

My Bout with Doubt

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Even before I took the pastorate of a bilingual church in New Jersey, I was already avidly reading the Psychology Magazine in Germany.

An American military chaplain stationed in Augsburg was supplying me with secondhand copies.

My motives seemed to be pure and my intentions benevolent. My goal appeared to be noble. Psychology would help me work not only with displaced persons and refugees but with all kinds of people.

When we returned to the States the end of 1956, I continued my psychological and theological pursuits. In my late 20s and pastor of my first church, I wanted to do my best for my Lord and for my flock.

I didn't know what I was getting into. The influence was slow and subtle. Supposedly harmless. The liberal theologians made a lot of sophisticated sense, I thought. They were asking seemingly intelligent questions, doing their homework and coming to impressive conclusions. I was bewitched by their brilliance. Trouble was, their rationale caused me to begin to doubt a lot of things about the Bible, about the Lord, about my faith.

Perhaps I should interject right here that Satan knew my weak spots.

I loved logic. I loved to reason. For me, things had to add up, to make sense. I was as proud of my pragmatism as I was of my imagination.

At that time of my life I did not fully realize that (1) anything good in me is God given and that (2) he doesn't have to use human intelligence.

The time came when I had to make some crucial decisions. Would I stay with my simple faith or would I agree with the Bible-questioning psychologists and theologians of "higher criticism?" (Of course, I prayed about it. A lot.)

The Lord did not communicate with me during my struggle, at least not consciously. I don't blame him for /being silent. He did not interfere but allowed me to work it out on my own. I had gotten myself into this fragile situation, and it was appropriate that I get myself out of it. But, while he did not get involved overtly, I can't help believing Jesus was interceding for me before the Heavenly Father. Without his

gracious intervention, I doubt that I would have kept my swelled head above the murky waters of apostasy.

What I experienced is difficult to put into words. I cannot adequately relate to you the mental melee and soul struggle I went through. The apex came when I had to choose between the scholarly statements of the theologians and the "foolishness" of the Gospel.

At one point, the thought came to me that my mind was as good as anyone else's. Why should I believe these mere men? Why should I trust them? Why should I put the fate of my soul into their feeble hands? I was capable of making my own independent choices and decisions. I owed humanistic psychologists and free-thinking theologians nothing - no matter how educated, cerebral and persuasive they were. On the other hand, I owed the Lord everything. They were building on shifting sand. I chose to build on The Solid Rock.

The crisis was over. I saw the light. The biblical statement, "For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom..." took on new meaning.

I almost succumbed to a deadly spiritual sickness. However, the Great Physician pulled me through. I am eternally grateful. I've been tested and tried in other areas since then. But, 4after my soul-threatening bout with doubt, I have never questioned the authenticity of the Word of God.