

CHRIST AND THE MASSES

By

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“My sheep hear my voice” (John 10:27).

In spite of the fact that the Lord clearly says that only the Remnant shall be saved, modern evangelism is designed to appeal to the masses. The mainstream church therefore has come to reflect, not the mind of Christ, but the mind of the masses.

Albert Jay Nock (1870–1945), in his book, *Free Speech and Plain Language* (William Morrow & Co.) wrote, “As the word masses is commonly used, it suggests agglomerations of poor and underprivileged people, laboring people, proletarians. But it means nothing like that; it means simply the majority. The mass-man is one who has neither the force of intellect to apprehend the principles issuing in what we know as the humane life, nor the force of character to adhere to those principles steadily and strictly as laws of conduct; and because such people make up the great, the overwhelming majority of mankind, they are called collectively **the masses**. ...The Remnant are those who by force of intellect are able to apprehend these principles, and by force of character are able, at least measurably, to cleave to them.”

Jesus did not go out to appeal to the masses. It is written that “the common people heard Him gladly” (Mark 12:37) when they thought He would outbid Caesar with bread and games. But when they got an inkling of what He was really after, they deserted Him in droves. He plainly told them, “no man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of the Father. Upon this many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him” (John 6:65, 66). In the long run, what He said in the Sermon on the Mount was proven true, that the masses travel the broad road to destruction, while only a few enter the strait and narrow gate that leads to life (Matt. 7:13–14).

Modern church growth is based upon the very opposite principle. The church which sets out to attract a large membership makes its appeal to the masses. This means that it must adopt the terms of its message to the popular mind an character of the masses, which is the reason you may hear “Amazing Grace” sung to the tempo of an uncivilized savage rhythm by young entertainers wearing mini-skirts. The sermons become tools of emotional and psychological power. Everything that is exhibited by the mass-mind is used as bait; entertainers are brought in from show business, athletes from the football arena are featured, and the requirements for discipleship are trimmed to allow the greatest number with the least change from carnal to spiritual aspirations. In the words of Nock, the result is that “the prophetic message is so heavily adulterated with trivialities, in every instance, that its effect on the masses is merely to harden them in their sins. Meanwhile, the Remnant, turn their backs on the prophet...” The prophet may be popular all right, but not with the Remnant.

Adam got along fine as long as he reacted to God alone. But when he went with the majority (Satan, Eve and himself) he sinned. By the time of Noah the masses had it almost all going their way in a world of violence and wickedness (Gen. 6:5). But God made no appeal to the mass-man. Instead, His message was aimed at the one man who

had intelligence and integrity to resist the tide of evil. Noah heard His voice and acted with sterling qualities of character, to the saving of a remnant, a total of only eight souls.

At Babel, the masses united. No doubt a great many thought this was the ultimate in progress. Their unity must have had the approval of the religions embraced by the mass-mind. They said, "Let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4), which is to say, "Let us live by our own code, and according to our own standard. Let us unite as one mind and thus overpower the mind of God in heaven." Their defeat was brought about simply by separating the language, so they could not communicate their idolatrous and rebellious ideas.

Today this God-made barrier is being torn down. By the press and TV an idea born in one corner of the globe within hours is the desire of millions all over the world. More than ever men insist that unity and equality mark human progress. The church occupies itself with learning what the mass-mind wants, and then trying to shape itself and its message to appeal to the masses.

It is a common mistake to think that Jesus made his appeal to the illiterate, to the skid-row type, to the majority. The fact is that Christ made His greatest efforts to the other-than-ordinary people. One of His greatest appeals was to Nicodemus (John 3), a man of superior intelligence and power, a ruler in Israel who sought Jesus out to hear His message. In John 4 there is the story of Jesus discussing profound truth with an exceptional woman at Sychar. The woman was sinful, but by no means one who drifted along with the masses. It was Judas, whom Jesus said was a "devil", who wanted to appeal to the masses by selling the perfume and distributing money to the poor.

In the parable of the "Sower" Jesus explained that the Word (seed) is sown on all soils, but it is not suited to all soils. Only the fertile soul, the person who has a mind to receive the demanding word of Christ, is actually proper ground for the Word. The seed does not accommodate itself to the average soil.

The message of Christ is not to be accommodated to the mass-mind, as is being done on every hand. Instead, the truth is to be sown everywhere, so that it may be heard where the fertile mind may perceive that it is, indeed, the unique message of Christ, and wherever that happens that person will arise to receive the implanted word, will hunger and thirst for more of it until the seed of the word brings forth the fruit of a new creature, fashioned not after the world but transformed by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2, I Peter 1:23).

The appeal to the mass-mind is usually motivated by good intentions, to attract the world to the church, to bring men to Christ by presenting Him as the man for the masses, to become "all things to all men in order to save some." But this quotation from Paul must be limited to his own use of it. Paul never compromised, but insisted that the world was evil and perishing (Gal. 1:4) and that the masses consider the prophet a fool and his message foolishness (I Cor. 1:18-27, 4:10). The modern approach is to shape the church and the message to appeal to those who follow the crowd, who stay in style, as they say, who are "with it." The idea is to draw men to Christ by making Him attractive to the mass-mind, the mind washed by propaganda, saturated with trivia and rendered incapable of discipline, or true repentance. But the method of Christ was to "draw all men" to Himself by being "lifted up," the lifting up, as John explained, not being the lifting up in praise and honor among men, but the lifting up on a cross, the most shameful spectacle the world knew (John 12:32-33, 3:14).

The church is not the sweetheart of the Rotary Club, but the bride of Christ. The church does not owe her life to the gross national product, but to the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). Therefore the message of the church must first, last and always be aimed at those individuals in the world who have the heart and the mind to grasp the unique purpose of God as revealed through the gospel of Christ.

The gospel is not for everybody. Jesus said, "He that is of God hears the words of God: for this cause you hear them not, because you are not of God" (John 8:47). Only those who hunger and thirst after righteousness have any hope of being filled. The masses do not meet these qualifications, but instead they hear the degenerate blare of the TV and hunger and thirst for long weekends in order to luxuriate in one way or another and "hated the light, and comes not to the light, lest (their) works should be reproved" (John 3:20).

Still the gospel is to be preached to all the world. Now and then it will fall on the ears of one who is seeking a way out of the mass-mind swamp. When he hears the voice sounding forth the truth, no matter how softly, he will rise to grasp it and eagerly make it his own.

Elijah could find no faith among the masses; hence, he thought there was none. "I, even I only am left" (I Kings 19:10). He had preached before multitudes, even before the King, but they all continued in the way of idolatry. What was the use? "Lord, I am the only one left." But God's children do not follow the masses. God said, "I have left unto me 7,000 in Israel, who have not bowed their knees to Baal" (I Kings 19:18). Elijah's message had not been in vain. Yet, the true hearers of the word were unknown to him; the fertile soil he had never recognized. He was still alone. He never met this 7,000. They formed no great organizations, and launched no campaigns, but the remnant was there, scattered throughout the nation each looking individually to God alone and resisting the mass-mind, each not knowing but that he was the only one and yet each of them known by God.

What is needed today is the witness of the individual Christian who knows where he stands in relation to God and the world, witnesses who will give a testimony, not of their experiences and subjective feelings, but a testimony of the truth of Jesus Christ and His kingdom. It has been said that our nation is filled with the sins common to Sodom and Gomorrah. Then we need men, who, like Lot, are willing to resist the masses and stand against the mind of the city. Not one man stood with Lot, even his wife in the showdown loved the sinful city more than life; only Lot and two daughters had their minds tuned to the voice of God and were saved. In spite of Lot's faults, he stands as an example of resistance to the popular mind.

The voice in the wilderness is never popular and is never heeded by the mass-mind. John the Baptist did not live to enjoy mass approval and was deemed a failure by his peers, but among those who heard his testimony were those who were looking for Messiah and hence were ready when He came.

The Christian message must not be aimed at the masses, but rather preached among the masses and aimed at the potential Christian who is looking for directions from God.

A true witness is quite unconcerned with what his audience wants to hear. He is altogether concerned that he tell the truth. The Christian witness must sound forth the message of Christ which calls for repentance and commitment to a kingdom which is not

of this world. For the most part it will fall on deaf ears and cannot be expected to bring praise from any who are in the mainstream of religion. But Christ's sheep will hear. Without fanfare and without publicity to the witness the truth will be believed, the seed will grow and produce children of God.

“My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me” (John 10:27).

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