

Week 1 Selected Reading

The Role of Vision in Leadership Development

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Human Spirituality -> Spiritual Formation -> Vision -> Mission -> Process/Plan -> Action

The Path of Progress Toward Accomplishment

Introduction

Vision has become big business. Business and leadership books abound. Higher education has jumped aboard with a passion. More esoteric groups, such as New Age and futurists, have joined the rage. Then there is the Bible.

Vision as a Theological Subject

Most of the aforementioned sources provide information about the role of vision in leadership as well as in life in general. A good question to ask may be, why, after many years of almost nothing on this subject, has it exploded lucratively into the popular marketplace? There may be many reasons. A main one seems to be that educators have become increasingly aware *that vision lies absolutely at the foundation of any sustained, enduring, effective leadership. All enterprises are limited to the size and quality of the driving (and guiding) vision behind them.* No enterprise is greater than its undergirding vision. Enterprises that exceed their original vision, unless the vision is re-cast, begin to crater in on themselves and wander aimlessly.

In addressing the subject of vision, apostolic leaders have at least three alternatives. The first is to simply ignore the subject and continue on as best as possible, living each day, week, and month in a sort of hand-to-mouth fashion. It seems safe to say that a large number will, in effect, probably (while not admitting that they are doing so) continue to do just this. Personal ministries will stay the same and, in turn, the group being led, or even whole churches will stay the same. While it is easy to criticize such, the truth is that the determination to escape must become extreme in order to disrupt this horizontal, traditional, and familiar operational ground. Breaking out of this “habituated response syndrome” not only includes “the fury of the will” but also a willingness to confront very real forces of darkness that are equally determined on preventing such a breakout. The constraints of finite life often dictate against such freedom. The pitch of righteous indignation required for such a break must reach a temperature that often appears to others as absurd, unreasonable, or even scary. For those

few who break through, a small residue of fear of them often rests upon their contemporaries. For those who view the breakthrough positively, the fear will create a healthy love, respect, admiration, and appreciation. For those who are negative and threatened, the fear will create criticism and (sometimes frantic) attempts to marginalize. This can reach totally irrational levels of determination to destroy the progress.

Responses to such breakthroughs are varied. The Pygmalion selfishness of carnal man, coupled with shrill attempts to protect one's ego, can evoke some startling reactions, and this from "good brethren." Those "breaking through" feel the pain of rejection, falsehoods, deterring counter-actions, and such like, which are often intentionally set in motion to curb their influence. Sadly, the never-ending pull of the desire for acceptance, for men's favor, for the insular world of the familiar, and for the predictable, often trumps all else in the life of such a leader who, succumbing to the crumbs of acceptance, goes (and it is embarrassing to observe) groveling back to genuflect before the altar of this present world. Neither the resistance of this world's established structures nor the seduction of return to the embrace of non-visionary leadership will ever cease as long one ministers in this present age.

The second alternative in regards to exploring the subject of vision is to turn to secular sources for information. Many corporate gurus have addressed and continue to address the subject and are, admittedly, in many cases, contributing to the store of what can be known about vision and its role in leadership. Ideas such as those of transcendental meditation stress themes such as imaging, visioning, imagination, etc. Positive mental attitude authors, having arrived at their awareness of the role of vision from various avenues, have added valuable insights. From Napoleon Hill to Norman Vincent Peale and scores of others, this list is long. Maxwell Maltz, a plastic surgeon and author of *Psycho-cybernetics*, observed years ago that in conjunction with improving the physical looks of his patients an often stunning difference was witnessed in their self-view as well as their worldview. How they perceived others' view of themselves profoundly affected how they viewed themselves. One's vision of oneself, he contended, has much to do with one's perception of how others see them. To see oneself as beautiful or successful or accepted becomes, in his teaching, self-fulfilling. The by-product of this is new energy, new goals, and new determination to succeed.

However, the discoveries of such observers, while useful, may only lead the student to a *philosophy* of vision, while leaving the student without the deeper vein which remains untapped, that is, a *theology* of vision. While observing and drawing from discoveries regarding vision that derive from experience, the greater goal here is to point towards the development of a theology of vision derived from the enduring and ancient greatness of Scripture. This, then, is the third alternative, and it is the subject of this course.

Surprisingly, there is a scarcity of literature in regards to a biblical or theological understanding of vision. This course is an attempt to at least begin the process of filling this

void. It is interesting that on a “pop” level hardly any Christian books can be found regarding vision. Therefore, our attention immediately turns to the Bible itself.

Biblical vision is characterized by penetrativeness. The original meaning of the word “saw” is to “cleave, or split, then to see into, to see through, to go beneath the surface and to discover the real nature.” Biblical vision also includes the ability “to see the final state, to see the end in the distance, the completion.” Thus, biblical vision always contains a prophetic element, a ‘seeing into the future’, from which it is inseparable.

Nothing of great consequence is recorded in the Bible that has anything other than vision as its foundation. Minus such vision, no greatness and no enduring successes are found. Only vision—spiritual vision, biblical vision—can insure the broader understanding of reality which is so crucial to effective spiritual ministry. The narrow, earthbound vision of Gehazi produces terror and fear for his life as he sees only the size of the enemy. In contrast, for Elisha, all such fears are dissolved by awareness of greater realities that are revealed by expanded vision. The micro-vision of Gehazi juxtaposes with the macro-vision of Elisha. It is here, in the discussion of vision, that these realities vividly portray the essentiality of a grasp of this seminal subject. The subject of vision is basic to all things spiritual, to all things that are of faith.

As explained in the Human Spirituality course, all being in a finite world exists simultaneously as both visible/invisible. All being has its beginning in the invisible. There, a pattern exists or is discovered by the creator of the object which is being examined. An example is that of a chair. Before there is a chair, there is an idea (or “vision”) of a chair. This vision includes its shape and appearance and every natural law that must be adhered to for a chair to fit its purpose. Someone discovers this idea or vision in the world of the invisible. The discoverer does not really “create” the pattern, but rather, captures it out of the world (with its laws) of shapes, sizes, and structure. This invisible conceptualization is as real—more real—than the physical chair itself and exists prior to the chair's existence as a physical reality. It is ‘more real’ due to the fact that it will continue to have being whether the physical chair continues to be or is destroyed. Prior to actualization, the vision must be thus envisioned by a visionary. The seer “sees” the chair. While this conceptualization may be visible only to the creator, it is certainly real—so real that unless the chair, once built, continues to remain in the general shape of this established, unseen, unchanging concept, it loses its being as a chair. To deviate from the invisible, authentic pattern is tantamount to the thing losing its definition, and thus, its being. The physical chair is built according to this fixed “pattern” which exists—must exist—prior to the physical object. The invisible reality can have *absolute actus* only as its visible manifestation is faithful to its invisible self. What it is inwardly it manifests outwardly.

The visionary (or inventor, seer, prophet, discoverer or author) sees the invisible concept and, through action, he becomes the builder or creator. But first he must see. He cannot be true to that which he does not know or has not seen. Only by being true to the

concept he has seen as a visionary can he and others actualize the concept into “real” being. *In potentia* must precede the actual. All being, whether human or otherwise, is revelation, that is, revelation of something from the invisible. Being, which is invisible and visible held in tension, is the medium by which the invisible is made visible. Being discloses the unseen. However, to say that being discloses is to admit that there is something in being which is hidden, invisible, undisclosed, or concealed. That which has being is, at once, revealing and concealing (c.p. Heb. 11:1, 13). The invisible reality, that is, the vision of the thing, always precedes, defines, and shapes its visible manifestation. The chair can never be built until it is first seen by the visionary. It may lie latent for millions of years “unactualized.” The physical chair is but an objectification of the pattern or blueprint which exists concealed (as a thought, plan, pattern). While waiting to be actualized into physical reality, the chair *in potentia* is not nothing. It is something. It is ‘there’ even though not yet existing as matter. Thus the visible aspect of being is finite while the invisible aspect of being is infinite.

By the same token, while the chair does have invisible being as a concept before it becomes a physical object, it nevertheless cannot have real existence in the finite world until *action* translates the invisible reality into visible, physical form. The chair can never be seen as an “object-ive” reality until *action* translates the chair from thought to physical being. Thus, the visionary without the missionary accomplishes nothing. (Suggestion: Go back to the beginning of this Selected Reading and reflect on the progressive movements displayed on The Path of Progress toward Accomplishment) **The mission is nothing more or less than the actualization of the vision.** “Doing mission” is another way of saying “actualizing vision.” Mission is preceded by and grounded in vision. Divorced from vision, mission becomes aimless wanderings. Even worse, mission eventually becomes merely the perpetuation of the machinery created to propel the mission, much like running printing presses with no paper.

Vision as Revelation

Any “being” is revelation of the unseen. The invisible is the “essence” of the thing. The revealed or visible is the existence of the thing. The “chain of challenge” to the visionary leader is then, first, to “see.” Biblically, this is, in itself, usually highly experiential. That is, the seer, in seeing, is swept into the scene. Authentic encounter of the authentic gospel is tantamount to encountering life itself, for “*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life*” (Jn. 6:63). The word of God is “quick,” that is, alive. Thus, cognition of such is not detached observation, but rather, involves being immersed in, sensing, tasting, and experiencing. This, in turn, concretizes the experience. Words such as “observation” no longer serve to correctly define such. Instead, one must turn to words such as conviction, certitude, and assurance— words imbued with a passionate certainty found nowhere else in life experiences and therefore incapable of comparison.

Vision is impossible without a vision-ary. Vision is dependent upon one envisioning. To “see” necessitates a “seer.” *“Where there is no vision, the people perish”* (Prov. 29:18). Another way of saying this is: *“Where there is no seer, the people wander aimlessly.”* Yet another: *“Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint”*. Vision comes only through the medium of an instrument of revelation—a visionary, a seer, a prophet. **This is what defines a biblical, spiritual, leader!** The vision is prophetic revelation. Thus, *“Without spiritual preaching, proceeding from spiritual experience, a people is unrestrained”* (Prov.29:18, Keil-Delitzch, Vol. 6, p. 252).

Earlier in our studies, we read this statement: “In revelation, the invisible essence of being ‘presences’ in its existence.” But in doing God’s ministry, the statement must be adjusted to “In revelation, the invisible essence of being must ‘presence’ in the visionary before ‘presencing’ in existence.” The Christian gospel is a mediated gospel, a gospel which comes to man indirectly, that is, through the agency of human ministers (Mt. 10:40). Those who reject the process forfeit the message and its power. The gospel resists self-induced manifestation. It remains hidden—“keeps away, keeps to itself”—until it is first grasped in the soul of the visionary man of faith as he has seen it. In turn, the visionary man who “sees” and grasps the gospel with the whole man, never sees it detached from its mission. There is no unattached gospel. A true vision of the gospel is always a vision of the gospel as ministry. Seeing and doing are thus one. As shown below, the gospel reaches its full measure only as it becomes actualized through delivery via the minister. This is ministry. Thus, every action of the visionary precedes concrete reality before becoming that reality. This is faith.



Biblical vision is seldom, if ever, mere cognitive apprehension. Rather, it is experiential on the deepest level of human reception. To experience such vision inescapably marks an individual for the remainder of life. Accounts of such are included in the book *Ultimate Leadership: The Defining Moment*.

Vision is inseparable from leadership. The book of Acts is filled with vision after vision of the most vivid kind. *One vision alone can change the world!* Acts 10 records Peter experiencing such a vision regarding the Gentiles. The world has never been the same as this vision continues to reverberate throughout history and continues today with broader impact than ever before.

Further, one can become so unified with the vision realm that the two worlds merge in such a way that they become virtually indistinguishable. Both Peter (in his deliverance from prison) and Paul (when caught up to the third heaven) experienced this. In such a state, one’s definition of the “real world” may undergo some change. Saul’s/Paul’s vision is so shocking and powerful that he is literally blinded to yesterday as he is rocketed into a radical new day. So

blindingly powerful is this experience that, from this point forward, he counts everything before as waste.

Even more remarkable is the fact that two or more complimentary visions can meet. This is witnessed in the examples of Peter and Cornelius and in Ananias and Saul/Paul. (As a side note, “what if” Ananias had not obeyed the voice of the Lord—which incidentally gave him an actual street address!) Such visions, to come to consummation, require a linking of one with the other. In contrast, there are “weak” visions. Saul, with the witch of Endor, had his vision mediated. It is a “second-hand” vision, a vision which didn’t have a match-up.

There is also a distinction between what might be termed “general,” “broad,” or “distant” vision and “specific,” “present,” or “immediate” vision. An example of general or distant vision is Hebrews 11:13: *“These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”* The Amplified version states: *“These people all died controlled and sustained by their faith, but not having received the tangible fulfillment of God’s promises, only having seen it and greeted it from a great distance by faith, and all the while acknowledging and confessing that they were strangers and temporary residents and exiles upon the earth.”* Other ways of stating this are:

-- “. . . that is, because they really saw them in the far off future” Williams

-- “. . . But they did see them from a distance” Adams

Immediately we are struck with the necessity which distant vision places upon us, that is, the necessity of always staying at arm’s length from hopeless immersion in the present. Conversely, specific or present vision demands *total* immersion and involvement in the present, the immediate. Vision itself provides its own balance. Built into these two poles is the life of the visionary leader—on the one hand, always in the immediate, and on the other, perpetually in the future.

Vision is the foundation of all finite reality. Finite life divorced from vision reverts to the mean, the common, the shallow, and finally, loss of being. Where connection to revelation is severed, destruction is the consequence. An example of this is the licentiousness of Eli’s era, a time of which it is stated *“there was no open vision”*.

That which triggers the visionary experience is crisis. Crisis can here be defined as a situation that desperately needs answers, that is, answers which cannot be found within the situation itself or in present, finite thinking. The crisis is the initiating circumstance. Also of note is that, even though most literature asserts that vision comes from within such a situation, biblically speaking, the visionary answer does just the opposite, that is, it comes from outside of

the situation precisely because the answer to the crisis cannot be found within the situation itself.

Discussion of the Theological Order of Vision

George Barna, in *The Power of Vision*, correctly notes that there are three things essential to a complete vision. His list includes, first, vision of oneself, secondly, vision of the task, and thirdly, vision of God. We would agree with the components, but not the sequence. Scriptural vision does not begin with vision of oneself or vision of the mission or task, but rather, it always begins with vision of God. The scriptural sequence for vision is first, vision of God, then, vision of self, and finally, vision of the task. Straying from this sequence invariably results in failure. From this, one begins to see the necessary linkage of vision of God (spiritual formation), then vision of self, and then vision of the task. An oft observed truncation of the subject of vision is that this third area is the only area thought of as the focus of vision. However, when considered minus the first two, vision, like a steam engine, runs out of steam short of its goal. Starting anywhere on the vinculum other than Spiritual Formation (Vision of God, Vision of Self) invariably leads to disappointment.

Spiritual Formation → Vision → Mission → Method → Action

These are the Five Essential Links to Effective Visionary Leadership. Again, starting ministry at any point except the first guarantees a less than acceptable result. The following are three brief illustrations—an Old Testament example and a New Testament example, both which reveal the negative results of a truncation of the process, and a third example, which shows the correct process.

Biblical Models of “Completed” Visionary Formation and “Incomplete” Visionary Formation

Moses

Moses begins his ministry of deliverance with incomplete Spiritual Formation. He begins in the middle of the vinculum shown above, that is, he begins with Mission. He evidently knows that his role is to be a deliverer. He next devises a Method for effecting this deliverance. This plan is not the result of a visionary encounter but rather is extrapolated out of the present situation, i.e., destroy the individual oppressor. This leads to Action, which results in the killing of the Egyptian slavemaster.

By acting out of the facts of the present situation rather than from divine vision Moses becomes a killer rather than a deliverer. He is sincere. He is devoted to the Mission. He cres

for his brethren *But none of these have within themselves a sufficient answer for the present need. Only in **divine vision** can the answer be found.* In our example, Moses clearly understands the mission (maybe from his mother), however, God’s mission for his life cannot be mediated through his mother but must come directly through a personal visionary encounter—first of God, then of self, then of task. From Spiritual Formation emerges Vision. The Vision gives shape to, defines, the Mission, which is the task. Moses sees task in a visionary way but does not see himself or His God. This truncation of the visionary process results in death, defeat, disaster. The result is He flees in confusion. Ministry which does not “go all the way back,” that is, which begins minus Vision or Spiritual Formation and begins at Mission, will always encounter serious dysfunction (often fatal) in Method (Program) as well as in Action. Thus Moses attempts deliverance by:

Mission → Program(Method) → Action

As we have seen, success in ministry begins not by going from Mission *forward*, but rather, by going *back*, as shown below:

Spiritual Formation ← Vision ← Mission

Moses must literally “start over”, go back to “zero.” He is cast out and required to literally renounce every methodology and every possible source of empowerment other than the visionary encounter with God which creates Spiritual Formation. This occurs at the Burning Bush. Stephen, in the book of Acts, records that it is here that Moses has a vision of God, that is, in this case, literally sees God (the angel of the Lord). From this, the Vision of Self (humility and awareness of personal inability, followed by a revelation of his individual divine empowerment) comes into view. This, in turn, leads to a new, much broader, richer, and sufficiently deep understanding of Mission, Methodology, and appropriate Action.

NOTE: It should be noted that, while vision is one of the stages of movement within the vinculum, it is also the medium by which the entire chain is developed and maintained. This is due to the fact that vision is the medium for all revelation, whether of God, self, mission, method, or action. Vision is thus the medium and the platform for ministry while also being a component of ministry development. No spiritual action develops from finite reason, but only from revelation. Revelation is a product of vision. For this reason, vision umbrellas the five-fold movement and is also one of these movements.

Saul/Paul

Not unlike Moses in the Old Testament, the apostle Paul, prior to his Damascus Road experience, falls into the same error as Moses. He understands that the Mission of God is comprised of establishing God's kingdom in the earth. This is Mission. Persecution and death is his Method, which leads to killing as his Action. As with Moses, one can hardly doubt his sincerity, which serves to underscore the fact that sincerity without Spiritual Formation and Vision can be devastatingly misleading. Thus, evangelistic fervor, as 'core' as it is, nevertheless is not the "first thing." Brilliant and zealous human creativity concocts scenarios that attract crowds or move toward finite outcomes, but they have no spiritual magnetism of a biblical nature whatsoever. *Zeal, passion, fervor, and radical commitment, unless preceded, mediated, and guided by Spiritual Formation and a correct understanding of biblical Vision, lead to an array of counterproductive possibilities, including compromise, fanaticism, and delusory excesses.* In contrast, a ministry of faith is not guesswork, human ingenuity, or uninformed action.

The spiritual event on the Damascus Road shakes Saul/Paul to the very center of his being. It is this level of the visionary experience which produces radical spiritual "re"-formation. Self-certitude, smugness, egotism—all such is instantly dismantled and swept out as is debris in a raging flood. This results in Saul/Paul's being driven *backward* from Mission, *backward* to Vision, which in turn drives him *back further still* to Spiritual Formation, of which he had no prior knowledge, not so much as to even know such existed! A genius—rabbi-educated above virtually all others—discovers a level of personal Spiritual Formation totally beyond his awareness! In discovering overpowering identity of divinity ("*Who art thou?*"), he finds self-identity, so much that his name is changed. Like Moses, the indirect result is a correction of Methods and Action in regards to Mission.

Isaiah

Isaiah 6:1-9 records the correct order for Spiritual Formation. The visionary sequence is revealed as follows:

"Pre-process" begins with death to old
masters of one's life: "*In the year King Uzziah died . . .*" (v.1).

First: "*I saw . . . the Lord*"

Theologically, here is found the starting point. Because it is "revelatory" (i.e., "beyond the gate"), models of vision which are not biblical never go there and are unfamiliar therewith.

This prerequisite cannot be circumvented. Its necessity is absolute and unavoidable. This is vision of God.

Second:

"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone;

because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (v. 5).

After seeing the Lord, he now sees himself. Seeing God first radically conditions how one sees oneself. In every case, a stripping comes first. Every vestige of one's ownership of oneself or one's ministry is stripped away. Not only is all subtracted, but prior to any addition, the stripping must be accompanied by conscious surrender and *admission* of personal incapacities. Qualification for ministry comes by being touched with fire from heaven (v.7). Such an occurrence and such an enablement is far outside the scope of every corporate or business model of leadership. In this most compressed, intensely lonely place is individual anointing encountered and formed. There is no substitute. There is no alternative. This is the domain of authentic New Testament leadership. This is part and parcel of Vision of Self.

Third:

*"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying,
Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?
Then said I, Here am I; send me" (v. 8).*

This is vision of Mission.

Discussion of Vision and the Changing of the Mind

The above encounters reveal a level of reality that occurs in the present, but which one cannot access without the spiritual, visionary encounter. So is there a "meaningless" growth in an apostolic church, a growth which will, like jetsam and flotsam in a tsunami, quickly vanish by exposure to the blindingly revealing light of judgment? Is Acts 2:38 an end or a beginning? Is there a possibility of a breathtaking, gratifying, divine unfolding of each individual's life within the context of a local church? Can a leader's vision of individual believers, through all the frustrations encountered in their progress, continue to consider them as subjects and not objects?

One must also ask, is pastoring a vocation, a job? Is everything a pastor needs to know to be a pastor simply utilitarian? Is knowledge of mechanics the key? Is there no end to attempts to make better administrative techniques a substitute for true spiritual leadership?

As someone recently wrote:

Frankly, I am “fed up to here” with “instruction” books on how to conduct funerals, do weddings, have good pastoral manners, and other such inconsequential pabulum which contain absolutely NO causal force! If I see one more manual on how to “do church business,” I am going to throw up! Is the church technology or art? Is it simply a “resource” to be manipulated? What about “*ye are God’s Masterpiece?*” Can one routinize divine beauty? Away with corporate models! Away with tabulations and bean-counting as primary things. Away with endless organizational models and re-engineering. Yuck! Away with gimmicks and posturing and fashion (or fashion which attempts to posture as “non-fashion”) as evangelism. Unfortunately, we have been raised with the unspoken assumption that appearance and/or organization are the answer. In terms of the current fixation on appearances . . . if we can just “look hip,” we can translate it into church growth. In terms of organization, if we can just keep tinkering with it, we will get it right, then all will be well.

NEVER! NEVER! It is a delusion—a lie. The answer will NEVER lie in more, better, bigger, smaller, purer, wider, or narrower organization, neither regionally, nationally, nor internationally. Neither does it lie in opposing such, or some kind of contrived “organization without organization.” Does organized fellowship have a place? Yes. Is it an important place? Yes. However, the value of all such is TOTALLY contingent, totally derived. If that from which its value is derived is lost, its significance is also lost. It is, then, a haunted house posturing as the house of meaning, a museum of “natural man” monsters which continue to come back to life to attack its most productive inhabitants. It is transformed from its true value into a wooden idol, a totem pole around which the desperate dance, cutting themselves and pleading for rain. Such cannot be compared to the beautiful, the artful, the stunning reality of the visionary. Next to such magnificence, all else is nauseous.

In specifically addressing apostolic concerns, why do not more people—people who are NOT experiencing growth, neither qualitatively nor quantitatively—understand this? Why are people satisfied with mediocrity? How is it that more than a few seemingly fail to grasp the brevity of life and the extremely limited window of opportunity that each of us possesses with which to do something eternally enduring? How can people who are made in the image of the infinite become so enslaved to the transitory and the finite, allowing to be stolen all that is transcendent, beautiful, expansive, glorious, magnificent?

The answer seems to be a life lived completely oblivious to that Spiritually Formative, life-convulsing, encounter with divinity. Such can be found only “beyond the gate.” Nothing can take the place of this inescapable necessity. Further, once one has experienced such, there is no longer the possibility of being the same as before. The change is real. Those who attempt to shrink to their former size become pitiful caricatures of their previously liberated selves.

Such vision creates a radical changing of the mind. It literally rearranges one's understanding of reality. Vision is, (similar to Dewey's view of education), the "art of the Spirit."

I suggest reading the following slowly and repeatedly.

VISION
and
The Changing of the Mind

1. *Fatalism* changes to *Destiny*.
2. *Tentativeness* changes to *Assurance*.
3. Vision stimulates *Refusal to Accept* conditions which fall below its measure.
4. Vision produces *New Standards* for establishing the worth of things.
5. Vision creates demand for one's *Environment* to come up to its level.
6. Vision discloses a *Depth and Range of Meaning* in experiences which otherwise would lack meaning.
7. Vision *Defines* and then *Focuses* on elements of worth.
8. Vision is the "*Art of the Spirit*."

Thus, Vision is transforming. Vision brings coalescence—coalescence of thought as well as coalescence of followers. In leadership, it is this power of vision that galvanizes people. People may complain, grumble and accuse, or like the children of Israel, complain virtually every day. Nevertheless, they continue to follow. Israel is witness to the fact that people will follow a visionary leader rather than go back to some boring place which hasn't had a vision in decades!

Finally, one can read, and comprehend, all of the above, and still not find a place to pray and stay there until this transformative process takes place. One such encounter may be over many days or in an instant. Either way, where this is lacking, ministry is light and shallow.

Vision and Framing

The optimum environment for envisioning is the open. The carapace of the present and temporary space in which we live acts to constrain, resists, the spiritual visioning event. The world of vision produces practical results but must first escape all such utilitarian limitations. Mapping is antithetical to vision. Visioning as a sensitive spiritual process operates only in the unboundaried. To frame is to limit. It is to presuppose that a hidden force predetermines. Man belongs in the *openness of being*, but presently dwells in the *forgottenness of being*. Man belongs to revealing but this has been lost. A review of what Heidegger observed is in order, that is, that the essence of technology lies in “framing.” Its hidden sway belongs to destining.

In destining, man is constantly pushed towards his potential, but only that potential that is revealed within the prescribed frame of the frame-builder, whether his own mind, or others. Through this, the other possibility is blocked, that is, that man might be admitted more and sooner and ever more primally to the essence of what is unconcealed and to this unconcealment, in order that he might experience as his essence the requisite belonging to revealing.

He goes on to observe:

Placed between these possibilities, man is endangered by destining. The destiny revealing is as such, in every one of its modes, and therefore necessarily *danger*. The first possibility, that of Framing, threatens to push man to the extreme of perpetrating only what is revealed in the mode of ordering and admitting as real only that which fits into this mode.

It is important to know, but rarely so, that Man belongs to the unconcealed and the open. He is meant to experience revelation. It is not something strange or alien to, humanness. However, in the mode of Framing, man does not belong to anything original but knows only the merely derived. Never a part of the organic, members are therefore excluded from authentic togetherness and left bereft of genuine union. Leadership on the deepest level insists that each member experiences an unmediated participation in the unconcealed. When leadership as an act is thus viewed, it becomes something much more than placing wooden blocks in the proper holes. “Belonging” consists of participating in “revealing.” “Group” here

approaches the highest definition of belonging together. In such a construct, human “being” becomes one with other “beings.” In such a dynamic event, individual being, rather than being subsumed into amalgamated loss of identity, instead experiences a vivified individuality while also knowing the thrill of a corporate being which is another kind of whole that is equally real. This is the oneness of John 17, I Cor. 12:13, Col. 1:18, Heb. 12:22-24, etc.

Access to the “open,” whether by leader or follower, is always threatened. This obstruction is not by random chance only but also by design. Paul declares: “*For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries*” (I Cor. 16:9).

The term “open” is used to indicate the unboundaried, as in “open seas,” that is, the sea which begins when land forms are no longer visible. This ‘beyond-objects’ world is a place where one sees without restraint, a world beyond immediacy, and a world beyond conscious acts of calculation. It is the place of revelation.

Whereas *technology* is the sum of the ways in which social groups provide themselves with the material objects of their civilization, *visioning* is the way in which social groups find the spiritual leadership that provides them with the enlightenment and guidance of their civilization. Paradoxically, to have eyes open to the immediate, say, as an animal, is to be sealed off from the “open,” that is, that which has no boundaries or limits. Thus, to be equated to “brute beasts” (II Pet. 2:12, Jude 10) is, like animals, to be “world-poor.” Such shallow “world-experiencing” is, in comparison to man-in-the-open, a form of poverty, for man-in-the-open is “world-creating.” Only in this world does the stunning transformation of man’s deepest consciousness occur. (Herein lies the thinking behind the name of the conference No Limits.)

Failure to experience the open exposes both group and leader to a two-edged danger. First, those who fail to explore the open inevitably become perpetrators of existential elements rather than essential elements, thus further enslaving the group to the tyranny and shallowness of the immediate and the banal, to the profane as opposed to the sacred, to the common as opposed to the holy.

Framing does not preclude all revelation, only that which does not fit within the frame. Where Framing rules, every other possibility of revealing is destroyed. Framing thus becomes a medium of revealing while simultaneously blocking the wider process of revealing. However, frames themselves are also vulnerable to dissolution and not impervious to change.

The other edge of danger is that the leader (and by transference the follower) evolves to the conviction that the totality of life is smugly accepted as being under his control. Existing conditions are dumbly assumed as optimal, while, in fact, such a leader remains, if aware at all, only dimly and remotely so of that which transcends his immediate scope of sight. Both leader and follower dissolve into a telescoping world of diminishing returns in which they are classified and consigned into a preconceived order of a system. Categorizing and production of beings rule. This is characteristic of Framing. All of this challenging and manipulating activity is the exact opposite of open, liberated, expansive vision. Repression destroys response to intuitive

urge. The infinite world of possibility is kept carefully under shroud. Wonder is stomped out. Awe is disdained. Nothing is allowed to “be.” Everything is manipulated. “Demand” is the ruling notion. Consequently, as response is lost, being is lost. Nevertheless, the individual can, at any moment, find escape to the freedom of revelation.

Attempts to obstruct individuals from exposure to the “open” often emerge from hidden motivations. The desperate need for the predictable, the known, and the manageable is often attractive as a superficial replacement for the risks of life which continue to make one constantly vulnerable. Attempts to “hold on” to this pseudo-security cause resistance to other possibilities. There is no greater tyranny than the tyranny that attempts to hide positive possibilities. However, such efforts, even if undertaken in a kind of ignorant sincerity, are a deceptive placebo which leads to group frustration and exhausting repetitions bereft of any possibility of bringing satisfactory outcomes.

Unlike the professor in the classroom, the challenge for the leader is not esoteric contemplation of airy, timeless theories. The leader must have real revelation. He/she is daily confronted with the challenge of ministry in “real-time.” With Vision must be found at least some skeletal form that can be utilized for application. Professors in the classroom can stay ensconced cozily in the *timeless* element and can discuss *ad nauseum* without the terrible necessity to come down on one side or the other of a pressing issue or action, thus avoiding the most dreaded action of all, *decision-making*. But leaders, pastors, and practitioners have no such luxury, but rather, live at the praxis of the theoretical and the actual. They cannot stop. One cannot “freeze-frame” a preferred circumstance, idea, or ideal. Time moves on. Neither life nor leadership is a single snapshot. Desperately clinging to nostalgic objects or events or outmoded systems is no substitute for the courage and vitality necessary for sustained, ongoing, fresh, effective leadership. Like the parent who, trying to freeze-frame their child at a certain age, keeps them in baby clothes or baby-talk. Or the wife who attempts to steer her husband into isolation in order to preserve some sense of control which growth makes impossible. Or the elderly person whose home is limited to tiny paths because it is crammed with old artifacts, newspapers, and remnants of yesteryear. Or the pastor who attempts to freeze-frame his church at certain levels of growth, both spiritually and numerically. Or the church organization which valiantly protects the static, and vigilantly guards long-outmoded processes, clinging desperately to operations the sound of which is not unlike the clacking together of the skeletons of long desiccated systems.

In contrast to the above unhealthy examples, the timely, that is, each newly developing situation, constantly creates the demand for fresh new applications of the timeless to the timely. The one constant is change. The alternative to these unhealthy responses is prayer, reflection, and meditation, which produces Vision that empowers Mission, from which emerges processes, which, when enacted, lead to informed and effective Action. *Without a vision, the people perish . . .*

The challenges to one's thinking in these areas are well articulated in the story *The Country of the Blind*.

Title: The Country of the Blind

Author: H. G. Wells

Three hundred miles and more from Chimborazo, one hundred from the snows of Cotopaxi, in the wildest wastes of Ecuador's Andes, there lies that mysterious mountain valley, cut off from all the world of men, the Country of the Blind. Long years ago that valley lay so far open to the world that men might come at last through frightful gorges and over an icy pass into its equable meadows, and thither indeed men came, a family or so of Peruvian half-breeds fleeing from the lust and tyranny of an evil Spanish ruler. Then came the stupendous outbreak of Mindobamba, when it was night in Quito for seventeen days, and the water was boiling at Yaguachi and all the fish floating dying even as far as Guayaquil; everywhere along the Pacific slopes there were land-slips and swift thawings and sudden floods, and one whole side of the old Arauca crest slipped and came down in thunder, and cut off the Country of the Blind for ever from the exploring feet of men. But one of these early settlers had chanced to be on the hither side of the gorges when the world had so terribly shaken itself, and he perforce had to forget his wife and his child and all the friends and possessions he had left up there, and start life over again in the lower world. He started it again but ill, blindness overtook him, and he died of punishment in the mines; but the story he told begot a legend that lingers along the length of the Cordilleras of the Andes to this day.

He told of his reason for venturing back from that fastness, into which he had first been carried lashed to a llama, beside a vast bale of gear, when he was a child. The valley, he said, had in it all that the heart of man could desire--sweet water, pasture, an even climate, slopes of rich brown soil with tangles of a shrub that bore an excellent fruit, and on one side great hanging forests of pine that held the avalanches high. Far overhead, on three sides, vast cliffs of grey-green rock were capped by cliffs of ice; but the glacier stream came not to them, but flowed away by the farther slopes, and only now and then huge ice masses fell on the valley side. In this valley it neither rained nor snowed, but the abundant springs gave a rich green pasture, that irrigation would spread over all the valley space. The settlers did well indeed there. Their beasts did well and multiplied, and but one thing marred their happiness. Yet it was enough to mar it greatly. A strange disease had come upon them and had made all the children born to them there--and, indeed, several older children also--blind. It was to seek some charm or

antidote against this plague of blindness that he had with fatigue and danger and difficulty returned down the gorge. In those days, in such cases, men did not think of germs and infections, but of sins, and it seemed to him that the reason of this affliction must be in the negligence of these priestless immigrants to set up a shrine so soon as they entered the valley. He wanted a shrine--a handsome, cheap, effectual shrine--to be erected in the valley; he wanted relics and such-like potent things of faith, blessed objects and mysterious medals and prayers. In his wallet he had a bar of native silver for which he would not account; he insisted there was none in the valley with something of the insistence of an inexperienced liar. They had all clubbed their money and ornaments together, having little need for such treasure up there, he said, to buy them holy help against their ill. I figure this dim-eyed young mountaineer, sunburnt, gaunt, and anxious, hat brim clutched feverishly, a man all unused to the ways of the lower world, telling this story to some keen-eyed, attentive priest before the great convulsion; I can picture him presently seeking to return with pious and infallible remedies against that trouble, and the infinite dismay with which he must have faced the tumbled vastness where the gorge had once come out. But the rest of his story of mischances is lost to me, save that I know of his evil death after several years. Poor stray from that remoteness! The stream that had once made the gorge now bursts from the mouth of a rocky cave, and the legend his poor, ill-told story set going developed into the legend of a race of blind men somewhere "over there" one may still hear to-day.

And amidst the little population of that now isolated and forgotten valley the disease ran its course. The old became groping, the young saw but dimly, and the children that were born to them never saw at all. But life was very easy in that snow-rimmed basin, lost to all the world, with neither thorns nor briars, with no evil insects nor any beasts save the gentle breed of llamas they had lugged and thrust and followed up the beds of the shrunken rivers in the gorges up which they had come. The seeing had become purblind so gradually that they scarcely noticed their loss. They guided the sightless youngsters hither and thither until they knew the whole valley marvelously, and when at last sight died out among them the race lived on. They had even time to adapt themselves to the blind control of fire, which they made carefully in stoves of stone. They were a simple strain of people at the first, unlettered, only slightly touched with the Spanish civilization, but with something of a tradition of the arts of old Peru and of its lost philosophy. Generation followed generation. They forgot many things; they devised many things. Their tradition of the greater world they came from became mythical in color and uncertain. In all things save sight they were strong and able, and presently chance sent one who had an original mind and who could talk and persuade among them, and then afterwards another. These two passed, leaving their effects, and the little community grew in numbers and in understanding, and met and settled social and economic problems that arose. Generation followed generation. Generation followed generation. There came a time when a

child was born who was fifteen generations from that ancestor who went out of the valley with a bar of silver to seek God's aid, and who never returned. Thereabout it chanced that a man came into this community from the outer world. And this is the story of that man.

He was a mountaineer from the country near Quito, a man who had been down to the sea and had seen the world, a reader of books in an original way, an acute and enterprising man, and he was taken on by a party of Englishmen who had come out to Ecuador to climb mountains, to replace one of their three Swiss guides who had fallen ill. He climbed here and he climbed there, and then came the attempt on Parascotopetl, the Matterhorn of the Andes, in which he was lost to the outer world. The story of that accident has been written a dozen times. Pointer's narrative is the best. He tells how the little party worked their difficult and almost vertical way up to the very foot of the last and greatest precipice, and how they built a night shelter amidst the snow upon a little shelf of rock, and, with a touch of real dramatic power, how presently they found Nunez had gone from them. They shouted, and there was no reply; shouted and whistled, and for the rest of that night they slept no more.

As the morning broke they saw the traces of his fall. It seems impossible he could have uttered a sound. He had slipped eastward towards the unknown side of the mountain; far below he had struck a steep slope of snow, and ploughed his way down it in the midst of a snow avalanche. His track went straight to the edge of a frightful precipice, and beyond that everything was hidden. Far, far below, and hazy with distance, they could see trees rising out of a narrow, shut-in valley--the lost Country of the Blind. But they did not know it was the lost Country of the Blind, nor distinguish it in any way from any other narrow streak of upland valley. Unnerved by this disaster, they abandoned their attempt in the afternoon, and Pointer was called away to the war before he could make another attack. To this day Parascotopetl lifts an unconquered crest, and Pointer's shelter crumbles unvisited amidst the snows.

And the man who fell survived.

At the end of the slope he fell a thousand feet, and came down in the midst of a cloud of snow upon a snow-slope even steeper than the one above. Down this he was whirled, stunned and insensible, but without a bone broken in his body; and then at last came to gentler slopes, and at last rolled out and lay still, buried amidst a softening heap of the white masses that had accompanied and saved him. He came to himself with a dim fancy that he was ill in bed; then realized his position with a mountaineer's intelligence and worked himself loose and, after a rest or so, out until he saw the stars. He rested flat upon his chest for a space, wondering where he was and what had happened to him. He explored his limbs, and discovered that several of his buttons were gone and his coat turned over his head. His knife had gone from his pocket

and his hat was lost, though he had tied it under his chin. He recalled that he had been looking for loose stones to raise his piece of the shelter wall. His ice-axe had disappeared.

He decided he must have fallen, and looked up to see, exaggerated by the ghastly light of the rising moon, the tremendous flight he had taken. For a while he lay, gazing blankly at the vast, pale cliff towering above, rising moment by moment out of a subsiding tide of darkness. Its phantasmal, mysterious beauty held him for a space, and then he was seized with a paroxysm of sobbing laughter

After a great interval of time he became aware that he was near the lower edge of the snow. Below, down what was now a moon-lit and practicable slope, he saw the dark and broken appearance of rock-strewn turf. He struggled to his feet, aching in every joint and limb, got down painfully from the heaped loose snow about him, went downward until he was on the turf, and there dropped rather than lay beside a boulder, drank deep from the flask in his inner pocket, and instantly fell asleep

He was awakened by the singing of birds in the trees far below.

He sat up and perceived he was on a little alp at the foot of a vast precipice that sloped only a little in the gully down which he and his snow had come. Over against him another wall of rock reared itself against the sky. The gorge between these precipices ran east and west and was full of the morning sunlight, which lit to the westward the mass of fallen mountain that closed the descending gorge. Below him it seemed there was a precipice equally steep, but behind the snow in the gully he found a sort of chimney-cleft dripping with snow-water, down which a desperate man might venture. He found it easier than it seemed, and came at last to another desolate alp, and then after a rock climb of no particular difficulty, to a steep slope of trees. He took his bearings and turned his face up the gorge, for he saw it opened out above upon green meadows, among which he now glimpsed quite distinctly a cluster of stone huts of unfamiliar fashion. At times his progress was like clambering along the face of a wall, and after a time the rising sun ceased to strike along the gorge, the voices of the singing birds died away, and the air grew cold and dark about him. But the distant valley with its houses was all the brighter for that. He came presently to talus, and among the rocks he noted--for he was an observant man--an unfamiliar fern that seemed to clutch out of the crevices with intense green hands. He picked a frond or so and gnawed its stalk, and found it helpful.

About midday he came at last out of the throat of the gorge into the plain and the sunlight. He was stiff and weary; he sat down in the shadow of a rock, filled up his flask with water from a spring and drank it down, and remained for a time, resting before he went on to the houses.

They were very strange to his eyes, and indeed the whole aspect of that valley became, as he regarded it, queerer and more unfamiliar. The greater part of its surface was lush green meadow, starred with many beautiful flowers, irrigated with extraordinary care, and bearing evidence of systematic cropping piece by piece. High up and ringing the valley about was a wall, and what appeared to be a circumferential water channel, from which the little trickles of water that fed the meadow plants came, and on the higher slopes above this flocks of llamas cropped the scanty herbage. Sheds, apparently shelters or feeding-places for the llamas, stood against the boundary wall here and there. The irrigation streams ran together into a main channel down the centre of the valley, and this was enclosed on either side by a wall breast high. This gave a singularly urban quality to this secluded place, a quality that was greatly enhanced by the fact that a number of paths paved with black and white stones, and each with a curious little curb at the side, ran hither and thither in an orderly manner. The houses of the central village were quite unlike the casual and higgledy-piggledy agglomeration of the mountain villages he knew; they stood in a continuous row on either side of a central street of astonishing cleanness, here and there their parti-colored facade was pierced by a door, and not a solitary window broke their even frontage. They were parti-colored with extraordinary irregularity, smeared with a sort of plaster that was sometimes grey, sometimes drab, sometimes slate-colored or dark brown; and it was the sight of this wild plastering first brought the word "blind" into the thoughts of the explorer. "The good man who did that," he thought, "must have been as blind as a bat."

He descended a steep place, and so came to the wall and channel that ran about the valley, near where the latter spouted out its surplus contents into the deeps of the gorge in a thin and wavering thread of cascade. He could now see a number of men and women resting on piled heaps of grass, as if taking a siesta, in the remoter part of the meadow, and nearer the village a number of recumbent children, and then nearer at hand three men carrying pails on yokes along a little path that ran from the encircling wall towards the houses. These latter were clad in garments of llama cloth and boots and belts of leather, and they wore caps of cloth with back and ear flaps. They followed one another in single file, walking slowly and yawning as they walked, like men who have been up all night. There was something so reassuringly prosperous and respectable in their bearing that after a moment's hesitation Nunez stood forward as conspicuously as possible upon his rock, and gave vent to a mighty shout that echoed round the valley.

The three men stopped, and moved their heads as though they were looking about them. They turned their faces this way and that, and Nunez gesticulated with freedom. But they did not appear to see him for all his gestures, and after a time, directing themselves towards the mountains far away to the right, they shouted as if in answer. Nunez bawled again, and then

once more, and as he gestured ineffectually the word "blind" came up to the top of his thoughts. "The fools must be blind," he said.

When at last, after much shouting and wrath, Nunez crossed the stream by a little bridge, came through a gate in the wall, and approached them, he was sure that they were blind. He was sure that this was the Country of the Blind of which the legends told. Conviction had sprung upon him, and a sense of great and rather enviable adventure. The three stood side by side, not looking at him, but with their ears directed towards him, judging him by his unfamiliar steps. They stood close together like men a little afraid, and he could see their eyelids closed and sunken, as though the very balls beneath had shrunk away. There was an expression near awe on their faces.

"A man," one said, in hardly recognizable Spanish. "A man it is--a man or a spirit--coming down from the rocks."

But Nunez advanced with the confident steps of a youth who enters upon life. All the old stories of the lost valley and the Country of the Blind had come back to his mind, and through his thoughts ran this old proverb, as if it were a refrain:--

"In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King."

"In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King."

And very civilly he gave them greeting. He talked to them and used his eyes.

"Where does he come from, brother Pedro?" asked one.

"Down out of the rocks."

"Over the mountains I come," said Nunez, "out of the country beyond there—where men can see. From near Bogota—where there are a hundred thousands of people, and where the city passes out of sight."

"Sight?" muttered Pedro. "Sight?"

"He comes," said the second blind man, "out of the rocks."

The cloth of their coats, Nunez saw was curious fashioned, each with a different sort of stitching.

They startled him by a simultaneous movement towards him, each with a hand outstretched. He stepped back from the advance of these spread fingers.

"Come hither," said the third blind man, following his motion and clutching him neatly.

And they held Nunez and felt him over, saying no word further until they had done so.

"Carefully," he cried, with a finger in his eye, and found they thought that organ, with its fluttering lids, a queer thing in him. They went over it again.

"A strange creature, Correa," said the one called Pedro. "Feel the coarseness of his hair. Like a llama's hair."

"Rough he is as the rocks that begot him," said Correa, investigating Nunez's unshaven chin with a soft and slightly moist hand. "Perhaps he will grow finer."

Nunez struggled a little under their examination, but they gripped him firm.

"Carefully," he said again.

"He speaks," said the third man. "Certainly he is a man."

"Ugh!" said Pedro, at the roughness of his coat.

"And you have come into the world?" asked Pedro.

"OUT of the world. Over mountains and glaciers; right over above there, half-way to the sun. Out of the great, big world that goes down, twelve days' journey to the sea."

They scarcely seemed to heed him. "Our fathers have told us men may be made by the forces of Nature," said Correa. "It is the warmth of things, and moisture, and rottenness—rottenness."

"Let us lead him to the elders," said Pedro.

"Shout first," said Correa, "lest the children be afraid. This is a marvelous occasion."

So they shouted, and Pedro went first and took Nunez by the hand to lead him to the houses.

He drew his hand away. "I can see," he said.

"See?" said Correa.

"Yes; see," said Nunez, turning towards him, and stumbled against Pedro's pail.

"His senses are still imperfect," said the third blind man. "He stumbles, and talks unmeaning words. Lead him by the hand."

"As you will," said Nunez, and was led along laughing.

It seemed they knew nothing of sight.

Well, all in good time he would teach them.

He heard people shouting, and saw a number of figures gathering together in the middle roadway of the village.

He found it tax his nerve and patience more than he had anticipated, that first encounter with the population of the Country of the Blind. The place seemed larger as he drew near to it, and the smeared plasterings queerer, and a crowd of children and men and women (the women and girls he was pleased to note had, some of them, quite sweet faces, for all that their eyes were shut and sunken) came about him, holding on to him, touching him with soft, sensitive hands, smelling at him, and listening at every word he spoke. Some of the maidens and children, however, kept aloof as if afraid, and indeed his voice seemed coarse and rude beside their softer notes. They mobbed him. His three guides kept close to him with an effect of proprietorship, and said again and again, "A wild man out of the rocks."

"Bogota," he said. "Bogota. Over the mountain crests."

"A wild man—using wild words," said Pedro. "Did you hear that--"BOGOTA? His mind has hardly formed yet. He has only the beginnings of speech."

A little boy nipped his hand. "Bogota!" he said mockingly.

"Aye! A city to your village. I come from the great world—where men have eyes and see."

"His name's Bogota," they said.

"He stumbled," said Correa—"stumbled twice as we came hither."

"Bring him in to the elders."

And they thrust him suddenly through a doorway into a room as black as pitch, save at the end there faintly glowed a fire. The crowd closed in behind him and shut out all but the faintest glimmer of day, and before he could arrest himself he had fallen headlong over the feet of a seated man. His arm, outflung, struck the face of someone else as he went down; he felt the soft impact of features and heard a cry of anger, and for a moment he struggled against a number of hands that clutched him. It was a one-sided fight. An inkling of the situation came to him and he lay quiet.

"I fell down," he said; I couldn't see in this pitchy darkness."

There was a pause as if the unseen persons about him tried to understand his words. Then the voice of Correa said: "He is but newly formed. He stumbles as he walks and mingles words that mean nothing with his speech."

Others also said things about him that he heard or understood imperfectly.

"May I sit up?" he asked, in a pause. "I will not struggle against you again."

They consulted and let him rise.

The voice of an older man began to question him, and Nunez found himself trying to explain the great world out of which he had fallen, and the sky and mountains and such-like marvels, to these elders who sat in darkness in the Country of the Blind. And they would believe and understand nothing whatever that he told them, a thing quite outside his expectation. They would not even understand many of his words. For fourteen generations these people had been blind and cut off from all the seeing world; the names for all the things of sight had faded and changed; the story of the outer world was faded and changed to a child's story; and they had ceased to concern themselves with anything beyond the rocky slopes above their circling wall. Blind men of genius had arisen among them and questioned the shreds of belief and tradition they had brought with them from their seeing days, and had dismissed all these things as idle fancies and replaced them with new and saner explanations. Much of their imagination had shriveled with their eyes, and they had made for themselves new imaginations with their ever more sensitive ears and finger-tips. Slowly Nunez realized this: that his expectation of wonder and reverence at his origin and his gifts was not to be borne out; and after his poor attempt to explain sight to them had been set aside as the confused version of a new-made being describing the marvels of his incoherent sensations, he subsided, a little dashed, into listening to their instruction. And the eldest of the blind men explained to him life and philosophy and religion, how that the world (meaning their valley) had been first an empty hollow in the rocks, and then had come first inanimate things without the gift of touch, and

llamas and a few other creatures that had little sense, and then men, and at last angels, whom one could hear singing and making fluttering sounds, but whom no one could touch at all, which puzzled Nunez greatly until he thought of the birds.

He went on to tell Nunez how this time had been divided into the warm and the cold, which are the blind equivalents of day and night, and how it was good to sleep in the warm and work during the cold, so that now, but for his advent, the whole town of the blind would have been asleep. He said Nunez must have been specially created to learn and serve the wisdom they had acquired, and that for all his mental incoherency and stumbling behavior he must have courage and do his best to learn, and at that all the people in the door-way murmured encouragingly. He said the night—for the blind call their day night—was now far gone, and it behooved everyone to go back to sleep. He asked Nunez if he knew how to sleep, and Nunez said he did, but that before sleep he wanted food. They brought him food, llama's milk in a bowl and rough salted bread, and led him into a lonely place to eat out of their hearing, and afterwards to slumber until the chill of the mountain evening roused them to begin their day again. But Nunez slumbered not at all.

Instead, he sat up in the place where they had left him, resting his limbs and turning the unanticipated circumstances of his arrival over and over in his mind.

Every now and then he laughed, sometimes with amusement and sometimes with indignation.

"Unformed mind!" he said. "Got no senses yet! They little know they've been insulting their Heaven-sent King and master"

"I see I must bring them to reason.

"Let me think.

"Let me think."

He was still thinking when the sun set.

Nunez had an eye for all beautiful things, and it seemed to him that the glow upon the snow-fields and glaciers that rose about the valley on every side was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. His eyes went from that inaccessible glory to the village and irrigated fields, fast sinking into the twilight, and suddenly a wave of emotion took him, and he thanked God from the bottom of his heart that the power of sight had been given him.

He heard a voice calling to him from out of the village.

"Yahoo there, Bogota! Come hither!"

At that he stood up, smiling. He would show these people once and for all what sight would do for a man. They would seek him, but not find him.

"You move not, Bogota," said the voice.

He laughed noiselessly and made two stealthy steps aside from the path.

"Trample not on the grass, Bogota; that is not allowed."

Nunez had scarcely heard the sound he made himself. He stopped, amazed.

The owner of the voice came running up the piebald path towards him.

He stepped back into the pathway. "Here I am," he said.

"Why did you not come when I called you?" said the blind man. "Must you be led like a child? Cannot you hear the path as you walk?"

Nunez laughed. "I can see it," he said.

"There is no such word as SEE," said the blind man, after a pause. "Cease this folly and follow the sound of my feet."

Nunez followed, a little annoyed.

"My time will come," he said.

"You'll learn," the blind man answered. "There is much to learn in the world."

"Has no one told you, 'In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King?'"

"What is blind?" asked the blind man, carelessly, over his shoulder.

Four days passed and the fifth found the King of the Blind still incognito, as a clumsy and useless stranger among his subjects.

It was, he found, much more difficult to proclaim himself than he had supposed, and in the meantime, while he meditated his coup d'état, he did what he was told and learnt the manners

and customs of the Country of the Blind. He found working and going about at night a particularly irksome thing, and he decided that that should be the first thing he would change.

They led a simple, laborious life, these people, with all the elements of virtue and happiness as these things can be understood by men. They toiled, but not oppressively; they had food and clothing sufficient for their needs; they had days and seasons of rest; they made much of music and singing, and there was love among them and little children. It was marvelous with what confidence and precision they went about their ordered world. Everything, you see, had been made to fit their needs; each of the radiating paths of the valley area had a constant angle to the others, and was distinguished by a special notch upon its kerbing; all obstacles and irregularities of path or meadow had long since been cleared away; all their methods and procedure arose naturally from their special needs. Their senses had become marvelously acute; they could hear and judge the slightest gesture of a man a dozen paces away--could hear the very beating of his heart. Intonation had long replaced expression with them, and touches gesture, and their work with hoe and spade and fork was as free and confident as garden work can be. Their sense of smell was extraordinarily fine; they could distinguish individual differences as readily as a dog can, and they went about the tending of llamas, who lived among the rocks above and came to the wall for food and shelter, with ease and confidence. It was only when at last Nunez sought to assert himself that he found how easy and confident their movements could be.

He rebelled only after he had tried persuasion.

He tried at first on several occasions to tell them of sight. "Look you here, you people," he said. "There are things you do not understand in me."

Once or twice one or two of them attended to him; they sat with faces downcast and ears turned intelligently towards him, and he did his best to tell them what it was to see. Among his hearers was a girl, with eyelids less red and sunken than the others, so that one could almost fancy she was hiding eyes, whom especially he hoped to persuade. He spoke of the beauties of sight, of watching the mountains, of the sky and the sunrise, and they heard him with amused incredulity that presently became condemnatory. They told him there were indeed no mountains at all, but that the end of the rocks where the llamas grazed was indeed the end of the world; thence sprang a cavernous roof of the universe, from which the dew and the avalanches fell; and when he maintained stoutly the world had neither end nor roof such as they supposed, they said his thoughts were wicked. So far as he could describe sky and clouds and stars to them it seemed to them a hideous void, a terrible blankness in the place of the smooth roof to things in which they believed--it was an article of faith with them that the cavern roof was exquisitely smooth to the touch. He saw that in some manner he shocked

them, and gave up that aspect of the matter altogether, and tried to show them the practical value of sight. One morning he saw Pedro in the path called Seventeen and coming towards the central houses, but still too far off for hearing or scent, and he told them as much. "In a little while," he prophesied, "Pedro will be here." An old man remarked that Pedro had no business on path Seventeen, and then, as if in confirmation, that individual as he drew near turned and went transversely into path Ten, and so back with nimble paces towards the outer wall. They mocked Nunez when Pedro did not arrive, and afterwards, when he asked Pedro questions to clear his character, Pedro denied and outfaced him, and was afterwards hostile to him.

Then he induced them to let him go a long way up the sloping meadows towards the wall with one complaisant individual, and to him he promised to describe all that happened among the houses. He noted certain goings and comings, but the things that really seemed to signify to these people happened inside of or behind the windowless houses--the only things they took note of to test him by--and of those he could see or tell nothing; and it was after the failure of this attempt, and the ridicule they could not repress, that he resorted to force. He thought of seizing a spade and suddenly smiting one or two of them to earth, and so in fair combat showing the advantage of eyes. He went so far with that resolution as to seize his spade, and then he discovered a new thing about himself, and that was that it was impossible for him to hit a blind man in cold blood.

He hesitated, and found them all aware that he had snatched up the spade. They stood all alert, with their heads on one side, and bent ears towards him for what he would do next.

"Put that spade down," said one, and he felt a sort of helpless horror. He came near obedience.

Then he had thrust one backwards against a house wall, and fled past him and out of the village.

He went athwart one of their meadows, leaving a track of trampled grass behind his feet, and presently sat down by the side of one of their ways. He felt something of the buoyancy that comes to all men in the beginning of a fight, but more perplexity. He began to realise that you cannot even fight happily with creatures who stand upon a different mental basis to yourself. Far away he saw a number of men carrying spades and sticks come out of the street of houses and advance in a spreading line along the several paths towards him. They advanced slowly, speaking frequently to one another, and ever and again the whole cordon would halt and sniff the air and listen.

The first time they did this Nunez laughed. But afterwards he did not laugh.

One struck his trail in the meadow grass and came stooping and feeling his way along it.

For five minutes he watched the slow extension of the cordon, and then his vague disposition to do something forthwith became frantic. He stood up, went a pace or so towards the circumferential wall, turned, and went back a little way. There they all stood in a crescent, still and listening.

He also stood still, gripping his spade very tightly in both hands. Should he charge them?

The pulse in his ears ran into the rhythm of "In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King."

Should he charge them?

He looked back at the high and unclimbable wall behind--unclimbable because of its smooth plastering, but withal pierced with many little doors and at the approaching line of seekers. Behind these others were now coming out of the street of houses.

Should he charge them?

"Bogota!" called one. "Bogota! where are you?"

He gripped his spade still tighter and advanced down the meadows towards the place of habitations, and directly he moved they converged upon him. "I'll hit them if they touch me," he swore; "by Heaven, I will. I'll hit." He called aloud, "Look here, I'm going to do what I like in this valley! Do you hear? I'm going to do what I like and go where I like."

They were moving in upon him quickly, groping, yet moving rapidly. It was like playing blind man's bluff with everyone blindfolded except one. "Get hold of him!" cried one. He found himself in the arc of a loose curve of pursuers. He felt suddenly he must be active and resolute.

"You don't understand," he cried, in a voice that was meant to be great and resolute, and which broke. "You are blind and I can see. Leave me alone!"

"Bogota! Put down that spade and come off the grass!"

The last order, grotesque in its urban familiarity, produced a gust of anger. "I'll hurt you," he said, sobbing with emotion. "By Heaven, I'll hurt you! Leave me alone!"

He began to run—not knowing clearly where to run. He ran from the nearest blind man, because it was a horror to hit him. He stopped, and then made a dash to escape from their closing ranks. He made for where a gap was wide, and the men on either side, with a quick perception of the approach of his paces, rushed in on one another. He sprang forward, and then saw he must be caught, and SWISH! the spade had struck. He felt the soft thud of hand and arm, and the man was down with a yell of pain, and he was through.

Through! And then he was close to the street of houses again, and blind men, whirling spades and stakes, were running with a reasoned swiftness hither and thither.

He heard steps behind him just in time, and found a tall man rushing forward and swiping at the sound of him. He lost his nerve, hurled his spade a yard wide of this antagonist, and whirled about and fled, fairly yelling as he dodged another.

He was panic-stricken. He ran furiously to and fro, dodging when there was no need to dodge, and, in his anxiety to see on every side of him at once, stumbling. For a moment he was down and they heard his fall. Far away in the circumferential wall a little doorway looked like Heaven, and he set off in a wild rush for it. He did not even look round at his pursuers until it was gained, and he had stumbled across the bridge, clambered a little way among the rocks, to the surprise and dismay of a young llama, who went leaping out of sight, and lay down sobbing for breath.

And so his coup d'etat came to an end.

He stayed outside the wall of the valley of the blind for two nights and days without food or shelter, and meditated upon the Unexpected. During these meditations he repeated very frequently and always with a profounder note of derision the exploded proverb: "In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King." He thought chiefly of ways of fighting and conquering these people, and it grew clear that for him no practicable way was possible. He had no weapons, and now it would be hard to get one.

The canker of civilization had got to him even in Bogota, and he could not find it in himself to go down and assassinate a blind man. Of course, if he did that, he might then dictate terms on the threat of assassinating them all. But—Sooner or later he must sleep! . . .

He tried also to find food among the pine trees, to be comfortable under pine boughs while the frost fell at night, and—with less confidence—to catch a llama by artifice in order to try to kill it—perhaps by hammering it with a stone—and so finally, perhaps, to eat some of it. But the llamas had a doubt of him and regarded him with distrustful brown eyes and spat when he

drew near. Fear came on him the second day and fits of shivering. Finally he crawled down to the wall of the Country of the Blind and tried to make his terms. He crawled along by the stream, shouting, until two blind men came out to the gate and talked to him.

"I was mad," he said. "But I was only newly made."

They said that was better.

He told them he was wiser now, and repented of all he had done.

Then he wept without intention, for he was very weak and ill now, and they took that as a favorable sign.

They asked him if he still thought he could SEE."

"No," he said. "That was folly. The word means nothing. Less than nothing!"

They asked him what was overhead.

"About ten times ten the height of a man there is a roof above the world--of rock--and very, very smooth. So smooth—so beautifully smooth . . . "He burst again into hysterical tears. "Before you ask me any more, give me some food or I shall die!"

He expected dire punishments, but these blind people were capable of toleration. They regarded his rebellion as but one more proof of his general idiocy and inferiority, and after they had whipped him they appointed him to do the simplest and heaviest work they had for anyone to do, and he, seeing no other way of living, did submissively what he was told.

He was ill for some days and they nursed him kindly. That refined his submission. But they insisted on his lying in the dark, and that was a great misery. And blind philosophers came and talked to him of the wicked levity of his mind, and reproved him so impressively for his doubts about the lid of rock that covered their cosmic casserole that he almost doubted whether indeed he was not the victim of hallucination in not seeing it overhead.

So Nunez became a citizen of the Country of the Blind, and these people ceased to be a generalized people and became individualities to him, and familiar to him, while the world beyond the mountains became more and more remote and unreal. There was Yacob, his master, a kindly man when not annoyed; there was Pedro, Yacob's nephew; and there was Medina-sarote, who was the youngest daughter of Yacob. She was little esteemed in the world of the blind, because she had a clear-cut face and lacked that satisfying, glossy smoothness that

is the blind man's ideal of feminine beauty, but Nunez thought her beautiful at first, and presently the most beautiful thing in the whole creation. Her closed eyelids were not sunken and red after the common way of the valley, but lay as though they might open again at any moment; and she had long eyelashes, which were considered a grave disfigurement. And her voice was weak and did not satisfy the acute hearing of the valley swains. So that she had no lover.

There came a time when Nunez thought that, could he win her, he would be resigned to live in the valley for all the rest of his days.

He watched her; he sought opportunities of doing her little services and presently he found that she observed him. Once at a rest-day gathering they sat side by side in the dim starlight, and the music was sweet. His hand came upon hers and he dared to clasp it. Then very tenderly she returned his pressure. And one day, as they were at their meal in the darkness, he felt her hand very softly seeking him, and as it chanced the fire leapt then, and he saw the tenderness of her face.

He sought to speak to her.

He went to her one day when she was sitting in the summer moonlight spinning. The light made her a thing of silver and mystery. He sat down at her feet and told her he loved her, and told her how beautiful she seemed to him. He had a lover's voice, he spoke with a tender reverence that came near to awe, and she had never before been touched by adoration. She made him no definite answer, but it was clear his words pleased her.

After that he talked to her whenever he could take an opportunity. The valley became the world for him, and the world beyond the mountains where men lived by day seemed no more than a fairy tale he would some day pour into her ears. Very tentatively and timidly he spoke to her of sight.

Sight seemed to her the most poetical of fancies, and she listened to his description of the stars and the mountains and her own sweet white-lit beauty as though it was a guilty indulgence. She did not believe, she could only half understand, but she was mysteriously delighted, and it seemed to him that she completely understood.

His love lost its awe and took courage. Presently he was for demanding her of Yacob and the elders in marriage, but she became fearful and delayed. And it was one of her elder sisters who first told Yacob that Medina-sarote and Nunez were in love.

There was from the first very great opposition to the marriage of Nunez and Medina-sarote; not so much because they valued her as because they held him as a being apart, an idiot, incompetent thing below the permissible level of a man. Her sisters opposed it bitterly as bringing discredit on them all; and old Yacob, though he had formed a sort of liking for his clumsy, obedient serf, shook his head and said the thing could not be. The young men were all angry at the idea of corrupting the race, and one went so far as to revile and strike Nunez. He struck back. Then for the first time he found an advantage in seeing, even by twilight, and after that fight was over no one was disposed to raise a hand against him. But they still found his marriage impossible.

Old Yacob had a tenderness for his last little daughter, and was grieved to have her weep upon his shoulder.

"You see, my dear, he's an idiot. He has delusions; he can't do anything right."

"I know," wept Medina-sarote. "But he's better than he was. He's getting better. And he's strong, dear father, and kind—stronger and kinder than any other man in the world. And he loves me—and, father, I love him."

Old Yacob was greatly distressed to find her inconsolable, and, besides—what made it more distressing—he liked Nunez for many things. So he went and sat in the windowless council-chamber with the other elders and watched the trend of the talk, and said, at the proper time, "He's better than he was. Very likely, some day, we shall find him as sane as ourselves."

Then afterwards one of the elders, who thought deeply, had an idea. He was a great doctor among these people, their medicine-man, and he had a very philosophical and inventive mind, and the idea of curing Nunez of his peculiarities appealed to him. One day when Yacob was present he returned to the topic of Nunez. "I have examined Nunez," he said, "and the case is clearer to me. I think very probably he might be cured."

"This is what I have always hoped," said old Yacob.

"His brain is affected," said the blind doctor.

The elders murmured assent.

"Now, WHAT affects it?"

"Ah!" said old Yacob.

THIS," said the doctor, answering his own question. "Those queer things that are called the eyes, and which exist to make an agreeable depression in the face, are diseased, in the case of Nunez, in such a way as to affect his brain. They are greatly distended, he has eyelashes, and his eyelids move, and consequently his brain is in a state of constant irritation and distraction."

"Yes?" said old Yacob. "Yes?"

"And I think I may say with reasonable certainty that, in order to cure him complete, all that we need to do is a simple and easy surgical operation—namely, to remove these irritant bodies."

"And then he will be sane?"

"Then he will be perfectly sane, and a quite admirable citizen."

"Thank Heaven for science!" said old Yacob, and went forth at once to tell Nunez of his happy hopes.

But Nunez's manner of receiving the good news struck him as being cold and disappointing.

"One might think," he said, "from the tone you take that you did not care for my daughter."

It was Medina-sarote who persuaded Nunez to face the blind surgeons.

"YOU do not want me," he said, "to lose my gift of sight?"

She shook her head.

"My world is sight."

Her head drooped lower.

"There are the beautiful things, the beautiful little things--the flowers, the lichens amidst the rocks, the light and softness on a piece of fur, the far sky with its drifting dawn of clouds, the sunsets and the stars. And there is YOU. For you alone it is good to have sight, to see your sweet, serene face, your kindly lips, your dear, beautiful hands folded together . . . It is these eyes of mine you won, these eyes that hold me to you, that these idiots seek. Instead, I must touch you, hear you, and never see you again. I must come under that roof of rock and stone and darkness, that horrible roof under which your imaginations stoop . . . NO; YOU would not have me do that?"

A disagreeable doubt had arisen in him. He stopped and left the thing a question.

"I wish," she said, "sometimes—" She paused.

"Yes?" he said, a little apprehensively.

"I wish sometimes—you would not talk like that."

"Like what?"

"I know it's pretty—it's your imagination. I love it, but NOW—"

He felt cold. "NOW?" he said, faintly.

She sat quite still.

"You mean—you think—I should be better, better perhaps—"

He was realizing things very swiftly. He felt anger perhaps, anger at the dull course of fate, but also sympathy for her lack of understanding—a sympathy near akin to pity.

"DEAR," he said, and he could see by her whiteness how tensely her spirit pressed against the things she could not say. He put his arms about her, he kissed her ear, and they sat for a time in silence.

"If I were to consent to this?" he said at last, in a voice that was very gentle.

She flung her arms about him, weeping wildly. "Oh, if you would," she sobbed, "if only you would!"

For a week before the operation that was to raise him from his servitude and inferiority to the level of a blind citizen Nunez knew nothing of sleep, and all through the warm, sunlit hours, while the others slumbered happily, he sat brooding or wandered aimlessly, trying to bring his mind to bear on his dilemma. He had given his answer, he had given his consent, and still he was not sure. And at last work-time was over, the sun rose in splendor over the golden crests, and his last day of vision began for him. He had a few minutes with Medina-sarote before she went apart to sleep.

"To-morrow," he said, "I shall see no more."

"Dear heart!" she answered, and pressed his hands with all her strength.

"They will hurt you but little," she said; "and you are going through this pain, you are going through it, dear lover, for ME . . . Dear, if a woman's heart and life can do it, I will repay you. My dearest one, my dearest with the tender voice, I will repay."

He was drenched in pity for himself and her.

He held her in his arms, and pressed his lips to hers and looked on her sweet face for the last time. "Good-bye!" he whispered to that dear sight, "good-bye!"

And then in silence he turned away from her.

She could hear his slow retreating footsteps, and something in the rhythm of them threw her into a passion of weeping.

He walked away.

He had fully meant to go to a lonely place where the meadows were beautiful with white narcissus, and there remain until the hour of his sacrifice should come, but as he walked he lifted up his eyes and saw the morning, the morning like an angel in golden armour, marching down the steps . . .

It seemed to him that before this splendor he and this blind world in the valley, and his love and all, were no more than a pit of sin.

He did not turn aside as he had meant to do, but went on and passed through the wall of the circumference and out upon the rocks, and his eyes were always upon the sunlit ice and snow.

He saw their infinite beauty, and his imagination soared over them to the things beyond he was now to resign for ever!

He thought of that great free world that he was parted from, the world that was his own, and he had a vision of those further slopes, distance beyond distance, with Bogota, a place of multitudinous stirring beauty, a glory by day, a luminous mystery by night, a place of palaces and fountains and statues and white houses, lying beautifully in the middle distance. He thought how for a day or so one might come down through passes drawing ever nearer and nearer to its busy streets and ways. He thought of the river journey, day by day, from great Bogota to the still vaster world beyond, through towns and villages, forest and desert places, the rushing river day by day, until its banks receded, and the big steamers came splashing by and one had reached the sea--the limitless sea, with its thousand islands, its thousands of islands, and its ships seen dimly far away in their incessant journeyings round and about that

greater world. And there, unpent by mountains, one saw the sky--the sky, not such a disc as one saw it here, but an arch of immeasurable blue, a deep of deeps in which the circling stars were floating

His eyes began to scrutinize the great curtain of the mountains with a keener inquiry.

For example; if one went so, up that gully and to that chimney there, then one might come out high among those stunted pines that ran round in a sort of shelf and rose still higher and higher as it passed above the gorge. And then? That talus might be managed. Thence perhaps a climb might be found to take him up to the precipice that came below the snow; and if that chimney failed, then another farther to the east might serve his purpose better. And then? Then one would be out upon the amber-lit snow there, and half-way up to the crest of those beautiful desolations. And suppose one had good fortune!

He glanced back at the village, then turned right round and regarded it with folded arms.

He thought of Medina-sarote, and she had become small and remote.

He turned again towards the mountain wall down which the day had come to him.

Then very circumspectly he began his climb.

When sunset came he was not longer climbing, but he was far and high. His clothes were torn, his limbs were bloodstained, he was bruised in many places, but he lay as if he were at his ease, and there was a smile on his face.

From where he rested the valley seemed as if it were in a pit and nearly a mile below. Already it was dim with haze and shadow, though the mountain summits around him were things of light and fire and the little things in the rocks near at hand were drenched with light and beauty, a vein of green mineral piercing the grey, a flash of small crystal here and there, a minutely-beautiful orange lichen close beside his face. There were deep, mysterious shadows in the gorge, blue deepening into purple, and purple into a luminous darkness, and overhead was the illimitable vastness of the sky. But he heeded these things no longer, but lay quite still there, smiling as if he were content now merely to have escaped from the Valley of the Blind, in which he had thought to be king. And the glow of the sunset passed, and the night came, and still he lay there, under the cold, clear stars.