

C.S. Lewis and Professor Haldane – III

By: Robert L. Withers

Is the enthronement of science confined to the world-system or can it be identified in the professing church? If by the word “science” we include the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and psychology then I suggest that the professing church has been significantly affected by the prevailing scientific-mechanistic ethos of society. Of the three aforementioned disciplines, anthropology, because much of it is interpreted through a Darwinian lens, has a significant effect on those elements of the church that do not hold a high-view of Scripture; however, I want to focus on the professing church which within its profession claims to continue to hold Scripture as the Word of God.

The danger of going down this path of observation is the same one Lewis risked when writing *That Hideous Strength*, the accusation that I am opposed to the learning and observations of science, including the social sciences; this is not the case. However, of all the areas of what we term science today, the social sciences are the most susceptible to subjective interpretation and manipulation of data because people are interpreting people – not physical objects. In daily life we all face the challenge of correctly interpreting the actions and words of our neighbors, and most of us, myself included, come up woefully short in understanding those around us. Consider that our daily interpretations of others are based on our empirical experience, and yet we continue to get it wrong with others. Granted some days we get it more right than wrong, but we still get it wrong. What does that say about the danger of placing empirical experience on the throne of social engineering? Social engineering may be able to manipulate but it cannot understand us as persons. It may be able to reduce us to rats and dogs but it cannot engage us as men and women with souls. The social sciences approach their statistics with *a priori* grids and those grids dictate the interpretation of data, indeed, they dictate the categories of data collected.

Filtering social sciences through the lens of Scripture is not always easy, at least not for me. Filtering the sciences that overlap between the social and medical, such as psychology and psychiatry, is not always easy, at least not for me. Sometimes these sciences can inform a situation, whether it be on a basic level or a more complex level, but if I permit these sciences to be the arbiter of my relationships and interpreter of family systems, of marriages, of congregations, of society...then what have I done?

As a pastor I have had occasion to work closely with professionals in the mental health sciences; but I have been careful to know the grid upon which these professionals base their practice, and my goal has been for my parishioners to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Shepherd of their lives; not counseling, not science, not me.

