Social Science and the Faith

(Paper on Social Science, spoken before the Educational Committee of the Goodna Christian School Association on the 11th of November, 1978.)

by C.F. Coleborn

It is not possible to present an exhaustive examination of Social Science in a paper of this nature. However, the vitals of Social Science can and must be examined and criticized in the light of Scriptural principles. I believe that the following points touch on the vitals of this subject, and any discussion of Social Science from a Christian perspective, must involve these points.

1. The presuppositions by which we must examine and judge Social Science, its aims, structure, and presentation, are the truths of the living God as they are revealed in the face of Jesus Christ in Scripture (Ps. 36:9; John 14:5-6; I Cor. 1:30-31; Col. 2:2b-4). Our rule of faith and life then, is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

For us, as members and teachers of the Association and School, we acknowledge the Scriptures to be purely summarized in the doctrinal standards of the School's Constitution, namely the Triple Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

2. There IS a need to clarify what we mean by Social Science. What are we talking about? One observes a tremendous diversity of understanding as to what Social Science is. For the purposes of this paper, we will presume that Social Science is commonly understood to be: "The consideration of man, his environment, and his relationship to his environment, so that he may become a better adjusted person in that environment." The source of truth and knowledge for life and happiness is thus commonly held to be in man and creation.

One observes that Social Science in the academic/educational world is influenced by, and connected to Sociology, Psychology and the Behavioural sciences generally. At present, these areas of research and study are deeply committed to, and have as their presuppositions, humanistic philosophy. This deep commitment flows into Social

Science as taught in primary and secondary schools. Any consideration of Social Science of necessity therefore means we are to deal face to face with the philosophy of humanism.

3. In all areas of knowledge it is not possible to be completely objective. Rather, every area of our life and learning is coloured by religio-philosophical presuppositions, and these presuppositions colour our whole being, and are presuppositional to all our existence. We see these presuppositions in all mankind, for essentially man is a religious creature. By creation he is essentially led and governed by what is in his heart (Matt. 4:4 and Prov. 23:7).

Because of man's sin and depravity, we know that not only is the heart of man not interested in loving and serving His Creator, but he is positively against Him, and constructs reality and the world around him against the Lord and truth (Gen. 6:5; Ps. 51:5; Prov. 21:4b; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 1:21-23, 25; Rom. 3:10-12, 18; II Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:15; etc.).

Thus man is by nature a "humanist," and as Paul says in Romans 1:25, is constantly exchanging the glory of the incorruptible God, into the likeness of the creature. We can never expect to receive from the hands of secular "experts" a true construction of man or his world. We may only expect to receive a humanistic construction and interpretation of them and their relationship to one another.

4. We cannot escape from the observable fact that the whole trend in education at present is towards the humanities, and thus the emphasis in primary and secondary education on Social Science as a medium in which to cast the child's total world and life view and education.

Because we are "children of our age," in education as well as life generally, we too in our education and teacher training, are influenced by this trend, and construction of man and the world.

The Humanists have historically been the ones who have both pioneered and encouraged the use of Social Science as a medium in which other subjects are taught. We cannot deny that the Humanists actively and in a most effective way, propagate their life and world view in Social Science, and use it as a tool to advance their essentially anti-Christian cause. I say anti-Christian, because they make the whole ultimacy of life in this world at least, to be found in man and his physical world. Any reference to the Almighty and to Jesus Christ is purely as an existential belief, and His claims of authority and rule over the whole spectrum of life in this world are ignored or positively rejected.

If we become involved in teaching Social Science, we thus take up, I believe, a subject whose whole background and development makes it an integrated system in which the presuppositions and purposes are pure Humanism. To bring this subject under the Lordship of Christ would mean, I suggest, completely dismantling the whole system bit by bit, examining and reforming where necessary each presupposition and its practical consequences by the Word of God. One wonders whether we would be able to call the rebuilt system "Social Science," for the rebuilt subject should be vastly different from the Humanists' course of studies.

5. There are very important questions involved in Social Science. Our whole world and faith and life view is involved in them. They are vital questions, and in fact touch on the very basics of our faith as Christians. The following questions are raised in Social Science and, mind you, the expected answers are very much in favour of Humanism.

a. What is man – his nature as a psychological, spiritual and physical being? What are man's abilities? Origins and development? Purpose in the world? Authority (that is, his rule of faith and life)? Relationship to the world around him?

b. What is Society? Is it essentially one or many? What are its powers? The relationship of the individual to his possessions? The institutions of Society? Their role and limits? The purpose of society?

c. What is the World around us? Its origin? Its development? Its relationship to mankind? Its relationship to our God?

d. What is History? of man? of society? of the world? Its purpose and interpretation?

I would see the cause of Christ Jesus and His Word as deeply involved in these vital and practical questions, and that Christ Jesus has much to say on these questions. And we know that the Lord has spoken absolutely on these matters in His Word. So, when we come to Social Science as the Humanists have handed it to us, we must be aware that these questions are involved, and have been answered with the interpretation of the Humanists. We must remove their construction of these subjects, and replace them with a Christ-honouring and Biblical construction of them.

What are some of the issues of Biblical revelation, issues of true life and death, that are involved in Social Science? I would suggest the following to be some:

a. The ultimacy of life, which is to glorify and enjoy God forever.

b. Depravity and Sin, and its effects on our being and world.

c. The antithesis. That is, the recognition that there are two groups of people in the world, two ways, and these two are deeply and profoundly opposed to one another.

d. Authority. That is our rule for Faith *and* Life.

e. Creation of the World and Mankind.

f. Providence.

g. Redemption.

h. The Covenant.

i. The institutions of life. That is, the family, the state and the church, and their different departments.

j. Morality and the commandments of God.

Now any answers we give to the questions raised in Social Science must, I believe, of necessity involve the above issues, and the Biblical construction of them. There are of course other questions and issues raised in Social Science, but the above are some of the more important, I would believe.

Two brief examples can be given on how and where Humanism and Biblical Christianity conflict. Firstly, there is a conflict over the psychological make-up and development of a person's mind and character. The reality and objectiveness of man as a sinner, what caused this sin, its remedy, etc. is practically denied by Social Science, and its Humanistic philosophy.

Secondly, history is seen as revolving around man and society by the Humanists, but around the eternal plan and purposes of the Lord by Scripture.

6. Because of the known history of Social Science, how it developed, and how it is presently used as a vehicle for Humanism, I believe the wiser and more Biblical course of action to adopt would be to disassociate ourselves from the structure and aims of Social Science, and return to teaching History, Geography, and Civics, (and Anthropology, Archaeology and Psychology!), as separate subjects, rather than trying to "Christianize" Social Science.

It is not enough, I would suggest, to believe we can adopt Social Science as Christians, and cut off the "Humanistic fruit" from it. The fact is, that not only the fruit needs changing, but the twigs, the branches, the trunk, and the very roots!

7. We need to remember as teachers that in all subjects taught in our school, and especially in those subjects which have a heavy emphasis

upon, and commitment to, faith concepts and presuppositions, we are committed to Biblical concepts which are embodied in the doctrinal part of our constitution. Practically, this would mean we exceed our mandate as teachers if we develop any subject not in theoretical and practical harmony with this doctrinal position. We usurp the duty and calling of the parents and church when we develop a subject upon any religio/philosophical presuppositions other than commonly agreed to by the parents, the church and the school association.

I believe that we must be very careful we do not imitate the state schools, and take to ourselves an authority that is not ours. The *primary* calling of instructing children in religio/philosophical concepts and application belongs to the home and church, and not, I would suggest, to the school. Scripture does not portray the school as a divine institution. The family and the church *are* portrayed as divine institutions.

CONCLUSION

One must acknowledge the importance of having an understanding of the topics raised in Social Science, and it is important to know how Humanists think and live. However, it is vital for our eternal good and God's glory, that we rightly understand these topics in their relationship to the Creator and Sustainer of all things (Romans 11:36).

We must realize, those of us who are involved in the instruction of the seed of Christ's church and covenant, that we are in the forefront of the great battle of the ages. We wrestle not against flesh and blood. We wrestle against both the flagrant as well as the most insidious and subtle assaults of the evil one against the faith and world view whereby we totally own the Mediator between God and mankind, Christ Jesus, as our Sovereign King and Saviour.

There is the dire need of a careful and prayerful and Scriptural examination of all that we do in relation to instructing covenant children, least we be found in some way, ever so small, where we aid and abet our eternal and mortal enemy.

May we see the all-encompassing truth of Ephesians 6:12-18, not only for our "spiritual" welfare, but for our intellectual and total world and life existence.

Death

(in Tolkienese)

By Rev. Robert C. Harbach

The Last Enemy stole into the world with the Fall of Melkor, King of Light,
Becoming Morgoth, Dark Enemy, head of the Morquendi, Dark Beings.
Transformed in guise noble and beautiful, deceiving all but the most wary:
A Liar, Prince of the Balrogs, Mighty Demons, who with them bred a hideous race,–
Upon which the dread of Light was new and strong, –
To multiply like flies, bringing on the Black Years of the World.
Black Foe of the Universe, from light made he darkness with power to pierce and deaden
The eye, the heart, the mind, to strangle the very will in Stygian gloom.
Boldly forth went he whither he would, achieving vengeance. Great was his triumph,
For men took the lives of men in Niagaras of blood to drown
millions in the black tide of Abortion.
Orcs and werewolves, the Sixteen Million hordes of the Gay Crowd, freely abound
In public life – men to lay buried under falling hells – Revelation Six –
Inprisoned in the Caves of the Forgotten until the Last Battle and the Day of Doom.
Yet he oft dismayed sent forth great reek and dark cloud to hide his nether realm
From the Light of the Daystar.
Morgoth, with Grond, the Hammer of the Underworld, smashed the Earth
With crash of thunder, to split it with a mighty crack from pole to pole –
Death and the Grave.
Gothmog, too, his name, Lord of Balrogs, Filthy Demons.

King he is of Angband, the Hell of Iron, his great dungeon-fortress.
Wields he Mormegil, the Black Sword of the King of Terrors,
Weapon which cannot be broken, save by an arrow from afar,
From the supra-mundane Sphere.
Mormegil spawns the children of Nienor, suicides, Judases, Ahithophels;
Himself suicide at the Leap of Dreadful Doom, he drove Turin, like Saul,
To madness, falling on his own sword; and Hurin, father of Turin, a mighty warrior,
But weak against temptation to self-murder, cast himself into the Western Sea,
When no more could he find purpose or conquest in life.
Naedhros, a Zimri, cast himself into a gaping chasm of fire and flame.
On these dupes Death wreaks all his rage.
Ar-Pharazon, the apostate king, turned back from the worship of the One, He That Alone Is,
To the Tartarean worship of Morgoth, Lord of the Dark.
A great host followed him, secretly at first, then openly.
Yet still there remained a remnant of the Faithful
On the Straight Road illumined with the Light of the Valar, the Angels.
That Way Everlasting is for those given to find it by a certain grace or favor.
Before they die, they look on the dreadful and beautiful White Mountain,
Their Everlasting Habitation, the abode of Yaweh, of the Angels and glorified men.

The Agony and the Ecstasy of My Teaching

(Miss Nelle Vander Ark is Associate Professor of Communications at the Reformed Bible College in Grand Rapids, MI)

by Nelle Vander Ark

Often when I am asked about my work and I say, "I teach English," my questioner flinches a bit and backs off. I sense I am someone to be feared. I teach a dreadful subject. . .one that many have failed and fear failing again.