
Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Reverend Sam G. Candler**

My morning devotion last week began with the biblical verse that goes like this: "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22). Fair enough. Our eyes should certainly be healthy.

But I studied a bit more. I discovered that the old King James Version of this verse is much more insightful: "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." In fact, I found, once again, that the King James Version of scripture is often much more faithful to the Greek than our present translations. The eye of the body is not a lamp; it is actually the light!

And what does this word, "single" mean? How can "thine eye be single"? The word ("haplous") actually means "single-minded," or "sincere." Thus, Matthew 6:22 really ought to read: The light of the body is the eye. If your eye is single-minded, then your whole body is full of light."

Now we are getting somewhere! "Single-mindedness" may be one of the most difficult spiritual characteristics for us to muster in these frantic times. How can we be single-minded when so many images and ideas compete for our attention? It is rare to be able to walk, or to drive, down the street without seeing hundreds of billboard words and directions. Every television screen seems to have text scrolling below the image, or strange pop-ups appearing during silences in our shows. We even try to have conversations with our loved ones or friends, and neither of us can stay on subject!

Thus, Jesus was saying, "If your eye (your will, intention) is single-minded (not scattered, distracted) then your whole body will be full of light."

I looked for other places where this beautiful Greek word, "haplous," might occur. It appears nowhere else in the New Testament! [Indeed, it appears only once in the Greek version of the Old Testament, at Proverbs 11:25, "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (KJV). I love that verse, for together with Proverbs 11:24, it reads like this: "Some give freely, yet grow all the richer; others withhold what is due, and only suffer want. A generous person will be enriched, and one who gives water will get water" (NRSV).]

The closest the New Testament gets to "haplous" -single-minded""is when it speaks of its opposite, in the Book of James at verses 1:8 and 4:8, "Purify your hearts, you double-minded." Surely, "double-minded" is the opposite of "single-minded." There, the word for "double-minded" might also mean something like "double-souled," to be of "two souls." How awful!

But the gist is this: purity of heart is to be single-minded and sincere in intention. I believe this is what Jesus meant in the great beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Those words always remind me of the great book by the brilliant Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, "Purity of heart is to will one thing." One needn't even read the book to appreciate the truth of the title!

The eye is the light of the body. If we seek spiritual health and light, we learn to walk through life un-distracted from our priorities and visions. Seek God (and generosity, according to Proverbs!), and we will be satisfied""and not just satisfied,

but filled to overflowing!

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