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Whatever Happened to Scripture? or Indiana Jones Meets Cornelius Van Til

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See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;" (Colossians 2:8-10, NASB)

If there is one characteristic that marks our age it is the relativising of truth. No longer is it acceptable to talk in terms of absolutes. Rather, everything must become speculative.

This paradigm shift has produced many changes. Remember Superman, that great crusader who fought for "truth, justice and the American way"? He had to go, because the establishment realised that "truth" and "justice" had nothing to do with the "American way."

In his place came a new list of heroes who were not interested in truth, justice, or any other such concept. One such hero was Indiana Jones. Looking at this trilogy we note strong occultic themes, however, there are other flaws

to be found. For example, in the "Last Crusade" Dr. Jones, in an address to his students, states that "archaeology is the search for *fact*, not *truth*." This advice given, he then directs his students to a philosophy class if they were interested in the search for truth.

This statement is of concern because it attacks truth by interjecting existentialism into the argument. In other words *morality* (truth) and *reality* (fact) are both called into question. This is done so that the objectivity of truth can be weakened, the consequence of which is a truth that is able to be manipulated.¹

Allow me to explain. Truth and fact have always been twin pillars. In years gone by, philosophical arguments usually began with the presupposition that reality is absolute.² We are here, we are real, and therefore we are absolute. This undeniable reality then meant that when the discussion proceeded to the topic of truth, it was firmly anchored in the realm of absolutes.

However, with the introduction of existentialism we see that this founda-

tion was eroded. By questioning man's reality and placing it in the realm of the fanciful, the natural consequence was to drag truth into the same arena.³ Thus the equation became something like, facts (*reality*) are uncertain, therefore truth (*morality and ethics*) does not or cannot exist. Translated a different way it would read: truth is governed by each individual's perspective of reality.

Consequently our society is saturated with uncertainties.⁴

Our purpose here is not to grieve for our lost heroes, but to illustrate how the philosophical currents of the day have subtly infiltrated all areas of life. This then leads us to consider another set of people who have been seduced.

Altered State of Reality

One of the high privileges in the Christian walk is being able to apply God's truth to a situation in order to bring healing. Nowhere is this more so than in the area of counseling and pastoral theology. Like the

1. "Truth is in the eye of the beholder", stated by Scar (the bad guy) in Walt Disney's, *The Lion King*.
2. Consider the famous statement by Rene Descartes: "I think, therefore I am."
3. The great philosophical question of existentialism: Does a tree falling down in a forest with no one to witness it make a noise? The idea being that reality is only true for you. Your "reality" can never be shared by another.
4. A relevant illustration is that of survey results I read some years ago. In this survey people were asked whether the ocean could feel or knew about a sunken ship that lay within its waters. When this question was first asked 80+ percent of respondents answered with "no". This same question was asked some twenty odd years later, around the mid eighties if I remember correctly. The staggering result was that the "no" answer had diminished markedly and the "I don't know" had increased. In other words, certainties such as inanimate objects cannot feel or know, had become uncertainties.

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previous super heroes, these modern men have allowed their perception of reality to be altered and in so doing bring false messages in the name of God.

Larry Crabb, Gary Collins and, to a lesser extent, Derek Tidball, are household names in many circles. They are men who share two things in common. First, they have written books for the purpose of helping people improve their lives; and second, they have all swallowed the lie of psychology.

So, what do we mean when we talk of an altered state of reality? Simply this: these men refuse to accept the status quo, with regard to man's estate, as God Himself has stated it.

God has declared all men to be in rebellion to Him. He has declared all men to be sinners who are bankrupt, in every aspect, because of this rebellion. Given this reality, men walk on very shaky ground when they discount or depreciate God's statements on the matter.

This brings us to the altered state of reality. Man is a sinner and estranged from his Creator/God. When man refuses to accept this (unpalatable) truth he enters a false state of reality in which his answers, yea more, the very questions themselves, fail to deal with the crux of the problem.

The living God of the Bible is offensive to the moral sense of fallen man. The rough edges of fallen man's god are smoothed out until he becomes acceptable to reason, and agreeable to the sinner's idea of what god should be.

The rationalistic philosophers of religion rarely if ever speak of the fall of man, nor of the effects of the fall on man's mind. Somehow, the philosopher is immune to sin! But the noetic (known, understood) effect of sin is very central to a Biblical doctrine of knowledge. Man's reason is not immune to the effects of sin. It is rather radically altered by it.

Sin alters man's perspective and warps it radically. Since original sin is man's will to be his own god, his own source of ultimate knowledge, and himself the determiner of good and evil, law and morality, it follows that original sin is essential to man's reason. Man the sinner cannot tolerate the God of the Bible, only a god acceptable to his reason. Hence, the only god he can tolerate is the god of his imagination, one who approves of rationalism. The god of the philosophers is a particularly ridiculous idol.⁵

Rushdoony's scathing appraisal of the *secular* philosopher is indeed accurate, and therefore poses a question for us. If the secular philosopher deserves such a severe critique, what should be our response to the Christian who holds to this approach?

In short, it should be even more stinging and harsh.

Whilst we must not lose sight of the fact that these men profess to be brothers in Christ, we can in no way condone the fact that they have abandoned the God of Scripture for the "ridiculous idol" of the rationalistic philosopher.

Sin Depreciated

What comes through strongly in the writings of these men is that the effects of sin upon man can be devalued — even to the point where man can almost nullify the power of sin in his own strength.⁶

Larry Crabb, in the preface to his book, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, states that: "Some of our suffering is the inevitable lot of fallen people living in a fallen world. The results of the Fall

WHAT POLICE REALLY THINK ABOUT "GUN CONTROL" MANIA

The San Diego Police Officers Association polled its members about gun control on 05 May 1997 and published the results in their official newsletter, "The Informant".

Note that the actual questions asked are stated here to prevent confusion. Anyone who has taken a survey knows the pitfalls of vague or misleading questions.

1. Do you support an assault weapons ban? NO - 82.1%
2. Do you support a limitation on magazine capacity? NO - 82.2%
3. Do you support a law-abiding private citizen's right to carry a concealed weapon? YES - 84.9%
4. Do you believe that armed, law-abiding citizens are a threat to you as a police officer? NO - 87.8%
5. Have recent gun laws (weapon bans, magazine capacity limits, and increased waiting periods) reduced violent crime in your area? NO - 94.2%
6. Would you support a point of sale background check (instant check) for the purchase of a firearm? YES - 92.1%
7. Does gun ownership by private citizens increase public safety? YES - 87.1%
8. Do you believe the criminal justice system needs streamlining and reform? YES - 99.2%
9. Do you believe in the death penalty? YES - 99.2%
10. Do you believe that restrictive gun laws will reduce violent crime? NO - 92.1%
11. Do you believe that gun buy-back or turn-in programs take guns out of the hands of criminals? NO - 98.5%
12. Do you believe that misuse of a firearm in a crime should result in stiff, mandatory sentences with no plea bargaining? YES - 95.6%

* * * *

5. R.J. Rushdoony, *The Bankruptcy of Rationalism* (Chalcedon Report; No 386, September 1997) 28. Emphasis and clarification added.
6. In fairness to Gary Collins it must be said that he is the least of the offenders at this point. However, as we shall demonstrate, there are still weaknesses in his approach.

included separation not only from God and others, but also from ourselves. We "come apart" as persons, unable to genuinely accept ourselves as we are.⁷

Here Crabb makes a number of explicit and implicit statements which betray his presuppositions. The first glaring instance is the use of the word "some". At this juncture there is no more inappropriate word that could have been chosen. We are sinners; therefore, we sin. Those sins have consequences. Those consequences will have repercussions for our own or someone else's life — guaranteed!

This then leads us to consider the other statements with regard to sin's origin. For example, we note the twin theme of "fallen people", "fallen world". The aspect of the "fallen world" is introduced by psychologists because it gives them a stage on which to play out their little melodrama of environmentalism.⁸ The Biblical reality is that Man fell and took creation with him. Creation did not, does not, and cannot, corrupt man.

Man rebelled and reaped *within himself* the judgement for his sin. Consequently, he needs no outside influence to corrupt him because he is already rotten to the core.

We will also do well to note the words, "the Fall included separation not only from God and others, but also from ourselves." Once more the Bible's teaching is corrupted. The fall did not include separation from God, ourselves, and others. No! The fall was our separation from God. The fall constitutes the very act of rebellion which drove a wedge between man and God. Separation from others and ourselves are *ipso facto* consequences of our rebellion against, and separation from God.

Moreover, if we continue reading the preface to Crabb's work we find other disturbing statements. Says he, "Our consequent struggle to be or to pretend to be what we are not explains much of our deep discontent and personal suffering."

These declarations make the soul ache. Of course man is consumed by a struggle to be or to pretend to be what he is not. He was created in perfection for fellowship with God. By rending the relationship with God, man lost the

state of perfection. A state that, by virtue of his creation in God's image, he still knows he should attain to. Is it then any wonder the human soul often finds itself in a torturous state?

Crabb, however, is not alone, for Derek Tidball also denigrates the place of sin.

Tidball's book⁹ is meant to be a "pastoral theology," however it is more of a survey than anything else. Under the heading of "Evangelical Pastoral Theology", the position of Eduard Thurneysen is discussed. The author is critical of Thurneysen's position because he outlines the position of sin, or at least our need for forgiveness, which indicates a rupture in the relationship between man and God. As a result Tidball states:

Thurneysen's stress on the word of God and the good news of forgiveness as the sole message of the pastoral counselor raises questions as to his understanding of man's problem and the place he gives, if any, to contemporary human sciences. All man's problems, to him (Thurneysen), can be traced to sin, and the illnesses and difficulties which other counselors often tackle are but symptoms of that underlying problem.¹⁰

Here again we see another Evangelical baulk at the topics of sin and forgiveness. Is it any wonder that the Church has lost its way when those who claim to be proclaimers of the gospel cannot even put forward its major tenets with any conviction?

This leads us to consider the point of seduction.

Scripture Verses Science

As is clear from Tidball's statement, his objection to anyone holding a strong view of sin comes from the fact that he believes in a medical model. In other words he is more willing to believe in "contemporary human sciences" than in Scripture.

Consider his concluding remarks in relation to Thurneysen:

In two respects Thurneysen may be justly criticized. Firstly he is too grudging about the contribution which the psychological and

HUMOUR

How do you make a trombone sound like a French horn?

Stick your hand in the bell and play all the wrong notes.

What do you call someone who hangs around with musicians?

A drummer.

How can you tell when a drummer is at your door?

The knock gets faster and louder.

Why are a violinist's fingers like lightning?

They rarely strike the same spot twice.

How can you tell when a soprano is at your door?

She can't find the key, and doesn't know when to come in.

* * * *

Revivalism

Revivals have been evident in many parts of the world over the centuries. They have been accompanied with a number of identifying marks, such as renewed interest in Bible reading and more prayer. They have often been accompanied with other phenomena that have a question mark over them as people have struggled to identify some of these occurrences with true Biblical teaching.

Mark Noll, in his recent book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), draws attention to some aspects of revivalism in terms of how it has shaped the mind of contemporary evangelicalism. He says:

This Revival [the First Great Awakening] was important for many reasons, for long-standing impact on Christian thinking, two matters were most significant. The first was the way the revival promoted a new style of leadership — direct, personal, popular, and dependent much more on a speaker's ability to draw a crowd than upon the speaker's place in an established hierarchy. The second was the way the revival undercut the traditional authority of the

7. Lawrence J. Crabb Jr., *Effective Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; 1977) 9. Emphasis added.

8. "Environmentalism" is the belief that outside forces corrupt the individual. Propounded by J.J. Rousseau et. al.

9. Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds: An introduction to pastoral theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press; 1986).

10. Tidball, 234. Parenthesis added.

sociological disciplines might make. Secondly, he is unnecessarily restrictive in confining all pastoral care to the issue of forgiveness.¹¹

Here, in a nutshell, we come face to face with the underlying problem. These men have exchanged the truth of God for a lie. They have substituted the infallible Word of the Creator for the fallible words of a fallen and rebellious creature.

The question this then raises is, how does this exchange affect these men's perception and counsel?

The Consequence of Substitution

In short it denigrates and diminishes the relevance of Scripture and the role of the Christian. How? Lets look at one example from each author to illustrate our point.

Derek Tidball — One strike. You're out!

In examining Tidball's position earlier, we noted that he had little time for anyone who suggested that sin and forgiveness form the basis of counseling. Moreover, he ardently defends the use of a medical model. In other words, it is all right to speak about sin and forgiveness as long as you include anthropology, sociology, and psychology, in your reasoning somewhere.¹² What is not acceptable is to believe the Bible to the exclusion of the social sciences.

Hence, after discussing the position of Jay Adams, Tidball concludes: "In spite of this there remain a number of major weaknesses in his approach which so blemish it as to render it seriously defective as an evangelical pastoral theology."¹³

The surprising, if not bewildering, aspect of this conclusion is the, "In spite of." You see, Tidball has just finished giving Adams a glowing report. Says he:

He (Adams) has restored the confidence of many in their role as pastors, as distinct from being psychologists with a religious hue. He has restored, too, the confidence of many in the Bible as a sufficient and relevant textbook to deal with man's problems. He has restored confidence in the power of the Holy

Spirit to bring about changes in people's lives. He has uncovered man's basic problem as being that of sin for which he is responsible, rather than being a problem which lies in his environment or heredity. He has put feelings in their right context, which is quite an accomplishment in a culture which has been termed by Christopher Lasch as 'the culture of narcissism'. And he has swept through much of the unnecessary and pretentious paraphernalia of the medical model which has laden counseling down. He has not been afraid to point out when he thought the emperor had no clothes. What is more, he has shown a concern to relate his counselling to his doctrine and to place it firmly in the context of the church.¹⁴

So there you have it! Adams is to be praised for reforming the world of counseling. He has given confidence to pastors. He has elevated the Bible in the eyes of many. He has exploded much of the nonsense associated with the medical model. Generally, he has put things back into the correct Biblical perspective. So, what more can we say? Disregard the lot because he does not give credence to the social sciences!

Here is one clear danger in cuddling up to humanist philosophy. Tidball recognises all these positive aspects, which indicates that there were negative aspects in dire need of correction, yet he dismisses Adams whole program because he refuses to admit psychiatry onto the counseling field as a legitimate player.

Space does not permit an in-depth refutation of Tidball's criticisms of Adams, suffice to say that they all stem from a desire on Tidball's part to recognise, wrongly, the place of humanistic sciences.¹⁵

So what is the next step?

Gary Collins — Oh no Christian, you have no qualification with which to counsel?!

As with the others, Collins briefly discusses the need for a relationship between psychology and the Bible. Of course, all psychological theories must be measured against Scripture, but you really cannot do this unless you are qualified.

churches. Ecclesiastical life remained important, but not nearly as significant as the decision of the individual close to Christ. The combined effects of these two matters originally had nothing to do with the life of the mind per se. The brilliant Jonathan Edwards was the most discriminating defender of the revival. But what they did do was to plant the seeds of individualism and immediatism that would eventually exert a profound effect upon Christian thinking.

In other words, amongst the good of the revival were mixed some issues that perhaps have had a more lasting and denigrating effect upon Christianity. Today, the right of private opinion almost universally replaces the idea of a formal "church" statement. Even the so-called "creedal" churches are afflicted with the right of private opinion to the extent that the creeds are effectively abandoned both as teaching and disciplinary instruments.

Individuals church-hop because the extreme individualism of our age supposedly grants everyone the right to consider his opinion equal to all others. On this basis, the local fellowship of believers will be small because there is such diversity of opinion amongst Christians, getting agreement on most issues is almost impossible.

The home-grown home-church, to take an example, is often started by those who have had a fallout with a church hierarchy. In this environment, they suddenly find justification for separation from the larger body of believers. They become dropouts from the local church fellowship, team up with a few like-minded friends and believers, but rarely work with the wider body of Christ on issues of mutual concern.

This does *not* mean that house churches are wrong or that they should not exist. This is merely a question of the way they have come into existence.

There is an identity crisis within Christianity. The urge for true community with fellow-believers is often frustrated by extreme individualism and an inability of many to work alongside others who don't share all their beliefs in exactly the same way. The solution for this would be to

11. Tidball, 235.

12. These, I would argue, are mutually exclusive.

13. Tidball, 239

14. Tidball, 238-239. Clarification added.

15. By this is meant sciences which are built upon a humanistic (not theistic) basis.

Hence he robs the Christian of two of his fundamental rights, privileges and responsibilities — helping his brother or sister in Christ and proclaiming healing to the sinner.

How does he do this? Simple! You must be a psychologist, a Christian, and a professional counselor, if you are to help people.

“Let us accept the fact that psychology can be of great help to the Christian counselor. How, then, do we wade through the quagmire of techniques, theories and technical terms to find insights that truly are helpful? The answer involves finding a guide — a person or persons who are committed followers of Jesus Christ, *familiar* with psychological and counseling literature, *trained* in counseling and research methods (so the scientific accuracy of psychologists’ conclusions can be evaluated), and effective as counselors. It is of crucial importance that the guides be committed to the inspiration and authority of the Bible, both as the standard against which all psychology must be tested and as the written Word of God with which all valid counseling must agree.”¹⁶

Here, in one foul swoop, Collins has ripped the role of counseling out of the hands of almost every Christian on the face of the earth. He has negated the Word of God and set up a false set of criteria instead. Are we not commanded to be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us? Where then does Collins obtain his criteria?

Here is the second danger involved in swallowing humanism — *God’s purpose is overturned*. In the first instance the professional counselor was denounced because he did not subscribe to humanistic theory. In the second, the Christian layman is dismissed because he does not have the academic ability to truly function in the role that God gave to him.¹⁷

God’s professional is out. God’s layman is out. What is next?

Larry Crabb — God. You’re fired!

The true impact of the psychological seduction comes when we see God

being pushed out of the picture, completely.

As mentioned above, Larry Crabb, too, has a section on Christianity and psychology. Here he talks about four separate positions that can be taken on this issue. 1. Separate But Equal — those who believe that both are legitimate but govern different fields. 2. Tossed Salad — indiscriminate mixing of theology and psychology. 3. Nothing Buttery — nothing accept Scripture. 4. Spoiling the Egyptians — a concerted effort to take from the secular world those insights that do not contradict Scriptural principles.

Of these options Crabb favors the fourth. The sad reality is that the belief that psychology has something to offer leads him onto dangerous ground. At the conclusion of the chapter, Crabb puts together the thoughts of psychologists in such a way that it could be adopted as a humanist manifesto. So enamored is he with proving the compatibility of psychology and Scripture that he compiles a list of those who might contribute to the restoration of the human condition — that is, with one notable exception, God.

Crabb’s manifesto reads:

Man is responsible (Glasser) to believe truth which will result in responsible behavior (Ellis) that will provide him with meaning, hope (Frankl), and love (Fromm) and will serve as a guide (Adler) to effective living with others as a self- and other-accepting person (Harris), who understands himself (Freud), who appropriately expresses himself (Perls), and who knows how to control himself (Skinner).¹⁸

God is dead. Christ’s Sacrifice is worthless. The Spirit’s work is needless. If we would but take note of these men our lives would be perfect. Utopia!

This then is the third danger. Seduction leads down a slippery slope. God’s workers, God’s Word, God’s purpose, and even God Himself are made extinct, all in the name of god and according to his word.

However, it is not the God of the Bible. It is the god of humanism. These

work for reform, because at the end of the day, you can only drop-out so far. When you’ve reached the end of that line, you have two choices: work for reform and reconstruct dead churches, organisations, even a dead nation, or abandon the church, the nation and other institutions to the devil.

men have all been seduced by trying to reconcile — read subject — the Bible to humanism.

Plundering the Egyptians — Didn’t that end in idolatry?

In bringing this to a conclusion we need to look at the reason these men went wrong.

Here, we shall focus upon Larry Crabb for he deals with the subject in greatest detail.

As noted earlier, Crabb outlined four positions that are possible as far as the relationship between psychology and theology is concerned. Whilst discussing this subject he made comment about each option, including the pros and cons. Interestingly, he also outlined the dangers.

Here then are some of his comments:

“It must still be said, though, that secular psychology operates from a radically different set of presuppositions than Christianity insists upon.”¹⁹

“It is impossible for ... psychology to remain metaphysically neutral ... We must therefore move with extreme caution in accepting the conclusions of secular psychology into our Christian thinking. *We may be absorbing ideas which subtly contradict our biblical position.*”²⁰

“*The Tossed Salad* model, although often practiced unwittingly by Christians who hold a high view of Scripture, *can result in thinking which subtly moves us away from our Christianity into sheer humanism.*”²¹

“In spite of the best intentions to remain Biblical, *it is frighteningly easy to admit concepts into our thinking which compromise biblical*

16. Gary Collins, *Christian Counselling* (Dallas: Word, 1988. Revised 1989.) 22-23. Italics added.

17. On this second point note the contrast between Adams and Collins. Adams wrote his book “Competent to Counsel” in order to encourage Christians to fulfill their duty; Collins has just made them redundant.

18. Crabb, 56.

19. Crabb, 29.

20. Crabb, 37.

21. Crabb, 38. One could rightly question what Crabb means by a high view of Scripture. A truly high view means that you study, treasure, and guard it. In such cases movement into “sheer humanism” would be near nigh impossible.

content ... The all-too-common but disastrous result is that we tend to look at Scripture through the eyeglasses of psychology when the critical need is to look at psychology through the glasses of Scripture."

All this leads Crabb to conclude about his own position: "Spoiling the Egyptians is ... **a delicate and risky task**, appropriate for the Christian and sanctioned by God but by no means free of real danger."²²

Crabb is so concerned about the dangers of spoiling the Egyptians that he actually sets up criteria people should adhere to. One of these is that

people should spend "at least as much time ... in the study of the Bible as in the study of psychology."²³ Interestingly enough, the dust jacket of his book records that Crabb has 3 degrees, all of which are in psychology.

It would seem that the earnest desire to supplement Scripture with secular study has led to just that. You see, *the very assumption that Scripture is in need of supplementation belies the fact that a fairly low view of Scripture was held in the first place.*

Scripture is God's revelation about Himself and man. Moreover, it is a

revelation about salvation/redemption. Man's reason is affected by sin. Therefore, it is impossible for fallen, sinful and rebellious men, to devise, in any way, an answer to the problems that man encounters.

The reason that psychology is unacceptable lies in the very fact that it seeks to give an answer to man's problems without reference to God or the fall. Psychology competes for the same ground as the Bible, and that is where its seductive danger lies. The two are not, and indeed cannot be, compatible for both seek exclusive rights to the same piece of ground.

22. Crabb, 48. Emphasis added.

23. Crabb, 50