

THE CALL OF GOD

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The Call of God

Five Biblical Studies

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"Here am I, for Thou calledst me."—1 Samuel ii. 5.

Australasian Student Christian Movement
Corporation

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"Be inspired with the belief that life is a great and noble calling; not a mean and grovelling thing, that we are to shuffle through as we can, but an elevated and lofty destiny."

—W. E. Gladstone.

Introduction.

With the outbreak of the Great War life for many people became extraordinarily simple. The call of country, of duty, of God sounded like a trumpet in their hearts, and they went the only way that was possible for them—the way of service and sacrifice, of high adventure and peril even unto death. In those days many were called. Life itself was a vocation. It was as

"When Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and thro' that strength the King
Drew in the petty principedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd."

Professor James of Harvard has said in unforgettable words that the supreme problem for all nations in the days of peace is to find the moral equivalent of war. We need an ideal, a motive that takes captive our imagination and our will and that constrains us to harness all our powers to its service. That ideal the Christian finds in "The Kingdom of God"—the rule of righteousness and mercy on the widest possible scale in this world as well as in that which is to come.

"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." When that prayer is offered in sincerity, life once more becomes exceedingly simple. Men and women feel that, whatever their profession or occupation, they are called to enlist in an army, to acknowledge the constraint of an ideal, to live purposefully, unselfishly, using whatever powers God has given them not for the prosecution of personal ends, but for the common good.

"It must be remembered," writes A. C. Benson, "that only a small percentage of people enter professions with a very definite sense of enthusiasm for the discharge of its duties. Most people would rather look forward to a prospect of doing what they like." It has to be acknowledged that in recent years this spirit has been much in evidence in University life. Too many, without facing deeper issues, have taken the line of least resistance, or, having decided against a "sacred" calling, have thought of the profession for which they have qualified simply as a means of making a comfortable livelihood.

During the war the phrase "national service" was on every lip. It was insisted that no man should stand aloof from the great conflict or reap personal profit from sacrifices in which he had no part. It was counted a disgrace to evade the obligations of "national service." The coming of peace has not really altered the situation. Its problems, though different, are as acute as those of the worst war days, and they can be solved in no other way than by devotion to a high and unselfish ideal, and by a resolute refusal on the part, particularly of the educated and cultured section of the community, to bow the knee to the false gods of this generation. We need sorely in every department of our modern life those who in their ordinary avocations will regard themselves as "called of God" to the warfare against evil and to the building up of the nation in righteousness. It is to emphasize that need and to show how, in some real measure, it may be met, that these studies have been written.

STUDY I.

The Call to Personal Consecration.

Readings: 2 Chronicles 26. Isaiah 1 and 6.

1.

Uzziah was one of the greatest of the Kings of Judah. He reigned for 52 years, and was a wise, active and successful ruler. In his old age he attempted to usurp the priest's office, and was smitten with leprosy. His lawless action was, no doubt, symptomatic of the decadence of spiritual religion which is described in Isaiah 1. Isaiah was probably born about the year 760 B.C., and it is certain that he was a citizen, if not a native, of Jerusalem. He was a man of the city, and belonged to the higher and wealthier classes, as is evident from the fact that he had access to the Court, and was on terms of intimacy with the high priest. In his youth he lived in the midst of the prosperity and luxury which prevailed during the reign of Uzziah; but even in those early days the shadow of approaching tragedy lay dark across his path. He witnessed the fall of the Northern Kingdom before the Assyrian invaders, and the carrying away into captivity of its hapless inhabitants. It became apparent to him that the tide of invasion would soon beat stormily against the frontier of Judah itself. What would the issue be? While such anxious questions were being asked, Uzziah, who for half a century had been the hope and defence of Judah, died, and to the young Isaiah as he prayed in the temple there came the wonderful vision described in Chapter 6.

2.

The first thought suggested by the vision was that, though the great king was dead, God reigns. In the midst of earth's confusions and tragedies there is a law of righteousness at work, and the issue, though obscure to human eyes, is sure. This is the first principle of all prophetic teaching. Human history is not simply the tale of man's plans and policies and passions. It is the unrolling of the purpose of Almighty God. It is the ultimate triumph of His will in the affairs of men. To hold such a creed is to have found a firm foundation on which to stand in an evil day.

3.

The vision reveals not only the *power*, but also the *holiness* of God. Isaiah is overwhelmed with a sense of his own, and of the nation's *guilt*. He makes confession of his sin with passionate earnestness, and receives the assurance of forgiveness and cleansing. To many in our age such an experience does not appeal. "The modern man," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "is not worrying about his sins." On the other hand, it should be recognised that, as a matter of fact, some such crisis as is here described comes to all men and women whose lives have been dominated by a sense of mission. In its form the experience may vary, but in its essence it is always the same—a casting of oneself in weakness and misery and self-despair upon the mercy of the Unseen God. "The completest religions," says Professor James, "are essentially religions of deliverance; man must die to an unreal life before he can be born into real life." Hence it is not mere religious egotism for a man to be concerned about the state of his own soul. To be in right relationship to one's own conscience and to the will of God—is the necessary preliminary to all effective service in the wider fields to which we are called.

4.

Isaiah was deeply conscious of the nation's social and religious needs. The catalogue of Judah's sins is given in Chapter 1, and the situation has been graphically summarised thus:—"Wealth had greatly accumulated, but its distribution had been such that it weakened rather than added strength to the nation. The rich nobles were steeped in gallantry, and feminine extravagance and vanity gave the tone to aristocratic society, which, like the *noblesse* of France on the eve of the great Revolution, was absorbed in gaiety and pleasure, while the masses were ground down by oppression, and the cry of their distress filled the land. All social bonds were loosed in the universal reign of injustice; every man was for himself and no man for his brother." It was in the face of such a situation and in response to the call of God, which sounded secretly, yet insistently, in his heart, that the young prophet said, "Here am I, Lord, send me."

5.

It is a noteworthy fact that from the outset Isaiah was under no illusions as to the issue of his own ministry. In

the latter part of Chapter 6 it is made plain that the prophet himself was not to see the final fruit of his own labor. He was to sow seed which other hands would harvest; to lay foundations upon which others would build. A consistent tradition asserts that he lived to the evil day, of the idolatrous King Manasseh, and that by his orders he was sawn asunder. Yet, in face of the hard road he was to travel, the prophet accepted his commission and toiled faithfully at his task through the long years. He gathered around him "the remnant", a little company of believing souls, who handed on the faith they had received to coming generations. "These all died, not having received the promise." It is noteworthy also that Jesus did not enlist his disciples for a short and easy campaign. Every true servant of the kingdom must be prepared to face bitter opposition and apparent failure, and to work for results that lie beyond the narrow boundary of his own lifetime.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. What points of similarity are there between our time and that of Isaiah? To what extent does a *need* constitute a *call*?
2. Isaiah's vision represents a crisis in his experience. Trace out the stages in that experience. Is such a crisis necessary to effective Christian service? What does such an experience involve?
3. Show that a life which is an apparent failure may be from the higher point of view a triumphant success. How would you define "a successful career"?
4. In the light of recent events, how do you regard the Student Volunteer Watchword: The Evangelisation of the world in this generation?

FOR THE QUIET HOUR.

Charles Sumner (1811-1874), a graduate of Harvard University, was one of the pioneers of the Abolitionist Movement in the United States of America. At the outset he stood alone in the Senate as the outspoken and uncompromising opponent of slavery. He encountered bitter opposition, and for four years was incapacitated for public life as the result of a brutal attack made upon him by a pro-slavery member of Congress. The poet Longfellow described him as "the whitest soul he had ever known."

"No trumpet sounded in his ear,
He saw not Sinai's cloud and flame,
But never yet to Hebrew seer
A clearer voice of duty came.

God said, "Break thou these yokes; undo
These heavy burdens, I ordain
A work to last thy whole life through,
A ministry of strife and pain.

Forego thy dreams of lettered ease,
Put thou the scholar's promise by;
The rights of man are more than these,"
He heard, and answered: "Here am I."

He set his face against the blast,
His feet against the flinty shard,
Till the hard service grew, at last,
Its own exceeding great reward.

The fixed star of his faith, through all
Loss, doubt and peril, shone the same;
As through a night of storm, some tall,
Strong lighthouse lifts its steady flame.

One language held his heart and lip,
Straight onward to his goal he trod,
And proved the highest statesmanship,
Obedience to the voice of God.

Beyond the dust and smoke he saw
The sheaves of Freedom's large increase,
The holy fanes of equal law,
The new Jerusalem of peace."

—J. G. Whittier.

STUDY II.

The Call to Patriotic Service.

Readings: Matthew 22: 15-22. Romans 13: 1-7. Nehemiah 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

1.

It was one of the early objections to Christianity that it was not patriotic, that it separated men from their civil duties and from the common interests of life. Certainly Christians refused to take part in any State service or ceremony which involved them in the idolatrous worship of the Emperor. Tertullian, one of the early Church Fathers (circa 200) wrote, "I will call the Emperor lord, but only when I am not compelled to call him Lord instead of God." On the other hand, from the earliest times Christians occupied high positions in the State, even under Pagan Emperors, and, as a class, were noted for their faithfulness in paying taxes and discharging the other duties of citizenship. To one Christian officer, an Emperor's chamberlain, a Christian Bishop, Theonas, wrote, "Since the Emperor, though not a Christian, believes that he can trust Christians, as the most faithful, with his body and life, you must be proportionately more careful in your service, that then Christ's name may be glorified to the utmost, and the faith of the Emperor be promoted by you who serve him."

In modern times John Stuart Mill and Mazzini have brought the accusation against Christianity that it is lacking in public spirit, and that Christians are not as faithful as they ought to be in the service of the State and of society as a whole. Doubtless, many Christians have come short of their duty in this respect, but, in so far as they have been deficient in public spirit, and in a sense of responsibility as citizens, they have not been true to the teaching of Christ and the Apostles. Read Matthew 22: 15-22; Romans 13: 1-7. How are we to interpret these passages?

2.

Read Nehemiah 1, 2. If the New Testament, while not neglecting the duties of citizenship, lays the emphasis particularly upon personal religion and the service of the

Kingdom of God through the Church, it must be remembered that the centre of interest in the Old Testament is the *nation* in its relationship to Jehovah. Further, the Old Testament was recognised by Christ as an integral part of God's revelation of His will to man. The study of Nehemiah's life will, therefore, throw light upon some problems of nationhood and of public duty. The following points may be emphasized:—

(1) A man may have as clear a call to the service of the nation in public life as to the preaching of the Gospel. In the case of Isaiah, there was a wonderful mystical experience, through which there came a definite call to the prophetic office. Nehemiah passed through no such experience. He was a plain, practical man of affairs, and his call was simply a sense of his nation's need, and the conviction that, by God's help, he could meet that need and rouse the people to help themselves. "Come, let us rise up and build," that is Nehemiah's watchword, and it expresses his attitude to the problems that confronted the nation.

(2) The story of Nehemiah indicates the value to the State of *one man* of supreme ability and capacity, who devotes his powers absolutely to the service of God in public life. His leadership is the nation's salvation. What is the secret of such leadership? Vision, courage, faith, absolute honesty and unselfishness, unconquerable resolve, promptness in meeting difficulties as they arise, the power to project his own convictions into the minds of masses of men—all these qualities Nehemiah possessed in a supreme degree. To what extent do our modern democracies need such leaders? To what extent are they prepared to follow them? Carlyle's "great man" theory of history has not been much in favour in our democratic age. Has it been demonstrated, however, that universal suffrage and parliamentary government make great national leaders unnecessary?

(3) The wall of Jerusalem was built in 52 days (Chapter 6: 15). An apparently impossible task was completed in less than two months. Such an achievement was made possible by the fact that the people were united. For a little while they forgot their personal ends, their petty jealousies, their class and social distinctions. Read Chapter 3. What made such unity and co-operation as is here described possible? Nehemiah was responsible for the introduction of three main factors—(i.) Behind all the

work was a religious motive. Unity in national service is unobtainable without the general recognition of the Sovereignty of God. National atheism ends inevitably in anarchy. (ii.) The element of private personal gain was eliminated from the work. There were no high wages and huge dividends. It was a labour of love and of duty. (iii.) All who were engaged in the work, with one exception (Chapter 3: 5) accepted a fair share of the task. All were workers. There were no idlers. Is it not conceivable that under the influence of deep religious feeling and conviction, inspired by devotion to the Kingdom of God, the same results might be achieved to-day on a much wider scale? Could they be achieved without a Nehemiah?

(4) Read Chapters 4 and 5. Here we have the story of some of the difficulties with which Nehemiah had to deal. There were enemies without, who were actuated by jealousy and hate. There were enemies within, who were simply selfish. They were building up powerful anti-social vested interests. All reforms, as Lord Shaftesbury and hundreds of others have found, have had to be fought through in the teeth of bitter opposition. Some of his enemies Nehemiah defies and fights, others who were guilty of selfish wrongdoing he wins to a better frame of mind. At one time he is uncompromisingly militant, at another time he is pacific and persuasive. It is the mark of an inspired leader, that he knows which method to adopt and when to adopt it. Think of illustrations from the life of Christ.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. In what respects does Nehemiah's call differ from that of Isaiah? What constitutes a call to public national service?
2. "Christianity is a gospel for the individual. Its aim is to save men from their sins and to fit them for the service of Christ in the world to come." Comment on this statement.
3. How would you answer one who said: "There is no room for a Nehemiah in a modern democracy. At every point he would be outvoted by the ignorant, the idle, and the selfish"?

4. From what sources does opposition to reform movements come in our day? How should we deal with such opposition?
5. What is the explanation of the value of Nehemiah's public service?

FOR THE QUIET HOUR.

"It is plain that the State has claims on the service of those who are able to serve it most efficiently. When there is political knowledge, political sagacity, the power of commanding public confidence, leisure to discharge Parliamentary duties, there is some reason to think that a man is in possession of 'the things that are Caesar's,' it is possible that in refusing to stand for the House of Commons, he is defrauding his country, defrauding it as really as if he had returned his income at two thousand a year when he ought to have returned it at ten. This is a question for a man's judgment and conscience, not for his personal tastes and preferences."

"The man who holds municipal or political office is 'a minister of God.' One man, therefore, may have just as real a Divine vocation to become a town councillor or a member of Parliament as another to become a missionary to the heathen. In either case, it is at a man's peril that he is disobedient to the heavenly vision. We shall never approach the Christian ideal of civil society until all who hold municipal, judicial and political offices recognize the social and political order of the nation as a Divine institution, and discharge their official duties as a minister of God."

"If, years ago, the Christian people of the metropolis had insisted on having an effective system of municipal government, and had worked its powers vigorously, the 'Bitter Cry of Outcast London' need never have been heard. Now that the cry has come to them the churches will never be able to remedy the evil apart from the action of municipal authorities. Medicine, and not the gospel only, is necessary to cure the sick. Municipal action, and not the gospel only, is necessary to improve the homes of the poor."

"The true duty of the Christian man is, not to forsake municipal and political life because it is corrupt, but to carry into municipal and political activity the law and spirit of Christ; to resolve to do his part to secure for his

fellow-townsmen and his fellow-countrymen all those blessings which a municipality and a nation, justly, wisely and efficiently governed, can secure for them."

—From "Laws of Christ for Common Life," by Dr. R. W. Dale.

"The social reforms of the last century have not been mainly due to the Liberal Party. They have been due mainly to the influence, character and perseverance of one man—Lord Shaftesbury."—Duke of Argyle, in 1885.

STUDY III.

The Call to Sacrifice.

Readings: Matthew 3: 13-17; 4: 1-11; 26: 26-42; 27: 33-50.

1.

The Baptism of Jesus represents His dedication of Himself to the public ministry through which He was to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to labour for its establishment. Acceptance of Baptism at the hands of John was the equivalent in the life of Jesus to Isaiah's "Here am I, Lord, send me." Henceforth he was the "Servant of the Lord" in the prophet's use of the term (Isaiah 52: 13-15). But the question would immediately arise, "In what way can the interests of the Kingdom best be served? In what spirit and by what methods is this work of service to be begun and carried on?" The story of the Temptation is the answer to that question. The first Temptation (to turn the stones into bread) suggested that Jesus should use His supernatural powers to escape personal hardship and suffering. His refusal to do this meant that He pledged himself to the way of self-denial and suffering for the Kingdom's sake—to the way that led ultimately and inevitably to the Cross. The second Temptation (to cast Himself down from the Temple) suggested that Jesus should give the unbelieving Jews "a sign," so that by revealing His supernatural power He should demonstrate beyond all question His Messiahship. Our Lord's rejection of this temptation meant that he was to trust for the extension of His Kingdom, not to extraordinary and spectacular methods, but to the convincing and regenerating power of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men. Nor could that power be fully revealed without the Cross. The third Temptation (to accept the Kingdoms of this world as a gift from the Tempter) suggested that our Lord should aim at the establishment by worldly methods of a visible World-Empire—an Empire that would surpass in extent, glory and power, the kingdoms of men, but would still be of the same order. Our Lord's rejection of this suggestion (John 6: 15) meant that He was prepared to accept apparent failure in His own lifetime rather than

employ doubtful methods in the service of God. He would use no compulsion save the compulsion of love, and that again meant the Cross. Thus the rejection of each of these temptations left Jesus standing face to face with the Cross, with the Law of Sacrifice.

2.

Why did Jesus choose this way of the Cross? Because it was the way to spiritual power. Hogg in his book, "Christ's Message of the Kingdom" (page 92) points out that our Lord did not accept the Cross in a spirit of mere passivity. "His whole life was consecrated to an active warfare against evil." If he submitted to the Cross, it was because that was the very strongest way of fighting evil and of building up the Kingdom of God. To choose the way of sacrifice is to choose the only way in which that spiritual power is gained which enables a man to overcome the world. It must be noted, however, that Jesus did not extol sacrifice and self-denial as ends in themselves. In this respect he differs from the extreme ascetics of all ages. There is, of course, an element of asceticism in the life and teaching of Jesus. He Himself had not where to lay His head, and He demanded of His disciples that they should be prepared to surrender their homes and friends and comforts, even life itself, should the work to which He called them demand that sacrifice. On the other hand, Jesus did not teach that anyone "acquires merit" by such acts of self-denial. They are simply means to an end, and that end is *power for the service of the Kingdom*. They are not self-inflicted, they are not endured for one's own advantage, but in loyalty to Christ and for the sake of others. The athlete in training must practise self-denial, an elementary asceticism must enter into his life; but the self-denial is not an end in itself. It is simply a means to physical fitness and power.

3.

The Christian law of sacrifice may be illustrated by the contrast between the Hindu "holy man" who practises the severest austerities in the hope of adding to his holiness and gaining the favour of the gods, and a Christian preacher like Sadhu Sundar Singh, whose acts of self-denial are born of his fervent desire to serve Christ's Kingdom with greater power and devotion. "As long as

I am in this world," he has said, "I have vowed my life to Him, and His Grace abiding, I shall never break my vow." "Never long in one place, he wanders over the length and breadth of India, meeting with all sorts and conditions of men, suffering the changes of climate, from the steamy tropical heat of Travancore and Ceylon to the icy cold of Tibet. Without knowledge of how food or raiment or lodging shall be provided from day to day, carrying no money or worldly possessions, he continues his pilgrimage in the service of his fellow-men and to the glory of his Master, Christ. In cold or heat, he wears the same clothes, and even in the bitter cold, of farthest Tibet he wears no shoes, for by his bleeding feet he attracts men to Christ."

4.

Jesus said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." To be a true servant of Christ means self-surrender, self-dedication to a hard task, the acceptance of burdens, limitations, penalties from which the heart of man naturally shrinks. In every true life there is something that corresponds to the wilderness-temptation and Gethsemane. The way to spiritual power, to noble living and effective service is the way of the Cross. We are tempted to aim at something less than the very highest, to surrender ourselves to Christ and His service—but with limitations, to take the line of least resistance, and so to avoid personal discomfort; to put mere cleverness and the use of spectacular methods before prayer and the secret working of the Holy Spirit; to be dazzled by the visible success that so many win so easily; to lower the flag of one's ideals and to make compromise with the world the law of our own life; to be discouraged by the apparent failure of our efforts to serve Christ and bring in His Kingdom, and to drift with the stream instead of rowing hard against it. He who would share our Lord's life and power and victory must overcome such temptations and walk with Him in the way of the Cross.

"To every man there openeth
A way, and ways, and a way,
And the high soul climbs the high way,
And the low soul gropes the low,
And, in between, on the misty flats
The rest drift to and fro;

But to every man there openeth
A high way and a low,
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go."

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. Try to estimate the significance to our Lord of the three temptations, and point out what corresponds to them in ordinary experience.
2. Distinguish between true and false asceticism. What does it mean, under modern conditions, "to renounce the world, the flesh and the devil"?
3. Why is it that "the way of the Cross" is the only way to spiritual power?
4. What bearing has this study upon the question of choosing a life work?

FOR THE QUIET HOUR.

"I have an inner conviction that a real Christian education would make everyone who graduated in it a gentleman. For the virtues of the gentleman and the Christian are surely the same, unselfishness and a superiority to gross and material ambitions."

"If I survive the war, I think I shall go out to Broken Hill, and try to neutralize materialism in the trades unions from within. I am not really a Socialist at all—I rather believe in the gentleman if only he can be kicked out of his prejudices and made to love his brethren. In the labourer and the gentleman there appears to me to be a certain potentiality for honest idealism which I don't see much of elsewhere."

"I don't know whether it is a good thing to dream about after the war, but we can't help it sometimes, and in all my day-dreams I long to escape from the atmosphere of club and collars and top-hats, and to get into a simpler if rougher one. I don't know what I shall do if I get through the war with a whole skin. I have no profession except that of writing, which is hardly a living, and I shall have very little money, and a good deal to do with it. If I can't get the sort of job I want in England, I shall have to go back to Australia. I want to work with my hands, and to mix up with ordinary, rough sort of men, among whom I fancy if there are a good many brutes there are also a good many trumps. I am judging from the sample one gets in the army. But what I hate are

the pretences and pretensions of people with 'social ambitions.' I do like a *man*, whether he wears collars or not, and such lots of them don't. I should like to stand up in my old age as a labour representative with a free hand to down all windbags."

"The only institution in which I have never lost faith is the Oxford and Bermondsey Mission. Its ideal has always been that Oxford men should, as far as possible, identify themselves with the working men of Bermondsey in order that they might earn the right to lead them. Of course, so far no one has ever fully realised this ideal, though enlistment in the army has brought some of us nearer to it than ever before. For that reason I now bitterly regret having applied for a commission. It has undermined what might have proved a valuable position. I am certain that the gentleman can be of use in leading the working man if he be humble enough to learn from the working man, and will not try to teach before he understands anything of a workman's life. There are two gifts in which I have increasing faith, and they are humility and love."

"I place no faith in organised reforms. I have seen with my own eyes what enormous, far-reaching effects a single Christ-like, Christ-embodying life can have, and I verily believe that the Church might, if she would, be the salt of the earth, the leaven of humanity. But the bright part of the present seems to be not in the general goodwill of the many, but in the dissatisfied longings of the few. If the few who see visions can keep humble something may happen."

—Extracts from letters of the late Lieutenant Donald Hankey.

"In order to produce a movement of a vital spiritual nature, *someone must suffer*, someone must go through sore travail of soul before a living movement can be born. This was so in the greatest movement in history—the evolution of the Christian faith. To that end Christ suffered, as we know (in a measure), to what a degree; but the depth and infinitude of his suffering we can not know. It is what the Greeks called 'the unknown and unknowable agony.' Scripture speaks of the 'travail of His soul.' In an infinitely smaller measure I believe that the evolution of any vitally good principle of truth, must be and always is preceded by suffering, by travail of soul."—Josephine Butler.

STUDY IV.

The Call to a Many-sided Discipleship.

Readings: Matthew 9: 9.

Mark 1: 16-20; 3: 14-19; 10: 17-22.

Luke 7: 1-9; 8: 2-3; 15: 1-2.

John 9: 39-41; 12: 20-22.

Acts 16: 14-15, 25-33; 17: 32-34; 19: 23-28.

1.

A study of the above passages, which might be multiplied almost indefinitely, indicates the extraordinary breadth of our Lord's appeal to the people of the time in which He and His apostles lived. From these passages a list of men and women might be compiled which would represent the greatest conceivable variety of class, occupation, temperament and nationality. As "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by" He is followed by a vast procession, which includes Jews, Greeks, Romans and barbarians, fishermen and artisans, women who had been great sinners and women who had been devout from their childhood, tax gatherers, soldiers and officials, slaves and householders, physicians and merchants. In that procession, too, all types and temperaments are represented—the practical and the mystical, the learned and the simple, the radical and the conservative, the impulsive Peter and doubting Thomas, the eloquent Apollos and men and women, who, because they were slow of speech could but follow and serve.

Two reasons may be given for the breadth of the influence which our Lord exerted. In the first place, the beauty and simplicity, the strength and tenderness, the depth and reality of his personality and teaching profoundly impressed and attracted all classes of men and women. Truth and goodness appeal irresistibly to the human heart. There is in all sincere souls, as Carlyle points out, a divinely implanted instinct of hero-worship. "We needs must love the highest when we see it." Jesus impressed all honest minds with the conviction that He stood in a unique relationship to God, that the Spirit of God dwelt in Him in immeasurable fulness, and worked through Him with extraordinary power. That impression

was deepened by the absolute selflessness of Jesus, by His utter devotion to His great unselfish task, by the steadfastness of His purpose in the face of scorn and hatred and the certainty of a cruel death. All the imperfect heroes of the past paled into insignificance before the divine splendour of the personality of Jesus.

In the second place, Christ's doctrine of the Kingdom of God touched life at all points and appealed to men and women of all classes and conditions. Religion had become, in the main, a small affair. It was the special business of a priestly caste. It was a matter of ceremonies, traditions, opinions, conventionalities. It was the source of all kinds of rivalries, hatreds, confusions. It had ceased to be a constructive force in any large sense. Christ's doctrine of the Kingdom of God—the world-wide rule of God in human hearts and affairs, came to many as a new revelation. They felt that they had been led out into a large place; that, at last they could breathe freely; that the service of God in His Kingdom was a wider, grander thing than they had ever imagined. To them religion was henceforth not a narrow system of limitations and prohibitions. It was the service, in the broadest sense, of the Father and of their brethren, with all the powers of heart and hand and brain that they possessed. It was with a high sense of exultation that they realised the meaning of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

2.

From the passages studied we learn that there were in general three classes of people to whom this Gospel did not appeal—(1) The *Traditionalists*, represented, in particular, by the Pharisees, stood for a hide-bound orthodoxy, and rejected Christ's teaching because it conflicted with the traditions of the elders. (2) The *Intellectualists* regarded that teaching as foolishness. The Greek philosophers at Athens said contemptuously of Paul, "Whatever does the fellow mean with his scraps of learning?" (Acts 17: 18. Moffatt). Lecky, in his "History of European Morals," points out that the greatest religious change in the history of mankind should have taken place under the eyes of a brilliant galaxy of philosophers and historians, and that for three centuries they should have treated Christianity with utter contempt is a fact well worth pondering. (3) The *Commercialists* revealed their attitude to the call of Christ clearly in connection with such inci-

dents as the cleansing of the Temple (John 2: 13-17), and the riot at Ephesus (Acts 19: 23-28). The men whose hearts were set on mere gain recognized that to follow Christ meant the sacrifice of their vested interests, and this sacrifice they were not prepared to make.

3.

The study of the New Testament indicates that the majority of those who made the first response to the call of Christ were plain, practical people, who had to toil for their daily living. Christianity made its strongest appeal (as it does to-day in India) to the poor, the oppressed, the socially unimportant (cf. 1 Cor. 1: 26-29). Does not history also testify that religious movements that go deep and retain their power must be firmly rooted in the life and thought, the homes and social ideals of "the common people"? To whom, for example, did St. Francis and Wycliffe, George Fox, John Wesley and William Booth primarily address their appeal?

What did the call of Christ actually involve for those who responded to it? Many, of course, were called to leave home and friends and daily business to become preachers and teachers; but the vast majority had to remain and carry on the ordinary work of the world. Indeed, St. Paul specifically directs his converts, if their calling were in any sense lawful, to abide in it (1 Cor. 7: 20-21; 1 Thess. 4: 11-12; 2 Thess. 3: 6-12). They were to serve the Master and the interests of His Kingdom (1) by being more diligent and faithful in the discharge of their daily duty than their pagan neighbours, (2) by using every effort to commend the Christian faith to those with whom they were in daily contact. Slaves for the most part remained slaves; but, as Lecky says, "Christianity broke down the contempt with which the master had regarded his slaves, and implanted among the latter a principle of moral regeneration." So with all other classes of Christians. Tertullian repudiates with indignation the suggestion that Christianity separated men from life's ordinary interests and occupations. In the fourth and fifth centuries, however, this healthy view of the Christian's vocation was lost. Celibacy and absolute withdrawal from the world came to be regarded as the cardinal virtues. A false distinction between the sacred and the secular was introduced, and a distorted ideal of saintliness ruled the mind of Europe for generations, with

evil results that are felt to this day. The re-discovery of the New Testament in the 16th century brought men back to the teaching of Jesus. It is still our task to interpret that teaching, and to give expression to it in our common life.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. Why did the first response to the call of Christ come not from the "wise and prudent" (Matthew 11: 25), but from "the common people" (Matthew 12: 37)? What is there in a working man's life that develops his capacity for religious insight and leadership? Why are more leaders in Christian work not now recruited from this source?
2. In view of present day conditions, what special calls are coming to women for the exercise of their influence and for community service?
3. To what extent should the following classes of people be able to regard their daily occupation as "a vocation"? (a) the laborer, (b) the soldier, (c) the business man, (d) the lawyer, (e) the teacher? How should the sense of vocation express itself in each case?
4. Prove from this study that the Church should include in its membership and work the greatest possible variety of types, temperaments, and classes. How, in such circumstances, is the unity of the Church to be preserved?

FOR THE QUIET HOUR.

"The merchant's function (or manufacturer's, for in the broad sense in which it is here used the word must be understood to include both) is to provide for the nation. It is no more his function to get profit for himself out of that provision than it is a clergyman's function to get his stipend. This stipend is a due and necessary adjunct, but not the object of his life, if he be a true clergyman, any more than his fee (or honorarium) is the object of life to a true physician. Neither is his fee the object of life to a true merchant. All three, as true men, have a work to be done irrespective of fee—to be done even at any cost, or for quite the contrary of fee; the pastor's function being to teach, the physician's to

heal, and the merchant's, as I have said, to provide. That is to say, he has to understand to their very roots the qualities of the thing he deals in, and the means of obtaining or producing it; and he has to apply all his sagacity and energy to the producing or obtaining of it in perfect state, and distributing it at the cheapest possible price when it is most needed.

"Two main points he has in his providing function to maintain, first, his engagements (faithfulness to engagements being the root of all possibilities in commerce); and, secondly, the perfection and purity of the thing provided; so that, rather than fail in any engagement, or consent to any deterioration, adulteration, or unjust and exorbitant price of that which he provides, he is bound to meet fearlessly any form of distress, poverty, or labour which may, through maintenance of these points, come upon him.

"And as the captain of a ship is bound to be the last man to leave his ship in case of wreck, and to share his last crust with the sailors in case of famine, so the manufacturer, in any commercial crisis or distress, is bound to take the suffering of it with his men, and even to take more of it for himself than he allows his men to feel; as a father would in a famine, shipwreck or battle, sacrifice himself for his son."

—From John Ruskin's "Unto this Last."

"If we had nothing but pecuniary rewards and worldly honours to look to, our profession would not be one to be desired. But in its practice you will find it to be attended with peculiar privileges; second to none in intense interest and pure pleasures. It is our proud office to tend the fleshly tabernacle of the immortal spirit, and our path, if rightly followed, will be guided by unfettered truth and love unfeigned. In the pursuit of this noble and holy calling I wish you all God-speed."

—From Lord Lister's "Graduation Address" to Medical Students and Graduates, Edinburgh University, 1876.

STUDY VI.

The Call to World-Wide Service.

Readings: Phil. 4: 4-7. Acts 26: 1-23. 1 Cor. 2: 1-10.
Acts 16: 6-15. 2 Cor. 11: 16-33. 2 Tim.
4: 1-8.

1.

From his earliest years Paul had considered himself as dedicated to the service of God and the observance of the Jewish law. He was earnest, even fanatical in his allegiance to the faith of his fathers. Sincere and thorough, however, as he was in all things, he gradually came to realise that it was impossible for him to achieve his ideal and find heart satisfaction in the hard legalism of the Pharisees. When he appears upon the pages of the New Testament he was probably about 30 years of age and a brilliant career was already opening up before him amongst his countrymen. At this state Christianity appeared to him to be merely a fanatical and dangerous superstition. Its central doctrine of a crucified Messiah was, from his point of view, the absolute denial of "the hope of Israel," and so he persecuted the Christians with bitterness and thoroughness. The martyrdom of Stephen, however, and his observation of Christians generally under persecution, must have deeply impressed him. Here was a religious experience and a spiritual power to which he was a stranger.

The description of Paul's conversion in Acts 9 indicates his state of mind at the time. His soul was torn asunder by conflicting emotions. A sense of the futility of his own life and faith, blind rage against the Christians and their gospel, obstinate determination to do violence to his own better feelings and the voice of conscience, the feeling that he was caught in a net of circumstances from which there was apparently no escape—all this is suggested by the expression, "It is hard for thee to kick against the goad" (Acts 26: 14). Here, too, we have the psychological background which made possible the wondrous vision on the Damascus Road, and, in part at least, explains it. When a man has pledged himself deeply to a false view of life, and suddenly finds it necessary to

break with traditions, prejudices, occupations, friendships, prospects that are as dear as life itself, conversion is usually a volcanic and convulsive experience. Sincere and courageous as Paul ever was, he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26: 16). He broke utterly with the past and became a fearless preacher of the crucified Messiah. In spite of this break, however, note that all his previous training and experience fitted him for the better discharge of his new duties. The very qualities that had made him a furious persecutor, and had kindled his ambition to serve the Jewish faith in a great way, now made him the foremost champion of Christ and His most daring and farseeing apostle. This is no unusual experience. Ambrose, one of the greatest bishops of the early Church, was the governor of a province, when at the age of 34 he was called to the episcopate. Mackay, one of the pioneer missionaries of Uganda, was until the age of 26 an engineer. In both cases previous training in a totally different sphere qualified them for most effective Christian service.

2.

Unlike most of the first disciples, Paul was a man of the highest academic training, and he had a wide knowledge of the world. A Roman citizen, born in Tarsus, trained in the greatest school of learning at Jerusalem, and endowed with a superb intellect, he was supremely qualified to interpret Christianity, not simply to one class or nation, but in terms of the universal and the eternal. In this apostle, the Jew, the Greek, and Roman met, and so he preached not simply a local, national, temporary faith, but the doctrine of the Universal and Eternal Christ. Paul's epistles indicate how he worked out great Christian principles in relation to the problems of life and thought in his own day. He was a *constructive Christian thinker*. The present tendency is to lay the emphasis upon the practical side of Christianity. Pragmatism is the popular philosophy of our time. Let anyone, however, consider the tremendous influence in modern times of such doctrines as are contained in Darwin's "Origin of Species" or Karl Marx's "Kapital," and he will realise that the greatest force in the world is the force of ideas. The constructive Christian thinker is always sorely needed—the man who, bringing to his task a trained and well-disciplined mind, can so

interpret and apply "the truth as it is in Jesus" as to commend it to the ordinary intelligence of his time.

3.

Paul was called also to be a great *missionary statesman*. As a Roman citizen he had been accustomed to think in terms of the Empire. Not Jerusalem but Rome was the capital of the world in which he had grown up. It was natural, therefore, that he should be called, from the beginning, to be the apostle of the Gentiles (Acts 22: 24). "Paul had the Roman genius of the statesman and organiser. He planted his churches, by preference, in Roman colonies. He had conceived the great idea of Christianity as the religion of the Roman world, and he thought of the various districts and countries in which he preached as parts of the grand unity." He had lived much in the company of soldiers; he had marked the onward march of Rome's victorious legions, and, as a missionary leader, he displayed the daring and the strategy of a true military genius. Even when a prisoner in Rome he was like a great general conducting a campaign that encircled the globe. His plans and influence reached out to the ends of the earth. Paul was essentially a pioneer. His eye was ever upon the regions beyond, the unoccupied fields which he longed to claim for Christ (cf. Rom. 15: 20-25).

Such leaders are always needed in the religious world. By instinct, most men are narrow in their outlook, parochial in their interests, absorbed in what is merely local and ephemeral. From its inception, the Student Movement has sought to teach men and women to think in terms of the whole world's need, to serve in neglected fields and at strategic points. The Great War in our day has made of the world one parish, and compelled the nations to realise that the days of a narrow and exclusive nationalism are over. The call of the hour is for the highest kind of statesmanship in the spheres both of international affairs and missionary effort. Men and women of vision are needed to see the strategic points, all along the line, and to occupy them in Christ's name.

4.

Lastly, Paul was called to be a great *constructive Churchman*. He taught that religion is not simply a personal conviction and experience; not simply a system

of truth embodying eternal spiritual principles; not simply a leaven in the social and national life of the people; it is also a divine impulse which draws the followers of Christ into a fellowship and constrains them to organise their forces for testimony and conquest. Therefore, wherever there is a living Christian faith the Church is essential as its embodiment and expression. Paul was not satisfied to have a private and personal religious experience; he was not content merely to preach the Gospel to individuals and pass on. He sought to organise a church in every centre, he provided for its worship, discipline and extension. He went back over old ground confirming the churches. He laboured to preserve the unity of the Church, to link together in one body Jew and Gentile, Greek and Roman, to preserve the Church from sectarian teachers and destructive heresies. Paul could not think of the future of Christianity apart from the Church.

This is not the present-day attitude of masses of people. The Church is under a cloud, and its value as a religious agency is seriously questioned. The drift is away from its ministry and membership. But admitting its imperfections, its need of reorganisation and revival, what substitute can be found for it as the agency for keeping religion alive in the community and training men and women for unselfish Christian service? If Christianity is to prove an increasing power amongst us, then the Church must be strengthened, reformed, revitalised. It must call to its service men and women of the highest attainments and deepest devotion. Never was the need for the constructive churchman greater than at this hour.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. Show from the story of Paul's conversion how custom, prejudice, or obstinacy may hinder a man from finding his true vocation in life. What would Paul's history probably have been had he not become a Christian apostle?
2. Is there any Christian *idea* that has been so powerful in influencing the modern mind as Darwin's doctrine of "the survival of the fittest" or Marx's "class war" theory of industry? What does this prove?

3. Give evidence that Paul was a true statesman in his missionary outlook and effort. Show that in facing the missionary situation as it affects us in Australasia there is need of the same statesmanship.
4. Is the Church necessary? What is its greatest weakness at present? What contribution can University men and women make to its life?

FOR THE QUIET HOUR.

"The sort of men who are wanted for missionaries are such as I see before me; men of education, standing, enterprise, zeal, and piety. I hope that many whom I now address will embrace that honorable career. Education has been given us from above for the purpose of bringing to the benighted the knowledge of a Saviour. If you knew the satisfaction of performing such a duty, as well as the gratitude of God, which the missionary must always feel, in being chosen for so noble, so sacred a calling, you would have no hesitation in embracing it.

"For my own part, I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blest reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word in such a view, and with such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say, rather, it is a privilege—I never made a sacrifice. I beg to direct your attention to Africa. I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open; do not let it be shut again. I go back to Africa to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do you carry out the work which I have begun. I LEAVE IT WITH YOU."

—From David Livingstone's Address to Students of Cambridge University, December, 1857.

THE NEW ARMY.

"God end war! but when brute war is ended,
Yet there shall be many a noble soldier,
Many a noble battle worth the winning,
Many a hopeless battle worth the losing.

Life is battle,
Life is battle, even to the sunset.

Soldiers of the Light shall strive for ever,
In the wards of pain, the ways of labour,
In the stony deserts of the city,
In the hives where greed has housed the helpless;

Patient, valiant,
Fighting with the powers of death and darkness.

Make us mingle in that heavenly warfare;
Call us through the throats of all brave bugles
Blown on fields foregone by lips forgotten;
Nerve us with the courage of lost comrades,

Gird us, lead us,
Thou, O Prince of Peace and God of Battles."

—Helen Gray Cone.

