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Design of Providence

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Where are the husbands?

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2013 AT 11:22 AM POSTED BY TONY-ALLEN CUCOLO COMMENTS (0)

Christian husbands, let me present a parable for you: if your wife one day told you, "Honey, I'm about to take a casual stroll through that dangerous part of town that even the cops don't go to," would you let them? If they told you, "Honey, I'm about to go have a nice private chat with that guy we suspect is a serial killer," would you let them? Obviously, most husbands would answer "no" to these questions. You'd probably want to protect your wives from all possible danger to their persons. Why then do so many husbands, when these situations are placed in the *spiritual* realm, answer "yes"?

Husbands are commanded by scripture to love their wife as Christ loves the church, and part of this is to "nourish" and "cherish" her (Eph 5:29). As the spiritual head of the house, the husband is not only the spiritual role model for his children, but is the one who provides the spiritual nourishment and education to his wife and, consequently therefore, from him and the wife to the children. He is directly responsible for what his family professes as orthodoxy and what his family declares to be their object of worship. "But as for me and my house," Joshua famously declared, "we will serve the LORD" (Jos 24:15). The definition of "LORD" means as much today as it did back in Joshua's day. Is is the husband's role to make certain that by "LORD" his family means the LORD our God, and not another deity such as Ba'al.

Yet constantly on social media, I see married women posting quotes from men and women who claim to be teachers of God but who have been proven to be wolves in sheep's clothing. They quote from individuals who, if they had existed in the Old Testament, would most likely have been stoned for their false prophecies, false visions of God, and false doctrines. What I immediately think each time is, "Does her husband know she's posting that?" I think to myself, "Is her husband aware from which fountain his wife is getting her spiritual nourishment?" Is the husband aware that his wife is seeking theological grounding from a heretic and false teacher? Is he aware that his fellow sheep is wandering towards a ravenous wolf? Of course, it will be granted not all the quotes shared are not necessarily bad or even "wrong" to some degree, but why would we permit our loved ones to traverse through a mine field of error hoping they won't step on the wrong spot?

In some respects, the wives may intentionally not care, and perhaps the husband permits her to be over him in this respect, not realizing that part of the husband's role, as said earlier, is to guide his wife on spiritual matters she may not fully understand (cf. 1 Cor 14:35). Other times, it might well be that the husband is fully aware, and doesn't care...in fact, he may *approve* of the false teacher having influence in his home. In this case, he invites danger into his life, and willingly puts his entire family in a line that leads to great sin, error, or even apostasy.

Christian husband, your role is to be used of God for the sanctification of your wife. Just as you need to be aware of the budget, the needs of the individual family members, and other serious concerns, so too do you also need to be aware of what your family is being exposed in their spiritual studies. Are they

"The person who loves God cannot help loving every man as himself..."

Maximos the Confessor 7th Century Theologian

"The Christian life, then, is a battle, so sharp and full of danger that effort can nowhere be relaxed without loss..." Ulrich Zwingli

16th Century Swiss Reformer

"I look upon all the world

as my parish; thus far I
mean, that, in whatever
part of it I am, I judge it
meet, right, and my
bounden duty to declare
unto all that are willing to
hear, the glad tidings of
salvation."

John Wesley Founder of Methodism

"As natural science was a chaos until the principal of induction was admitted and faithfully carried out, so theology is a jumble of human speculations, not worth a straw, when men refuse to apply the same principle to the study of the Word of God."

Charles Hodge "Systematic Theology: Vol. 1"

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learning the truth of God, or are they learning heretical nonsense? Are they being fed on spiritual fruit or demonic junk food? Ask yourself, again, if you would put your wife or even family in such danger as I illustrated at the beginning of this post. If not, then why would you dare to put your family in danger related to their eternal soul?

I write this not as an open condemnation or a judgment against others, but merely a call for discernment.

Labels: False Teachers, Family, Husband, Marriage | Links to this post

A Warning and Call for Repentance: Philip Stallings

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2013 AT 11:02 AM POSTED BY TONY-ALLEN CUCOLO

For a while, I've known a gentleman named Philip Stallings, also known as "Mr. Paradox" in some circles. We met through Facebook, chatted often on the phone, met in person (since his residence of Durham, NC is not too far from my residence in Hampton Roads, VA), and we were both admins for a group on Facebook called Monergism. While he was probably more of a "high Calvinist" than I was, I respected his desire to uphold the truth.

Then, on the morning of November 19, I received a Facebook message from a married woman (also a member of Monergism) claiming that Philip had been flirting with her, asking questions about her 18-year old daughter (Philip is 34 at the time of this writing), and sending her inappropriate messages as well as inappropriate photos. While I wasn't going to just dismiss her account outright, those who know me personally know that I don't readily believe everything I hear, and so I asked her to provide some evidence for this. In response, she sent me some photos, some of which had clear head and face shots. As I wrote before, I've met Philip in person, and I've seen plenty of pics of him, so I know what he looks like...and that was definitely his face in those pics. Also, I work as a graphic designer, so I know when something's been Photoshopped or "doctored up," so to speak...and these photos were definitely real. While they weren't exactly x-rated, they were still inappropriate photos for a Christian man to send to a married woman.

She gave me a few more details, and even pointed me to evidence of something more shocking...Philip has had a history of doing this, at least for the past two years or so. This incident with this particular woman and her daughter was not a one time thing. A good blog post over at *Purpose Drivel* was written on this subject, along with links to various official sources, regarding Philip's past history and his false claims to belong to The North American Reformed Seminary (TNARS). In fact, Philip was removed from TNARS because of sexually harassing other women. As I read this, I went over in my head a few instances where I had seen hints of this and that in my friendship with Philip: one time he had sent me a Facebook message asking about a girl who had been a member of Monergism, and now wasn't, and he seemed to be bordering on obsessive; another time, he casually mentioned that he had been kicked out of a seminary because of some lies told by a few people, but didn't go into detail. Hindsight is 20/20, of course, but I still felt gullible for not stepping into this sooner and possibly preventing this woman's problems.

That same morning, after reading all this evidence against him, I proceeded to write a long Facebook message to Philip in order to confront him on the matter. I tried to be as kind and gracious as possible, while at the same time calling out his sin. Here is an excerpt from the message I sent (specifically the last part):

Is this a major problem for you? Is the internet causing you to sin this much, that you are confronting married women and asking them to let you give them a massage or asking if you can hang out with their young daughter? You should get accountability software for your browsers, but for temptations like this, perhaps you should do away with any easy access to the internet you have. If it requires going to a library to check your email/FB, then do that. If it requires going over to a friend's place to use the internet, do that. But you need to take control of this. You not only create stumbling blocks for sisters in Christ, but you commit great sin against God, to whom these sisters in Christ belong. Any earthly father would be enraged upon discovering that a man was being a sexually deviant with his daughter - so much more with a heavenly Father against those who would harass His daughters in adoption.

Know this, first and foremost, that there is redemption in Christ. If you repent now and turn to him, he will assist you and give you strength to overcome. In order to do this, however, you need to fess up and own your sin, admit it, confess it, and repent of it. You need to admit that this is a problem, and that it has reached a boiling point. When you do this, you can turn to Christ, and lean on him, and tell him all your woes and struggles. In him is complete redemption from all sins, and his blood cleanses all. No sin is too great, because our Savior is the greatest of all.

And so I call on you to repent of these sins, but I also offer to you God's offer of redemption and cleansing.

- May (3)
- April (9)
- March (8)
- February (12)
- January (13)
- December (6)
- November (8)
- October (14)
- September (10)
- August (9)
- July (11)
- June (10)
- May (14)
- **April** (11)
- March (13)
- February (12)
- January (11)
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- October (12)
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Followers (16)

He wrote me back not too long after, laughing it off ("lol hi there!") and saying: "She is a liar. She had flirted with me...But thanks for assuming the best of me!" He told me a few things about her that I'm sure she had only told him in the strictest confidence, but which he was now using to attack her character. Trying to get to the heart of the matter, I asked him if she was lying about the photos, and kept pressing him on it as he kept trying to avoid answering for them. He just kept trying to put it back on her (questioning her "motives"), but I would try to make him answer for the inappropriate photos that were clearly of him. He finally said that he wasn't going to "continue this sort of conversation through text," and ended the conversation.

As an admin of Monergism, I felt compelled to look into this, and so I began speaking to my other admins, and presenting all the evidence I had gathered up. They all admitted that it seemed like the situation seemed bad for Philip, but we agreed to give him a chance to defend himself, and planned some kind of verbal communication with him, either over the phone or Skype. We also, as a temporary measure until all was sorted out, removed Philip as an admin and member of Monergism. Now, I think most would understand this was done for the safety of the members and the accountability of the group. Think, for a moment, on what happens when a policeman is accused of some crime: he's temporarily suspended, for the safety of people on the street and the accountability of the department. If Philip was found innocent, he would be let back in with all privileges renewed; if he was found guilty, he would be called to repent, and if he did, he would be restored with love.

I contacted Philip, and told him what was going on. He claimed that there was no "biblical procedure" here, and that he had already repented through someone named Dudley, and said that Dudley was doing the right thing while I "would rather turn into a detective and draw this out."

As I later discovered, another Monergism member named Dudley had indeed contacted the woman and transferred messages from Philip to her, but this consisted in Philip repenting of "offending her." Now, if he had said to her like "Your kid's artwork sucks," that might be a valid repentance...however, it's quite clear that he did *a bit more* than offend someone. Rather, he lusted after a married woman and her daughter, flirted with her, said inappropriate things towards her and her daughter, sent inappropriate photos to her...there was a lot more going on here than mere "offense." If anything, I was reminded of Ergun Caner "repenting" of "misspeaking" when he was first called out on his lies. It came across as Philip was merely trying to get out of this in an easy fashion, without really owning up to what he had done.

I again began to press Philip on whether or not the photos of him were real. I asked him about four times, and each time he refused to answer, trying to distract to another topic. He said, "I have had strangers to treat me with more respect than you." Finally...he blocked me. He then accused Dudley of being in on the admins and helping to get him kicked out of Monergism, and blocked him too. As such, there's little doubt he's not returning as an admin.

From what I have heard from other people, and from what I had just experienced, Philip Stallings will follow the same tactics:

- 1. He will just flat out deny it, and call the other person a liar.
- 2. When the evidence is stacked up against him, he will demand that Matthew 18 be followed in regards to church discipline. He claims that Matthew 18 teaches the offending party must give the offender "space to repent."
- 3. When people call him out on his weak interpretation of Matthew 18, he will simply block the offended parties (if they haven't blocked him already) as well as all those calling him out. (see here)

Let's talk a moment about his interpretation of Matthew 18, and what it says regarding church discipline:

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." [Matthew 18:15-17]

Philip, on Twitter and in his defense against accusers, will often harp on verse 15, putting in capital letters the words "between you and him alone." The problem is most people have, and he has not fulfilled the obligation of the accused: that is, to "listen" to what their sins have been. Thus the next step was followed through, in verse 16, with the bringing of "one or two others" to assist in this exhortation. Again, people have done this as well, as people who have witnessed or have evidence of Philip's wrongdoing have confronted him along with the offended parties. The final step, in verse 17, involves telling it to the church; in this situation, with the admins of Monergism confronting him, he had the "church" telling him there was an issue. Contrary to his claim that nothing biblical was going on, what happened was *very* biblical.

Note that in none of these scenarios is there any mention of "space to repent," only the need for the person to "listen" to you. The word here for "listen" is $\dot{\alpha}\kappa\dot{\omega}\omega$, a common New Testament word which means to listen, hear, and comprehend - that is, the person understands the sin being presented to them and what is required for reconciliation. Philip has completely read a concept of "space to repent," and, with all due respect, it comes across merely as an attempt to get out of being disciplined. He's been a repeat offender, and people have repeatedly called him to turned from his sins...he's had plenty of



A.W. Pink (1)

Abortion (2)

Abraham (1)

Acts 17 (2)

Acceptance (1)

Adam Clarke (1)

Addiction (1)

Africa (1)

Afterlife (1)

Agabus (1)

Allah (1)

Allegory (2)

Allen Hood (2)

Alvin York (1)

Angels (3)

Animals (1)

Alex Kendrick (1)

Alex Malarkey (1)

Alexander MacLaren (1)

Acts of the Apostles (3)

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Anne Verebely (1)

"space to repent."

This post was not written as a personal attack, but for two primary reasons:

1) A warning to other women who might encounter him on Facebook or other social media - The author of the Purpose Drivel post (who is a woman herself) put it best:

It's a crying shame that no one seems to be able to reach this man's heart with truth, enough for him to repent. If your wife or daughter has him as a friend, please be extremely careful. Don't harass the man. Just protect your family from him...I am saying nothing more in all of this than do not trust this man. He needs to be treated with great caution. This man should never be in a position of leadership or responsibility over, or have access to, girls or women. Especially not in a church.

That he has not openly repented and is still on Facebook and other forms of social media means he may still be trying to harass women and their daughters, which means he may potentially be dangerous to someone. That is why I made this a public warning, so that others may look into his background and come to a knowledge of who he is and why he might be dangerous. This is especially true if Philip is trying to pass off that he's gone to seminary, and he's trying to be active and advance in a local church. If he had repented of these things and moved on from them, I wouldn't be worried - but the fact he's still doing them, and he won't repent of it, makes him dangerous to women and girls any where, especially in the church. There are women who have had to have psychological help to attend church again, because of experiences involving sexual harassment or sexual sins in general, especially from pastors who are supposed to be protecting them.

2) As an open call of repentance to a man I used to know personally - As I wrote before, I knew Philip Stallings in person. I've met him, and we've discussed various topics over the phone. When this came up, I reached out to him as a friend and a fellow Christian. He attempted to act like I wasn't being a friend, and cut me off. He's blocked me on Facebook and won't answer my texts. As he tries to be public and interactive through social media, YouTube, and other places, I have to respond accordingly. What's more, I have to be consistent: if I am going to call out Ergun Caner for his lies, and criticize Mike Bickle for sweeping the sexual sins of his friend Bob Jones under the rug, and criticize Michael Brown's playing apologist for his heretical friends, then I have to be consistent with how I treat my own friends and acquaintances. I have to hold up men I know personally with men I simply know through media. I can't be like Mike Bickle and pretend they don't exist because of my friend's more positive traits.

It was saddening to discover all this, but it seems to have been revealed that Philip is like many: he loves the Doctrines of Grace for the knowledge aspect, but (as RC Sproul said) cannot understand the grace of the doctrines. At this point, I do not think he has truly repented at all, or has been regenerated. This does not mean, however, we should as yet shrug him off. This post is an open call to repentance and restoration, as I had formerly given to him privately. Philip, if you read this post, know that the offer of forgiveness is still out there. As someone who has struggled with pornography and lust, I know how hard it must be for you, and I know it can be difficult to own up to what you have done and admit to it before other men, but this needs to happen. You need to get help, and you need to turn to God for forgiveness of your sins. There is forgiveness of sins only in the blood of the Lamb, and nowhere else. Stop putting on a facade, stop blaming others, and turn towards Christ.

If he does sincerely repent of the sins he has committed, and seeks help and restoration, this post will be taken down ASAP.

Update - November 23, 2013: Shortly after this was posted, Philip called me on the phone, later calling with a friend of his, both of them still harping on Matthew 18:15. Philip was adamantly protesting that I should never have gotten involved, saying, "It was none of your business!" One thing I tried to explain was that the reason I got involved was because of my concern for a brother in Christ, something Philip's friend came across as almost mocking at one point in the conversation. I've already demonstrated earlier in this post that their application of Matthew 18 and the demand for "space to repent" is fallacious. In regards to a brother in Christ getting involved in the sinning of another brother in Christ or member of the church, I'd like to bring forward this passage:

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. [Galatians 6:1-2]

When it was revealed to me that Philip had become involved in sin against a woman, of course I, as a concerned brother in Christ and friend, would get involved, as I would hope any brother in Christ to me would get involved if I was committing some great sin. I attempted to restore him in the spirit of gentleness. He has rejected not only mine, but all other attempts to restore him. Indeed, it has been documented, by myself and others, that any time someone attempts to make Philip realize the depth of his sin, he presents to them some superficial response or defense and then blocks them, continuing on in his sin.

I think we must also remember that not all situations are going to fit into the Matthew 18:15 mold perfectly. This is not to say that Christ was wrong in Matthew 18:15, or that Matthew 18:15 is uninspired - only that Matthew 18:15 fits a particular set of circumstances. Something like child abuse would not fit into Matthew 18:15...neither would sexually harassing numerous women. If a sister in Christ is being harassed by someone who is making her feel uncomfortable, it goes well beyond the concern of just her

Anne verebely (1)	
Anneliese Michel (1)	
Anointing (2)	
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Art (1)	
Assumption of Mary (1)	
Assyria (1)	
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Atheism (10)	
Atonement (4)	
Attis (1)	
Augustine (1)	
Baptism (1)	
Baptists (1)	
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Bondage of the Will (2)	
Bones (1)	
Boy Meets World (1)	
Brian Kim (1)	

and the perpetrator. Most brothers get very defensive for their natural sisters...shouldn't we be defensive for our spiritual sisters as well?

Again, as I said in the original post, if Philip sincerely repents of all his past sins and seeks restoration from this larger issue clearly facing his life, this post will be taken down ASAP.

Update - January 4, 2014: I've been contacted by email from someone whose wife was harassed yesterday by Philip Stallings. When his wife spurned his advances, he called her a "stupid b----" and blocked her. They sent me a screenshot of said conversation if anyone needs evidence of this.

It seems that, unfortunately, Philip Stallings is still at it. Again, if you have any daughters or wives or sisters or even just female friends who are associated with him somehow on social media, please look out for them and protect them from him.

Update - February 20, 2014: I decided to write this update to make a few things public.

Obviously, I've mentioned that Philip and his friend have talked to me over the phone before. What they have also done is attempt to get this post taken down by calling my pastor, and then someone within my church's organization. Philip even made a remark to my pastor that he would talk to a lawyer about all this. Philip even made the claim to me that someone who was borrowing his phone (or something...the situation was rather vague) received death threats after reading this blog, though this story had two problems: when I asked if police reports had been filed in response to these death threats, Philip refused to answer; likewise, there was no evidence given that the supposed death threats were connected to my blog in any way (I certainly don't tell people in my post to cause Philip any physical or emotional harm).

I find all this interesting, given that I'm not the only person in the world attempting to get Philip to repent, and that, even if my post went bye-bye, the *Purpose Drivel* post would still be up. I also find it interesting that Philip hasn't pursued the *Purpose Drivel* author and called *her* pastors, church organizations, etc. Why Philip thinks information about his sins rises and falls on me, I don't know.

Update - April 8, 2014: Yesterday, TurretinFan, Reformed apologist who also contributes to James White's Alpha and Omega Ministries, made a post on his Facebook page regarding Philip and his sins. The main body of the post:



As the post might suggest, this was a *serious* move: not only would TurretinFan's 400 common friends with Philip see his post, but one of the top people at AOMin were speaking out against him, and making a public exhortation to repent. Philip's immediate response - almost predictably - was to make a post on his own Facebook wall, playing the victim and hiding behind Matthew 18:

and I do hope that he will be brought to repentance as a result of having the



brethren exhort him.

I would ask for all of my brothers and sisters in the Lord to pray for me regarding a very serious issue whereby some have thought it wise to publish publicly private and Matthew 18 issues.

Shortly after TurretinFan's post, however, dozens of people began to confront Philip. Some confronted him on his Facebook wall or in response to his Facebook posts - they all had their comments deleted and

Brian Powers (1)	
Bride (1)	
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Cain (1)	
Calvin and Hobbes (2)	
Calvinism (23)	
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Civil Rights Movement (1)	
Clayton Ritter (1)	
Colonial America (1)	
Colton Burpo (2)	

Brian McLaren (1)

were blocked. Some confronted him in private, and were likewise blocked. Philip responded to these loving pleas for repentance the same way he responds to any call for repentance: ignore, block, play the victim, and all the while hide behind scripture to do it.

Now, at the time of this writing, Philip's account seems to have disappeared. More than likely, Philip chose to deactivate his Facebook account until this whirlwind blows over. Whether this is the case, or Facebook finally decided to take his account down (which is unlikely), the fact remains that Philip has yet to repent of his sins, and he still presents a danger to women on the internet.

Labels: Personal , Philip Stallings , Repentance | Links to this post



Podcast: The State of African Christianity Today

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2013 AT 9:45 AM POSTED BY TONY-ALLEN CUCOLO COMMENTS (0)

Is there revival going on in Africa right now? Or is there a greater need for reform? Find out in this podcast as I'm joined by brother Kofi from the Fiery Logic blog. We discuss the history of Christianity in Africa, how the Word of Faith and Hyper-Charismatic movements became so big, what things are like now, and even how the situation can change.



Some additional links:

The video of "Bishop" Oyedepo slapping a poor young lady in front of the congregation.

An article by Conrad Mbewe that explains much of the cultural context of what was discussed in the podcast.

Another article by brother Mbewe, this one also discussing the religious state of many African churches.

A brief documentary from Kenya showcasing the corruption and false theology in many of these churches.

Labels: Africa, Charismatics, Christianity, Hyper-Charismatics, Podcast, Word of Faith | Links to this post 🙀

A Brief Thought on Criticism and Discussion

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2013 AT 10:00 AM POSTED BY TONY-ALLEN CUCOLO COMMENTS (0)

Since I and fellow bloggers Steven and Kofi did our collaborative podcast regarding Michael Brown's support of Mike Bickle and other false teachers, there has been some response to the episode. Most of it was fairly positive, but some was not. This, of course, is not bad in and of itself.

What I could not help but notice, however, was that the criticism tended to follow the same format:

- 1. The person makes a statement of criticism.
- 2. A request is made to substantiate the statement.
- 3. Either the person employs a burden of proof fallacy, or the statement is simply repeated.
- 4. Another request is made to substantiate the statement.

Communion (2) Conspiracy Theories (3) Constitution (1) Context (2) Conversion (7) Coptic Church (1) Council of Nicaea (4) Council of Trent (1) Creation (1) Criticism (1) Cross and the Switchblade (1) Crossing Church (1) Crucifixion (7) Cults (7) Dan Wallace (1) Daniel Lim (2) Darkness (1) Dave Armstrong (1) David Wood (1) Debate (1) Debt (1) Demons (1) Demotivational Poster (2) Denominations (2) Depression (1) Devil (1) Diet of Worms (3) Discernment (9) Dispensationalism (2) Divines (1) Don Benedetto (1) Doug Pagitt (1) Dreams (1) Easter (7) Eastern Orthodoxy (19) Education (1) Eisegesis (14) Election (5) Emails (1) Emergent Church (3) End Times (2)

5. The person either backs down immediately, or simply refuses to offer any substantiation.

For example, I received an email from someone accusing me, Steven and Kofi of being ungracious and unnecessarily mocking of men like Brown or Bickle. When I asked him to tell me where, in the podcast, any of us had been ungracious or mocking. He told me to listen to the podcast again. I told him I had, and wasn't aware of anywhere that I had been ungracious or mocking towards people. He said that it was probably fine then, and then later admitted that a friend of his listened to the podcast and couldn't find anything ungracious or mocking.

I was then accused of having, in essence, a personal vendetta against IHOP-KC, and that my criticism of them was really minor and not worth denying that Mike Bickle and his peers are true believers. I asked the person to interact with what I had written and said on the subject, and show me where I was overstepping my bounds and to demonstrate that I simply had a personal vendetta against them. After much prodding to do this, the person replied, and I quote: "I don't have the time or the interest."

Immediately, I had *deja vu* regarding my interaction with Michael Brown (see here and here). Namely, a refusal to read criticism of a certain false teacher, a refusal to interact with what a person has said about the false teacher...and yet, a strong condemnation of what the person has said regarding the false teacher. The mindset of some people seems to be, "I don't know what you believe or why you believe it...but it's wrong." Such a mindset is neither gracious nor rational.

This mindset, indeed, is one that has already made it's mind up. It doesn't matter what Mike Bickle, Rick Joyner, and countless other false teachers could teach, or what they might teach, the fact is they fit the standard for a biblical teacher in the individual's mind, and that's that. Anyone who opposes this false teacher is automatically in the wrong, even if they may have valid reasons for it. In fact, said valid reasons aren't even considered. They are instead automatically deemed irrelevant without being examined, or at best are dismissed in straw man renditions. Sadly, this kind of thinking is all too common in Hyper-Charismatic circles, where the cult-like mentality of "Don't touch God's anointed" and "Don't pass any form of judgment on anyone ever" becomes a repeated mantra that ignores all teachings from scripture regarding biblical discernment. It becomes a veil for someone to hide behind, so that they can ignore the plain truth and love a lie. Brothers, this is not how it should be.

If we are to enter discussion on the topic, we must do so with a desire to examine and see, from scripture and plain reason, if what is taught is indeed truth and honesty. If we truly worship He who is Truth, then let us show that we are Truth's disciples.

Labels: Criticism , Discernment | Links to this post

Podcast: Matthew Gallatin and Romans 9 Part V

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2013 AT 10:30 AM POSTED BY TONY-ALLEN CUCOLO COMMENTS (0)

Here is the final part in our examination of Eastern Orthodox author Matthew Gallatin's review of Romans 9 and whether or not it teaches predestination and election.



Labels: Eastern Orthodoxy , Election , Matthew Gallatin , Podcast , Predestination , Romans 9 | Links to this post

Thoughts on the "Sons of God" and the Nephilim

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2013 AT 10:00 AM POSTED BY TONY-ALLEN CUCOLO COMMENTS (0)

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.

End-Times Prayer Movement English Standard Version (1) Ergun Caner (6) Eric Dykstra (1) Esau (1) Eschatology (2) **ESV** (2) ESV App (1) Eucharist (1) Eugene Peterson (1) Evangelicalism (1) Evangelizing (5) Evil (5) Exclusivism (2) Exegesis (7) Ezra (1) Facebook (2) Faith (7) Faith Healing (3) Fallen Angels (1) False Prophecy (1) False Teachers (13) Family (2) Fanboys (1) Felidae (1) Fellowship (1) Fighting for the Faith (4) Film (3) Films and Religion (1) First Great Awakening (2) Fleecing the Flock (1) Flywheel (1) Football (1) Foreknowledge (1) Forerunners (3) Forgiveness (1) Forums (1) Francis Chan (2) Frank Dux (1) Frank Sinatra (1)

Fred Phelps (1)

Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. [Genesis 6:1-4]

These verses present one of the more interesting moments in scripture, which has created a lot of theology and stirred a debate or two. The belief held by some is that the "sons of God" are angels, who came down and married, and procreated with, women, resulting in the creation of "giants" (the Nephilim). This was a Rabbinical tradition, likewise recorded down by the Jewish historian Josephus:

For many angels of God accompanied with women, and begat sons that proved unjust, and despisers of all that was good, on account of the confidence they had in their own strength; for the tradition is, that these men did what resembled the acts of those whom the Grecians call giants. [Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 1:3:1; source]

It was also seen in some early Church Fathers, such as the second century apologist Athenagoras:

Some [angels]...created by God, continued in those things for which God had made and over which He had ordained them; but some outraged both the constitution of their nature and the government entrusted to them...these fell into impure love of virgins, and were subjugated by the flesh, and he became negligent and wicked in the management of the things entrusted to him. Of these lovers of virgins, therefore, were begotten those who are called giants. [Athenagoras, *A Plea for Christians*, XXIV; source]

Let's take a moment to examine this passage of scripture, and do so by examining two points:

The Identity of the "Sons of God"

Many people, as we've seen, identify the "sons of God" as fallen angels, who went to earth and procreated with human women. This is partially because the term "sons of God" is used in reference to angels in the book of Job (Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7), as well an assertion that Jude's epistle states the fallen angels engaged in sins of the flesh:

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. [Jude 1:6-7]

However, the term "sons of God" is likewise use in reference to believers, especially in the New Testament (Matt 5:9; Luke 20:36; Rom 8:14, 19; Gal 3:26). The similar phrase "children of God" is likewise used to refer to believers, both by the apostle Paul (Rom 8:16, 21; 9:8; Php 2:15) and the apostle John (John 1:12, 11:52; 1 John 2:28, 3:1, 10; 5:2).

In like manner, the words in Jude's epistle do not explicitly clarify that these angels are the "sons of God" seen in Genesis 6. We must likewise consider the full context of what Jude has written:

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. [Jude 1:3-7]

Jude explains that he had begun a letter talking about faith in general, but felt compelled to write about a serious topic: false teachers had infiltrated the churches. He then goes into examples of how those who disobeyed and rebelled against God were treated in the past: many saved out of Egypt were punished for unbelief, fallen angels were put in eternal chains as a result of their rebellion, and Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for their immorality. Those who attempt to tie in the fallen angels with Sodom and Gomorrah forget that these three examples are all one train of thought. They also forget the example of the people fleeing Egypt - were these people also guilty of sexual sins? Perhaps as much as everyone is, but Jude's point in citing them is irrelevant to the matter of sexual purity. The use of "which likewise indulged" in regards to Sodom and Gomorrah is most likely referring back to the false teachers mentioned earlier, whom Jude will make mention of as "defiling the flesh" (v. 8). Jude's point in this discussion is to cite various examples of those who sinned against God for various purposes. He does this again when he cites Cain, Balaam, and Korah together (v. 11) - obviously these three men were not guilty of the same exact crime, but were all guilty before God for specific, unique crimes. Therefore, the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah cannot be tied backwards into the fallen angels, and hence it is assumed that these fallen angels engaged in sins of the flesh.

Perhaps the most problematic part of assuming that the "sons of God" in Genesis 6 are angels is the fact that they said to have *married* daughters of men. Why is this problematic? Because, as Christ himself said, angels *do not marry*.

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Government (1)	
Grace (1)	
Grammar (1)	
H.P. Lovecraft (1)	
Halloween (1)	
Harold Camping (3)	
Healing (2)	
Heaven (1)	
Heaven is for Real (2)	
Hebrew (1)	
Hell (4)	
Heresy (9)	
Hezekiah (1)	
Hillsong (1)	
History (3)	
Holy Spirit (5)	
Homophobia (2)	
Homosexuality (17)	
Humor (56)	
Husband (2)	
Hymn (2)	
Hyper-Charismatics (5)	
I Give You Freedom (1)	
Idolatry (1)	

"For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." [Matt 22:30; see also Mark 12:25]

In this verse, Christ is talking to the Sadducees about the resurrection and the place of marriage, and says that those in the resurrection live like the angels in heaven. One trait is that the angels "neither marry nor are given in marriage." We therefore have a dilemma here, as either: 1) Christ gave a contradiction, as clearly there's an example early on in scripture where angels marry and were given to marriage; or 2) the "sons of God" are in fact not angels. The only logical course would be to assume that the "sons of God" are not angels.

If the "sons of God" are not angels, then who were they? That answer comes with the age old rule of reading; context, context, context, Genesis 6 comes from a long narrative in Genesis 4 and 5, detailed the lineage of both Cain and Seth. Seth's lineage especially continues all the way down to Noah, who takes center stage in Genesis 6. It is likewise said during the beginning of Seth's lineage that "at that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Ge 4:26). Following this trail of thought all the way to Genesis 6, we have to conclude that the "sons of God" are those early believers, and the "daughters of men" are the descendants of Cain, who were not believers. The two begin to mingle and marry in Genesis 6, and scripture always presents negative results when believers are swayed by unbelievers in marriage. We see this in Genesis 6:5, where, after the procreation, wickedness is said to have filled the earth.

The Identity of the Nephilim

Most people are more familiar with the translation of "giants" for the word Nephilim. This was how the word was translated in many older translations, in particularly the KJV, the latter of whom has given a great influence on how we understand certain wordings within scripture. The very word nephilim (נפלים), however, is of unknown origin, as the NET notes explain. Many commentators believe that it comes from the word *naphal* (נפל), meaning "to fall."

The use by some translations of the word "giants" most likely comes from two sources: the only other use of the word, in Numbers 13:33, in which another group of Nephilim are described as being of great height; the Septuagint, which renders the word here in Genesis 6 as γίγαντες, from which we get the word "gigantic."

Many assume that the Nephilim are the offspring of the sons of God and daughters of men. The argument they make is, "Would two normal people be able to produce a giant?" However, scripture seems to suggest they existed at the same time. Genesis 6 reads that the Nephilim were already on the earth "in those days," when the sons of God and daughters of men procreated, as well as "afterward." In other words, you have two parallel timelines: you have the sons of God and the daughters of men marrying and procreating; at the same time, you have the Nephilim frolicking across the land. Therefore, we cannot immediately assume that the Nephilim here are the results of the breeding between the Sons of God and Daughters of Men.

Labels: Angels , Fallen Angels , Nephilim , Sons of God | Links to this post

Podcast: Matthew Gallatin and Romans 9 Part IV

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2013 AT 8:59 AM POSTED BY TONY-ALLEN CUCOLO COMMENTS (0)

Here is the latest podcast, continuing our examination of Matthew Gallatin handling the question of whether or not Romans 9 teaches predestination and election.



Labels: Eastern Orthodoxy , Election , Matthew Gallatin , Podcast , Predestination , Romans 9 | Links to this post

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John Wesley (7) John's Gospel (1)

A Salute to John Knox

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2013 AT 2:14 PM POSTED BY TONY-ALLEN CUCOLO COMMENTS (0)

When Reformation Day was around the corner, I was studying the life and times of John Knox, the Scottish Reformer: what he said, what he believed, what he put up with, etc. Each Reformer seemed to live a unique life, in one way or another, and Knox is certainly no exception: from his days as a bodyguard to George Wishart, to his time as a tutor of children at St. Andrews, to his two years as a galley slave for a French ship, to his time in the Church of England, his time in Geneva, and finally his time of sincere Reformation in Scotland, including the four big meetings with the Queen Mary.

Knox was definitely not a politically correct man, by today's standards that is. He called the pope the Antichrist, called the Latin mass idolatry, and openly said Purgatory was a fiction. When compelled to venerate a statue of the Virgin Mary on a French galley, he replied by tossing it into the river and assuring them that she was light enough to swim. He annoyed Anglican bishops by speaking out against anything resembling the Roman church, campaigning especially to remove any worship of the host during communion. Even when Scotland was ruled by a queen who was popular among the people, Knox was not afraid to call her out for her political or religious faults - either from the pulpit or to her face. At his funeral, the Regent of Scotland said, "Here lies one who never feared the face of man."



You have to look at us today and ponder if we are willing to be as bold as Knox is. Are we willing to tell others they're wrong? Are we willing to speak out against false Christianity when we see it? Are we not afraid of offending everyone when we believe the right thing needs to be said? Or are we willing to forgo error for the sake of "charity" or "unity"? Are we willing to speak out against national leaders and church officials alike? Can it truly be said that we never fear the face of man?

Let us pray that God grants us to be as brave as Knox was, and that many more men like Knox will arise in the centuries to come. Amen.

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Labels: John Knox , Reformation | Links to this post

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Design of Providence: November 2013 6/11/14, 8:42 AM

