

UNDERSTANDING CHURCH GROWTH

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THE MASSES, THE CLASSES, AND CHURCH GROWTH

MORE THAN any previous century, ours is conscious of "the masses" and their claim to justice and equality of opportunity. The burden-bearers have always comprised the major part of society, but in the twentieth century they have gained more and more power. Industrialism has created a huge proletariat in our ever enlarging cities. Labor organizations have achieved tremendous strength. The Churches have called for social justice. An awakened conscience among national leaders has changed our tax structure in the direction of a more just distribution of wealth. Communism has established dictatorships of the proletariat in many nations, defending these as a necessary step toward a just society.

Scores of millions, through reading, study, lectures, the mass media, and indoctrination, have learned of both the needs of the masses and their might when organized and armed. Perhaps more powerful than books and speeches, however, managed events such as elections, victories at the Olympic Games, space explorations, summit meetings, riots, and wars have strikingly focused attention on the masses and their right to education, health, leisure, and power. That mankind should be divided into beneficiaries and victims of the social order no longer seems right to thoughtful men. The condition of the disinherited has become a matter of profound concern to the state. Those who oppose communism do so not on the basis

that its championing of the masses is wrong, but that it is ineffective, its means and consequences are self-defeating.

What does this radically new element in human thinking, which dominates the world scene as the Himalayas dominate the plains of North India, signify for bringing nations to faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to the Gospel?

CLASS/MASS SOCIETY DESCRIBED

While most Americans will agree with the first paragraph above, they understand it with their heads rather than their hearts. Though they have their poor, Americans are accustomed to a unified society and do not like to speak of "the classes and the masses." The carpenter earns as much as the college teacher and the millworker drives a better car than the minister. The idea of a privileged aristocracy is alien to our national ethos. So while they sometimes talk about the masses, Americans do not really know what it is to live as victims of the social order. In fact we are apt to think "victims of the social order" too barbed a phrase to describe any portion of our own society.

Notwithstanding this, America has her exploited masses. In his State of the Union address in 1968 President Johnson dwelt on the five hundred thousand "hard core unemployed." Vice President Humphrey has said, "The consequences of being poor and hopeless in a society where most are not produces a deep sense of alienation. This feeling is nowhere more fully expressed than in the attitudes of some ghetto dwellers toward the law. . . . In the eyes of the impoverished, it is the law which garnishes the poor man's salary . . . evicts him from his home . . . binds him to usury . . . cancels his welfare payments . . . and seizes his children" (Humphrey, 1967).

In Afericasia outside the strictly tribal societies, the (upper) classes and the masses are a vivid part of the scene. Economies, power structures, and religions are so arranged that the more comfortable classes remain high above the great mass of people. The distance can be measured in many areas of life. In income, the classes average 200 a month, the masses 20. In language, the classes speak the national language fluently and correctly. The masses speak many dialects and express themselves clumsily in the standard languages. In housing, the classes live in comfortable and permanent homes, with all modern conveniences. The masses live in shacks made of thatch and wattle, adobe and crude tile, odds and ends of lumber, and tin cans. As to health, the classes obtain competent medical service,

buy sufficient food to keep well, rear their children to maturity, and enjoy old age. The masses depend on herbalists and medicine men of one sort or another, eat chiefly corn or manioc or rice, meal after meal, day after day, and year after year. True, their diet is fortified by a few beans, vegetables in season, and very occasionally meat or fish. Men of the masses are lean. They do not count calories, their infant mortality is high, and they seldom live to have grey hair.

In Afericasia, in the political arena, the classes are intimately related to the men who run the country. The masses have little to do with those who rule them and care less. In religion, the classes are assured that they are God's special creation—recall the Hindu doctrine of castes. The masses are assured, in effect, that God created them "little people"—Shudras or inferiors in India, Indians in Bolivia and Peru, Negroes in North America—to be laborers forever.

Brazil is one of the advanced nations of Afericasia. It has a superabundance of land and is installing great power dams and industrial complexes. Yet the following quotations indicate that even in Brazil the masses are a prominent feature of the demographic landscape.

Brazil's Negroes (38 per cent of the population versus 10 per cent in the United States) have never feared a Ku Klux Klan, never fought in a race riot, never staged a sit-in. Indeed, President Janio Quadros was expressing a common opinion of Brazilians when he once said, "We have become the most successful example of racial co-existence and integration known in history."

But the facts suggest otherwise. Brazil's colored people are the nation's dispossessed and, in many respects, race prejudice in Brazil matches anything to be found in the Deep South. Even the Portuguese word for people—gente—has racial overtones in Brazil. "Whites," runs a bitter Negro saying, "are gente, blacks are beasts." . . . On a visit to Sao Paulo, Louis Armstrong exclaimed, "They told me this place had no discrimination, and all I see is my color pushing the broom." . . . Many white Brazilians have a superiority complex which staggers the wildest Yankee imagination. "According to Brazilian stereotypes," a Negro lawyer in Sao Paulo said to a North American newspaper reporter, "you are now talking to a man who is shiftless, lazy, irresponsible, lawless, stupid, drunk, immoral, and oversexed." In Sao Paulo police training classes, only Negroes are used to simulate crooks. . . . Most colored Brazilians accept these white stereotypes without question. . . . until Brazil's Negroes climb off the bottom rung of the ladder, no one expects any pressure for change. Most of Brazil's struggling Negro millions are still too busy trying to get enough to eat to worry overly much about discrimination (*Newsweek*, September 7, 1964:47).

"The masses" in Brazil in 1964 included almost all the Negroes, and millions of mestizos as well. In 1942, Merle Davis of the International Missionary Council estimated the situation as follows.

A wayside house. One backless bench, a hammock and a broken chair were the only items of furniture. The other room had a table, a bed with rags covering rusted springs, and a bench. In one corner hung a small mirror, and on a kerosene box beneath were a powder puff, a spool of thread, and a tumbler. Two naked children played about on the dirt floor with chickens and a small pig. Food was cooked in a kettle over a fire of sticks, kindled on a mud-covered shelf. The home and equipment were typical of many of the rural houses we entered.

Approximately ten million workers with their families comprise the bulk of the nation. They are the *fazenda* workers, the small farmers, the sharecroppers, the forest and stock men, the mill hands, and the common laborers. This great group of workers who comprise between 96 and 97 per cent of the population earn an average wage of \$10 (U.S.) per month, with a spread of from \$15 for skilled labor to \$5 or even less for the unskilled worker of the north.

The North American thinks of food in terms of bread, butter, milk, eggs, meat, cheese, and vegetables. The Brazilian worker can afford but tiny amounts of these food staples; to him they are luxuries; he lives on starchy roots, potatoes, black beans, manioc, and occasionally salt fish and bananas (Davis, 1942:19, 35-36).

Brazil has made progress since 1942, but it was then and is in 1980 definitely ahead of many nations in Africa.

In India the masses include not only 99 per cent of the untouchable Shudras but most of the touchables, and great numbers of the upper castes also. In manufacturing cities and villages, the hungry are to be found in all castes, though the proportion grows less as one approaches the uppermost. In China, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Africa, and all the countries of Latin America, as one adds disinherited, shirtless ones, sharecroppers, landless labor, and illiterates together, a vivid picture of the huge size of the masses and the depth of their misery emerges.

FIGURE 14.1

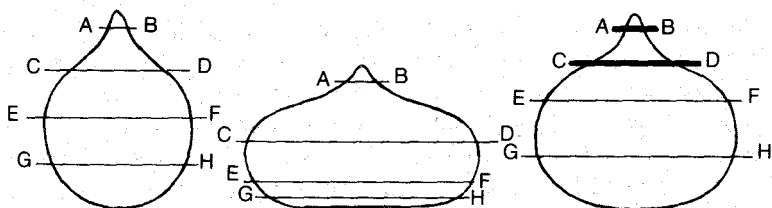
Landowners
Business Community
Professionals
Artisans and Mechanics
Peasants
Unskilled Laborers

“There are various classes in society” is not an accurate statement; it conveys falsehood rather than truth. A missionary communication recently said, “We are reaching all classes of society with the Gospel,” and then, to give point to the words, appended the misleading diagram shown on page 272.

There are these classes, true; but the landowners, business community, and professionals are emphatically not as large a part of society as the artisans, mechanics, peasants, and unskilled labor.

The world of mission is indebted to Eugene Nida for popularizing a much more accurate diagram of the social order. The three pear-shaped figures below show proportions and classes much more truly.

FIGURE 14.2. THE SHAPE OF CLASS/MASS SOCIETY



Any analysis to be meaningful must define accurately the terms used. Exactly who comprise the classes and masses? *Until sharp definition has been made of each segment of a given society, precise thinking about it is impossible.* Since society in each country, however, differs from that in other countries, and in a given country the definitions of thirty years ago will not fit society as it exists today, I shall not attempt precise definitions. Those made for Mexico would not fit Korea in 1980, those for Canada would not fit England.

Instead, for the sake of the illustration, I shall count the landed aristocracy as the upper classes (above *AB* in the left pear-shaped diagram), the business community and professionals as middle classes (above *CD*), artisans, mechanics, mill foremen, and truck drivers as upper-lower classes (above *EF*), peasants and unskilled labor as middle-lower classes (above *GH*); and the unemployed, unemployable, serfs, drifters, and diseased as the lower-lower classes (below *GH*). Note the extremely small proportion the upper classes form of the whole—perhaps 1 per cent of the total

population. Note the small size of the middle classes, perhaps 6 per cent of the population. The place of line *CD* varies up and down depending on what country and what decade in that country is being considered. Note also how words mislead the mind. The middle classes are "middle" in no real sense at all; it is more realistic to call the "middle" and "upper" classes together "the classes." They are the beneficiaries of the social order. In many places they are the exploiters and the lower classes could more exactly be called the exploited. Consequently in this chapter I speak of only two main divisions: the classes and the masses. Any true picture of mankind in Afericasia must portray the small numbers in the tip and the very large numbers in the swelling bulb of the pear-shaped figure—everything below the line *CD*. Tiny classes and tremendous masses characterize most countries of Afericasia today.

In North America and increasingly in Europe, the middle figure more truly represents the population of each nation. The flattened pear shows that the distance between the classes and the masses is not so great. The middle class is more truly middle and is much larger. The "upper-lower classes" form a large section of the whole and the lower-lower classes comprise a smaller segment of the whole than in the typical Afericasian land.

In the right-hand figure, the heavy black bars *AB* and *CD* represent breaks between the three segments. The upper classes are not only far above the middle classes but compose a different breed of men. The middle classes, too, are so far removed from the lower classes that intermarriage and interdining are rare. Such caste—or perhaps one should say space—lines are demanded by human pride and mark most societies, but are institutionalized in some. Hindu India with its caste system is the most obvious illustration of institutionalized race pride, though for four hundred years the old white families of Latin America have run the twice-born of India a close second.

Rev. Oscar Maldonado (1966:43) writes,

Colombian society, seen as a whole, seems to be more of a caste society than a class society. There is an abyss between "the social classes which direct society" and the masses. The latter still have not acquired the nature of a class since they lack an awareness [of their situation] and will continue to remain in this condition given the high rate of illiteracy, low quality of instruction in the primary schools, and the past experience of labor movements.

Tribal societies, where every member of the tribe has an equal right to the land, present an exception to class/mass society; but the exception will not be long-lived. As tribal societies break down, emerge into the common life of the world, and flood into cities they become the masses.

In ages past, despite the fact that their aristocracy became Kshatriyas (ruling castes), the great mass of tribesmen in India became Shudras (inferior castes).

As industrialization and education progress, the middle classes, particularly in favored nations, increase in size. Observe the shift in per cent of the total population which each class is undergoing in Brazil as described by Havighurst and Moreira (1964:99). Let the eye follow the "lower-middle" class from 1870 to 1955. The growth of "middle classes" may be observed in most lands; more in the industrialized, less in others. See how the slaves in 1870 melted into the "lower-lower" class in 1920.

SOCIAL CLASS DISTRIBUTION IN BRAZIL BY
PER CENT OF TOTAL POPULATION

Class	1870	1920	1950	1955
Upper Upper	1	1.5	2	2
Lower Upper	1	1.5	2	2
Upper Middle	5	2	3	4
Lower Middle	6	9.5	12	16
Upper Lower	73	10	33	36
Lower Lower		70	50	42
Slaves	15			
	<hr/> 100	<hr/> 100	<hr/> 100	<hr/> 100

Middle-class growth does not decrease the tremendous numbers in the masses. For example, in Brazil in 1955, the lower classes (masses) comprised 78 per cent of the total population, and, since the population had grown so greatly, 78 per cent in 1955 meant millions more than 80 per cent in 1920. In other countries, the masses might comprise 70 to 95 per cent of the total population, but their exact numbers in each country do not concern us here. In Afericasian lands, on the most favorable estimates, the masses (the disinherited, the burden-bearers, the one- and two-acre men, and the landless) still comprise the vast majority of the human race.

One rejoices in the increase of the middle classes, in land reform and other moves in the direction of justice, but one cannot help noting that by comparison with the size of the problem, these changes are small. There is not much to rejoice about. For instance, the February 1962 *Viewpoints* carried a brave headline: SYRIA MAINTAINS LAND REFORM OFFENSIVE. The story underneath was this. In 1957, Syria passed a law to distribute land which enabled each owner of a large estate to keep for himself and for each person in his family 160 acres of land. Which parts he kept were

determined by himself. Only the balance of his estate was to be distributed. After three years, only 6,000 families (out of a total population of 3,000,000) had been given an average of ten acres of irrigated or fifty acres of unirrigated land! The headline might better have read: SYRIA FIDDLES WHILE THE FUZE SIZZLES.

Christians must not imagine that these moves toward justice, in which they rejoice, materially affect the discipling of nations. The glowering masses still remain. Their numbers grow with every passing year. The middle classes are still small and will remain small, if not proportionately smaller. Christians today should address themselves to the current problem. Fifty years hence our grandsons will no doubt address themselves to the situation they face.

The masses in the past have been resigned. They thought the kind of life they lived was the only kind possible. Wise men simply accepted life the way it had to be. But resignation or what passes for contentment is disappearing. One should not overestimate the rate of its going, but it is retreating. The masses are learning that they do not have to live in perpetual poverty. Educated men inform them that they have a right to plenty, and organize and arm them to wrest a large share of this world's goods from the privileged. This is the revolution which seethes in every land.

The Marxists are determined to ride this revolution to world domination. They believe communism offers the only way by which the masses, through class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat, can wring justice out of the reluctant classes. Idealists among the students, groaning at the rank oppression which present systems impose on the multitudes, demand change. Patriots, seeing that nations composed of hereditary elites batten on a vast illiterate peasantry are weak, seek to enfranchise the latter so that their countries may become powerful. Whoever does it—Marxists, idealists, or patriots—the masses are being roused, organized, and pushed into the battle for more of the good things of life.

Their temper is well illustrated by a letter which the Student Federation of Chile addressed to President Eisenhower on the occasion of his visit to South America in 1959. It reads in part:

In the United States, it makes sense to fight to defend the prevailing order. . . . In Latin America, to defend the prevailing order means maintaining the privilege of a thin layer of the population surrounded by an ocean of poor people for whom the social order means little or nothing. . . . If the injustices of today are all Christianity or democracy can offer this continent, no one should be surprised if the best children of these nations turn toward communism.

These few pages describing so briefly today's class/mass society will recall to most readers a familiar picture. The existence of the classes and masses need not be labored. We press on to ask what is the meaning of the masses to the mission of God.

THE BIBLE AND THE MASSES

The Bible shows a steady preference for the common man. It begins by declaring that all men are sons of Adam and hence brothers and equal. It ends by affirming that all men, "great and small alike," will stand before the great white throne and be judged. Wealth, learning, blue blood, power, and thrones count for nothing as men are judged. The sole criterion, equally possible to the masses and the classes, is: Have they washed their robes? Are their names written in the book of life? Have they confessed Christ before the world and, abandoning all sin and other allegiance, been faithful unto death?

To Christians of the masses in India, the biblical account—that God created one man and one woman and all men are their descendants—is particularly dear. It contrasts sharply with the Hindu account that the great god Brahm created the Brahmans from his head, the warrior castes from his shoulders, the merchant castes from his thighs, and the masses from his feet.

When God selected a people in Egypt and made a covenant with it, he chose not the learned, not the princes, not the aristocrats, not the students—but the slaves.

The Lord said, "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:7, 8). . . . The people of Israel . . . came to the wilderness of Sinai . . . and Moses went up and the Lord called to him out of the mountain saying, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all people; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." . . . And the people answered and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do."

Later when the Hebrews were settled in Canaan and wanted a king, the Bible records that God was not pleased with their thirsting after a more efficient aristocratic structuring of their society. In a remarkable passage He foretold the oppressions which the classes have always inflicted on the

masses. The forms vary from age to age and land to land, but the oppression remains.

These will be the ways of the king who will rule over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war. . . . He will take your daughters to be his perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards. . . . He will take your manservants and maid-servants, and the best of your cattle. He will take a tenth of your flocks and you shall be his slaves (I Sam. 8:11f.).

When the aristocratic order flowered and came to fruit, and all these prophecies and more had come to pass, God sent His prophets to plead the cause of the poor and to demand justice for the common man.

The Lord has taken his place to contend, he stands to judge his people. The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor, says the Lord God of hosts. . . .

Woe to those who add field to field and house to house, until there is no more room and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land. Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may run after strong drink. They have lyre and harp, timbrel and flute and wine at their feasts. . . .

Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppressions.

To turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right,

That widows may be their spoil and that they may make the fatherless their prey (Isa. Chaps. 5 and 10).

Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel!

Is it not for you to know justice?—you who hate the good and love the evil, Who tear the skin from off my people, and their flesh from off their bones: Who break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a kettle. . . .

He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 3:1-3; 6:8).

Nathan, Jeremiah, Amos, and other prophets immediately come to mind when we focus attention on the rights of the common man and the oppression meted out to him by the upper classes. It is no accident that communism arose in Christendom. The communist ethical passion, so strangely distorted by its metaphysical framework, arises straight out of

the biblical insistence that God is a God of righteousness and *will not have the poor oppressed.*

New Testament Emphasis

The New Testament tells us that, when it pleased God that the Word should become flesh and dwell among us, Jesus was born to a peasant girl of Nazareth and grew up in the home of a carpenter. The Son of God learned the carpenter's trade and carried heavy planks and beams on His head and shoulders. Like the masses everywhere, He ate His bread "in the sweat of his face."

When at Nazareth our Lord announced the purpose of His coming, He said,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18).

No one can miss His marked emphasis on God's will for the masses, a point which received added confirmation when later He included in the signs of the coming of the Kingdom the significant one that "the poor have the good news preached to them" (Matt. 11:5).

Of the twelve apostles, eleven were Galileans—country people who spoke with an accent. The rulers, elders, scribes, and high priests scorned them as "uneducated common men." The Book of Acts tells us that the Christian religion spread through the masses in Jerusalem and Judea. The common people heard the apostles gladly. The rulers of the Jews were afraid to act against the apostles because they feared the people. "The people," we are told, held the apostles in high esteem and when the captain with the officers went and brought the apostles (Acts 5:18) to the high priest, they did so without violence "for they were afraid of being stoned by the people." It is no wonder that the masses were solidly behind the Early Church. She was made up largely of the common people and had common people for leaders. All the common people in Jerusalem must have had Christian relatives. The Church had only a few of the intelligentsia, and the great company of priests who later became obedient to the faith were perhaps those who were dependent on the masses who had become Christian.

When the Church grew in the synagogue communities of the Roman Empire, she took in large numbers of the underprivileged, as is amply

attested by the famous passage in I Corinthians—the only breakdown of the social standing of church members that we have.

For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are . . . (I Cor. 1:26f.).

There were, to be sure, men of wealth and learning in the Church. Only the well-to-do had houses large enough to serve as places of assembly, and the Jews were not a poverty-stricken community. Still, as one reads the passage he is confident that in social structure the Early Church resembles the Afericasian Churches which are rising out of the masses more than she does the middle- and upper-class congregations which assemble in tastefully-appointed, air-conditioned churches all across Eurica.

The Masses Are Dear to God

These selected passages must not be distorted to mean that God loves the poor and not the rich. God is no respecter of persons, and the wealthy sinner is just as lost as the poor one. While the Old Testament prophets inveigh against the rich who sell the needy for a pair of shoes, the great weight of their judgment falls not on the rich but on those, rich and poor, who abandon God for idols. Wealthy women were disciples of our Lord, and Nicodemus and Zacchaeus were far from poor. All this must be held steadily in view. Nevertheless, it remains true that the common people are dear to God. The fundamental thrust of God's revelation demands a high valuation of the masses.

The infinite value of a single soul, the doctrine that God judges the heart, and the clear directive that the commandment of God is to believe on His Son, Jesus Christ—all proclaim that structuring society into the classes and the masses is displeasing to God. Any such division—whether intentional or not—is man's device, which like divorce may be allowed by God because of the hardness of men's hearts, but is no part of God's intention for man. His ideal is a society in which all men, because each is of infinite worth, are judged by the same standards and saved by the same faith in the same Savior, receiving equal opportunity and equal justice.

Facing the classes and the masses, the Church and her emissaries may well pray the following missionary prayer:

Almighty God our heavenly Father, Who didst make of one blood all that dwell on the face of the earth, we worship Thee, we adore Thee, we bow in reverence before Thee. We yield ourselves to Thee and implore Thee to be born in us, take command of our wills and make us Thine in truth.

O Lord Jesus Christ, we remember that Thou wast born of a peasant mother in a poor carpenter's home and didst surround Thyself with disciples and apostles whom the educated of that day called "ignorant and unlearned." Thou didst tell men that a sign of the coming of Thy Kingdom was that the Gospel was proclaimed to the poor.

The common people heard Thee, Lord, gladly. Thy blessed Mother sang, My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, for he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich hath he sent empty away. And didst not Thou, O Lord, invite all those who labor and are heavy laden to come to Thee and find rest?

O Holy Christ, we lift up before Thee the poor of earth, the masses of mankind, the rural multitudes whose backs are bent with toil, the urban proletariat who live in tenements, and shacks, and favellas, and barrios, and zongoes. The illiterate, the oppressed, the disinherited, the fishermen and the carpenters, the landless labor, the unskilled. . . . The poor, Lord, the poor for whom Thou didst shed Thy precious blood and on whom Thou didst look with compassion, for they were as sheep without a shepherd. Grant us, Lord, Thy compassion, that we too may see the great masses of mankind as Thy lost children, and like Thee spend ourselves for them. In Thy blessed name, Amen.

MISSIONS FAVOR THE CLASSES

Missions from the wealthy West usually overlook the Bible at this point. Missionaries customarily place a high value on the educated, the wealthy, the cultured—in a word, the middle and upper classes. This is dictated and inspired, not by the Bible but, unconsciously, no doubt, by the extraordinarily affluent society of which most missionaries are a part. They thus devote themselves to "maintaining cordial relationships with the business and professional leaders," seek to win the leaders of the coming generation, and believe one Brahman convert is worth a thousand Untouchable Christians. In a given congregation of 200 communicants there may be 10 from the middle classes and 190 from the lower classes; but if asked, "What classes are you reaching?" a typical churchman will reply, "Middle and high—and some low, of course." Part of the scorn which has, in days past, been poured on the Pentecostals in Latin America is due to the fact that Pentecostals are frankly churches of the masses.

From the human point of view, preference for the middle and upper classes is eminently reasonable. The masses, as Moses and Paul could testify, bring problems with them when they become the people of God. The wealthy can support a paid ministry much more easily than the poor. Having grown up with more to manage, they are much more experienced in managing things.

Eurican Churches are middle-class Churches. Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Catholics in Europe have largely lost the working classes. An Anglican clergyman remarked to me, "After the industrial revolution started, we never had the working classes, and the Methodists got only a small part of them." In the United States, where all segments of the body politic are relatively affluent, many laboring men and women are Christians; but here, too, redemption and lift make many congregations and denominations middle-class organisms and rather pleased at being such. Most missionaries are middle-class people. They have grown up with interior plumbing, electric light, and plenty of books. They ride in cars and travel to the lands of their work in jet planes. Really, in relation to the masses of the lands to which they go, they are not middle-, but upper-class people.

Naturally they create middle-class Churches. There is nothing surprising in this, for the middle-class congregations in which they grew up have formed their standards. What is reverent worship, good singing, Christian treatment of wives, and proper use of leisure? What are efficient ways of conducting church business and educating one's children? Answers to these questions, given by Eurican missionaries and Afericasian leaders trained by them, cannot but be middle-class answers, unless churchmen, recognizing this part of their cultural overhang, steel themselves against it.

Occasionally they create small middle-class churches by converting middle-class non-Christians; but more frequently they plant churches among the peasantry or lower classes and then over a period of decades educate the youth of the Church. These then, in lands where education is the key to the middle classes, find themselves middle-class people. The older the Afericasian Church, provided it has had Eurican assistance through the years, the more middle-class are its controlling members. Not everyone becomes educated and middle-class, but those who do, control the Church. They are the ministers, elders, deacons, church school teachers, and heavy givers. The smaller the number of communicants in relation to the mission resources, the more rapidly does a Church become middle-class. A mission which stresses education, builds schools and possibly a college, and engages Christians as teachers, will build up an educated community. As we

have amply seen, this may not grow much, but its members will assure you that they are not interested in numerical expansion. They want quality Christians, by which they mean middle-class Christians. They disdain unwashed congregations of the masses.

By contrast the large Afericasian Churches—such as those built up by Lutherans, Baptists, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Pentecostals among the Bataks, Karens, Malas, and Madigas, Formosan Highlanders, and Chileans—are composed of the masses. Their members are poor (peasants, landless labor, urban proletariat) and commonly illiterate. Having many members and small mission resources they remain Churches of the masses.

Missionaries identify with the leaders of younger Churches, who by virtue of their education are middle-class, and thus reinforce the image of the Church as a middle-class organization. They tend to press middle-class clothes on a Church made up of the masses. They give middle-class armor to the Davids of the masses to fight in. Then growth stops.

First the Upper Classes in Afericasia?

One of the key questions on which mission policy hinges is this: Should we seek to win the upper classes first, confident that if we do they will win the lower classes? Many missionaries and nationals, living in cities, working with students and maintaining schools, believe the question should be answered in the affirmative. In part their answer is dictated by their own middle-class standing, but in part it is based on what seems a reasonable assumption: that the middle classes are the leaders and the masses are the followers.

Striking instances of the lower classes following the upper into the Church can be found. The slaves in the United States unquestionably became Christian because their masters were Christians—and would have become Moslems had their masters been Moslems. In the Philippines, the feudal lords of a large estate in Negros Oriental became Evangelicals, and most of their peons followed them. A church of several thousand resulted, made up of many small congregations scattered over the vast holding.

But for the most part, the strategy of winning the upper classes first has not worked. They will not be won. The middle classes "have it too good." Why should they risk losing it all to become Christians? For when they do, they are often disinherited and lose their position of leadership. No one has made a more careful study of this issue than Waskom Pickett. His findings should be carefully pondered before answering the question.

Movements to Christ, he says, "have not generally developed where

missionaries were most closely associated with the Government" and hence with the rulers of the people, nor "in areas where Western influence has been most strongly felt" through schools and colleges where the upper and middle classes were educated. "Nor have movements developed in areas where missionary forces have been most numerous or longest at work. . . ." Where movements did begin, they began almost in spite of the missionaries, for "the missionaries in practically every area were working primarily for the high castes hoping that they might first be won and might then take over the winning of the lower castes."

The fear that reception of large numbers of the depressed classes into the Church would interfere with the winning of the upper classes seems to have restrained a section, at least, of the missionaries in every area when movements were beginning. . . . But it is a matter of record that the great harvest expected of the upper classes and the subsequent conversion, through their efforts, of those lower in the social scale, have not occurred (Pickett, 1933:55f.).

Our first recommendation is that every possible effort be made to win all the remaining groups of the Depressed Classes to Christ. Although the case for this recommendation is clear and compelling . . . there is grave danger it will not be implemented. There is a disposition to neglect the Depressed Classes whenever hope is entertained that the higher castes may be induced to respond. To neglect them now would be both a capital folly and a grievous wrong. There is strong reason to believe that the surest way of multiplying conversions of higher caste Hindus is to increase the scale on which the transforming, enriching and uplifting grace of Christ is demonstrated in the Depressed Classes. And one certain way to arrest the movements of the higher castes to Christ is to turn away from the poor and the despised (Pickett, 1960:96, 95).

Pickett's findings in India in 1933 can be duplicated in Brazil and Chile in 1979. Far greater numbers of middle-class people are being won for Christ in those two lands where hundreds of thousands of poor people have become Evangelicals in Baptist, Pentecostal, and other Churches than are being won in Colombia, Costa Rica, and other lands where the chief effort has been to win the middle classes to Christ.

Arnold Toynbee has pointed out that, far from a new religion first being accepted by the classes and then by the masses, it is usually first accepted by the proletariat. Later, of course, as in the case of Christianity in the Roman Empire, the classes accepted it. He says, "Higher religions make their entry into Society from below upwards and the dominant minority [the classes] is either unaware of these new religious movements or . . . is hostile to them. . . . [In the Roman Empire] the philosophies appealed to the middle class. . . . Christianity appealed to the masses" (Toynbee, 1956:37, 99).

First the Upper Classes in North America?

Americans should not imagine that the winning of the masses is of concern only in Africa and other far-off places. It is also of great concern in the United States and Canada. Since God blesses Christians, they soon come to be comfortably fixed people. It is easy for them to believe that if they evangelize their own kind of people, the task will be done. This is disastrously not true. If the denominations of North America are to break out of their present middle-class encirclement, they must very soon establish thousands of congregations of factory laborers, mechanics, members of labor unions, dock hands, mill workers, and the like. The pastors of these congregations also must be of the same socio-economic level. "The people" do not obediently follow the middle and upper classes in any but a feudalistic society.

The Masses Are Increasingly Responsive Today

Often the masses, groaning under centuries of oppression by the classes, regard their old religion as the instrument of their enslavement. Thus Ambedkar used to exclaim, "When I read the New Testament I find the very antidote my people need for the poison of Hinduism which they have been drinking for three thousand years." Emilio Willems, the Brazilian sociologist, says (1964:103):

Revolutionary changes . . . are related to and perhaps reinforced by a steadily growing desire on the part of the lower classes, to overthrow the traditional social order. The main target of a generalized and intense hostility is . . . the conservative, landholding upper class, and all those institutions (including the Roman Catholic Church) perceived as its allies. . . . conversion to Protestantism . . . constitutes one of many ways in which hostility and rebellion against a decaying social structure may be expressed. . . . The Catholic Church is often perceived by the masses as a symbol of the traditional order or as an ally of its supreme exponent, the landed aristocracy. . . . The farther removed the ideology and structure of a particular denomination are from those of traditional society, the stronger the appeal it holds for the common people.

"Steadily growing desire"—these words of Willems, penned in regard to Brazil, have a very much wider bearing. The next fifty or a hundred years are certain to see the masses everywhere in the grip of a "steadily growing desire" to get the good things of life—and to overthrow the traditional social order, if necessary, to get them.

The landless in the Philippines are desperately unhappy with the large landed estates and the holdings of the Church of Rome—witness the Huk revival of the late sixties. The depressed classes in India are temporarily

comforted by concessions of various sorts given them by the upper classes; but nothing will fully satisfy them now except complete equality, which the upper castes will not give them. No thirty million in Africa have made the advances that thirty million Negroes have made in the United States, yet the Detroit and Newark riots of 1967 bear powerful witness to the fact that even that great degree of progress is not enough.

Decades of struggle lie ahead, with victory now in the hands of the proletariat and now in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The form of the struggle will vary from country to country and decade to decade, but it will rage ceaselessly. And it will continually turn the masses responsive. Christians should realize that this is the kind of world in which they are called to proclaim the Gospel, find the lost, and multiply cells of *the redeemed*—the most potent ingredient of the righteous order God is creating.

The Good News and Its Corollary

The Christian Church has good news for the awakening masses—first that God the Father Almighty is just, and second will give those who love and obey Him power to treat other men justly. Let us consider both parts of this Gospel.

That God is just—the revolutionary impact of this simple statement should be grasped. It affirms that the very structure of the universe favors the common man. It proclaims that the vast mysterious Personal Power, whom we call God the Father Almighty, intends an order of society in which each man can and will receive justice. Consider this ultimate fact in the light of the needs of the masses. Contrary to much superficial thinking, the greatest need of the masses and their leaders is neither aid nor kindness. Their greatest need is not handouts, but a world view, a religion, which gives them bedrock on which to stand as they battle for justice.

What attracted Ambedkar to Christianity was the New Testament, which gave his people the antidote against the poisons of Hinduism. These latter were not the particular disabilities under which the Untouchables labored in the thirties and forties, but rather *the ultimate religious sanctions of the caste system*.

Although the Bhagavad Gita is commonly regarded as the highest Hindu scripture and has passages of profound beauty and wisdom, it must be recognized that it consciously sanctifies the caste system. It declares that the superiority of the classes and the inferiority of the masses are rooted in the divine order. The Gita, some scholars think, rose when Hinduism was battling Buddhism—that almost-successful revolt against

caste. It teaches throughout that men according to their *karma* (deeds in a former life) are born into specific castes and each must carry out his own *caste dharma*, i.e. the "duties" or "law" suited to his caste and hence required of him as part of the immutable order of things. The argument underlies much of the conversation between Arjuna and Krishna and becomes explicit in several passages, among which is the following from the eighteenth book or lesson.

41. Of *brāhmins*, of *kśatriyas*, and *vaiśyas*, as also of *sūdras*, O Conqueror of the foe (Arjuna), the activities are distinguished, in accordance with the qualities born of their nature.

42. Serenity, self-control, austerity, purity, forbearance and uprightness, wisdom, knowledge, and faith in religion—these are the duties of the *brāhmin*, born of his nature.

43. Heroism, vigour, steadiness, resourcefulness, not fleeing even in battle, generosity, and leadership—these are the duties of a *kśatriya*, born of his nature.

44. Agriculture, tending cattle, and trade are the duties of a *vaiśya*, born of his nature; work of the character of service is the duty of a *sūdra*, born of his nature.

45. Devoted each to his own duty, man attains perfection. How one devoted to his own duty attains perfection, that do thou hear.

46. He from whom all beings arise and by whom all this is pervaded—by worshipping Him through the performance of his own duty does man attain perfection.

47. Better is one's own law though imperfectly carried out than the law of another carried out perfectly. One does not incur sin when one does the duty ordained by one's own nature.

48. One should not give up the work suited to one's nature, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna) though it may be defective.

(Radhakrishnan, 1957:161)

If this view of human relations is correct, then all efforts to change the social order and to elevate the masses are both wicked and futile. For a Shudra (or Śudra) to become an excellent teacher brings him less happiness and keeps him farther from "consummation" or "perfection" than to be an indifferent ditch digger. No wonder Ambedkar felt he had to find some antidote to these poisonous concepts.

By contrast, the highly valuable gifts of the Christian religion are:

God the Father Almighty who hates injustice, God the Son who died for each man of the masses, the Bible, and a world view which requires justice for the common man, thus endowing every human being with infinite value. "Making people Christian," along with other things, means giving them a world view which irresistibly, though often slowly, creates equality of opportunity and undergirds all strivings against entrenched privilege. With this wealth in hand, the man of the masses can conquer all secondary poverties.

The second aspect of the Good News is this: God gives those who love and obey Him power to treat other men justly. Those who accept Jesus Christ as God and Savior receive the Holy Spirit and His gifts—love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. They receive power to live the good life. They are able to live justly whatever the framework of their society.

The Good News has a powerful corollary which appeals greatly to the masses today: that just men can build a just society. This just society must be clearly differentiated from the ultimate Kingdom of God—that reign of perfect goodness when death itself shall have been abolished, which comes as God's gift. Man can do nothing to bring that in. The just society of which I speak, however, is the kindlier, more humane order which by God's grace arises within family, neighborhood, city, or state as the number of Christians multiply. Since a just society must be built, not by, but *out of* men who are profoundly interested in the welfare of others, and determined to devise structures which provide justice for them; as such men and their churches multiply, the structures of society will become more and more righteous.

Because God is just, His mission maintains that every move toward justice is pleasing to Him. It assures men that when they are fighting for justice He is on their side. Even more truly, in working for justice and brotherhood they are on God's side, and God will win.

Because man is a sinner and cannot of himself do justly, God's mission maintains that man's chief need is not justice but forgiveness and a clean heart within. The just order he strives for will disappear as he fashions it, unless he strives as a godly person. He is to be more concerned with *being just* than receiving justice. Patriots and guerrillas, partisans and revolutionaries, can drive foreign imperialists from the soil of the motherland with hunger strikes, marches, bombs, and terror; they can seize power, burn cities, and shoot alike domestic aristocrats and foreign oppressors. But these tactics will not drive evil from the hearts of their people or themselves. Only another society of new pressures and tensions—another

sinful society—can arise as men set up new frameworks supposed to guarantee the people justice. The old competitions between men in high places (as well as low), the raw struggles between those of opposing views are not laid to rest by revolutions, however far reaching.

A peaceful and righteous society—and till the millennium this only in muted measure—can come only from redeemed men seeking to implement what they conceive to be God's will. Therefore Christ's mission, confident that there is no more effective service it can render the masses, will press ahead, bringing men to Christ, that He may redeem them in His Body, the Church, which at the right times and in all places where she has arrived and achieved at least a little influence, will Christianize the framework of her societies.

In October 1978, Pope John Paul II in his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, again and again underscored the fact that universal evangelization was the ground work for the new righteous order. On page 33 we read that all Christians should "consciously join in the great mission of revealing Christ to the world, helping . . . the contemporary generations of our brothers and sisters, the peoples, nations, States, mankind, developing countries and countries of opulence . . . to know 'the unsearchable riches of Christ' " (John Paul, 1978).

Fluctuating Responsiveness

For years, I worked with the Satnamis of Central Provinces, India. These oppressed people were beginning to turn to Christ when, in 1947, with the arrival of self-government, their community of half a million received four seats in the provincial legislative assembly. Satnamis flocked to election rallies and began to idolize political power. This became their new savior. They believed their representatives in the legislature would give them prestige, power, education, and a higher standard of living. They neither knew, nor would have believed, that the good life does not consist in the abundance of things a man has. Their interest in the Gospel waned sharply.

Over the next twenty years, however, they began to realize that seats in the assembly, help in getting an education, a share of jobs, and other exterior changes, while good, do not constitute a long step in the direction of justice. These things do not rebuke sin nor call sinners to repentance. They do not make bad men into good men. They neither increase kindness, gentleness, goodness, and self-control nor hold out promise of eternal life. The Satnamis began to see the contrast of which Isaiah sings (55:1-3):

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
 and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!
 Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
 Hearken diligently to me, eat what is good,
 and delight yourself in fatness.
 Incline your ear and come to me; hear that your soul may live.

Perhaps they saw more clearly that minor concessions would not give their people equality with the real rulers of the province, who still believe that the lower castes are inferior breeds of men. The illusion of progress is beginning to wear off. The Satnamis will have a steadily growing desire for *more*, which will enable large numbers of them to "hear" the Gospel. Some who hear will obey.

In the next hundred years—and no doubt longer—the masses, like my Satnami friends, will time and again put their trust in kings, elected officials, alliances, horses, chariots, walled cities, urban renewal, million-dollar schools, and fertilizer factories. But when they discover that these are not bread and cannot satisfy, and that the new elites are as rapacious and corrupt as the old, they will again be able to hear the Gospel. Like the Israelites, when masses get possession of vineyards which they did not plant, and cisterns which they did not dig, and walled cities which they did not build, they will conclude that they have arrived in the land of milk and honey. But again and again they will realize that the essential nourishment and sweetness are within, and that there is salvation in none else but God and Jesus Christ His Son. Then they will listen.

For the foreseeable future, the masses will be substantially responsive. Their responsiveness will fluctuate, but just because they are the victims of the social order, they will listen to the Good News. Like the Jews of our Lord's day, they are looking for a deliverer. Like those who joined themselves to Jesus of Nazareth, they may come looking for a worldly kingdom; but those who tarry with Him will find the Kingdom of God.

POLICY TOWARD MASSES AND CLASSES

As the Church faces the three billion who know little or nothing about Jesus Christ, what should be her policy toward the classes and the masses?

Winning the Winnable

Policy should be formed on two assumptions: (1) that the masses are growing increasingly responsive and will continue to listen to the Good

News, just because every influence bearing on their lives will make them increasingly dissatisfied with their present status; (2) that particular masses in certain countries and sections of countries fluctuate in response as they are played upon by military fortune, economic forces, victories and defeats. In some places they will temporarily become highly resistant, in others highly receptive. Non-Christian classes, on the other hand, may be counted on to be generally resistant to the Gospel, though their attitude also will fluctuate. Some sections may for brief periods become significantly responsive, and should be effectively evangelized.

Since the Gospel is to be preached to all creation, no Christian will doubt but that both the receptive and the resistant should hear it. And since gospel acceptors have an inherently higher priority than gospel rejectors, no one should doubt that, whenever it comes to a choice between reaping ripe fields or seeding others, the former is commanded by God.

Winning the winnable while they are winnable seems sound procedure. This is the strategic meaning of our Lord's words "beginning at Jerusalem." While the Palestinian Jews were responsive, the Holy Spirit led the Church to focus upon them. The first twenty years saw a powerful, one-race Church built up among the residents of Jerusalem and Judea. When either masses or classes are winnable, they should hear the Gospel, be baptized, and added to churches which immediately, without pause to consolidate, go out to win their still receptive fellows.

The Rev. A. C. Krass, writing from northern Ghana in 1967 about the Chokosi tribe (from which in the previous three years about 800 had accepted Christ and been baptized), said it is reasonable to believe that in about ten years "the whole Chokosi tribe will have become Christian." Christian mission on a very wide scale needs not only to see these potentials, but to master such modes of proclaiming the Gospel and discipling the peoples that hopeful possibilities become actualities. Whole populations should be claimed for Christ. This is the highest priority in evangelism.

If in any given sector the masses turn indifferent or hostile, then efforts to win them should be transferred to other sectors where men will hear and obey. When our Lord gave directions to the twelve (Luke 9:5), He said, "Wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." When He instructed the seventy (Luke 10:10), He gave them precisely the same instructions. The indifferent of the masses have no more right to coddling efforts at persuasion than other men. Those who stand with arms outstretched, whether of the classes or the masses, have a higher right to hear than those who stop their ears and turn away.

It should not be evangelistic policy to besiege indifferent and resistant or even rebellious segments of any type because they are children of Abraham (prestige-laden elements of their societies). God is able to raise up men of prestige from the very stones—the rejected, the disinherited, and the things which are not—provided they become members of His household.

Social Action and Church Growth

It should not be *mission* policy to foment rebellions among the masses and thus help them to achieve political, economic, and cultural goals. Mission (which proceeds from one country to another—from India, let us say, to Africa, from Korea to Thailand, or from America to China) is always a guest in the country to which it goes. Its emissaries are there by permission of the government. They can be ejected at an hour's notice. The function of the missionary and his institutions is to reconcile men to God in the Church of Jesus Christ. It is not his business to lead Christians to the barricades and teach them to make Molotov cocktails or seize power. On the contrary, the missionary teaches submission to existing governments as ordained by God. For this he has abundant scriptural warrant and churchly precedent.

With *the Church* it is otherwise. The Church is made up of citizens of the country. They are part and parcel of the oppressed and the oppressors. The Church cannot avoid the ceaseless struggle going on between the classes and the masses. Its members cannot be repatriated to some other land at a moment's notice. They cannot be accused of being outside agitators. They speak from within by right, and what they say, they alone must decide in the light of God's will for them.

On occasion He will direct them, as He did the Church during the days when the New Testament was being written, quietly to bear great injustices, such as slavery.

Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as to Christ; not in the way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service (which if they did not render they were beaten) with a good will as to the Lord (Eph. 6:5-7).

On occasion God will direct them as He did Moses, to defy the oppressor, in rebellion, confident that the Lord marches on before.

I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt . . . and have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians. . . . I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt. . . . The king will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt . . . after that he will let you go. . . . When you go, you shall not go empty . . . you shall despoil the Egyptians (Ex. 3:7ff.).

When churches multiply in a non-Christian population, they will bring God's purposes for His children to bear on the particular part of the social order which they can influence. The village which becomes Christian among the Higi of northeast Nigeria will forbid parents to scarify their daughters. The county in the United States, a majority of whose citizens are evangelical Christians, may vote—as hundreds of counties already have—to forbid the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. The nation most of whose citizens become Christian will pass fair employment acts and fair housing laws—and enforce them. Not only will individual Christians take part in such social action, but again and again whole congregations and denominations, as in the days of Abolition and Prohibition, will act for righteousness.

There should be no tension between mission and the advocates of social action. There is the most urgent need for *both* extension of the benefits of the Gospel to all communities and countrysides where there are no Evangelical Christians at all, *and*, where Christians are found, the application of Christian principles to all of life.

Time Is Short

This is not only the age of the common man, but the future belongs to him. Evangelistic policies should not be determined on the basis of the aristocratic feudal order which dominated the world a few years ago. What God requires of His Church is based upon the forms that society is going to take, not those that flourished a hundred years ago. Christian mission stands at one of the turning points of history. A new order is being born. Its exact form is hidden from us; the forces which combine to make the new world are far too complex to allow anyone a clear view of the outcome. Yet it seems reasonably certain that, whatever else happens, the common man is going to have a great deal more to say in the future than he has in the past.

Mgr. Cardijn, founder of the Young Christian Workers, recently wrote, "These proletarian masses, which today are powerless, will tomorrow become the arbiters of order, progress, and peace. Only the blind are

unaware of this. No technological power can prevent these Asiatic populations from deciding tomorrow the future of the world" (Retif, 1962:154). There is no good reason to limit the power of the masses to Asia. Each continent contributes hundreds of millions to earth's masses.

It may be that the most significant movement in Christian mission is the discipling of the advance elements of the masses to the Christian faith—the people movements of India, the tribal movements of Indonesia, the hundred and fifty million and more who have become Christians in Africa, and the Pentecostal Churches of some countries in Latin America. To win the winnable while they are winnable would, indeed, seem to be an urgent priority. The evangelization and incorporation of the receptive sections of the masses is the best gift we can give to them.