

C.S. Lewis and Professor Haldane – IV

By: Robert L. Withers

Three or four years ago I was in a day-long gathering of pastors in Charlottesville, VA. Because these gatherings had generally been edifying I invited one of the men in our church to come with me. The presenter that day was from a seminary. At this seminary he had developed an institute with a focus on developing pastors and congregations and coaching leaders. Now I'm sure this man is a fine man, a fine brother in Christ; so please don't interpret what follows as personal, it can't be personal because I don't know the man, but I want to use this experience and one or two others as foils to describe what I'm talking about when I write of the professing church adopting the scientific ethos of the world-system.

My first observation is that programs, institutes, and other offerings in seminaries and many parachurch ministries are often economically driven. While this may not be quite on point with our current discussion regarding science, the issue of ethos is relevant. Just as a scientific ethos has permeated much of the professing church, so has an economic ethos. "Ministries" must be economically viable in order to be sanctioned and supported by many professing Christian institutions and organizations. It seems that the notion of trusting the leading of the Holy Spirit and trusting the God of Abraham for provision has departed the camp; we may sing *Jehovah-jireh* but we'll trust in marketing. We now know a thing is from God if it provides a return on our economic investment.

The day in Charlottesville consisted of a Power Point presentation with graphs, statistics, maxims built on the statistics, and more graphs and statistics. Coaching, church growth, leadership, and more coaching, church growth and leadership. On the way home I asked my companion what he thought, "I didn't understand much of it", was the reply. The fact was that there wasn't much that was understandable.

I had brought my Bible for the day; I need not have done so. With, I think, one exception, the Bible was not referred to. Here we are, a group of pastors and other church leaders, gathered for the day, considering the church, pastoral ministry, and our mission to the world; and the Bible is not necessary, we can get through the day without it. No wonder my companion couldn't understand much – it was not Biblical language, they were not Biblical paradigms – it was the science of sociology reigning as arbiter and director of pastoral ministry and church growth and church health. And Jesus? What about Jesus? While I don't recall Jesus being referred to during the day, in similar contexts Jesus would more likely be referred to as a "coach" than as Lord.

Similar scenarios are played out throughout the professing church, on seminary

campuses, in pastoral workshops, in leadership seminars, in parachurch ministries, in “Christian” books and DVDs. The Scriptures and Christ are placed within the framework of social science, social science is not placed within the framework of Christ and the Scriptures.