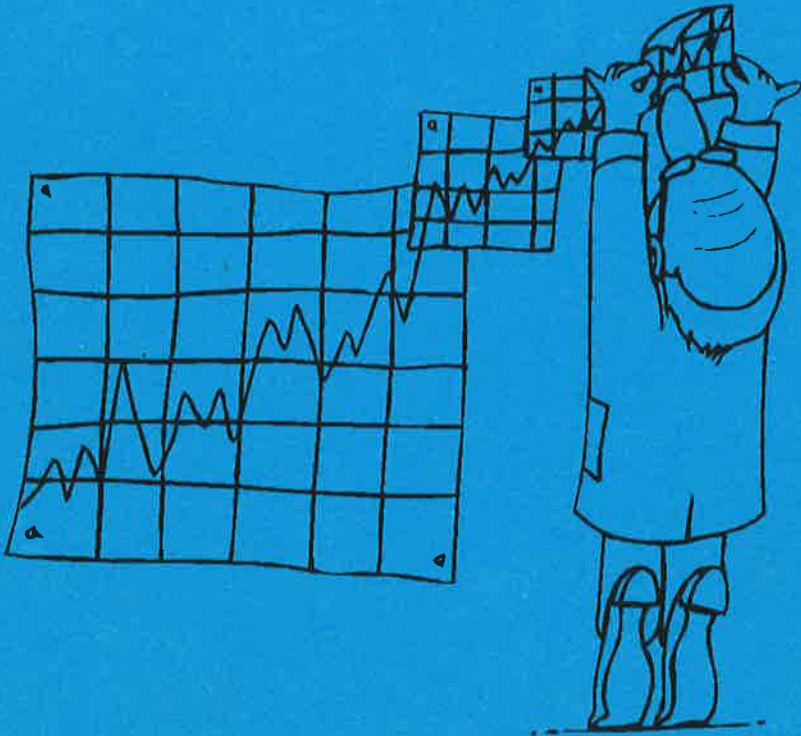


# CHRISTIAN THINKING ABOUT RESEARCH

Based on Bible Studies and a Paper  
given at the  
Second International Lausanne Researcher's Conference  
High Leigh, Hoddesdon, UK  
February 1996



# **CHRISTIAN THINKING ABOUT RESEARCH**

Edited by Heather Wraight

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## STUDY 2

### **INTEGRITY FOR RESEARCHERS**

**- eyes and sight  
Rev Tom Houston**

Reading Matthew 6:19ff Contemporary English Version

#### **Introduction**

Let us imagine we are on the Mount and close to the front of the crowd, looking into the face of Jesus and hearing him speak to us. Let us not look at it as the scholars have tended to make us look at it, as a collation of what Jesus said at different times all put together in a package to suit the five-fold division of the Gospel of Matthew. But let us try and push our way to the front of the crowd and hear Jesus as he says, "Don't store up treasures on earth where moths and rust can destroy them and thieves break in and steal them. Instead store up your treasures in heaven where moths and rust cannot destroy them and thieves break in and steal them. Your heart will always be where your treasure is.

"Your eyes are like a window for your body. When they are good you have all the light you need but when your eyes are bad everything is dark and if the light inside you is dark you are surely in the dark.

"You cannot be the slave of two masters, you will like one more than the other or be more loyal to one than to the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

#### **Integrity for Researchers**

Oddly, integrity is not a frequent word in the English Bible but it occurs more frequently in the King James Version than in any of the later versions. You would have thought it would have been one of those words that became more dense in the later translations and with usage. But neither is there frequent use of the equivalent words in the

Hebrew of the Old Testament or in the Greek of the New Testament. However, I will not spend time on a word study but go straight to the New Testament and the passages where the idea of integrity is conveyed.

It is the Greek word 'haploos' with the noun 'haplites' which speaks about singleness, so let us think about the single eye.

In the first study we thought about researchers being ears to the people and I want to build on that and talk about researchers being eyes to the people.

The basic idea behind integrity is wholeness or singleness which is an interesting combination. An integer is a whole number and integrity is about wholeness that can also be represented by singleness. Stated negatively, integrity is about being undivided, unambiguous in intention, single minded. In speech it is speaking without hidden meaning.

### **A Challenge for Researchers**

The challenge for us as researchers is that we might see clearly, having a single eye. "Your eyes are like a window for your body. When they are good you have all the light you need but when your eyes are bad everything is dark and if the light inside you is dark you are surely in the dark." This little sentence or two occurs both in Matthew and in Luke. The words are almost identical but not quite. I want to refer to both passages because in Luke 11 it is placed in a different sandwich from that of Matthew 6. The bit before and after in both Matthew and Luke are illuminating and will allow us to pursue the analogy in ways that will help us.

The focus on the eye is helpful because you could say that researchers are the eyes of the Church. So with this analogy in mind let's look Jesus in the eye and have him speak to us in his sermon. Let's begin with the analogy. Jesus takes his illustration from nature. Let's grasp the three elements in the illustration.

## **The Eye is the Lamp of the Body**

This delicate organ, the eye, is the instrument by which light is given to the human body. Notice the eye does not mean light - you can have a seeing person in a dark room who sees nothing. And light does not necessarily imply sight because you can have a blind person in a bright room who sees nothing. So you have an external factor called light and an instrument by which it becomes active or real for the human body.

## **The Factor Called Light**

In other places Jesus concentrates on the factor called light, 'He is the Light of the world', 'we are the light of the world.' Here he concentrates on the instrument by which the light becomes effective, the eye. If the eye is single or sound, your whole body has good vision or good light. If the eye is not sound or single the whole body has dim vision, lacks good light. In these two emphases there can be deficiency of vision due to the malfunction of the eye and, where this occurs, the whole body is affected by the weakness of one small organ.

## **The Quality of Sight**

The third factor in the analogy is that our sight, our vision, can be of good or poor quality.

Now one of the main factors in vision is discrimination, the ability to distinguish one object from another, one distance from another, whether it's a man or a woman and whether near or far off. When someone comes along the street there is a process going on in which your eye is very active. It is a living thing and not an inanimate thing.

The object comes nearer and we say to ourselves this is a person and not an animal and as it comes even nearer we say this is a man and not a woman.

As the person comes nearer still, all the distinguishing features of the person, their height, their width, their features, their appearance, their clothes, all become clearer. The closer they come to us, the more opportunity light and sight have to act. Distinguishing one colour from another, one shape from another and the relation of things is what the eye is about.

The function of light is not to produce a general awareness of light in the eye and its spiritual equivalent is not a general awareness that we are looking for. It is rather to produce a distinct image on the retina which can be an item of knowledge that leads to a guide to action.

That is probably enough about the picture Jesus uses. It is something we know and of which we have constant experience.

### **The Big Question**

What are the counterparts in the moral and spiritual realm that correspond to this analogy of everyday experience? And for us as researchers what are the equivalents in our role as the eyes of the Church, the Body of Christ on earth?

To look into that I want to use the two contexts in Matthew and Luke.

I suggest the *light* we are concerned with is the true context in which the church or churches operate internally and externally. The eye is the capacity of the research community to view and expound that. The *vision* is the grasp that any church or organisation has of its situation, which informs how it acts and reacts. And that of course breaks down into the individual situations where the process takes place.

But before we leave the analogy we need to register that we are not talking about a natural situation. There is a spiritual dimension to our appreciation of the churches' contexts.

The whole Body, the Church, is emerging from a condition of blindness, ourselves included. We see nothing clearly. We are like the man in the story of Mark 8:24 - having had our eyes begin to be opened we are still seeing men as trees walking. Or we in the Church may need to hear the words of the risen Christ say to us, 'You don't know you are blind'.

The Church is emerging from that blindness but it doesn't all happen instantaneously. So we need always the humility that steps back and acknowledges, as Paul does, that we know nothing as we ought to know and to seek the illumination of the Holy Spirit as we try to understand the data before us.

What else impairs the sight of researchers that compromises their integrity, the singleness of their eye that they need to provide for the Body? Now unfortunately in this instance Jesus does not move out of the analogy and say, 'This is that'. So I propose to try to elucidate this from the context in which the two Gospel writers place the statement.

### **Short Sight**

First of all, as we talk about sight impairment there is a thing called short sight. I have it. If I take off my glasses I can't see any of your faces clearly. In this case Jesus says, "Don't store up treasures on earth where moths and rust can destroy them, instead store up treasures in heaven". Treasure on earth, treasure in heaven. The long range is out of focus. To keep occupied with the near and immediate leads to ignoring the long term.

It is significant that money is the factor that causes this. Money pushes you in the direction of the short term and we all know research can be biased by where the money comes from and also what money the selected data can raise. In practice this slows the whole process down and costs us more in the long run because of the wasted time that the Church spends in following short term conclusions.



If the Body is misled it wanders ineffectively and the lack of long term integrity diverts the Body and leaves it unprepared for the future. While it is good to have goals, short term, medium and long term, it is important not to be too short term at any time or we may be guilty of being short sighted.

### **Double Vision**

The second possibility is double vision. The passage that follows says, "You cannot be the slave of two masters, you will like one more than the other, or be more loyal to one than the other." This is binocular vision. Single vision gives depth to what we see as we see things in relation to one another. When the two eyes are not simultaneously in focus you get diplopia or double vision. This is both uncomfortable for those who have it and unattractive to those who look at it. It can result in a squint or what is called a lazy eye because to avoid discomfort the person who has double vision makes one eye work more than the other to try and get the balance right and true vision.

So spiritually, if you don't have money and God in proper focus you develop a lazy eye for God and keep only the money eye focused. This impairs integrity and we need to be very careful in this whole matter.

### **Selective Vision**

Now we move to the Luke context and we begin with the third factor of sight impairment which I call *selective* sight, because the previous passage in Luke is about leaders who seek a sign. They refused to see the obvious and kept looking for the spectacular. They refused to see the regular and kept looking for the random.

This says a lot about our personality, it's a statement of what is important to the person. The person wants his position or her position to be demonstrated. When it is not, he or she has no time for that sign and looks for another. This kind of researcher rides his hobby horse, and lacks integrity for that reason.

Because his sight is selective and not whole and he leaves the Body to a degree in the dark.

### **Disproportion**

The following passage in Luke 11 from verse 37 is about Pharisees who concentrated on details but were blind to principles. They concentrated on tithing small things and neglected greater matters of justice and mercy and faith. They were more concerned about the outside than the inside; appearances were more important than reality. This is the shop window mentality, when the overriding consideration is 'How do I look?' This disproportion is a great enemy of integrity.

### **Deficient sight**

So how do you know if your eyesight is deficient? There are three ways:-

Comparison with the past. By comparison with what used to be and with what you used to see. When you get older you remember how you used to see certain things more easily. I have a friend who had an operation for cataracts. She was amazed how well she could see only two weeks after the operation and could only then describe her sense of loss of sight because she had got it back again. In another sense, when you have a cataract you remember how you used to be able to see things but cannot see them clearly now and that is important for a Christian. We need to remember how we used to see things and give that a degree of validity.

Comparing with others. When we ask others what they see we may find it is not the same as what we see.

An objective test. You go to have your eyes tested, the man puts the card or diagram up and says, "Read the bottom line." Without a test we do not know our problem. Colour blind people would not know they were colour blind if someone did not tell them.

It used to be the case that in Nairobi there was only one set of traffic lights on Government Road. I remember being driven along that road by a very prominent Christian doctor who said to me, "You know, Tom, I am colour blind." I said, "Are you? Well, how do you handle traffic lights?" "Oh," he said, "It's quite easy. Green is on top and red is at the bottom!" We were within about 100 yards of the lights so I quickly became his interpreter.

So what other people say is important. And here is a word from 1 Corinthians 12, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'." All of us need tests.

Sight is important in many tasks. People can be disqualified from service by impaired sight. You may not get into the Army because you have bad sight.

The Body of Christ can be incapacitated from certain work if its researchers create imperfect sight by their lack of integrity or singleness or wholeness of vision.

So we must test ourselves by what we used to see and by what others tell us. We need to compare what we see with what other researchers see.

Let us remember the objective standard is also there in the Scriptures and we must measure ourselves against it. Where our findings are in accord with the teaching of Scripture then the spiritual vision of the Body will be good. But where it is not, then we need to put ourselves into the hands of the Specialist to rectify it and pray, "Lord, that I might receive my sight and the integrity that will make me good eyes for God."

### **Summary**

Giving this study has been helpful to me because I confess I started off seeing the researchers at this conference as a conglomeration of individuals. But as I prepared this message on 'Integrity for Researchers' I realised that God has been wonderfully gifting his Church with a community of researchers who need to be comparing and checking on one another if there is going to be integrity.

I am so glad that Lausanne has been the banner under which this has happened because we are there to encourage the whole Church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world. Our role is to build bridges of understanding and cooperation between Christian leaders everywhere. I do pray that one of the fruits of this conference will be a greater sense of community and interdependence among us. For if it is like that, so will our integrity increase and so there will be light for the whole Body.

## **Prayer**

*Oh Lord, we thank you for your Word and for the way in which it has that capacity to penetrate recesses of our thinking and feeling that other things cannot reach. We put ourselves before you as those who have seen something new and pray for grace to respond to that.*

*Our prayer is also that the community we represent may become a reality in the exchange of information, in our feeling for one another, our trust in each other and our sense of dependence on each other and all together on you.*

*Make us eyes for the Body that will give it light, for the glory of Christ, the Light of the World.*

Amen.