

## THE EVER-WIDENING FELLOWSHIP ROAD

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The path and destination of those who set out on a new fellowship pilgrimage five years ago is becoming increasingly apparent. Consider with me the most recent milestone on that road, prefaced by a very brief background. Likely, the sixty brethren who signed the "Statement of Support for Apologetics Press (AP) followed shortly thereafter (early June 2005) by the announcement that brother Dave Miller was appointed as its new executive director, did not foresee the far-reaching effects of that initial compromise. Miller came to AP in 2002 with heavy doctrinal baggage (elder r/r, marriage "intent"). Shortly thereafter, brother Terry Hightower tried more than once to elicit a response from Miller relative to his agreement/disagreement with brother Mac Deaver's direct-operation error (before Mac began publicly advocating his Holy Spirit-baptism error). Miller refused even to acknowledge receipt of Hightower's inquiries.

However, Miller recently showed his hand relative to Deaver and his errors. A young man (in years and in the faith), a stranger to me and to the goings-on since mid-2005, called me recently (cir. May 1, 2010) with some very interesting information. In his zeal for the Truth, he had challenged a Baptist preacher to a debate. The Baptist declined, saying he would only debate someone with "credentials," and he insisted on affirming that "The Church of Christ is a Cult" as one of the propositions. A brother where this young man lives suggested he call brother Curtis Gates, which, in all innocence he did. Gates declined, but suggested he call Miller, which, in all innocence, he did. Miller declined, but suggested he call Deaver which, in all innocence, he did, not knowing of Mac's Holy Spirit errors at the time. I told the young man immediately that Mac was not a qualified representative of the Lord and His Truth because of his Holy Spirit errors. He said he agreed and learned of these errors only after a phone conversation with him (Deaver was the preacher at the apostate Sherman Drive congregation [ Pearl Street, in Denton, TX] at the time, but has since moved back to Sheffield, TX).

Upon my follow-up questions to our phone conversation via e-mail, he wrote the following to me on May 22 about the matter (quoted as he wrote it): Yes, I did call Mac Deaver and I did not know of his views concerning the HS. After I found out, I called Curtis to find out if he believed this. He said know [sic] and was saddened that Dave Miller would recommend such an individual to defend the Lord's church.

Mac Deaver didn't say much about the HS or anything. He and the woman who answered the phone seemed pretty rude as if they were expecting me to be calling to harass or criticize Mac which I didn't even realize at the time. Mae said that he'd be glad to debate this fella [sic] over Water Baptism and "Are [sic] the church of Christ a Cut [sic].

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Now, some observations:

1. Miller's recommendation of Deaver to represent the Lord's church in this debate is a clear indication that Miller does not (a) consider Deaver's doctrines to be erroneous or (b) if he considers them to be errors, he does not count them as barriers to fellowship (if my conclusions are faulty, some one please correct me). My surprise is not that Miller agrees with Deaver, but that he failed to realize he was announcing his agreement with Deaver and his errors by this recommendation.

2. Cates's recommendation of Miller (whose errors Curtis 'voted' to oppose before he "voted" to defend them—marked by the moment he signed the AP "Support" statement) is no surprise, but Miller's recommendation of Deaver has sorta, kinda, maybe-so put Cates's continued endorsement of Miller in a bind, don't you think? Question: Can Cates continue to fellowship Miller who fellowships Deaver whom Cates has (correctly) avowed he doesn't/can't/won't fellowship (he exposed, per my assignment, Deaver's "supra-literary" error on the 1998 Annual Denton Lectures)? Answer: After observing the fellowship meanderings and contortions of which Cates and those of his mentality have proved themselves capable over the past five years, I haven't the slightest doubt that he will find ample excuses for hanging onto his fellowship with Miller (he and his comrades in fellowship-compromise are in too deep not to do so). All the while, Cates will doubtless hypocritically continue to declare his abhorrence of Deaver's errors.

3, In that Cates is only "saddened" at Miller's fellowship with Deaver (and will go no further than a bit of lamentation), we sadly see these brethren allied with Cates taking one more fatal step in their fellowship concessions. If Cates continues his fellowship with Miller (which he will), and Miller is in fellowship with Deaver (which he has now proved himself to be), then why are not both Cote and Miller "partaker in" (i.e., in fellowship with) Deaver and his evil works" (i.e. errors) (**2 John 10-11**)?

4. And what will our old friend, brother Tommy Hicks, do about all of this (he who in July 2005 wrote to brother Kent Bailey that he stands with "every other sound brother – in opposition to..." Miller's elder r/r and marriage intent doctrine)? In October 2005 Hicks planned and directed a lectureship on "The Holy Spirit" that included no fewer than eight lectures specifically addressing the then-known Denver error (Cates delivered one of those lectures), Hicks eventually published the book of those lectures). Now as long as he remains in cahoots with Cates (Hicks spoke on the recent MSOP Lectures), who defends Miller in his errors, Hicks (deny it all he wants to), therefore **implicitly endorses/defends Miller's errors** (which he "voted" against before he "voted" for, perhaps learning this stratagem from Cates). But even worse, with Miller's endorsement of

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Deaver, **Hicks is now also in the position of implicitly endorsing Deaver** by means of Miller's recommendations of him. What a gargantuan mess these brethren have created for themselves – and worse, for a once united brotherhood.

Those who can't (or won't) get off this spiritually suicidal compromise bandwagon (the drivers of which are guilty of fierce loyalty to a man in multiple errors [Dave Miller] and of a determination to protect their respective fiefdoms regardless of the compromises required) will go over a cliff with the wagon drivers (Matthew 15:14).

[Editor's Note: the following underscores some of the thoughts in my article above.]

### WHAT WE ARE SEEING IS UNHEALTHY, BUT CAN IT BE STOPPED?

Over the years we have seen many unfortunate transformations within the Lord's church. Splinter groups (with their doctrinal liberalism) have often taken on a life of their own, sometimes dissolving into full-fledged denominationalism or at times becoming a free floating filly extended entity that loosely, but continually identifies itself with the churches of Christ.

We are now seeing a new organism develop that is likely to result in the largest defection from Truth we've ever experienced. Call it the "Metastasized Church," as it is an unfavorable spreading of affiliations and associations that will undermine the purity of doctrine demanded by the Scriptures. It did not start of its own volition, but rather became the child of circumstance when Bert Thompson was removed from Apologetics Press and Dave Miller became the Interim (ahem) Director. We needn't rehearse that story again. Because of the tremendous effort to prevent AP from falling apart or losing its support base there have been several compromises with Truth.

There is the compromise to continue fellowship with Miller (and AP) on the part of those who actually do not agree with his position and actions with regard to Elder Re-evaluation/Reaffirmation and his view of intent in marriage. These brethren know they cannot defend Miller, but will stubbornly keep him in their fellowship circle. There is the compromise on the part of many otherwise (or formerly) conservative brethren who, in order to expand and increase their numbers, will fellowship with new "circuit rider" brethren who speak anywhere with anyone. Their associations with or acceptance of Sunset, Tahoe, the Christian Church, and liberal "church" schools is amazing because those "otherwise" brethren would not have set foot within a hundred yards of these places or events five years ago. Yet now we see someone like Brad Harrub, Phil Sanders, and the like embraced by a wide swath of churches... And the real kicker is that congregations do not seem to mind those things,