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Israel to the godly remnant in an era of woeful declension. Its second occurrence is in the same chapter to bring comfort and assurance to an afflicted daughter of Israel. Only twice is the title found in the New Testament, and with the same significance as in the Old Testament, namely, in Rom. 9:29, defining God's relationship to the devout remnant of Israel; and in James 5:4, for the encouragement of God's afflicted saints. The proximity of the title in Zech. 13:7 to "the man that is my fellow" suggests an emphatic contrast. The speaker, the eternal God, had innumerable hosts ever obedient and ready to fulfil His will and always enjoying His favour, but He had only one 'Fellow,' His well-beloved Son, whom He commanded His sword to smite and whom He forsook "in that dark hour on Calvary";

"We'll sing of the Shepherd that died,  
That died for the sake of the flock".

The scattering of the sheep is prophetic of the dispersion of the Jewish people less than forty years after they crucified their Shepherd. The "little ones" are the lambs of the flock, Christ's humble followers, on whom He lays His hand in protection.

It is John's Gospel that the strong bond of fellowship between the Father and the Son, eternal as it is strong, is predominant. It is in that Gospel that Jesus asserts again and again, "I and the Father are one". John's is the Gospel of the SHEPHERD SACRIFICE.

## VISION

BY HENRY F. MORGAN

As we study the Church of our time the conclusion is forced upon us that we are in one of those periods of the Church's history which can only be adequately described in the words of 1 Sam. 3:1, "*The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision*". In many circles people are saying, "We need a new vision". But what exactly is the new vision that we need? Of some new work of God? Or of some new aspect of Truth? We certainly do need a new vision in these things and in those moments of our life when the fires of our being burn feebly and we are inclined to think that God has reached the

end of His resources it is wonderfully refreshing to have the words of our Lord come stealing into our souls with their ineffable sweetness: "Thou shall see greater things than these". But do we not need something else? Do we not need a *new vision* of the incomparable Christ?

What is usually referred to as "mysticism" has very little meaning to a hard-headed and materialistic generation; the more so as it has come to be identified in the minds of many people with an unhealthy quietism. But whether we like the word or not the fact remains that it is impossible to be a Christian at all without being a mystic. How can we be living the "life hid with Christ in God" unless we are mystics? The mediaeval mystics used to speak of the Beatific Vision. Did they have experiences that today we have somehow lost? Or may we too have their experiences of God? What they spoke of as the "dark night of the soul" emerging finally into the "beatific vision" was their way of expressing what all Christians who are progressing with God in their spiritual life must ultimately experience, viz., that oneness with God for which our Lord prayed while He was on earth. (John 17:11). It would appear that there are seven distinct steps in this spiritual union.

(1) "*And when his eyes were opened he saw no man*" (Acts 9:8). Now this is a curious thing. When a man's eyes are opened you would expect him to see something. This man saw nothing. Is not this the condition of us all when we are first born again? We are like spiritual kittens, with our eyes opened indeed but unable, as yet, to discern more than the fact that we have passed out of darkness into light. We are in need of someone to lead us by the spiritual hand.

(2) "*And he looked up and said I see men as trees, walking*" (Mk. 8:24). Here is a man who can see, but only indistinctly. He has a distorted vision. Most Christians pass through a stage where they are a little fanatical. They have not quite loosed their hold on the world of time and sense, and they have not quite gripped hold of the things that are eternal. They have not got life properly focussed.

(3) "*And he was restored and saw every man clearly*" (Mk. 8:26). But the man did not stay in this condition; he made progress. As we go on with God there comes a time in our experience when we see every man clearly, even as our Lord who needed not

that any should testify of man for He knew what was in man. Our Lord had no illusions about human nature. He knew man as no man has ever known himself; but he also knew what man could become. That is why our Lord never became cynical or embittered.

(4) "*And when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man, save Jesus only*" (Matt. 17:8). There comes a stage in the life of every person capable of thought at all, when they recognise that the man Jesus of Nazareth is the greatest human being who has ever trod this earth; living a life of unequalled purity and teaching precepts that have never been matched before or since. The tragedy is that so many never get beyond this stage. They simply regard Him as the greatest man, superior to, but otherwise not essentially different from Mohammed, Buddha or Confucius.

(5) "*And when they were awake they saw His glory*" (Lk. 9:32). But in the experience of every sincere seeker after Truth there comes a time when we come to see that Christ is not only the greatest man, He is divine. Only in order to recognise this, to see His glory, we must be awake. It is significant that our Lord never took His three disciples up into the Mount of Transfiguration until after Peter had recognised who He really was (Lk. 9:20). It was no use showing His glory to those who could not appreciate it. Our Lord never cast His pearls before those who were unable to discern their beauty.

(6) "*Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord*" (John 20:20). Perhaps the words of the Psalmist often came into the mind of our Lord, "They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me" (Psa. 119:74). At least it is certain that one of the sweetest moments it is possible for a fallen human being to experience in this life is when the soul first becomes entranced with the beauty of the Lord Jesus, all the sweeter because of the consciousness that it is only a foretaste of lovelier things yet to be.

(7) "*And when they saw Him they worshipped Him*" (Matt. 28:17). This is final and inevitable. When a soul has been ravished with the peerless loveliness of the Christ, worship becomes the only thing possible; worship that is rendered spontaneously with the whole being.

It is not to be supposed that the vision of Christ is something that could only be achieved while our Lord was on earth or will

be achieved when we pass into His immediate presence. *Seeing* Christ is a very different thing from *looking at* Christ. While our Lord was on earth thousands of people looked at Him (Lk. 23:35) but only a handful saw Him (John 19:25). The vision of Christ has inspired some of the loveliest verse and it is interesting and curious to notice how all the mystics repeat the theme in almost identical language; whether it be Bernard of Clairvaux:

Jesus! the very thought of Thee  
 With sweetness fills my breast  
 But sweeter far Thy face to see  
 And in Thy presence rest.

Or Myers:

Who that one moment hath the least desried Him  
 Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar;  
 Doth not despise all excellence beside Him  
 Pleasures and powers, that are not and that are.

Or Darby:

For ah! the Master is so fair  
 His smile so sweet to banished men;  
 That they who meet it unaware  
 Can never rest on earth again.

Loss of vision is always the outcome of disobedience and if unrepented our Lord has to say to us in effect what He once said to the Jews in fact: "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39). Read Prov. 29:18 R.V.

—Service

#### DO YOU USE YOUR BIBLE?

*Said the late Principal P. T. Forsyth, D.D., "If we are not going to use our Bible, it is of no use building our Churches. We shall come to think more of our Church than of our Bible, and more of both than of Christ. And is that not Romanist? Most people make so little personal use of the Bible that they do not know if an interesting preacher is preaching the Gospel or not. The real strength of a Church is not the amount of its work, but the quality of its faith. One man who truly knows his Bible is worth more to a Church's real strength than a crowd of workers who do not."*