

My Apologies!!!

Thoughts on Christian Apologetics

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No Bout-a-Doubt-It....The Usefulness of Doubt

Taking from the words of Walter Gekko, the unscrupulous fictional tycoon in the 1987 movie *Wall Street*, “[Doubt] is good.” Contrary to what many people might believe, doubt and skepticism can be very helpful to the Christian. That is, if it is handled in a healthy way.

First, let's get a reasonable working definition of what doubt is. To doubt something means that you are in a state of mind in which you question the veridicality, or the “truthfulness” of a thing, such as a proposition, a belief, a doctrine, or a fact of some sort. In this state of mind, you are not ready to hold that thing as true or you have come to think that something you once held as true may not be the case anymore.

In its purest form, doubt is a matter of the intellect. There may be some contradiction you see or some fact that came up does not jive with what you believe. In this case, the healthy way to deal with this is to bring the doubting matter to the surface by questioning, by seeking knowledge, evaluating and fairly weighing the evidence and coming to the best conclusion you can with the facts you have. Intellectual honesty is key here. You must be willing to fairly weigh the facts and reasons and go “go where the evidence leads”.¹ Reasoning things out this way allows the facts of the matter to come forward. Perhaps you needed some more knowledge about what kind of God the God of the Bible is like. Maybe you were misunderstanding a key fact about

¹ This is a principle put forth by Socrates. He said to go where the argument leads. The conclusion must be based on the evidence.

the resurrection of Jesus. Asking questions, getting good answers is the key. The more facts you have to support your belief, the more confident you are about them and you can hold on to your beliefs with good reasons. This prevents you from suffering from a shallow faith. You will be more grounded in the facts and you will not be like the children of Ephesians 4, “tossed back and forth by every wind of doctrine.”²

But there's another side of doubt that has less to do with the head than it does with the will. Often, we may doubt something about our faith when it comes into conflict with our desires. We are sinful creatures and our old self still wants control. In this case, although there may be intellectual doubt, the motivation and source may be in the heart and the old nature.³ Moreover, many Christians frequently make the mistake of seeking out mundane “confirmations” to affirm what they think is God's specific, personalized will for them. In my view, the Bible does not teach this as a *normative* way to make decisions. Nevertheless, people whose doubts are fueled by disobedience and willfulness will perform similar actions...they will seek out intellectual confirmations that would tend to support their doubts all in order to avoid dealing with their disobedience or immaturity.

Check your motivation! Be careful to examine yourself and ask why you are doubting something. Is it because you really are having an intellectual issue with something or some logical inconsistency with what you believe or are you avoiding obeying God because of some sin in your life right now (we all have them).

As C.S. Lewis said, the morals go before the intellectual reasons.⁴ Lewis

² Ephesians 4:16, New American Standard Bible

³ Romans 3:10 says that there is none good. I Corinthians says that we have an old nature that wars with our new spiritual nature.

⁴ Professor Gary Habermas of Liberty University said this in a lecture on the resurrection.

recognized that many of the doubts we have originate or are empowered by our own willful disobedience to what God wants in our lives. Maybe it's better to ask whether there is something you're avoiding in your Christian life with God rather than asking for more data and evidence about the Christian worldview.

As a Christian encountering doubt, first recommit your life to Him knowing that He forgives⁵ and pray that the Holy Spirit will lead you into all truth.⁶ Peter tells us correctly to first sanctify Christ in our hearts.⁷ When that is cleared up, then you can go and question with your mind with all intellectual honesty, fairness, healthy skepticism, and open mindedness to your heart's content...I have no doubt it will be.



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⁵ I John 1:9

⁶ Gospel of John 17:

⁷ I Peter 3:15