepentant false teacher with at least two false doctrines to his “credit.”

Beside the fact that you “jumped the gun” when you bypassed certain steps in the marking process, you have also failed to prove your allegations against Brown and McClish as well as offer what you think proves that Dave Miller is faithful to God in these matters. Since this would involved public activity on the part of yourself and those you oversee, as far as you are concerned that is out of the question. Again, to accuse men publicly of “sowing discord,” one needs to provide an actual statement or event in which such has been done as public as your accusations were made—public in your accusations, but clandestine with your “proof.” You write they are guilty of writing “outright lies,” (while ignoring the definition of a liar) but again fail to provide any evidence of such in the *TFHN* you mailed to the public. *Will you tell us how you know that they knew something was false but told it for the truth with the intent to deceive others?* Will you cite one instance where they are guilty of being **“A false witness that speaketh lies, and soweth discord among brethren”** (Prv. 6:19)? Further, is it always wrong to be involved in that which brings about division when such is the result of teaching the Truth, defending it and exposing false teachers and their erroneous conduct? Would it be “sowing

discord” if someone publicly identified a brother who had begun endorsing the Pope? Or, if a brother began to praise Peter Gilmore, the current head of the Church of Satan?

See the FH elders 12/1/09 *TFHN* statement in the 1/2010 issue of *CFTF*, page three. Regarding it, I was absolutely appalled by your recent unscriptural actions taken against Brown and McClish. You accused them of falsehood and discord yet have done a poor job of looking in the mirror at yourselves. Did David or Dub “move” from their stance on the firm foundation of God’s Truth or did you? They have not moved from their positions on these matters. Since McClish had publicly “marked” Dave Miller in 1997, and had printed articles about his false doctrine in *The “old” Gospel Journal* in 2002, I am certain that Dub has not “moved.” Brown did the same regarding Miller and the r&r of elders in several issues of *CFTF* in 2001 and 2002. At that time sis. Annette Cates, the wife of Curtis Cates, was a regular writer in *CFTF* and a bundle of the paper went each month to MSOP. Did you or anyone from MSOP oppose such opposition to these matters at that time? *None of you did. But why did you not do so seeing they are today where they were then?* Also, Brown and McClish were regular speakers on the MSOP Lectureship as were those of MSOP on lectureships these men directed. Dub and David stood then where they do today on this matter. They have taken many stands over the years against those who preach false doctrine as well as endorse them, why, then, should it be strange to you for them to oppose one more false teacher? They have not moved. On the other hand, the venerable FH elders, overseers of MSOP, who would not have practiced fellowship with those in error only a few years ago, have now begun to do so. In actuality, *who has moved?*

What takes this entire situation from the ridiculous to the absurd is the 12/1/09 *TFHN* article written by none other than Barry Grider. It is a prime example of fellowship with and endorsement of false teachers. Is this still another example of Barry having to “redraw his fellowship circle,” enlarging it enough to include more doctrinally diverse people? *This is what Grider said he was doing and clearly he is staying true to his promise.*

In view of your charge that Brown and McClish are guilty of telling “outright lies” let us hold the mirror up to you men and study the reflection. *It is one thing to make an allegation. It is quite another thing to prove it.* When brethren Keith Mosher and Curtis Cates, et al., were called upon to answer questions regarding fellowship with Dave Miller certain charges were publicly made at the West Kentucky

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Lectures Open Forum in 2006, that labeled the writers of various publications to be “vile” and “liars.” When Keith was pressed to prove that any “lie” was told, he made no attempt to prove his charges. But the apostle Paul said that we *must* do so regarding all things, including allegations (1 Thes. 5:21). With two of you elders being attorneys I would think that such would be “second nature” to you. When Michael Hatcher took bro. Mosher to task about his unproven charges, Mosher told Hatcher that he was not talking about *Defender*, the long time monthly paper that is a work of the Bellview Church of Christ with Michael as its editor. Mosher’s response is interesting since *Defender*, *Standing Fast* and *CFTF* are the only publications of which I am familiar that have stood against Miller and his supporters. None of the other former defenders of the faith publications oppose Miller’s false r&r doctrine or his erroneous marriage intent doctrine.

We Will Not Meet But We Will Mark

As previously noted, since the sad events of 7/05 Brown, McClish and others have made several attempts to get those at FH, MSOP and others to meet in order to discuss fellowship with Miller and his supporters, but to no avail. The real question here is: “Who is REALLY the cause of discord?” David and Dub who have not changed, but someone obviously has. In Grider’s previously mentioned article there is further evidence of these fellowship problems. He begins his article with the following statements:

It has been a busy month of preaching and teaching. I had the opportunity to preach in two gospel meetings during October. One meeting was with the Lake City Church of Christ in Lake City, Florida and the other was with the Southwest Church of Christ in Austin, Texas. It was my privilege to close out the Spiritual Sword Lectures here in Memphis in mid October. I returned to Texas in early November to preach on the Schertz Lectureship near San Antonio.

A casual glance at the Lake City website demonstrates their ongoing support of Apologetics Press, Gospel Broadcast Network, and the publication known as “House to House, Heart to Heart.” All these groups and programs are in fellowship with the unrepentant false teacher Dave Miller. The Gospel Broadcast Network was suspect even before they aligned themselves with Apologetics Press because of their affiliation with Mack Lyon and “In Search of the Lord’s Way.” Do you consider the Edmond, OK church, of which Mack Lyon is a member to be sound in the faith, especially when it comes to who all they fellowship?

The Southwest (SW) Church of Christ, Austin, TX, one of their works being the Southwest School of Bible Studies (SWSBS), has also had numerous problems in recent years, not the least of which was their acceptance of Joseph Meador’s involvement with practices of Eastern Mysticism and Gestalt Psychology, both of which are rooted in atheism. They did nothing about these matters until Meador had left his wife for another woman—much too little done much too late. Legitimate questions about their position on fellowshiping false teachers regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage (MDR) continue to crop up.

One such example concerns another in bro. Grider’s fellowship circle—the Shertz Church of Christ, Shertz, TX Lectureship. It is public knowledge that the Shertz preacher, Stan Crowley, a graduate of SWSBS, espouses a false doctrine (in fact more than one) regarding the MDR issue. Crowley teaches that the mere act of “distancing” oneself from one’s spouse without that spouse’s consent is, in effect, the “putting away” mentioned in Matthew 19:9. According to Crowley, if you were to leave your house because of an argument with your wife, that departure on your part means you have “put away” your spouse. He further states, “Once that has happened, it cannot happen again.” Crowley also subscribes to the false belief that a man and woman are not married until the sex act is consummated. This means that the preacher who pronounces them “husband and wife” is in error, and should they sign the hotel register on their wedding night “Mr. and Mrs.,” they along with the preacher are lying. *At what point were you elders and your wives married?*

Stan Crowley’s errors were fully documented in several different ways. An eye witness, the former preacher and for a time one of the elders of the Buda/Kyle Church of Christ, Buda, Texas, Tim Kidwell, wrote in 2005 that Crowley said his own new definition and application on MDR was “worth splitting the church over” (*CFTF* 8/05). Crowley was a member and had been the preacher for this church before he attended SWSBS. Because of Crowley’s MDR errors the Buda/Kyle church split. Bro. Ken Ratcliff, an elder at Schertz, was contacted by brethren Dub McClish, Ken Chumbley and others about this matter. Also, in *Spiritual Perspectives* bro. Gary Summers wrote about and refuted Crowley’s false doctrine. Bro. Lynn Parker addressed Crowley’s error in a 65 page chapter, lecturing on it during the 2005 Spring *CFTF* Lectureship Spring, TX. Bro. Ratcliff was a writer and speaker on the same lectureship with several from the MSOP speaking on it as well. He even commended Bro. Parker for presenting that information. At the request of bro. Ratcliff, the Spring elders and David Brown met with the Schertz elders and other Schertz brethren (one of whom is a speaker on your 2010 lectureship) in an attempt to persuade another one of the Schertz elders of Crowley’s error. Because the Schertz eldership would not discipline Crowley the New Braunfels, TX Church of Christ withdrew fellowship from the Schertz congregation. Such false teachers as Crowley and the erring Schertz congregation are included in your preacher’s ever enlarging fellowship circle.

Grider also mentions *The Spiritual Sword (TSS)* Lectureship. While the *TSS* has, in times past, had a great reputation among the faithful brethren for its stand against error and its propagation of the Gospel, such is no longer the case. Many a venerable Gospel preacher wrote excellent articles for *TSS*. However, the current editor, bro. Alan Highers, not long ago, was willing to be listed alongside all manner of false teachers without any word of public explanation before the fact. This he was willing to do so he could deliver a lesson (that I am sure was Scriptural) on singing in worship. The occasion was the David Lipscomb Summer Lecture se-

ries, “Summer Celebration 2006.” His name was alongside the names of such rank false teachers as Jeff Walling, Joe Beam and Lynn Anderson. He later stated he was not a part of the lecture program but was there at the behest of *21st Century Christian*. Nevertheless DLU proudly announced his participation in their lecture program.

Of late it was announced in the *TSS* that Highers had established a scholarship at Freed-Hardeman University (FHU), a school that is ever moving toward the stance of her sister institutions, Lipscomb, Harding and the like in their liberalism. How can a faithful child of God put one penny into any of the so-called and mis-labeled Christian universities operated by the brethren? If you want your children to be encouraged to stray from the Truth, simply send them to any of these schools, encourage them to drink deep from what they teach regarding the Bible and religion and watch them become weaker in the faith. Truly some are worse than others and some of them are much worse than others of them when it comes to asking for “the Old Paths,” but none of them are where they were doctrinally when they began and for many years thereafter. But fellowship FHU, you do. Obviously, bro. Grider has drawn his fellowship circle big enough to encircle FHU.

Highers also wrote that “balance” was “one of the MOST important themes we have featured” in the *TSS* (emp. Mine). But when he defines his term by his actions, we wonder at his concept of balance. Should not God’s Truth on any subject always be more important than the subjective and relative concept of what is and what is not “balanced teaching?” It is God’s Truth that brings about God’s unity for the church. Balanced preaching is nothing more or less than preaching the whole counsel of God on whatever the subject.

Among the current *TSS* writers there is Phil Sanders, who currently works with the Edmond Church of Christ, Edmond, OK. He is one of the speakers on *In Search of the Lord’s Way*, the heir apparent to the founding and long time speaker for the program, bro. Mack Lyon. Phil is on record as stating that members of the Christian Church are his “brethren.” Also, before going to Oklahoma he served for years at the Concord Road Church of Christ in Brentwood, TN. They conduct children’s church, support Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes, Churches of Christ Disaster Relief, Inc., even giving endorsement to Heartlight on their website, all of which have no Scriptural authority to exist. Is there any doubt as to how big Grider’s circle is going to be drawn—Phil Sander’s is a speaker on the 2010 MSOP Lectureship. And, from your 2010 lectureship speakers he only begins the list of those in Grider’s big unity in diversity circle.

Brethren, as you “marked” brethren Brown and McClish, did you first bother to take the “beam from thine own eye?” Did you look in the mirror and see who was really being truthful and who was sowing discord “contrary to the doctrine?” Even the singular example you gave concerning the alleged “outright lies” told by Brown and McClish fell far short of proving your charges. My question for you is this: What lies were told in the 10/09 CFTF? I have read the article and am reading it again as I write and find no hint of

a lie in it. Did Tommy Hicks edit out of the manuscript written by Tyler Young—the very material included by Grider in the 2/10/09 TFHN bulleing in question? Was this a lie? Did bro. Grider agree with the contents of the Tyler’s article? If not, why did he print it? Was this a lie too?

What seemed to be one of the greater, if not the greatest sticking points with you brethren, is Brown’s question in his editorial in the 10/09 *CFTF*—“Is there more than meets the eye regarding Grider’s decision to exchange the FH pulpit for a funeral director’s work?” Of course Grider’s departure from the FH pulpit, then his rapid return to the FH rostrum makes such a moot point anyway. However, it is a fact (not “evil surmising on my part”) that Grider changed his mind from what he called his “exciting” “new opportunity” to a desire for his old job back. And, we dare not wonder at the reason(s) for Grider’s quick turn around lest we are judged guilty of surmising with an evil motive.

Now as such was printed in the 1/2010 *CFTF*, Brown and McClish have accepted your corrections and in no uncertain terms made their apologies to you, asking your forgiveness for even thinking that somebody remained at FH or MSOP who opposed Grider and Young’s views so clearly set out in Grider’s 2/10/09 *TFHN* article. But this in no wise settled the matter of your continued Biblically unauthorized fellowship of the unrepentent Dave Miller and others as previously indicated in this open letter. As I understand it, to date, you elders have not even acknowledged Brown and McClish’s correction of error referred to by Grider in his 12/1/10 *TFHN* article. *Why is that? Also, why have you brethren made no effort to comply with 1 Thes. 5:21 regarding your allegations against Brown and McClish? Am I guilty of “evil surmising” to wonder why Grider and you elders operate as you do in dealing with such matters?*

For your own spiritual well-being, it is my hope and the hope of many brethren that you rescind this unscriptural marking forthwith. Please, do not remain guilty of shooting God’s messengers! David Brown and Dub McClish have only been “walking point” in this patrol. Many of us are concerned over the direction being taken by you and those you oversee during the past four or more years. I assure you, we only have the best interest of your souls and those you oversee in mind as we ask you to **“believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world”** (1 John 4:1). Take a good, biblical and honest long look at those you fellowship and ask yourselves the question: *Would I have been in fellowship with them 10 years ago?*

Yours in Him,

/s/Dennis (Skip) Francis

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Directory of Churches...

-Alabama-

Holly Pond—Church of Christ, Hwy 278 W., P.O. Box 131, Holly Pond, AL 35083, Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., (256) 796-6802, (205) 429-2026.

-Colorado-

Denver—Piedmont Church of Christ, 1602 S. Parker Rd. Ste. 109, Denver, CO 80231, Sunday: 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. www.piedmontcoc.net, Lester Kamp, evangelist. (720) 535-5807.

-England-

Cambridgeshire—Cambridgeshire—Cambridge City Church of Christ, meeting at The Manor Community College, Arbury Rd., Cambridge, CB4 2JF. Sun., Bible Study--10:30 a.m., Worship-- 11:30 a.m.; Tue. Bible Study--7:30 p.m. www.CambridgeCityCoC.org.uk. Keith Sisman, Gospel Preacher. Contacts: Keith Sisman [From USA, Toll Free: (281) 475-8247]; By phone inside the U.K.: Cambridge (England): 01223-911243]; Alternative Cambridge contacts: Joan Moulton - 01223-210101; Matt. Shouey (Lakenheath) - 01638-531268. Postal/ mailing Address - PO BOX 1, Ramsey Huntingdon, PE26 2YZ United Kingdom

-Florida-

Ocoee—Ocoee Church of Christ, 2 East Magnolia Street, Ocoee, FL 34761. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7:00 p.m. David Hartbarger, Evangelist, (407) 656-2516, ocoeechurchofchrist@yahoo.com, www.ocoeeccoc.org.

Pensacola—Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Michael Hatcher, evangelist, (850) 455-7595.

Pensacola—Eastgate Church of Christ, 2809 E. Creighton Rd., {emsacp;a. F; 32504, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Tim Cozad, evangelist, (850) 477-4910

-North Carolina-

Rocky Mount—Scheffield Drive Church of Christ, 3309 Scheffield Dr., Rocky Mount, NC 27802 (252) 937-7997.

-South Carolina-

Belvedere (Greater Augusta, Georgia Area)—Church of Christ, 535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841, www.belvederechurchofchrist.org; e-mail belvecoc@gmail.com, (803) 442-6388, Sun.: 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Evangelist: Ken Chumbley (803) 279-8663.

-Oklahoma-

Porum— Church of Christ, 8 miles South of I-40 at Hwy 2, Warner exit. Sun. 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. Allen Lawson, evangelist, email: lawson@starnetok.net.

- Tennessee-

Murfreesboro—Church of Christ, 1154 Park Avenue, Murfreesboro, TN 37129, Sun. Bible class 9:00 a.m., Worship 10:00 a.m., Fellowship meal 11:00 a.m., Devotional 12:00 p.m.; Wed. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. For directions and other information please visit our website at www.murfreesboro-churchofchrist.org. evangelist, Steve Yeatts.

-Texas-

Denton area—Northpoint Church of Christ, 5101 E. University Dr. (Greenbelt Business Park). Mailing address: Northpoint Church of Christ, Greenbelt Business Park, 5101 E. University Dr., Box 6, Denton, TX 76208. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 1:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: 940.387.1429; tgjoriginal@verizon.net.

Evant—Evant Church of Christ, 310 West Brooks Drive, Evant, TX 76525. Office: (254) 471-5705; Jess Whitlock, evangelist (254) 471-5717.

Houston area—Spring Church of Christ, 1327 Spring Cypress, P.O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383, (281) 353-2707. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring Contending for the Faith Lectures beginning the last Sunday in February. www.churchesofchrist.com.

Hubbard—105 NE 6th St., Hubbard, TX 76648, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Delbert J. Goines; DJGoines@Valornet.com.

Huntsville—1380 Fish Hatchery Rd. Huntsville, TX 77320. Sun. 9 a. m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (936) 438-8202.

New Braunfels—225 Saenger Halle Rd. Sun: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. Wed. 7:30 p.m. Lynn Parker, evangelist. (830) 625-9367. www.nbchurchofchrist.com.

Richwood—1600 Brazosport, Richwood, TX. Sun. 9:30; 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (979) 265-4256.