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The Concept of Doubt in the New Testament

Charles Lentner

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, cde.lentner@gmail.com

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THE CONCEPT OF DOUBT
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

EN-505: Research Paper Elective in
New Testament Exegetical Theology

by

Charles David Lentner

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Approved by:

Victor A. Bartling

Advisor

45692

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research paper is to present the New Testament concept of doubt. Such a study necessitates a detailed examination of the various words that directly or indirectly mean or refer to doubt. By the word "doubt" is not meant an intellectual inquiry in search for a greater understanding—every Christian must do this to grow in the knowledge of his faith. Rather, by "doubt" is meant a wavering between faith and unbelief wherein one's reason and personal desires try to be autonomous. Some Greek words can be translated directly into the word "doubt." If only these words were studied, however, the many other phrases that refer to the idea of doubt would be missed. Furthermore, in a few instances, neither specific words or phrases directly refer to doubt but the situation or context in general issues the concept of doubt. These three, then, specific words, phrases, and situations that speak or refer to doubt, must be studied if an adequate picture of doubt in the New Testament is going to be obtained.

What sometimes triggers a student to do research in the New Testament on a certain concept is what he finds recent authors writing about that concept. The desire is to check what is being written with the New Testament itself. So it was in this case. In recent years no detailed systematic work has been published which treats the subject of doubt, but very often articles in periodicals or magazines or small sections of books have appeared which deal with the topic. In general

doubt has been presented in a positive light. H. E. Kolbe has written,

The only faith worthy to stand--the only faith likely to stand very long in our world--is one to which, in a highly important sense, literally nothing is sacred. I mean nothing is sacred in the sense of being off limits for questions or criticism The willingness to question, to doubt, is then more than simply a sign of healthfulness in faith. It is essential to the very existence of faith.¹

Furthermore, sometimes the doubt of Thomas is spoken of as almost representing the good side of Thomas. Alvin Rogness has stated that Thomas doubted because he wanted more than anything in the world to have Jesus alive again.² When one suffers, his faith sometimes is tested to the utmost with the ultimate result that his faith is purer and more centered on its object, Christ. This is true as the first epistle of Peter 1:6-7 testifies, and the experience here is a cause for joy. But sometimes suffering is spoken of incorrectly as naturally causing doubt, and the conclusion is then drawn that one may find in doubt a matter for rejoicing.³ Doubt is looked upon as a natural occurrence in one's religious life which one should not feel guilty over. In fact, doubt has been considered in the theology of Gerhard Ebeling as an essential part of faith: "Faith endures because it is threatened, called in question, and tempted This threat and question directed to faith, this tempting of faith is of its very nature."⁴ One may conclude by saying that

¹H. E. Kolbe, "Courage to Doubt," Christian Advocate, V (April 27, 1961), 7-8.

²Alvin Rogness, Youth Asks Why Bother About God? (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, c. 1965), p. 16.

³Albert D. Belden, "Doubt," Review and Expositor, XXVII (April 1930), 198.

⁴Gerhard Ebeling, The Nature of Faith, translated from the German by Ronald Smith (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c. 1961), p. 162.

there has been a gradual process of glorifying doubt, and whether or not it began with Descartes and his famous maxim, "Cogito ergo sum," which turned out to be his first certain principle, is hard to tell. The question is: In what sense does the New Testament speak of doubt? Does it glorify doubt or condemn it or do both?

Although the New Testament teaching of doubt cannot be fully ascertained by an analysis of the Greek words which can be translated easily or with some difficulty into "doubt," such an investigation will prove helpful for determining the basic meaning of doubt. Such an examination will be the content of CHAPTER II. The other words, phrases, and situations that give light to the understanding of doubt will be woven into the subject matter of the other chapters. After the basic meaning of doubt has been determined, it will be important, as is the intent of CHAPTER III, to find out who doubts in the New Testament. Are they primarily the common people in life who stand outside the Church; are they the common people inside the Church; are they possibly the disciples and leaders of the Church? CHAPTER IV will deal with the causes of doubt. Just as doubt has various shades of meaning, so there are various causes of doubt. A treatment of doubt in the New Testament would not be complete if one merely defined it, told of who doubted, and tried to find out its causes. The concept of doubt should also speak of how and to what extent doubts may be overcome. One does so, however, not because there is simply that desire to find out but because the New Testament itself talks of how doubts are conquered. Such is the content of CHAPTER V. Lastly, in CHAPTER VI the conclusion of the paper will draw together the results of the research. One further point must

be mentioned. The concept of doubt is not static but dynamic. That is, the concept of doubt develops and changes in its meaning and implications. One can particularly notice development by comparing doubt in the Gospels with doubt in Acts through Revelation. Thus, at certain points in the paper the development and the change of the concept of doubt in the New Testament will be referred to.

Since this paper is a research paper the materials consist not only of the New Testament itself and various lexicographical aids but also of the major commentaries in English along with pertinent articles that deal with the concept of doubt. The English translation of the New Testament which will be quoted from is the Revised Standard Version, except when stated otherwise. The lexicographical aids referred to in the text are A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) designated as "AG," and The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament by James Hope Moulton and George Milligan (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1939) designated as "MM." The titles of the different pericopes and narratives are taken from the Synopsis of the First Three Gospels by Albert Huck (New York: American Bible Society, 1935).

CHAPTER II

THE MEANING OF DOUBT

To speak of doubt in the New Testament as having only one meaning would be to misrepresent the richness of the concept of doubt. Each word, phrase, and situation that speaks of doubt either directly or indirectly adds a different shade or color to the total picture. Furthermore, each word, phrase, and situation has its own shade of meaning. This richness in meaning, however, does not mean that doubt has no overall meaning under which all the different shades of meaning come. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to present the meaning of doubt in its richness and yet at the same time not to lose sight of a general coherent meaning.

There are few words in the New Testament that can be translated directly into the word "doubt." The Authorized Version translated a variety of Greek words with doubt but the Revised Standard Version used the word "doubt" only eight times in the New Testament, apart from the fixed phrase "no doubt" in Acts 28:4. In this study the words most directly meaning or referring to doubt are: διακρίνω (-ομαι), διαλογισμός (-ίζομαι), ὀλιγόπιστος, δισταῖω, μετεωρίζομαι, ἀσθενής

διακρίνω (-ομαι)

The simple word from which διακρίνω comes is κρίνω. Κρίνω means "to separate" or "to distinguish" (AG, κρίνω, 1, p. 452). In Romans 14:5a "One man esteems one day as better than another"

God has made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles (cf. Acts 15:9). Since *δια* strengthens the force of a verb, *διακρίνω* is a stronger form than *κρίνω*. Therefore, *διακρίνομαι* means "to contend" or "to take issue," "to dispute" as in Acts 11:2 (AG, *διακρίνω*, 2, p. 184) where the circumcision party disputed with Peter, asking him why he went and ate with uncircumcised men.

The meaning "to doubt" is not known prior to the New Testament. It is not likely to be in the strict sense a Christian coinage, but seems to have had its beginning in near proximity to Christianity.¹ In reference to doubt *διακρίνομαι* means "to be divided against oneself," "to waver," or "to hesitate" (MM, *διακρίνω*, p. 150). The attitude which the New Testament expresses by *διακρίνεσθαι* in the sense "to doubt" is seen in prayer and action, not in reflective thought.² In Mark 11:23 and Matthew 21:21 man has the promise that if one has faith in God, what he asks in prayer will actually occur. When one doubts, however, he is at odds with himself. He believes, and yet he does not believe. For Jesus the attitude of doubt is the opposite of faith. In Acts 10:20 "to doubt" means to not act immediately upon the direction of the Spirit but "to hesitate." Doubting also means wavering in not fully believing a promise of God (cf. Rom. 4:20). Doubt, because it stems from unbelief, is sin (cf. Rom. 14:23). As

¹William Sanday and Arthur Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, in The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1964), XXXII, 115.

²Friedrich Böhmer, "*διακρίνω*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated and edited from the German by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), III θ-K, 947.

Büchsel points out, "The *διακρινόμενος* is the one who has no certainty as regards either his judgment or his action, who does with a bad conscience what he cannot refrain from doing, who is inwardly at odds with himself."³ A most vivid description of "the doubter" in connection with prayer is given in James 1:6: "For he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind." He is "unstable" and "double-minded." Such a person cannot expect the fulfillment of his prayers.

Διακρίνω (-ομαι), therefore, expresses a lack of faith in trusting God to act in prayer, in trusting the guidance of the Spirit, and in believing the promises of God. This attitude is intolerable to faith and is treated in a condemning manner. (Jude 22, however, is an exception. Here one is encouraged to convince or to have mercy on those who doubt. The reading is not certain in this case and therefore enough weight cannot be given to justify its being a true exception.)

διαλογισμός (-ίζομαι)

Usually *διαλογισμός* refers to a dispute or some kind of questioning meditation that involves mental anguish. After Jesus had asked the chief priests and the elders where the baptism of John had its origin, from heaven or from men, they began to argue with one another (cf. Matt. 21:25). The disputing is sometimes done with an evil intention such as in Mark 2:6 where the Pharisees question in their hearts and seek to

³Ibid., pp. 947-948.

accuse Jesus of blasphemy. Likewise, when Jesus said that He could forgive sins, the scribes and the Pharisees disputed with an evil purpose, to mark Jesus as a blasphemer (cf. Luke 5:22). In other places there is not much sign of disputing, but more mental anguish is evident. Referring to the view of the chief priests, scribes, and elders toward the baptism of John in Mark 11:31, these people argued with one another in fear because they were afraid of the people.

When *διαλογισμός* refers to doubt, the ideas of mental disturbance and questioning are blended together in a given situation. When the disciples were faced with the problem of where to find food for the multitudes, they questioned among themselves and felt at a loss to figure out how to solve the problem (cf. Matt. 16:7-8; Mark 8:16-17). With little understanding of how Jesus could perform miracles and with little faith in His ability to provide for the needs of the many people, they doubted. Sometimes the questioning kind of doubt is presented without a dispute. In Luke 1:29 the doubt consists mainly of a mental confusion mixed with fear and the desperate attempt to understand the appearance of the angel. (*Διελογίζετο* here means much more than mere "meditation."⁴) Doubt is also present in the appearance of the resurrected Lord (cf. Luke 24:38). Questions arose, for the appearance did not conform to one's reason and caused anxious reflection. Along with doubt is fear and being troubled in the heart. In this case it

⁴Gottlob Schrenk, "*διαλογίζεσθαι*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated from the German and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), II Δ-Η, 96.

might be good to describe the doubts as "torturing," for the mind yearned to believe what the eyes saw.⁵ In the letters of Paul there is also this kind of questioning doubt. He exhorts the Philippians to do all things without grumbling and questioning (2:14). Doubting is considered an obstacle in the Christian's path but does not bar one from the Christian community (cf. Rom. 14:1).

Before going on to the next word for doubt, the use of *διαλογισμοί* in Matthew 15:19 and Mark:7:21 should be considered. Usually this word in these passages is translated "evil thoughts" (Authorized Version, Revised Standard Version, New English Bible) or "wicked thoughts" (New English Bible). In view of the previous paragraphs and the context of these verses, *διαλογισμοί* could be translated "doubts"; or, if it is translated "evil thoughts," doubt can be included as one of these thoughts. Part of doubt is not being able to understand the work of Jesus and having little faith. What is not understood is the parable of Jesus which stated that not what goes into the mouth defiles a man but what comes out of the mouth. The Pharisees were offended at the statement and the disciples did not understand. Jesus explained that what comes out of the heart defiles a man. As has already been seen, doubt is a matter of the heart in that it is the opposite of faith which is also a matter of the heart. Doubt expresses a broken relationship with the Christ, a failure to fully trust Him. Since *διαλογισμός* has closer connotations with the concept of misunderstanding than *διακρίνωμα* does, and since the exasperation of Jesus at the

⁵Ibid., p. 97.

lack of understanding is seen in both passages, it would seem that the very first thing that Jesus mentioned as coming from the heart and defiling a man, namely, *διαλογισμοί*, means not only "evil thoughts" but also "doubts."

In general, then, *διαλογισμός* may be described as "questioning hesitation." B. B. Warfield calls it "the Nemesis of faith that is pursued by anxious questionings and mental doubts."⁶ The degree of mental anguish depends upon the character of the people who question and the more or less unbelievable nature of the event or statement confronted.

ὀλιγόπιστος

This word does not appear in the profane authors but only in the Christian writings. The noun form *ὀλιγοπιστία* occurs only once in Matthew 17:20 and means "littleness" or "poverty of faith" (AG, *ὀλιγοπιστία* p. 566). Because of a weak faith the miracle of healing the epileptic child could be done by none other than Jesus. *ὀλιγόπιστος* occurs five times in the New Testament, four occurrences being in Matthew's Gospel. Luke 12:28 is the place of the other occurrence and is a parallel to Matthew 6:30. In these two passages a lack of trust is shown in God's ability to care for man as He cares for the rest of His creation. The word is apply translated "of little faith" or "trust" (AG, *ὀλιγόπιστος*, p. 566). In Matthew 8:26 and 14:31 doubt appears

⁶B. B. Warfield, "Doubt," A Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1931), I A-Feasts, 619.

as the result of a situation in which one might perish and thus it causes a lack of confidence in the protecting care of Jesus. Furthermore, doubt is also expressed in Matthew 16:8 as the failure to understand that Jesus can provide enough food for the many people. Ὀλιγόπιστοι is always said by Jesus and truly is Matthean. For Matthew Jesus is the Rabbi, and as such He uses this Rabbinic saying. Anxiety about food for the coming day is a sign of little faith according to the saying of R. Eliezer the Elder (about 90 A.D.): "He who has bread in his basket and says: What shall I eat tomorrow? belongs to those of little faith."⁷ In further comment on this term, Held says,

The designation 'men of little faith' (στῆ δὲ ἰσθμῶν ἢ ὀλιγόπιστοι) is also found in other Rabbinic sayings. It expresses the contrast to the 'men of trust' (of faith στῆ δὲ ἰσθμῶν ἢ ἰσθμῶν) so that men of little faith means those who have no faith. Yet little faith, on the other hand, does not really mean unbelief; for those are called men of little faith who belong to the people of God, who are righteous, who have thus proved their faith at least earlier. In this way, however, the notion of little faith denotes, so to speak, a situation of unbelief within the life of believers.⁸

As one can see, this word refers only to doubt and does not have various meanings as the other words previously studied. Simply speaking, ὀλιγόπιστος means doubting in the protection and continual care of God or Jesus.

⁷As quoted by Heinz Joachim Held in "Matthew As Interpreter of the Miracle Stories" in Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew, co-authored by Günther Bornkamm and Gerhard Barth, translated from the German by Percy Scott (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 293.

⁸Ibid., pp. 293-294.

δισταΐω

This word occurs only twice in the New Testament and both times in the Gospel of Matthew. It means simply "to doubt" or "to hesitate" in doubting (AG, δισταΐω , p. 199). In 14:31 faith is present although it is weak because it is distracted by fear of perishing. In 28:17 the same term refers to doubting that the Lord had truly risen. Looking at the Lord on the mountain, some worshiped and some doubted, namely, those whose faith was distracted by the unnatural sight. Thus, this word refers to a lack of confidence in Jesus' protection and to an imperfect and distracted faith.

μετεωρίζομαι

This verb in the literal sense means "am lifted up," or "suspended." In a negative way it can refer to being suspended by ropes for the purpose of being tortured. In a positive way it can also mean "being exalted in mind," or "seeking high things" (MM, μετεωρίζομαι , p. 405). When this word is used in the New Testament, however, (and it is a ἄπαξ λεγόμενον) it carries the meaning of "being anxious" or "being worried." In Luke 12:22f Christ speaks of how God cares for all of His creation because of which man should not doubt in God's taking care of him (μή μετεωρίζεσθε , vs. 29). The adjective μετέωρος equals "hovering between hope and fear, restless, anxious" (AG, μετέωρος , p. 515) and it can also be used technically of an "incompleted" contract, which is therefore still "in suspense" (MM, μετέωρος , p. 405).

Here again, then, doubt consists of a mind distracted from its firm assurance. Belief and unbelief are present at the same time.

A man who thus doubts has an incomplete faith and therefore doubts unduly.

ἀσθενής

In his epistles Paul refers to *οἱ ἀσθενεῖς*, "the weak." *Ἀσθενής* is a weakness of a religious and moral condition. In this sense *ἀσθενής* is not found prior to the New Testament except for a few instances, one of which is Psalms of Solomon 17:42 in reference to the Messiah: "He shall not be weak (*ἀσθενήσῃ*) or waver in his trust in God."⁹ The word occurs eleven times in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians and fifteen times in all of Paul's letters. It often refers to the person who has a weak conscience and has not come to thoroughly know the implications of the Gospel in his life in relation to pagan practices. As in the case of I Corinthians 8:7-13, the weak man doubts and is led on by the reckless example of another person to do what he inwardly feels to be doubtful, namely, eating food offered to an idol. The weak man does not understand the principle in verse four that "an idol has no real existence" and that "there is no God but one." Thus, his guide or conscience is a hesitating guide.¹⁰ In the letter to the Romans (14:23) the man who eats and doubts does not act from faith. If his faith were strong, he would

⁹Gustav Stählin, "*ἀσθενής*," in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated from the German and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), I A-Γ, 492.

¹⁰Charles Ellicott, St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1887), p. 149.

have no doubt or hesitation.

Therefore, those who are weak in faith and doubt do not fully understand the relationship between Christian faith and practice in eating food. Their consciences are defiled by doing something which the unenlightened conscience does not allow.

Thus far, the New Testament words that directly mean or refer to doubt have been studied. To sum up, doubt in the New Testament is when a person believes and disbelieves God or Jesus Christ at the same time. The degree of faith or unbelief varies in different situations and people. Doubt means failing to completely trust in God and in His promises, and also in His continual protection. Questioning hesitation and having a distracted faith often cause mental anguish. Doubt does not exclude faith but it is always intolerable of faith.

Several other Greek words could be examined that refer to the character of doubt, but they do so in a more indirect way and can never be translated into the word "doubt" or "doubter." These other words, however, are important and will therefore be dealt with in the subject matter of the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER III

THE PEOPLE WHO DOUBT

In CHAPTER II there was little reference to the people who doubted; it was the basic meaning of doubt that was under study. In this chapter much attention will be given to the people who doubted. To notice who doubts is important, for it adds to the understanding of the very nature of doubt. In a few cases, it will be necessary to discuss the context in detail in order to determine if the person actually doubted.

To the surprise of many the prime examples of doubt in the New Testament are the very disciples of Christ, the Twelve, who intimately worked with Jesus in His earthly ministry.

In the pericope "The Stilling of the Tempest" (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25) the doubt of the disciples is contrasted with the perfect confidence of Jesus. The disciples, thinking that they would perish, cried out to their Master for help. By doing so they showed that they put little trust in His presence and were far from sharing Jesus' untroubled faith. From all appearances it seemed as though Jesus was unconcerned with what was happening; the Gospel of Mark says, "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" (4:38). Jesus, however, was displaying a far different attitude by sleeping. According to D. E. Nineham, the ability to sleep peacefully and untroubled was a sign of perfect trust in the sustaining and protective power of God (cf. Prov. 3:23-24; Pss. 4:8; 3:5; Job 11:18-19; and Lev. 26:6).

Furthermore, the Old Testament presents the man of trust as one who will not doubt God's power and determination to save him even in the most terrible storm (cf. Ps. 107:23-32; Is. 43:2; Pss. 46:1-3; 65:5).¹

Some raise the question here of whether the disciples lacked faith in God's care for them or in the wonder-working power of Jesus.² But as C. E. B. Cranfield points out, the raising of this question is misleading, for one of the purposes of the story is to show that Jesus is the one who has authority over the sea, the power that is attributed to Yahweh in the Old Testament.³

The disciples' sin consists in doubting or in unbecoming fear.⁴ In the Markan account Jesus asks His disciples, *τὶ δειλοί ἐστε οὕτως*; (4:40). By using the word *δειλοί* He meant His disciples to be "timid" or "cowardly" (AG, *δειλός*, p. 172). By their doubt the disciples showed their lack of faith, if not the almost complete lack of faith, for the next question Jesus asks is *πῶς οὐκ ἔχετε πίστιν*; (Mark 4:40). Luke makes the question less offensive by simply asking *ποῦ ἢ πίστες*

¹D. E. Nineham, The Gospel of St. Mark, in The Pelican Gospel Commentaries, edited by D. E. Nineham (Great Britain: Cox and Wyman Ltd., 1964), p. 146.

²Vincent Taylor says that the disciples lacked faith in the Father's care for them; cf. The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: MacMillan and Company, LTD, 1963), p. 276.

³C. E. B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to Saint Mark, in The Cambridge Greek Testament, edited by C. F. D. Moule (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1963), p. 174.

⁴William F. Arndt, The Gospel According to St. Luke, in the Bible Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), pp. 237-238.

ὑμῶν ; (8:25). Matthew uses his favorite word, ὀλιγόπιστοι, "men of little faith" (8:26). In the study of ὀλιγόπιστος only its meaning was mentioned. Now it can also be said that this is the term that Matthew uses only for the disciples; only they are of little faith. It is mainly a derogatory term and yet, in contrast to Mark's description of the disciples as possibly lacking all faith, Matthew at least attributes to them a little confidence or faith. According to the context in the Matthean account, the faith of the disciples might not only be contrasted with the confidence of Jesus but also with the faith of the centurion concerning whom He said, "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith (8:10).

In "The Walking on the Water" (Matt. 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52) the disciples also doubt with an added dimension, particularly in Mark's account.⁵ The disciples again are on the sea, this time not during a storm but when the waves are at least high because of the strong wind. Instead of Jesus being with them in the boat He appears to them on the water. They become terribly frightened not initially because of the rough rowing but because of the appearance of Jesus. They thought it was a ghost. Although no word is present in the story that can be translated "doubt," the words of fear give the atmosphere of doubt. Both accounts use the words ἐταράχθησαν (Mark 6:50; Matt. 14:26) and φοβεῖσθε (Mark 6:50; Matt. 14:27), the former directly describing the disciples' reaction and the latter spoken by Jesus along with

⁵Matthew includes here the walking of Peter on the water and his subsequent doubt, but this narrative will be considered on pages 24-25.

μὴ) telling them not to fear as they were doing. *Ταραύσω* means "stir up," "disturb," "unsettle," or "throw into confusion" (AG, *ταράωσω*, 2, p. 813). The disciples are greatly perplexed at the appearance of what they think is a ghost. This internal disturbance is usually severe in nature; and in many cases where *ταράωσω* is used, the atmosphere of doubt is present (cf. Luke 1:12; 24:38; John 14:1,27; Acts 15:24; 17:8,13; Gal. 1:7; 5:10; I Peter 3:14). Although *φοβέω* usually refers to fear in general (AG, *φοβέω*, 1, p. 870), here it adds to the picture of the disciples being unstable and somewhat removed from the faith that never wavers in any adversity. One must make a distinction between this story and the last one considered. In "The Stilling of the Tempest" the disciples doubted when Jesus was with them in the boat; they were frightened because of the storm. In this story, however, the disciples doubt when Jesus appears; they are frightened not because of the waves but because of the "ghost." Therefore, to attribute great doubt to the disciples in this instance would be unjust, for once they recognized the ghost to be Jesus, their fear subsided. Still they feared and showed distrust in God's continual care for them. The added dimension to the concept of doubt lies in their lack of faith being connected to their lack of understanding. In Mark 6:30-44 Jesus feeds the five thousand people. This miracle should have shown the disciples that in Jesus they were dealing with the eschatological power of God and the fulfillment of the Old Testament when they saw Him walking on the water. The Old Testament frequently speaks of God's mastery over the sea and describes it in terms of power to walk

on or through the waves (cf. Job 9:8; Ps. 77:19; Is. 43:16).⁶ The disciples' reaction should have been a joyful confirmation of that truth, but instead of joy or confidence they displayed a faithless panic and then astonishment, attributes expected of those who do not know the mystery of the kingdom of God.⁷ Therefore, doubt is not grounded only in one's emotions but also in one's lack of understanding God's actions.

In "A Discourse on Leaven" (Matt. 16:5-12; Mark 3:14-21; Luke 12:1) the ones who display the doubt of questioning again are the disciples. Matthew brands them the *ὀλιγόπιστοι* (16:8). As in the narrative of Jesus' walking on the water, the disciples' doubt is connected to their lack of understanding. Previous to this incident Jesus had performed the miracle of feeding the five thousand people. Therefore, the disciples should be faithful, that is, they should have trust, confidence, or assurance in the power of Christ to provide food as He had done before.⁸ Their failure to understand finds emphasis in Matthew by Jesus' remark, "Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember . . . ?" (16:9); but the emphasis is even greater in Mark with the additional "Are your hearts hardened?" (8:17).

"The Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5-7) also reveals the disciples to be doubting followers. Whether or not all of the sermon referred

⁶Nineham, p. 180.

⁷Granfield, p. 228.

⁸W. C. Allen, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew in The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1957), XXVII, 174.

directly to only the Twelve is too difficult to say. "Disciples" may be a more inclusive term and include a greater number. At any rate, the disciples are separated from the crowds (Matt. 5:1). In the discourse "On Cares" (Matt. 6:25-34) however, the immediate disciples are directly referred to. The term that Matthew uses only for the Twelve is used here (*ὀλιγόπιστοι*, 6:30).⁹ In the Lukan parallel (12:22-31) the word is also probably used for the immediate disciples (12:28).¹⁰ The object of faith in this discourse "On Cares" is God; but since the disciples are anxious and restless in mind, hovering between hope and fear, as is meant particularly in Luke 12:28 (*ΑΓ, μετεωρίζομαι*, p. 515), their faith is something less than confidence and trust in His power and willingness to care for the bodily needs of those who trust in Him.

In the accounts concerning "An Epileptic Child Healed" (Matt. 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43a) the disciples also are pictured as people of doubt. They are not the only ones, however, because the father of the boy and possibly the people in the crowd also doubt. The doubt of the father is seen in the often quoted cry, *πιστένω βεηθεε μου τῆ ἀπιστία* (Mark 9:24). This is his confession of doubt; his first words of genuine doubt are: "if you can do anything" (Mark 9:22).¹¹

⁹Cf. Matt. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20.

¹⁰Arndt, p. 317.

¹¹George Arthur Buttrick in a sermon, "Faith and Doubt" has aptly said, "Genuine doubt is the reverse side of genuine faith. For just as genuine faith is not mere intellectual assent, but trust in ultimate Reality, so genuine doubt, as in the case of this father, is the fear that demonism and despair may have the last word . . . in our life on earth." In Sermons Preached in a University Church by G. A. Buttrick (New York, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 23-29.

The father believes and yet he does not. He cries out with words meaning, "Help my faith where it is ready to fail." His faith is half-faith encompassed with doubts and fears which need power to bring it to life.¹² The doubt of the disciples becomes evident in what the father had previously done. He had taken his child to the disciples that they might heal him, but they were unable. They failed because their faith faltered. They doubted that they could help, and therefore, they were powerless. When they ask Jesus why they could not heal the boy, He responds, *διὰ τὴν ὀλιγοπιστίαν* (Matt. 17:20). The doubt of both the father, the disciples and possibly even the people in the crowd is indirectly referred to in Jesus' response, "O faithless generation" (Mark 9:19).¹³ Even in this healing of the epileptic child the disciples turn out to be probably the greatest examples of doubt. The father's faith was at least persistent in wanting his boy healed either by the disciples or Jesus, and when Jesus spoke against his doubt, the father showed how desperately he wanted to believe more by his honest cry for help. The people in the crowd stand aloof. The disciples, on the other hand, in an almost cowardly manner came to Jesus and asked why they could not cast out the demon; and never do the disciples cry for help in their faith but only for deliverance from bodily disaster.

Not only did the disciples doubt before Jesus had accomplished

¹²Taylor, p. 399.

¹³Matthew (17:17) and Luke (9:41) call the generation not only faithless but perverse, that is, morally "distorted" or "twisted."

His saving work; they doubted even after the resurrection. In Luke 24:37,38 Jesus reprimands His disciples for supposing that they saw a spirit. He asks them, "Why are you troubled (*ἐδίσταν*), and why do questionings (*διαλογισμοί*) arise in your hearts?" In Matthew 28:16-17 when Jesus appears to His disciples on the mountain, some worship Him, but some doubt. Some commentators say that the ones who doubt are not the disciples but others who were present.¹⁴ But from Matthew's usual description of the disciples as "men of little faith" and from the other synoptic references which speak of the disciples as disposed to being skeptical rather than credulous, it would not be wrong to conclude that even here in Matthew 28:17 the doubting ones are the disciples, especially since no one else is mentioned as being present. Even though the appendix to Mark's Gospel probably comes from the last part of the second century,¹⁵ what it says concerning the faith of the disciples after the resurrection can be taken at least as a valuable expression of early Christian thought or as an interpretation about the end of the other gospels. In Mark 16:14 Jesus appears to His eleven disciples and reproaches them for their unbelief of those reports of the resurrection. They doubt if Christ is really risen from the dead.

In two instances the disciples as a whole are not spoken of as doubting but a specific disciple is referred to, a different one in

¹⁴Allen, p. 305.

A. Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Robert Scott, 1911), p. 427.

¹⁵Nineham, p. 450.

each case. The first one to be considered is Thomas, "doubting Thomas" (cf. John 20:19-29). It has often been taken for granted that Thomas simply doubted. The evidence shows, however, that even though he did doubt, Thomas tended to be more of an unbeliever than a believer. One cannot put too much weight upon the meaning of his name. *Δίδυμος* is a natural rendering of *θδω* (Thoma, a "twin") which means primarily "double," "twofold."¹⁶ A name does not determine a man's character. According to B. B. Westcott, Thomas did doubt; and the words that express his doubt, wavering between faith and unbelief, come from the Lord: *μη γινου απιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός* (v. 27). The verb is a present imperative which marks the process going on. Thomas "was" not, but he "was on the way to being" faithless. Therefore, *μη γινου* should not be translated "Be not . . ." but "Become not . . ."¹⁷ The only other evidence showing that Thomas actually had some faith and therefore doubted is the fact that he was with the disciples who had already seen the Lord. Why was he with them? One cannot tell for sure but the reason could very possibly be that he inwardly yearned to see the resurrected Jesus. One cannot take for granted, however, that Thomas was half-way between faith and unbelief. What Thomas said speaks plainly of sheer unbelief: "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not

¹⁶C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S. P. C. K., 1965), p. 475.

¹⁷Brooke Foss Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), p. 355.

believe" (vs. 25). Thomas said he did not believe. He needed the grossest and most palpable evidence to believe. Furthermore, none of the characteristic words sometimes associated with doubt such as *ῥοβέω* or *ταράσσω* are present in this narrative. Thomas seemingly did not hesitate or question as much as he disbelieved. But because he still showed some sign of faith, he can rightly be called "doubting Thomas," even though the title may be misleading.

The other disciple singled out as a doubter is Peter (cf. Matt. 14:28-31). Matthew includes the story of Peter walking upon the water within the story of Jesus walking upon the water. Jesus had already appeared to His disciples on the sea. No longer did they have to fear that He was a ghost, for He had told them what the vague image was. But Peter now doubts and says, "Lord, if it is you . . ." (vs. 28). The Lord's "Come" is sufficient for him to start out across the water. But as soon as he gets his feet wet and sees the wind, he starts to hesitate or doubt with fear (*ἔφραβήθη* vs. 30) and then he begins to sink. But even while he is sinking he does not lose faith entirely, for he believes that Jesus can save him. Jesus saves him but then ascribes to him personally the title of doubt, *ὀλιγόπιστε*, and then asks, "Why do you doubt? (*ἔδίστασας*, vs. 31). Peter's actions here are typical of his character. As A. Plummer has noticed, there is a repeated progression in Peter. First he shows impulsiveness in showing his dedication. Then he fears and starts to hesitate. Lastly, he fails. A year later the same thing happens. Peter exclaims, "I will lay down my life for you" (John 13:37). Then in the Passion of Jesus

he enters the courtyard in fear, and finally before the blast of adverse criticism he fails (cf. John 18:15-27).¹⁸

The disciples definitely are examples of doubt in the Gospels. But other people who believe also show signs of doubt, tottering between faith and unbelief.

John the Baptist doubted (cf. Luke 7:18-30). One must be careful to notice, however, what he doubted. As F. Godet has correctly seen, John doubted his earlier belief about the Messiah:

Most assuredly John does not doubt whether Jesus is a divine messenger, for he interrogates Him. He does not appear even to deny Him all participation in the Messianic word: "John having heard in his prison of the works of the Christ" (Matthew). What he cannot understand is just this, that these works of the Christ are not accompanied by the realization of all the rest of the Messianic programme which he had formerly proclaimed himself, and especially by the theocratic judgment. "His fan is in his hand . . . the axe is already laid at the root of the trees." Jesus in no way recognizes it as His duty to become the Messiah-judge whom John had announced in such solemn terms, and whose expected coming had so unsettled the people.¹⁹

Because of the nature of John's doubt Jesus is able to say, "Blessed is he who takes no offense at me" (vs. 23; underlining my own), yet at the same time He goes on to say, "none is greater than John" (vs. 28). Before going on, the meaning of the "reed" (*κάλαμον* vs. 24)

¹⁸Plummer, Matthew, pp. 208-209.

¹⁹F. Godet, A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, translated from the second French edition by E. W. Shalders and M. D. Cusin (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1887), p. 220.

Martin John Creed agrees with Godet on the nature of John's doubt; in The Gospel According to St. Luke (London: MacMillan and Company, Limited, 1930), p. 105.

should be mentioned. At first sight it might appear that Jesus is saying by the use of this metaphor that John did not doubt--John was not "a reed shaken by the wind." But the shaking of the reed has no connotation of John's doubting. It simply refers to a common thing in the wilderness.²⁰ Therefore, there is no contradiction between John's actually doubting and Jesus' reference to him as not being like a reed shaken by the wind. John was more than a reed; he was a prophet and even more than a prophet (vs. 26).²¹

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, displayed signs of doubt (cf. Luke 1:5-38). What stands particularly common to both figures is their reaction to a promise about an "unbelievable" birth, a promise from God through an angel. The narratives concerning Zechariah and Mary are taken together because of their similarity in content and structure. The appearance of Gabriel to Zechariah (vs. 11) is balanced by Gabriel's appearance and salutation to Mary (vs. 28). Like Zechariah (vs. 12) Mary (vs. 29) is distressed. Mary (vs. 30) like Zechariah (vs. 13) receives from the angel reassurance and the promise of a son. Like Zechariah (vs. 19) she receives from the angel an answer to her doubts (vss. 35f).²² With both Zechariah and

²⁰A. H. M'Neile, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: MacMillan and Company, Ltd., 1949), pp. 152-153.

²¹In view of our conclusions, there is no need to have recourse to the hypothesis of Chrysostom, accepted by Calvin and Grotius, that John desired to give his disciples an opportunity to convince themselves of the dignity of Jesus. Cf. Creed, p. 220.

²²Creed, p. 13.

Mary there is great perplexity in mind and in both instances the verb *ταράσσω* is used (vs. 12 and vs. 29).²³ At the appearance and the announcement of the angel they become confused and fail to readily believe the message. Zechariah asks the question, "How shall I know this? I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years" (vs. 18). Mary says to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no husband?" (vs. 34). Both show questioning hesitation or doubt.

In the records of the early Church from Acts through Revelation there are also people mentioned who doubt. By and large Paul is the one who speaks most about doubt by a favorite expression of his: *οἱ ἀσθενεῖς* (*οἱ ἀσθενοῦντες*), "the weak." Stählin says,

Thus used, the terms *οἱ ἀσθενεῖς* (*οἱ ἀσθενοῦντες*) etc. (*→ ἀδύνατος*) are favourite expressions of Paul, although with the exception of 1 Th. 5:14 they are limited to his chief epistles. In them he was perhaps adopting slogans current in his churches, especially in Corinth and Rome and on the lips of the opposite group, the "strong," against whom he uses them as a weapon (R. 15:1). More precisely these are the weak in faith, as in R. 14:1 (cf. also 4:19): *τὸν δὲ ἀσθενοῦντα τὴν πίστιν προσλαμβάνεσθε*, though it is not usually necessary to say this, cf. 1 c. 8:9ff.; 9:22; 2 G. 11:29,30.²⁴

Therefore, "the weak" often refers to people within the congregation. They are torn between their former practices and the Christian practice, between what their uninstructed conscience tells them is right and what they see their fellow Christians do.

²³Their fear is also indirectly expressed or directly recognized in the words of the angel, *μη φοβοῦ* (vs. 12 and vs. 30). *φοβέω* is a word often used in doubt situations.

²⁴Stählin, p. 492.

Although the passages that refer to the weak in faith are the strongest and the clearest references to people who doubt in Acts through Revelation, the concept of doubt in people is indirectly referred to in other places. This is seen in Acts 15 and particularly in Paul's letters to the Romans and the Corinthians.

In Acts 15:10 the Jewish Christians are referred to as tempting (*πειράζειν*) God. This action is shown in the fact that after God had clearly made His will known by granting the Spirit to the Gentiles (vs. 8), some doubted Him and made trial of Him to see whether He really would make His will operative (*AG, πειράζω* e. p. 646). The "tempting" of God is much more prevalent in the Old Testament when the Israelites tempted God (cf. Deut. 6:16; Ex. 17:2). The idea in this tempting is "seeing how far you can go."²⁵ By trying to put the yoke of fulfilling the Law on the necks of the Gentile Christians, the Jewish Christians were showing that they did not fully believe that there were no distinctions between people in God's eyes. Because the Jewish Christians tried to impose the Law on the Gentile Christians, there was confusion in the minds of the Gentile Christians in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia (vs. 24). This confusion is seen not only in the word *ἐτάραξαν* which is often used in connection with fear and doubt, but also in the word *ἀνασκευάζοντες* (α ἅπαξ λεγόμενον). *Ἀνασκευάζω* means "to tear down," "to plunder," "to dismantle" a town (*MM, ἀνασκευάζω*, p. 37). With such mental disturbance the Gentile Christians can be thought of indirectly as doubting and not knowing for sure what

²⁵F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), p. 135 and p. 293.

was the really Christian thing to believe and to do.

The unsettling of the mind is referred to in different New Testament epistles. Often the people in the congregations are disturbed. Already the mental anguish or disturbance in Paul's letter to the Romans and the Corinthians has been referred to. Also, Galatians 1:7 refers to "some who trouble (*ταράσσοντες*) you" The concern of Paul for the people in the congregation not to fall away from the faith is especially vivid in his letter to the Ephesians (4:14): by the use of the words *κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ* he uses a metaphor from the sea which the apostle knew so well, the symbol of instability and insecurity. It suggests the jeopardy of the little boats, storm-tossed and swung around by each fresh blast so that they cannot keep their head to the waves and are in danger of being swamped.²⁶ Some of the Christians at Colossae apparently are forgetting the importance of Christ's human life, that He dealt with the material things and considered them of great consequence in one's relationship with God (cf. Col. 2:8f). Regarding the Christians in Thessalonica, some are in doubt and distress as to whether the dead over whom they grieve will share in Christ's Advent (I Thess. 4:9f). Some of the addressees of the first epistle of Peter are surprised at the persecutions they have to experience; they think something very strange is happening to them (cf. 4:12). Thus, in the New Testament epistles many Christians in the different congregations are often

²⁶J. Armitage Robinson, St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (London: James Clarke and Company, LTD, 1928), p. 101.

perplexed and doubt.

It has been made clear that the disciples are referred to as the primary figures of doubt. Other people are mentioned as doubting, such as the father of the epileptic child, Zechariah, Mary, John the Baptist, and the people in different congregations in the early Church; but none stand out as clearly and consistently as the disciples. It is to be noted that in the early Church the apostles do not speak of themselves as doubting. (Only Paul comes close to expressing some kind of doubt.²⁷) An overview of the New Testament shows, therefore, that in the Gospels the ones who doubt are those whom one would expect to be the most faithful, the ones closest to Jesus in His work. In the rest of the New Testament those who doubt are the ones who are not the leaders and have not advanced much in Christian knowledge. Most important to remember is that no matter who doubts, the person is a believer who wavers between faith and unbelief.²⁸

²⁷Cf. Rom. 7:7-24. Here Paul does not express doubt but at least an anxiety or a mental confusion, the feeling of being a double or divided self which is very characteristic of one who doubts.

²⁸Before going on to the next chapter, a few words should be said about King Agrippa (cf. Acts 26). In response to Paul's question (vs. 27) Agrippa said, "In a short time you think to make me a Christian!" (vs. 28). Although the exact interpretation is uncertain, the general interpretation is that Agrippa did not doubt here. J. W. Parker remarks, "The N.E.B. gives the right interpretation. Agrippa's reply is neither a sarcastic rejoinder nor the heartfelt cry of a man on the threshold of conviction. It is the winsome reaction of a thoughtful man who sees the point but will not be convinced. The Greek is very concise: 'In a short time' (or 'with little effort') 'you persuade me to be a Christian (or 'to turn Christian')." J. W. Parker, Acts of the Apostles (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1966), p. 205.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAUSES OF DOUBT

An adequate treatment of doubt calls for understanding not only what doubt is and who doubts but also what the causes of doubt are. What brings a person, a believer, to become uncertain in his trust and start to vacillate to a greater or lesser degree? The New Testament gives various reasons, some of which are hard to separate from each other. The ground work has already been done for determining the causes, for in describing doubt in its various manifestations it was impossible not to infer at least indirectly what the reasons for doubting are. Therefore, much of the chapter will pull together many ideas already stated and bring to a sharper focus the reasons or causes for doubt.

Doubt often occurs in some kind of a stress situation in which normal human experience speaks against the powerful action of God. In "The Stilling of the Tempest" the disciples became frightened because the boat was filling up with water (cf. Mark 4:37). From all appearances, if the storm would have continued much longer, they would have perished. Doubting in the continual protection of God present in Jesus, they cried out in anguish (cf. Matt. 8:25). In the narrative of Jesus' walking on the water the disciples again showed fear and doubt because what they thought they saw was a ghost (cf. Mark 6:49). In Acts and the epistles the Christians are often under suffering and persecution. The stress situations, however, are looked upon as primarily being a necessary part of the Christian's life (cf. Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17;

Phil. 1:29-30; I Thess. 2:14; II Tim. 3:12; I Pet. 3:14). The suffering of the followers of Jesus is unavoidable because the Savior's work runs counter to the aspirations of the world and its powers. But it is in the very experiencing of these sufferings of this age that one is tempted, tested, and tried. One is tempted to be moved by the afflictions (cf. I Thess. 3:3). When affliction strikes, one fears and trembles in his faith; but in the end one should have a greater faith and finally receive the crown of life (cf. I Pet. 1:7; Rev. 2:10).

To say that doubt arises because of a trying situation covers many different situations. But to become more specific, doubt is sometimes caused because the promise of God is contrary to all human experience. Zechariah and Mary doubted because what the message from Gabriel said was opposed to their human way of thinking. Zechariah was an old man and his wife, Elizabeth, was advanced in years (cf. Luke 1:7,18). Mary was not even married (cf. Luke 1:34). They both doubted that what was humanly impossible could come to be. Interestingly enough, the accounts do not say Zechariah doubted that his son would "make ready for the Lord a people prepared" (vs. 17) and Mary doubted that her son would be called "the Son of the Most High" (vs. 32) and that he would reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there would be no end (vs. 33). Apparently, they did not go on to doubt the real content of the message because they could not immediately get beyond the first step of the sheer physical impossibility.

Directly connected to failing to believe a promise from God is failing to understand the working of God. The disciples and others doubted because of a lack of understanding of how God works. H. J.

Held says of the disciples' inability to understand or to understand fully,

In this 'book of secret epiphanies' [Mark's Gospel] they remain to the end unbelieving and devoid of understanding before the revelations of Jesus, whether by teaching or miracle. Of course, the first evangelist does not regard the disciples as completely devoid of understanding. It is rather a characteristic of the disciples in Matthew's Gospel that understanding of the revelations is given to them (cf. e.g., Matt. 13.16f). This portrayal of the disciples corresponds to the observation that Matthew sees, in principle, in the disciples of Jesus the congregation. But yet the evangelist does not depict the disciples as in the full possession of understanding. He too shows, for example, their incapacity to understand without more ado the teaching of the Lord. It cannot be an oversight that he does not entirely abandon some passages about the lack of understanding on the part of the disciples in Mark's Gospel (for example, Mark 7.17f; 8.15 ff.) but retains them (Matt. 15.15ff.; 16.6ff.). . . .¹

But then what caused the disciples to have a lack of understanding?

The reason does not lie merely in saying that man's knowledge is imperfect or in part (cf. I Cor. 13:9). Rather, what caused the disciples and others to misunderstand and doubt is that they had the wrong concept of the Christ. Their hardness of heart or "intellectual blindness" gave little room for the unexpected and unusual workings of God.² Therefore, the disciples wonder who this man is that even the wind and the sea obey him (cf. Matt. 8:27). After coming to them on the water, they are astonished and do not understand the incident or the previous one about the loaves (cf. Mark 6:52). The disciples were not open to

¹Held, pp. 291-292.

²Nineham says that although *πῶρωσις* originally meant hardness, its meaning in the New Testament is "obtuseness" or "intellectual blindness." Nineham, p. 111.

Jesus' being the one with authority over all the evil forces. In this light the disciples are seen as doubting even in the resurrected Lord (cf. Matt. 28:17; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:37,38). In regard to John the Baptist, the reason he doubted is essentially the same. As has already been pointed out in CHAPTER III, his view of the Messianic work was limited, for he could not understand that the works of Christ were not accompanied by the theocratic judgment.

Furthermore, not only do the disciples misunderstand Jesus but they misunderstand the gift of prayer which He gave them. Jesus told His disciples, "Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you will receive it, and you will" (Mark 11:23,24; cf. also Matt. 21:21).³ In prayer one is to be fully dependent upon God. The disciples failed to learn this adequately because in the story of the healing of the epileptic child they come and ask Jesus why they were not able previously to cast out the demon (cf. Mark 9:28). The exorcist is to make use of prayer; he is to rely not on his own powers but on the power of God.⁴ According to Cranfield,

³F. Büchsel says that these passages along with Jm. 1:6 have Jewish roots. The Apocalypse of Elias reads (24:3): "None should go to the holy place who doubts in his heart. He who doubts in prayer is his own enemy, and angels do not add their assent. Hence be at all times of one heart in the Lord, that you may know all things." Büchsel, p. 948.

⁴Taylor, p. 401.

It would seem that the disciples had thought of the gift of vi. 7 as given to them in such a way that they had henceforth the disposing of it, and therein had lain their lack of faith. They had to learn that God's power is not given to men in that way. It has rather ever to be asked for afresh (*ἐν προσευχῇ*) and received afresh. To trust in God's power in the sense that we imagine that we have it in our control and at our disposal is tantamount to unbelief; for it is really to trust in ourselves instead of in God.⁵

The reason for Thomas doubting is part of the whole theme of John's Gospel. The conclusion of the book is: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31). The significant word is *σημεῖον*, "sign" or "distinguishing mark" (AG, *σημεῖον* 1, p. 755). In the synoptic gospels the word is most frequently used of a sign which adversaries of Jesus wrongfully seek from Him (cf. Matt. 12:38,39; 16:1,4; Mark 8:11,12; Luke 11:16,29; 23:8). The Pharisees seek a sign, an outward compelling proof of divine authority, something which unbelief demands, but Jesus resolutely refuses to give it. To grant it would make faith impossible, for it would preclude a personal decision and depart from the plan of Messianic veiledness. The Pharisees' requests reflect their spiritual blindness, for they are unable to recognize the signs which God gives them and, therefore, demand signs of their own choosing.⁶ The synoptic gospels speak of signs, in the sense of miracles, as having eschatological signifi-

⁵Granfield, p. 305.

⁶Ibid., pp. 257-258.

cance and unable to be understood for the present. In John, however, the signs are conceived differently. To those who believe, the miracles are signs which feed their faith; to those who do not, signs may be multiplied indefinitely without producing faith (cf. 12:37).⁷ Since Thomas stands somewhere in between one who believes and one who does not believe—and the evidence tends to show him more on the side of an unbeliever—the visible proof of the death and the resurrection of Christ as the supreme *σημείον* both brings him to faith and yet invokes admonition from the Lord.⁸ A cause of doubt, therefore, lies in basing one's faith more on empirical evidence than on the work of Christ in the witness of the Church.

In the pericope "On Cares" (cf. Matt. 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31) another cause for doubt comes to light. One doubts when he is concerned about his physical well-being to the extent that he fails to trust in God's protective care. One is not to be unduly concerned (*μεριμνάω*, Mark 6:31) about food or drink or clothing. In "The Interpretation of the Parable of the Sower" (cf. Matt. 13:18-23; Mark 4:13-20; Luke 8:11-15), cares, riches, tribulation and persecution cause one to fall away or stumble if his faith is not firmly rooted. This warning was true also for the early Church as represented in the epistles. Those who desired to be rich were in danger of falling into temptation from which would come many foolish and harmful desires.

⁷Barrett, John, p. 64.

⁸As Barrett points out, after 12:37 the word *σημείον* does not occur until 20:30. As in Mark, there is no miracle in the passion narrative. This is not because the story of Jesus ceases to have the value of revelation; the death and the resurrection are the main *σημείον*. Ibid., p. 65.

Craving for material things would cause one to wander away from the faith and experience much mental anguish (cf. I Tim. 5:9-10).

In the epistles a definite cause for doubt is false teaching. In the Gospels the only reference to false teaching as connected with doubt is in "A Discourse on Leaven" in the Markan (3:14-21) and Matthean (16:5-12) accounts, but the connection is only indirect. The teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees is not the cause for their lack of faith here but their inability to understand the discourse on leaven. That is why they are called *ὀλιγόπιστοι* (cf. Matt. 16:8). In the epistles, however, several references are made which point to false teaching as a cause for one's doubting and falling away from the faith. In I Timothy 1:6 some have wandered away from the faith by following the teachings of the Judaistic teachers. Hymenaeus and Philetus taught falsely that the resurrection was already past and therefore they had wandered away from the truth (cf. II Tim. 2:17-18), Judaizers were at work in Galatia, trying to take away the freedom of the Christians, and Paul is astonished that so many have deserted him (cf. Gal. 1:6-7). The false teachers were troubling (*ταράσσοντες*, 1:7) their minds, causing them to be disturbed mentally or "shaking their allegiance."⁹ The Christians at Colossae were threatened with danger from false Gnostic teachers who had appeared among them, but they as yet had no success (cf. Col. 2:4,8). Although in Ephesians there is lacking any concrete discussion of false teaching, the

⁹J. B. Lightfoot, The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1950), p. 77.

Christians are encouraged to remain loyal and not "be like children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (*διδασκαλίας* ; 4:14). So also in Hebrews 3:12; 13:9 the readers are in danger of falling away from the faith and slipping back into Judaism.

The cause for doubt does not only lie within the abstract idea of false teaching but also within the concrete brother in the faith. In Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8 the reason for a believer's doubting is because of the inconsiderate example of another believer. In Romans 14:15 the Christian who exercises his freedom with only self-interest causes his brother to fall. The brother is grieved because: 1) The mere sight of a Christian doing what he (however wrongly) regards as sinful will give pain to his sensitive conscience. 2) He may nevertheless be influenced by his fellow's example to do that which he regards as sinful; but he will do it with a bad conscience, as a waverer, who is condemned by his doubts (cf. vs. 23).¹⁰ Such is the case also in I Corinthians 8. A strong Christian may use his freedom unwisely and place a stumbling block before the weak. The latter has a good knowledge of the faith; the former has just begun to grow. Those who are strong lack charity and themselves commit sin by inciting those who are weak to commit it; they place them in a situation in which they run the risk of losing the benefits of the work of Christ.¹¹ The cause for

¹⁰C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans in the Moffat Commentary (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1957), p. 263.

¹¹Jean Héring, The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, translated from the Second French Edition by A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: The Epworth Press, 1962), p. 73.

doubt lying in the inconsiderate brother, however, never leaves the one weak in faith irresponsible. He is still guilty because his actions do not stem from conviction (cf. Rom. 14:23).

The causes of doubt, therefore, are various: stress situations, particularly those in which human experience speaks against God's action; blindness to the unusual action of God; failing to understand the gift of prayer; seeking empirical proof for faith; too much concern for one's material welfare; false teaching; and the wrong use of Christian liberty by another Christian--all these cause a believer to doubt.

CHAPTER V

THE OVERCOMING OF DOUBT

The New Testament speaks not only of the problem of doubt, that it exists, who doubted, and the causes of doubt, but speaks also of how doubts are overcome. This becomes apparent when one looks at the example of Abraham, the general reaction of Jesus or God toward those who doubt, the stability of the Gospel, and the responsibility of the strong Christian toward the Christian weak in the faith.

The primary example of faith among believers in the context of the concept of doubt is Abraham (cf. Rom. 4, especially vss. 17-25). Abraham had been given a promise by God, that he should be the heir of the world (cf. vs. 13). "Heir of the world" is probably drawn from Genesis 22:18 ("all the nations") and 22:17 where the Septuagint "shall possess" becomes "shall inherit."¹ St. Paul's purpose in verses 17-28 is to show what faith is and to contrast it with doubt by using the example of Abraham. Nygren clearly presents the truth involved:

It is not the sheer fact that one believes the improbable, the impossible, the absurd, that constitutes the faith of which Paul speaks. Nor was that the nature of Abraham's faith. He had God's promises, and it was that which he believed. Only in the light of that fact can one properly speak about what is humanly impossible. Since he had the divine promise, he could not be made to doubt God by the fact that he saw clearly that human resources were not

¹Barrett, Romans, p. 94.

equal to its fulfillment. This is faith, to hold to God's promise, even if man has no human ability to build on, even if all human calculations contradict.²

Abraham did not weaken (*ἀσθενήσας*) when he considered (*κατανόησεν*) his own body (cf. vs. 19). *Ἀσθενής*, as has already been shown, is often used in connection with doubt. *κατανοέω*, even though it might appear to imply something close to "to question," actually means "to consider," "to contemplate" something (AG, *κατανοέω*, 2, p. 416). *διακρίνομαι* is often used in relation to a hesitating questioning and this is the word that is used in verse 20: "and Abraham never doubted (*διεκρίθη*) God's promise, but, strong in faith, gave honor to God" (New English Bible). Even though *διακρίνομαι* has other meanings, here it stands in direct opposition to *πίστις*, *πιστεύω*.³ Abraham had the firm conviction that God would fulfill His promise (cf. vs. 21). As stated in verse 22, Abraham's faith (the opposite of unbelief present in doubt) was put to his account (MM, *δοξίζομαι*, p. 877) as righteousness (*δικαιοσύνην*). The same way of being accounted righteous is effective for all believers in God who raised Jesus from the dead (cf. vs. 24). From this example of Abraham one can see the importance of faith in being considered righteous by God. To doubt is to do the opposite of what Abraham did and to cause oneself not to be accounted righteous.

²Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans, translated by Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949), pp. 179-180.

³Sanday-Headlam, pp. 114-115.

With this understanding of Abraham and the importance of his faith, one can better understand God's and Jesus' reactions to the doubts of believers.

On practically every occasion in which the disciples doubt, Jesus rebukes them severely, and the following response of the disciples is some expression of awe or worship. In "The Stilling of the Tempest" (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-40; Luke 8:22-25) the tone of the rebuke is sharp: "Why are you afraid, have you no faith?" (Mark 4:40). It is the first of a series of reproaches addressed to the disciples for their want of faith and understanding (cf. Mark 7:8; 8:17f,21,32f; 9:19).⁴ The word for "afraid" is *δειλοί* which, besides being used in the parallel account in Matthew, occurs only one other time, in Revelation 21:8 where the *δειλοί* ("cowardly") are included among the faithless, polluted, murderers, scorcerers, fornicators, idolaters, and liars who shall end up in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. It is interesting to note that the other two accounts soften the rebuke. Matthew calls them "O men of little faith" (8:26) and Luke says "Where is your faith?" (8:25). Jesus rebukes the disciples as severely as He rebukes the wind and the sea. The personal language that Jesus uses to rebuke the sea reflects a recognition of nature as the vehicle of divine power which is strange to modern man.⁵ The image of the storm or of great waters is frequently used in the Old Testament as a metaphor for the evil forces active in the world and particularly for the

⁴Taylor, p. 276.

⁵Ibid., p. 275.

tribulation of the righteous from which only the power of God can save them (cf. Pss. 69:1,2,14-15; 18:16).⁶ Thus, although one cannot say that Jesus rebukes the disciples like demons, it is clear that He rebukes them as severely as He rebukes the sea and its demonic powers. The disciples receive a harsh reproach. After the rebuke, however, the disciples respond by fearing (*ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν*; Mark 4:41) and marveling (*ἐθαύμασαν*; Matt. 8:27).⁷ The meaning is that the disciples were filled with reverential awe.⁸

The same emphases of rebuke and awe are found in other incidents too. In "An Epileptic Child Healed" (Matt. 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43a) the disciples along with the father and probably the people are rebuked for their unbelief. Jesus calls them a "faithless" (*ἄπιστος*) and "perverse" (*διστραμμένη*) generation.⁹ The word *ἄπιστος* is surely a word of reproach; it refers to unbelievers. *Διστραμμένη* means "perverted" in a moral sense or "depraved" (*AG, διστρέφω*, p. 188). The generation is morally out of joint, twisted, distorted. Jesus rebukes further by saying, "How long am I to be with you and bear with you?" (Luke 9:41). The modern idiom for the same thought would be: "I am getting tired of you."¹⁰ The rebuke against the father is

⁶Nineham, p. 146.

⁷Luke 8:25 uses both words: *φωβηθέντες* and *ἐθαύμασαν*.

⁸Taylor, p. 277.

⁹While Matt. 17:17 and Luke 9:41 include both "faithless" and "perverse," Mark 9:19 has only "faithless."

¹⁰Arndt, p. 266.

specific. Jesus said, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23). The disciples are also specifically rebuked later on when Jesus tells them that the reason they could not cast out the demon was because of their *ὀλιγοπιστίαν* (Matt. 17:20). While in the Markan and Matthean accounts reverence does not follow the rebuke and the healing, Luke 9:43 says that all were astonished at the majesty of God. Jesus was regarded by the spectators as an agent of the omnipotent Lord.¹¹

When the disciples see Jesus after the resurrection and doubt, they are reproached again. In Matthew 28:16-20 the disciples are not rebuked; here only worship and doubt are seen in close proximity. But in Luke 24:38 the words of Jesus: "Why are you troubled, and why do questionings arise in your hearts?" are not necessarily to be seen only as words of comfort but also as words of rebuke, for the Markan account (16:14), even though it is an appendix, suggests such an interpretation: "He upbraided (*ὠνειδίσεν*) them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen." The rebuke here is harsh. *ὠνειδίζω* means "revile," "heap insults upon" (AG, *ὠνειδίζω* 1, p. 573). The reproach is more severe than in Mark 8:14-21 and includes words which in Mark are used of men hostile to Jesus (*ἀπιστία*, 6:6; 9:24 and *σκληροκαρδία*, 10:5).¹² Both in Matthew and Luke their doubt again is connected to worship (Matt. 28:17) and also joy (Luke 24:41).

¹¹Arndt, p. 266.

¹²Taylor, p. 611.

"A Discourse on Leaven" (Matt. 16:5-12; Mark 8:14-21) also shows the reproaching attitude of Jesus toward His doubting disciples. With words of disgust He admonishes them for their hardness of heart and inability to understand. After going through the previous incidents of the five loaves and the seven loaves and trying to get the disciples to see that He did not mean just plain bread but the teachings of the Pharisees, Jesus still asks them, "Do you not yet understand?" (Mark 8:21). In the Matthean account, however, they finally understand (cf. Matt. 16:12).

Regarding Peter and Thomas, the two disciples who are specifically mentioned as doubting, and also concerning John the Baptist, there are words of reproach for them too. In the narrative, "The Walking on the Water" (Matt. 14:22-23; Mark 6:45-52), there is no word of reproach said to the disciples in general, but in the Matthean account which includes Peter's walking on the water Jesus reproaches Peter a little for his doubt by calling him *ὀλιγόπιστος* (vs. 31). Thomas also is rebuked, though not severely. His faith was accepted but its basis was not the highest.¹³ Jesus said, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29). John the Baptist was rebuked indirectly with the words of Jesus: "And blessed is he who takes no offense at me" (Luke 7:23).

Regarding the account about the promise given to Zechariah one sees not only words of reproach but actual punishment (cf. Luke 1:5-25).

¹³Edwyn Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by F. N. Davey (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), p. 548.

Because Zechariah doubts the promise, Gabriel says, "I am Gabriel . . . and behold you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things come to pass, because you did not believe my word, which will be fulfilled in their times" (vss. 19-20). Zechariah does not accept the authority of the message and is punished because of his unbelief. In the case of Mary (cf. Luke 1:26-38) one finds almost an unexplainable contrast: she is not rebuked for her doubt! Rather, the angel gives an answer to her doubts and assures her that with God all things are possible (cf. vss. 35-37). A possible explanation for this, according to the text, cannot lie in her blamelessness as the mother of God. Zechariah is described as "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (cf. v. 6). Rather, a clue might lie in Mary's not laughing at the angel and readily accepting the message after the explanation (cf. v. 38). In the case of both Zechariah and Mary their doubt is again in the context of worship, through Zechariah's worship precedes his doubts and Mary's worship follows her doubts.

In the epistles doubt is also met with words of rebuke. Although the rebuke usually is an exhortation (direct or indirect) to the people not to doubt (cf. Eph. 4:14; I Tim. 1:6; II Tim. 2:16f; 4:4; Heb. 3:12; 4:11; II Pet. 2:2), in a few instances the doubter is severely rebuked. Paul says in Romans 14:23: "But he who has doubts is condemned, if he eats, because he does not act in faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." The words of reproach mean that the doubter is pronounced guilty unto destruction and the divine execution is inevitable. In James 1:6-8 the doubter is told that he must not expect to

receive anything from the Lord in his prayers.

Doubt, then, or the doubter, is never justified. Jesus usually rebuked His disciples and sometimes did it severely. Doubting is often connected with worshiping because only the believer doubts. Doubts are never to be glorified, for they show the opposite of faith and in the end lead to destruction. This is important in seeing how doubts are overcome because man is never allowed to take the position of both faith and unbelief at the same time. They are opposite poles, incompatible with each other. God's act in Jesus Christ demands a full faith in God and His Work, the Gospel.

In the Gospels the action of God was before the eyes of people in the very person of Jesus Christ. When the disciples became frightened on the treacherous sea and doubted, the reason they were rebuked is because they failed to put complete confidence in Jesus who was in their midst. Likewise, when the disciples, the father of the epileptic boy, and other people present doubted in God's ability to heal, they were all severely rebuked because they failed to decide totally for God's power being present in Christ. Thomas failed to decide fully for the risen Christ. Peter lacked complete confidence in the powerful Jesus. John the Baptist had his misgivings about the work of Christ. Zechariah and Mary also did not fully trust in God's promises. What God demands, what the Christ demands, is full acceptance and complete trust—nothing less.

The saving work of God in Jesus Christ is directly related to the problem of doubt. According to the book of Hebrews Christ suffered and was tempted (2:18). Furthermore, He sympathized with our weaknesses and was tempted as we are, yet without sinning (4:15). This refers to

the whole life of Christ on earth, but one thinks in particular of Christ's experiences in the wilderness where He was tempted by Satan (Matt. 4:1f; Mark 1:13f). The word for being tempted is *πειραζόμενος* (Mark 1:13; Matt. 4:1; Heb. 2:8; 4:15). It means not just "to be enticed to sin" (AG, *πειράζω*, 2,d,p. 646) or "being tested," but being tempted to turn aside from the appointed path.¹⁴ According to A. Plummer, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews insists upon three points: 1) The temptations were real. 2) Jesus was absolutely victorious. 3) One reason for His subjecting Himself to such trials was that we might be sure of His sympathy in our temptation.¹⁵ Jesus was able "to sympathize" (*συμπάθειν*) with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15). The temptations common to man He experienced; *συμπάθεις* means a "sharing of experiences" (MM, *συμπάθεις*, p. 598). Also, if He was tempted *κατὰ πάντα* (cf. Heb. 4:15), then He also was tempted to doubt, although He did not succumb to doubting. Jesus as the Christ is able to help because He has stood where man has slipped and because He has faced the onset of temptation without yielding to it. As A. Plummer explains,

The man who never yields is the man who has felt the full force of the temptation; for the man who yields has not waited for the tempter to do his worst It is precisely because He resisted in all cases to the very end that He knows, as no one else has ever known, how severe the temptation can be.¹⁶

¹⁴Cranfield, p. 58.

¹⁵Plummer, p. 38.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 38-39.

Jesus was tested to the ultimate, even to the extent that He asked in a cry of anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). Being forsaken, He still clung in trust to His Father.

Jesus shared all of our weaknesses (*ἀσθενείας* ; Heb. 4:15).

Ἀσθενεία is most significant here because even though this word refers to the sickness of the body at times, it can also refer to the weakness of the mind, and, indeed, to the weakness of doubting (cf. CHAPTER II; *ἀσθενής*). Because of this work Jesus was able to destroy Satan (Heb. 2:14) and to help the tempted.

This showing of sympathy must be reflected within the Church too. Paul said, "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak (I Cor. 9:22). It was the "lex amoris" which the apostle enforced on the Corinthians with regard to eating idol-meats. The law of Christ, while freeing the strong from things which seemed to the weak (though not to him) to be wrong, never gives room for an inconsiderate example, for the weak brother is one for whom Christ died (I Cor. 8:11).¹⁷ One who is strong must not welcome one who is weak to dispute with him (cf. Rom. 14:1) but to seek peace and to build him up in the faith (cf. Rom. 14:19). If the "Law of Love" is followed, then the weak brother who doubts will be upheld, for the Master is able to make him stand (cf. Rom. 14:4). Mutual concern, then, marks the character of the Christian community. It is present in all the functioning of the Church, even

¹⁷A. Robertson and A. Flummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians in The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1958), XXXIV, 192.

even in mutual exhortation so that the believer's confidence in Christ might always be firm (cf. Heb. 3:13-14).

One's doubts need never have the last say because the work of God in Christ is certain. Therefore Paul can say in his second letter to the Corinthians (1:18-22),

As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we preached among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No; but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God. But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

God is faithful in His word and does not waver between Yes and No. That the faithful God should have a Son who was both Yes and No would be a monstrous contradiction.¹⁸ The character of Jesus is totally opposed to any kind of double-dealing whereby a man says one thing and means another. God always carries out His promises, and Jesus is the Son who has faithfully fulfilled the promises of His faithful Father. The result of the promises being fulfilled is permanent as is indicated by the change to the perfect tense (*γέγονεν*; vs. 19).¹⁹ God establishes the believer in Christ or makes him a faithful disciple (*ἀεὶ βεβαίω*, 2, p. 138). The Christian faith rests in Him who is able to keep the believer from falling and to present him without blemish before the presence of God's glory with rejoicing (cf. Jude 24).

¹⁸A. Flummer, p. 35.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 37.

The doubts of the believer, therefore, are overcome in Jesus Christ. He rebukes the doubter and demands complete faith. Jesus is the Christ who has overcome the tempter in obedience to the Father. This is the message of the Gospels in relation to doubt. The rest of the New Testament, however, goes on to say more, for it also sees the strong in faith helping the weak in faith to overcome their doubts. One may rightly ask, "Isn't it natural for a person to doubt?" Doubting is no more natural than sinning; both are a necessary part of this depraved and twisted order of Creation. But just as God demands nothing less than perfection (cf. Matt. 5:48), so He demands nothing less than complete faith.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to present the concept of doubt in the New Testament, to see if its view or views of doubt are in harmony with the general glorified view of doubt today. As a result of the research, doubt in the New Testament is generally described as wavering between faith and unbelief to a greater or lesser degree. The people who doubt in the New Testament are primarily the disciples, the Twelve. Doubt is found in many other people, too: John the Baptist, Zechariah, Mary, the father of the epileptic child, and the people in general in the different congregations of the early Church. Doubting first seemed to be, as presented in the Gospels, a characteristic of the supposedly truly faithful but later came to be, as presented in Acts through Revelation, associated with Christians in general. Doubt is caused largely by the human mind, conditioned by human experiences and human desires, being closed to an unusual action of God. Doubt has been overcome in Jesus Christ who Himself was tempted to doubt. He calls men to faith and to a full decision for Him. Anything less deserves a condemning reproach, for doubt stems from sin. The believer's faith rests upon God's saving work in Christ which is completely firm. As brothers in the Church, all Christians are to help each other mutually to grow in faith and never act with only selfish desires in mind.

With these conclusions in mind, one might say that there is no

place for any questions in the Christian's mind and that, therefore, he should feel free to agree with Friedrich Nietzsche who said,

Christianity has done all it possibly could to draw a circle round itself, and has even gone so far as to declare doubt itself to be a sin. We are to be precipitated into faith by a miracle, without the help of reason, after which we are to float in it as the clearest and least equivocal of elements—a mere glance at some solid ground, the thought that we exist for some purpose other than floating, the least movement of our amphibious nature: all this is a sin! Let it be noted that, following this decision, the proofs and demonstration of the faith, and all meditations upon its origin are prohibited as sinful. Christianity wants blindness and frenzy and an eternal swan-song above the waves under which reason has been drowned!¹

But any such conclusion fails to make the distinction between intellectual honesty and intellectual autonomy. Any Christian should ask questions about his faith and Christian life, but he must never let his questioning mind be the ruler over his relationship with God. Intellectual honesty is in harmony with commitment to Christ; intellectual autonomy is not. Doubt must never be glorified. Just as no Christian would glory in sinning, so he would not glory in doubting. As Emil Brunner said, "Doubt is a form of sin; rightly understood it is the root of all sin, sin in its original form: 'Hath God said . . . ?'"²

As for any further direction which the study of doubt in the New Testament may take, it is simply suggested that there be future studies of the same concept, especially since little biblical work has been

¹Friedrich Nietzsche, The Dawn of Day in The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, edited by Dr. Oscar Levy, translated by J. M. Kennedy (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1964), IX, 89-90.

²Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 206.

done in this area and the practical concerns in this age regarding doubt are great. The present conclusions arrived at in this paper are always open to future studies resulting in a deeper and probably somewhat corrected understanding of the New Testament concept of doubt. It would be interesting to present the concept of doubt in the Old Testament, which probably would lie mostly with the People of God, and to compare the findings with the New Testament concept of doubt.

God's people, old and new, always doubt. But God has forgiven the condemned--that they might have faith!

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