

From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

HE DOUBTED IT

Text: "The Other Disciples Therefore Said Unto Him, We Have Seen the Lord. But He Said Unto Them, Except I Shall See in His Hands the Print of the Nails, and Put My Finger Into the Print of the Nails, and Thrust My Hand into His Side, I Will Not Believe." John 20:25.

It is reassuring to know that the very inner circle of Jesus' friends included a man who struggled with doubt. We find many other types of temperament in this group. It is not strange to find a skeptic. It is difficult to explain the valuable place of the doubter in religion without seeming to laud this negative side of faith, but we must not think of doubt as something disgraceful or revolting.



REV. D. M. CLARK

Doubt is as native to a man as faith; indeed it is just as essential. In a sense, doubt is just the other side of faith; they are two faces of the same shield. Before there can be any deep, abiding faith, a certain amount of doubt must precede. Before Columbus could launch out with a conquering faith that the earth was a sphere, he had to doubt the old theory that it was flat, which was then geographical orthodoxy. In order for one to believe in a spiritual philosophy, he must doubt the materialistic explanation of the universe. To believe in God you must doubt the atheist's contention of a godless world. Where a man makes his mistake is to believe his doubts and doubt his beliefs, and thus see all the world through the dark glasses of skepticism.

Men like Thomas, who could not easily believe every tale of enthusiastic believers, have done a real service to the world--even the world of religion. Indeed, it is reassuring to remember that among Jesus' friends was one who had to test carefully before he could believe. It assures us that at least one of them could not be easily led to believe just any idle tale. The very fact that Thomas was convinced of the resurrection of Jesus is strong evidence of its reality.

Jesus' attitude toward this man, who found it hard to accept the testimony of his friends is instructive. He understands Thomas' difficult situation and goes on to give him opportunity to prove his faith.

There must have been a cause for Thomas' confidence in doubting when his friends were so certain of their faith in the risen Lord. Craving a revelation of the reality of Jesus' resurrection, he absented himself from the place where that revelation was being made.

Although honest doubt is a normal reaction of every sincere mind, we must be careful how we permit our doubts to control us. It is never honest to retire into our shell of misgiving so that the revelation of truth cannot reach us when it comes.

The hour of doubt is the hour to keep hold of the things that still remain. Although he may have doubted the value of the cause in which he had enlisted, Thomas need not have doubted the value of fellowship with his friends. That still remained. Had he stayed true to them, he would have been on hand when the greater experience came. You doubt? Then hold firmly to the things that remain. On these things faith may again be built.

Hear these wise words from Frederick W. Robertson: "It is an awful moment when the soul begins to find that among the props on which it has blindly rested so long, many are rotten, and begins to suspect them all. In that fearful loneliness of spirit I know but one way in which a man may come forth from his agony scatheless: It is by holding fast to those things which are certain still--simple landmarks of morality. . . . If there be no God and no future state, yet even then it is better to be generous than licentious, better to be true than false, better to be brave than cowardly. Thrice blessed

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is he who, when all is drear and cheerless, has obstinately clung to moral good. Thrice blessed because his night shall pass into clear, bright day."

If you feel akin to Thomas, the disciple who said, "I doubt it!" do not make Thomas' mistake. Stay loyally by the appointments of faith, and hold fast to the truth that remains. Then, when the living experience of revelation comes, you will be on hand ready to receive.

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(CLINIC, from page 6)

Osteopathy, holds an M.D. degree from La Universidad Libre Mexicana in Mexico City, attended the Chicago Eye, Ear, Nose & Throat Institute, the Post-Graduate Hospital in New York City, studied at the Massachusetts College of Optometry and is registered as a physician and surgeon with the Massachusetts Board of Osteopathy. He is a member of various professional art and literary societies.

Dr. Bernstein revealed that he had just about retired from active practice when he was advised to "get back to work" for its therapeutic value following a mild heart seizure.

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