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AN APPROACH TO THE DOUBTS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS
REGARDING CHRISTIANITY

by
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To My Dear
Mother and Father

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the Problem

"The religious nature of the student is just as important an element in personality as the intellectual. In the last analysis, history has proven that religion is able to marshal all of the resources of personality, moral, physical, psychological, and intellectual, and to command these in service, as no other power at the disposal of personality."¹

If the spiritual truth of this statement is accepted, the necessity is obvious for the kindling, nourishing, and establishing of strong Christian faith in the educated young people of today.

During the education of such youth, Christian pastors, teachers, laymen, and other leaders are frequently requested to counsel in personal, academic, or religious matters. One phase of counseling in the latter category is in relation to doubts of an intellectual nature which often arise in the minds of college students regarding Christianity. Reasonable and successful overcoming of these doubts is basic to a positive and useful Christian life in these youth. However, many Christian workers have not been trained to deal with such phenomena as intellectual doubts. Hence this study will consider these

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1. Albert Clarke Wyckoff: *Acute and Chronic Unbelief*, p. 18.

doubts from the viewpoint of the average Christian worker who must meet them in the modern college or university student.

1. Justification for the Research

That doubts regarding Christianity exist in the minds of college students may be ascertained by the following brief historical survey. It is based on data presented by certain writers who have studied young people's religion.

In the year 1899, Edwin Diller Starbuck published his study, The Psychology of Religion. His analysis of adolescent religious experience is as follows: a period of clarification begins at the end of childhood; spontaneous awakening appears at about fifteen years, and embraces experiences of conversion and doubt; an era of alienation dominates from about eighteen years until the¹ end of adolescence.

"More than two-thirds of the persons whose experience we are studying passed through a period sometime, usually during adolescence, when religious authority and theological doctrines were taken up and seriously questioned. To be exact, 53 per cent of the women and 79 per cent of the men have had a pretty distinct period of² doubt, which was generally violent and intense."

Regarding adolescent religious experiences, Tracy writes that two features are most prominent. These are

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1. Edwin Diller Starbuck: The Psychology of Religion, p. 239.
2. Ibid., p. 232.

the experience of intellectual doubts and difficulties, and the experience known as conversion. Statistics reveal, says Tracy, that doubt and difficulty, in regard to religious questions, and in connection with religious situations, are more common at this age than at any other.¹ Tracy and Starbuck thus call attention to the general youthful characteristic of religious doubt.

A comprehensive questionnaire to survey a variety of student opinions was given anonymously to Syracuse University students by Katz and Allport in 1926. Included in their summary was a view of religious attitudes of students in the college of liberal arts. Belief in God was the primary attitude scaled, and one of seven possible views was checked by each student. The results may be considered to be typical for the secular university of the 1920's:

21 per cent - personal omnipotent Creator, worthy of prayer and worship

43 per cent - unlimited intelligent Being working in harmony with natural law

14 per cent - a spiritual force in nature and man

12 per cent - agnostic

10 per cent - atheistic (three levels of atheism combined).²

Allowing for error, one may see that the orthodox Christian view of God was held by only a small minority of Syracuse

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1. Frederick Tracy: The Psychology of Adolescence, p. 191.
2. Daniel Katz and Floyd Henry Allport: Students' Attitudes, pp. 260-265.

liberal arts students. The authors call attention to the more liberal attitudes of upperclassmen in this typical comparison:

	personal Creator	spiritual force
freshmen - sophomores	23 per cent	12 per cent
juniors - seniors	17 per cent	18 per cent

The conclusion is that the greater proportion of juniors and seniors

"stressed a liberal, impersonal notion of the Deity rather than the old personal and orthodox view. . . . It may be said that the influence of a college training works slightly in the direction of unorthodoxy."¹

Registering changes of convictions regarding God, Katz and Allport found that from one-fifth to nearly half of the upperclassmen altered their views. The first, or most orthodox, opinion of God suffered the greatest degree of change (47 per cent), and the authors asserted that a distinct, though not overwhelming, trend toward the unorthodox end of the scale was evident.² In summary, Katz and Allport stated that a rather steady trend away from orthodoxy to more unorthodox views was visible during the college career. The changes were not extensive, however.³

The frank and revealing testimony of Philip E. Wentworth concerning his loss of Christian faith in college during the 1920's describes in detail an instance of mental readjustment. From a devout Christian home and completely

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1. Ibid., p. 268.
2. Ibid., p. 299.
3. Ibid., p. 310.

God-centered life, Wentworth went to Harvard University, and later wrote why he believed that education so often destroys orthodoxy.¹ From the same era in educational advancement comes the statement of Wyckoff: "Fully 75 per cent of the students in our American colleges are suffering from a mild or severe attack of acute unbelief."² That this tendency toward doubt among college students still prevails will now be indicated by more recent data.

Conceiving the idea of God generally to be the central and pivotal concept of religion, Wickenden studied the terms in which students think of God, and what changes are produced in their concepts as a result of four years in college. In fifteen church colleges and five non-church schools of the midwest, he used a check-list questionnaire³ of 35 items, setting forth current concepts of God. The total comparison revealed that the typical freshman (at least 50 per cent) thinks of God as a loving, merciful, and generous heavenly Father, best revealed in Jesus Christ, the Creator of and supreme Power in the universe, Ordainer of the moral law, and One who hears and responds to prayer. However, God is a vague undefined reality for about 25 per cent of the freshmen.⁴ In summarizing their view of God,

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1. Philip E. Wentworth: "What College Did to My Religion", Atlantic Monthly, June, 1932, pp. 679-688.
2. Wyckoff: op. cit., p. 19.
3. Arthur C. Wickenden: "The Effect of the College Experience upon Students' Concepts of God", The Journal of Religion, April, 1932, p. 242.
4. Ibid., pp. 246-248.

Wickenden writes that freshmen bring with them to college the symbols of traditional faith, which have been accepted uncritically and have not yet been subjected to vigorous criticism. These inherited concepts are challenged by other ideas received from college studies and social contacts, and the student is led to question his accepted ideas and becomes unsettled in his religious thought.

"Although, in the large, the actual change in ideas that transpires is not greatly marked. . . , yet one apparent result is the decline in dogmatic certainty. The Senior is not so sure of the validity of his ideas as he was as an entering Freshman, and there follows a correlative decline in the degree of vitality that the concept holds for his total faith."¹

The typical church college senior is less positive in his affirmations, and somewhat more positive in his denials than the freshman, says Wickenden. The degree of acceptance of God decreases in most instances between the freshman and senior years.² Non-church college seniors display a more marked trend toward impersonal, mechanistic, agnostic, and atheistic ideas, with distinct aversion to "naïvely anthropomorphic ideas."³ In calculating the mean difference between freshmen and seniors with respect to the affirmative statements, Wickenden found it to be 9.22 per cent in the church colleges and 17.22 per cent in the non-church colleges. In both

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1. Ibid., pp. 264-265.
2. Ibid., pp. 251-253.
3. Ibid., p. 255.

instances the direction of movement was away from conserva-
tive orthodoxy.¹

In a similar study, Dudycha compared the religious beliefs of newly enrolled freshmen in six colleges with those of seniors in seven other institutions at the close of their college courses. Twenty-five orthodox statements regarding God, Christ, prayer, the Bible, and other Christian beliefs were each marked by one of five attitudes, ranging from belief to disbelief.² Summarizing freshmen beliefs, Dudycha wrote that college freshmen firmly believe or are inclined to believe the greater per cent of the twenty-five religious propositions submitted. Of the orthodox statements, 65 per cent were believed, and 78 per cent were believed or inclined to be believed. According to Dudycha's study, seniors hold essentially the same beliefs, but to a definitely lower degree. Among seniors, 49 per cent of the propositions were believed, and 64 were believed or inclined to be believed.³

By means of a check list, Bond studied the religious attitudes of 500 students in a small denominational college. In most questions, subjects marked all statements which expressed their own viewpoints on a given subject. Concerning the Bible, 63 per cent considered

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1. Ibid., p. 256.
2. George J. Dudycha: "The Religious Beliefs of College Students", Journal of Applied Psychology, October, 1933, p. 585.
3. Ibid., p. 595.

it to be "a library of magnificent literature", 59 per cent believed it is an everyday source of help, and 44 per cent saw in it a source of power for those who want to live the best life. In numerical contrast, 7.6 per cent believed that it is infallible, wholly inspired by God; and 10 per cent could live just as well without it. Dr. Bond concludes:

"Of the seven responses which constitute the upper half of the ranking system, six are decidedly favorable, and the seventh is an acknowledgement of ignorance of the Bible, and of consequent failure to appreciate it."¹

However, a summary of Bible reading habits reveals that it was a symbol of value more than a means for attaining value. Of the students, 85 per cent read the Bible² occasionally, very seldom, or never.

Attitudes toward other Christian fundamentals were also briefly reviewed. In the practice itself, 31 per cent prayed less regularly than before college entrance, 29 per cent considered that they prayed more intelligently, and another 29 per cent sought a sustaining³ fellowship with God through prayer. In their view of Jesus, 73 per cent considered Him to be the world's outstanding teacher of morals and religion; 60 per cent felt that His life was a pattern to which good men will strive;

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1. Charles M. Bond: "A Study of the Religious Attitudes of 500 College Students", Bucknell University and the Board of Education of the Northern Baptist Convention, p. 15.
2. Ibid., p. 16.
3. Ibid., p. 17.

59 per cent thought of Him as the highest ideal for modern youth to follow as a leader; 51 per cent believed He is the Savior of men; and 37 per cent saw Him as the greatest Hebrew prophet. The conservative statements regarding Jesus received relatively less support: 35 per cent felt His life was so God-like that He must be considered divine; 29 per cent believed He is God in human form; and 26 per cent agreed that He was a God-filled man.¹

Although several of these studies indicate no doubts as such regarding Christianity, they do reveal tendencies in thought which do not accept certain orthodox beliefs. The thinking and practice of these students call attention to what they do not accept as well as what they believe. These studies emphasize the lack of vital, serious, conservative opinions among typical college students.

A. C. Reid believes that the religious doubts of college students are not isolated in their experiences.

"The undergraduate undergoes psychological, social, and religious disillusionment. He enters college with a confident attitude, naiveté, superficial dogmatism. But as he continues at college, his positiveness weakens into a wondering doubt."²

By means of the various studies here cited, it may be seen that doubts regarding orthodox Christianity exist among college students. The doubt may pervade the

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1. Ibid., p. 23.

2. A. C. Reid: "Religious Problems and the Undergraduate", Christian Education, September, 1947, p. 222.

adolescent period as a whole. Yet the decided changes in belief which occur during the college course indicate that certain factors must be operating to produce a unique type of questioning at this time.

2. Definition of Terminology

In considering an aspect in the life of college students, one is aware that their higher educational career generally is included in the period known as later adolescence, or the years from eighteen to twenty-four.¹ Early and middle adolescence, from twelve to eighteen, have direct bearing on the final years of the period, and all of the three stages bear upon the problem under consideration.

When used in the title and body of this study, the term Christianity includes the traditional view of the faith. Perhaps the major tenets are: the existence of a personal, loving, omnipotent God, who is Father and Creator; the revelation of God in Jesus the Christ, perfect God and man, who was virgin-born, bodily resurrected, and is living today as the only Saviour; the inspired Bible as the complete Word of God; immortality of the human soul; efficacy and necessity of prayer to God; and the ministry of the Holy Spirit as Comforter and Counselor.

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1. Luella Cole: Psychology of Adolescence, p. 21. Cf. Leon C. Palmer: Youth and The Church, p. 2

The doubts of college students regarding Christianity here refer to those questions or elements of unbelief which arise upon an intellectual basis regarding one or more aspects of the Christian faith. Although certain data to be presented will be helpful to those dealing with agnostics and atheists among college students, the particular goal is information concerning the doubter. Honest questions are raised in his mind, and he sincerely desires to know the truth. Generally speaking, the doubter once believed, but information heard, learned, or surmised has created an element of question and wonder.

Tracy considers the essence of adolescent doubts as follows:

"Doctrines touching the origin of things, the authority of the Bible, the person of Christ, certain of the divine attributes, certain of the attributes of the human soul and its destiny, stand first among the things that come to be doubted in these years. It will be observed that these are among the things that lie beyond the realm where proof in the ordinary sense is possible, and their acceptance involves a demand upon the faculty of faith, in that sense in which it means the acceptance of something upon authority."¹

A more recent picture of the primary questions and problems of college students is given by Reid. He includes: evidences of the existence of God; reconciliation of the presence of evil with the Christian view of God; the divinity of Christ; prayer as communion with God or mere psychological discipline; the meaning of immortality; the value of the church;

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1. Tracy: op. cit., p. 194.

the meaning of religion; the validity of the Bible; the value of philosophy; and the significance and hope of man.¹

In a similar series of questions which college youth ask, Palmer adds those regarding the source and validity of moral ideas; understanding of the Trinity and atonement; the place of the church and the variety of beliefs therein; and the Bible as compared with contemporary religious literature.²

B. Objectives and Plan of Procedure

As the introductory remarks indicated, this study is written to assist those Christian workers who must deal with doubting college students. Before adequate help can be given, an understanding of the sources of doubts must be gained. Hence a non-technical but comprehensive view of the causes of doubt will be presented first. In connection with sources of doubt appears the possibility of prevention among pre-college young people. Since the faith of younger adolescents may be influenced by Christian pastors, teachers, or laymen, brief suggestions for the prevention and alleviation of doubts will be offered. Finally, the goal of vital and reasonable personal faith in God through the person of Jesus Christ will be sought for the doubter. How the counselor may contribute to the resolution of the problems

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1. Reid: op. cit., pp. 223-224.
2. Palmer: op. cit., p. 76.

of the doubter and lead him into Christian faith will be considered.

C. Limitations of the Problem

Because every doubter has his own relation or non-relation to God, and is influenced to question Christianity by personal factors, no single pattern of sources and resolution of doubts is possible. The galaxy of causes to be presented here will of necessity be generalized, and will be applicable to young people as a whole. Likewise the suggestions for the prevention of doubts must be broad, with the consequent necessity of applying to particular situations. However, the most obvious use of general procedure will be found in the chapter dealing with the resolution of doubts. Therapeutic measures are always undertaken on an individual basis, but knowledge of foundation principles underlies any beneficial prescription. Although the counselor must proceed differently in each case of doubt, he can be fortified by certain basic information applicable to each situation.

D. Significance of the Problem

The information cited above to justify this research indicates that the problem of doubt among college students regarding Christianity is sufficiently prevalent to warrant attention. The issue may not encompass a majority of college students, but its very existence is a threat to vital Christian testimony by the college

generation.

"While the majority of these young people finally recover their religious faith, some drift into indifference and have their whole religious life permanently debilitated by their attack of acute unbelief, while in others, the malady hangs on until it becomes deep-seated and chronic. The consequences to the individual and to the children of the second generation are serious."¹

No Christian worker can ignore the problem of doubt, for only he can meet it and assist in the victory of faith. Yet he may lack the proper background for coping with the issue. As young Philip Wentworth said of the advice given to him, it "demonstrated so conclusively the impotence of the church to deal with, or even to understand, the problem of my generation."² The opportunity for real Christian service among questioning young people is indicated by Wyckoff. He has written that doubt is a solvent with the power to soften beliefs and ideas. In this plastic condition, they may be remoulded either³ into useful beliefs or into unbelief.

E. Sources of Data

Textbooks dealing with the psychology of religion and of adolescence, counseling and personal work handbooks, and current periodical articles concerning Christian education and youth work are the principal sources of data for this research.

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1. Wyckoff: op. cit., p. 27.
2. Wentworth: op. cit., p. 686.
3. Wyckoff: op. cit., pp. 24-25.

CHAPTER II

SOURCES OF DOUBTS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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A. Introduction

To the Christian worker who meets him, each doubting college student is an individualized challenge. A particular combination of factors has operated to produce his questioning of Christianity, and these same elements may in turn become the key to the door of vital faith for him. If the pastor or teacher or layman can understand what significant personal traits and experiences have united to create doubt, his opportunity for successful service increases. The precise causes, in terms of their deficiencies, errors, and characteristics, may thus be treated in the remedial efforts. Because both earlier and more immediate sources are operative in any situation, this chapter will deal with sources before and during college experiences. The more basic and usual causes will be considered in an attempt to provide the Christian worker with information upon which he can draw in leading doubting college students to their God.

B. Significant Factors In Pre-College Experience

1. Intellectual Development

As the total adolescent personality develops, the religious life shares in the process of growth.

"The religious life, in so far at least as it is a matter of observation, is in coordination with the psycho-physical development as a whole. For in childhood there is a simple, direct response to the impressions of the environment. . . , and with a minimum of logical interpretation or critical analysis. In youth this naive outlook gives way by degrees to one in which the subjective elements play a more prominent part, with the simple feelings giving place to the profounder emotions, mere sense-perception being supplemented by the more ambitious processes of cognition, and the instinctive and habitual motor reactions by deliberate choice and higher volition."¹

Thus the maturation of emotion and intellect directly affects the religion of the adolescent.

One of the most prominent aspects of intellectual development is the appearance of abstract, logical, and original thought. Of necessity, the child must take information and answers in an inadequate and dogmatic manner, because his mind cannot receive a really adequate answer. He is credulous and accepts what is told to him² because his mind can comprehend only the concrete. In the progress of the mind towards maturity, however, these questions and their customary answers must submit to a closer scrutiny. Conscious criticism begins, and from this³ criticism nothing is free. Realizing the insufficiency of his childhood ideas, the adolescent challenges his⁴ previous assumptions.

Wile describes the basic elements in intellectual

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1. Tracy: op. cit., p. 189.
2. Ibid., p. 191. Cf. Earl S. Rudisill: The Intimate Problems of Youth, p. 174.
3. Tracy: op. cit., p. 191.
4. Rudisill: op. cit., pp. 175-177.

advancement as the ability critically to distinguish one's own thoughts from those of another; the power of reason, questioning the "why" and "how"; the desire to explore and experiment in new truths; the desire for a life goal acceptable to oneself and society; and the capacity for mature social relations.¹ Receptivity to a flood of new ideas creates the desire to prove everything.² The essential characteristic of the mature mind is its power to grasp ideas in their relations to one another in a totality or system.³

Relating intellectual development to religious doubts, Tracy distinguishes between the immediate occasion for questioning, such as the study of science or philosophy, and the true root. He believes that the real cause of religious doubt is the expansion of the mind, the enlargement of the mental outlook, and the augmentation of the emotional currents which take place at puberty.⁴

As a result of matured mental capacity, certain young people may find that belief is a difficult path. Some persons are natural doubters in all areas of life, not only in religion. The whole tendency of their disposition is towards distrust, and against belief.⁵

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1. Ira S. Wile: The Challenge of Adolescence, pp. 125-128.
2. Ibid., pp. 116-117. Cf. Rudisill: op. cit., p. 179.
3. Tracy: op. cit., p. 92.
4. Ibid., pp. 193-194.
5. John W. Diggle: Religious Doubt, p. 114.

2. Desire for Personal Independence

Basic adolescent goals are considered by Wile¹ to be emancipation, independence, and responsibility. These are elements in a rapidly developing individuality which openly rebels against regulating forces. The strongest of these forces is parental and religious authority.² The adolescent resents the coercion of existing standards as they are frequently flaunted before him, and he recoils from exorbitant demands upon his uncertain beliefs. His newly acquired independence of mind is functioning.³ Rebellion against authority is related to doubt in that the things questioned lie beyond the realm where proof in the ordinary sense is possible. Acceptance involves a demand upon faith, in the sense in which it means the acceptance of something upon authority.⁴ Despite the discomfort which it may create, this attitude of personal responsibility is natural and desirable, according to Cole.

"As people grow older they should become unwilling to accept statements on the basis of authority alone and should want to see the evidence. They also want to know why things are as they are."⁵

In the search for independence, the adolescent reevaluates and redefines all areas of life, including

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1. Wile: op. cit., p. 113.
2. Wyckoff: op. cit., pp. 14-15.
3. Wile: op. cit., p. 102. Cf. R.E. Welsh: In Relief of Doubt, p. 23.
4. Tracy: op. cit., p. 194.
5. Cole: op. cit., p. 12.

religion. His process includes a comparison of his own beliefs and attitudes with those of other people; the seeking of his own viewpoint, not that of authority; and the inflation of his ego by the rejection of the known and accepted.¹ Therefore it may be seen that the development of typical adolescent characteristics may well challenge imposed and authoritarian religious views.

3. Social Factors

Coupled with the effects of inner mental development upon adolescents are those of the social environment. Its particular influence in their religious life is stressed by Cole:

"The real assault upon religious opinions is not made by scholars but by the daily life and experience of the common people. Contact with any life situation tends to develop new interpretations of so-called spiritual matters. New standards of living² mean the visualization of new meanings in religion."

Furthermore, any trace of doubt which may appear finds further support in the behavior and attitude assumed by those who have a powerful suggestive influence over a young life.³ Frequent contacts with those who remain outside of the Christian fold reveal that they find no values in Christianity. The adolescent consequently questions with honesty the actual existence of any⁴ Christian values.

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1. Wile: op. cit., p. 291
2. Cole: op. cit., pp. 186-187.
3. Ibid., p. 180.
4. Lawrence Augustus Averill: Adolescence, p. 406.

4. Conflict of Standards and Mores

Contemporary life is based upon such a changing variety of behavior patterns that absolute Christian standards are questioned and disregarded with comparative ease. Young people observe this fact, and wonder. They desperately need ethical clarity and conviction. Yet current mores are changing rapidly, science has circum-¹vented fears, and the result is weakened moral conviction. The conflict between Christianity and the world in general is accentuated in many eyes by the practices within so-called Christendom. Averill names the most notorious: dishonesty in business and politics; lack of brotherhood; double standards of men and women; and indifference to² crime and injustice.

5. Home Environment

"In that part of the educative process that goes on in the home, it is beyond question that the personal character of the parents counts for more than anything else."³

Modes of conduct, principles of value, and attitudes toward Christianity which are emphasized by parents tend to be⁴ impressed upon the growing child.

By the time they are confronted with their

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1. Paul Weaver: "Youth and Religion", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, November, 1944, p. 154.
2. Averill: op. cit., p. 407.
3. Tracy: op. cit., p. 213.
4. Loc. cit. Cf. Sophia Fahs: "Problems of Pre-Adolescents", Religious Education, July-August, 1947, p. 229.

maturing offspring, many parents have not readjusted their expectations for youth behavior; nor have they formulated realistic and acceptable reasons as bases for the conduct¹ which they expect of young people. One or the other of two patterns of action is frequently followed by baffled parents. They may continue to project their own traditions and beliefs upon the adolescent who wishes to think his own way through his conduct and convictions. He is thus faced with authoritarianism in religion as well as in other areas in life. At the other extreme, parents may allow freedom of self-expression and judgment to the point of confusing the young person. Without sufficient guidance for establishing a personal code of conduct, he is bewildered by society's varied and conflicting patterns of² action, and his judgment has no valid foundation.

6. Educational Factors

During the usual course of public education, an adolescent receives only secular training. The emphasis is on things and information; the motive is pragmatic. Personality is often subordinated to a practical curriculum. When addressed regarding moral law, principles of ethics, spiritual reality and truth, the average young person does³ not understand the language spoken. Coupled with this secularism, the educational stress upon independent and

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1. Weaver: op. cit., p. 154.
2. Paul H. Landis: Adolescence and Youth, pp. 188-193.
3. Reid: op. cit., p. 225.

logical thought and analysis produces a particular mind-set. What is spiritual and absolute appears relatively unimportant when seen in the light of constantly emphasized secular information and attitudes. Doubt concerning the validity of higher religious truth is a natural and often unconscious by-product.

7. Religious Factors

a. Typical Religious Experiences

The average young person entering college probably has been contacted by Christianity in one of two general ways. He may be the product of Christian nurture, considering himself to be a Christian from his earliest years. This nurture may have been weak and ineffectual, or may have been accompanied by active personal decision to belong to Christ. On the other hand, the individual may have known little or nothing of Christianity until a certain point in his life, likely considered to be his conversion. Following this event, he may have been well trained in the reasonableness of Christian truths and conduct, or he may have been allowed to exist on his decision alone. The conversion may have been complicated by evangelistic methods which stress emotional experience¹ stimulated by fear rather than genuine heart surrender. As a result either of nurture or of conversion, a young

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1. E. Leigh Mudge: Varieties of Adolescent Experience, pp. 127-128.

person may have adopted a conventional but insincere expression of religion, without comprehending the true¹ meaning of Christian faith.

Another possibility in the life of the college student is that he may have a relative absence of any religion at all. Because modern American life does not consider religion to be vital or needed, people generally,² including students, are not interested. Weaver quotes a 1941 International Council of Religious Education study concerning the most common but inadequate definitions of religion among youth fourteen to eighteen years of age: belief in God or something supernatural; a way of good living, or a system of ideals; going to church and worshipping; getting help in emergencies; a peculiar psychological experience or spiritual mood.³ With such nonchalant views of religion before them, young people are vulnerable targets for any doubt which may appear before or during college.

b. Readjustment to Childhood Faith

In addition to the religious experiences which early and middle adolescence bring to him, a young person is confronted by his own childhood beliefs. As these were frequently received without question from parents or

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1. Loc. cit.
2. Ruth Davies: "Are Students Losing Their Religion?", The Christian Century, June 14, 1939, p. 767.
3. Weaver: op. cit., p. 156.

teachers, they are now subject to scrutiny.¹ The child develops a rudimentary religious philosophy and theories of causation. He is credulous and will accept teachings about God, but will inevitably fit them into his own scheme. The adolescent, however, develops a new attitude toward theological conceptions, as he does toward all categorical statements. He wishes to use the test of² active, critical judgment. Indifference and passivity of the mind are replaced in the middle teens by energetic contemplation of already existing religious concepts. In the light of ever-broadening knowledge and reason, they³ are re-examined and often recast.

Elements of doubt may appear when the young person learns that the answers to many of his questions are not based upon almost obvious facts. Even disillusion with Santa Claus stories can contribute to the destruction⁴ of faith in other early teachings. The ultimate result⁵ of adolescent reconsideration of beliefs is a unique and dynamic religious life. It is neither passive nor static, neither unquestioning nor assured.

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1. Ante, pp. 17-19.
2. Mudge: op. cit., p. 109.
3. Averill: op. cit., p. 415.
4. Cole: op. cit., p. 180.
5. Palmer: op. cit., p. 69.

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c. Religious Training

Specific types of early Christian training may influence later development of an individual's faith. Kepler classifies the usual training into three possible categories: apocalyptic emphasis, stressing "the end" and minimizing Christian growth and the social gospel; pre-destinarian atmosphere, lacking freedom and often producing violent reactions, such as scientific determinism; and "build the kingdom" program, developing external activity² to the exclusion of inner faith.

Each of these types, in addition to its values, is subject to weakness and inadequacy. Compared to the state's best efforts in behalf of secular education, religious education in the home and the church often has little success. Teachers are frequently untrained, equipment is poor, attendance is voluntary and limited, needs of students are not considered and met, and curricula are uninteresting and unrelated to life.³ Pupils lack understanding of why the Bible is the Word of God, of its consequently vital message, and of its relevance today. The content of religious education can stand the light of

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1. Although the following two sections are severe, the evidence in their support, and the presence of such results as doubts among students emphasize their validity. However, the fact that student doubt is a minority problem is a primary indication that the data presented is not universally true.
2. Thomas S. Kepler: "On Coming of Age Religiously", Religion in Life, Autumn, 1947, pp. 545-546.
3. Averill: op. cit., pp. 399-400. Cf. Weaver: op. cit., p. 157.

honest examination, but the average Sunday School product is unconvinced. His teaching

"has been so pitifully meager, so narrow and sectarian, so denominational, so restricted in its scope, so cramping and literal in its interpretation, that under the clear gaze of the intellect . . . the religious concepts built in childhood's years can hardly fail to become untenable."¹

Training which defines Christianity in negative terms and which confuses the essence of Christian faith with mere tradition produces a useless faith in many young people.² Furthermore, the interpretation of religion as an experience begun only by a powerful conversion creates wonder in young minds. They cannot conceive of religion as one single event.³ When vivid emotional experiences alone are connected with conversion, morbid fears and extreme shame or guilt may be established. Unless further guidance is given, the personality is warped, and growth fails to occur.⁴ If a spectacular conversion fails to solve psychic, social, and religious difficulties, inner doubts materialize more easily.⁵

Doubts arise most often, according to Starbuck and others, in the class of propositions which are taught to children dogmatically, and are accepted on external authority with a minimum of explanation.⁶ Parents and

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1. Averill: op. cit., p. 398.
2. Landis: op. cit., p. 189. Cf. Diggle: op. cit., p. 126.
3. Averill: op. cit., p. 416.
4. Cole: op. cit., p. 176.
5. Ibid., p. 184.
6. Tracy: op. cit., p. 194.

teachers may contribute to further discord by withholding information and failing to allow children and youth to face the implications of modern scientific and philosophic thought, in the hope of forestalling questioning and un-¹belief.

"Intelligent young people want to be confronted with the truly great realities of the Christian faith, and many of them are lost to the Church because they have not been introduced to it quickly and intelligently enough to fit their expanding powers. As a result they think of Christianity in childish terms."²

In any Christian training situation, the absolute standards of truth, sincerity, and tolerance of other viewpoints require vigilant practice. When the searchlight of reason is turned upon the half-truths, bigotry, or narrowness of some early teaching, the skepticism which results is likely to be extremely dis-³turbing. When an individual begins to scrutinize what he has been taught, the degree of skepticism which he may experience is commensurate with the shallowness and superficiality and narrowness of the concepts which have been⁴ instilled into him.

The following conclusion of Katz and Allport may well serve as a guidepost for conservative Christian teaching. They discovered that individuals holding an orthodox belief in God seem to be less firmly grounded in

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1. Palmer: op. cit., p. 70.
2. Elmer G. Homrighausen: Choose Ye This Day, p. 135.
3. Averill: op. cit., p. 396.
4. Ibid., p. 395.

their position than students with an atheistic conviction or more liberal religious beliefs. Furthermore, the intellectual influences of college challenge the former beliefs more than the latter ones.¹

Palmer summarizes the "almost universal" deficiencies of elementary religious education today in the following manner:

1. "There is a failure to impart definite and systematic knowledge of religious truths."
 - a. No understanding of conventional or memorized phraseology
 - b. No idea of how to maintain beliefs in the face of criticism, or to express them in modern terms
 - c. Use of words and symbols instead of thoughts and facts
2. "We are not leading our children and young people to do creative thinking; a child cannot be a passive receiver."²

d. The Church Itself

Conduct of professing Christians and practices within the church may often cause doubts to arise in young people's minds. Unworthy lives of professing believers display discrepancies in business, family, and social dealings; belief exists without vigor, sincerity, and intellectual honesty; morality is conventional without conviction; hypocrisy and pettiness are commonly visible. The atheist may be a better man than the church-goer. Within the church as a whole, youth sees narrow

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1. Katz and Allport: op. cit., p. 301.
2. Palmer: op. cit., pp. 74-75.

denominationalism, open strife and controversy, poor preaching directed "at" people and containing little¹ relevance or help. According to the International Council of Religious Education adolescent study of 1941, youth between fourteen and eighteen years rate church activities as least important for the following reasons: personal quarrels always enter into undertakings; lack of activity; leader dictates; meetings are dead; and lack² of friendliness.

The message of the church today is not directed primarily toward the conviction of sin and certainty in salvation of its adherents. An atmosphere conducive to a compelling belief in God does not exist.

"Today the creed that the destiny of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever survives in the several catechisms and creeds but has little place in the mission of religious teaching and practice. Into the picture has come the institutional norm widely accepted, that religion's major function is to improve human associations. Personality development in the direction of worthy ideals rather than eternal salvation is the essence of the message of the modern church."³

8. Summary

From the data presented above, it may be seen that a great non-religious pressure is exercised against the normal adolescent even before he enters the college doors. His own mental maturation, his social contacts,

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1. Averill: op. cit., pp. 406-407. Cf. Palmer: op. cit., p. 70, and Diggle: op. cit., pp. 130-131.
2. Weaver: op. cit., p. 158.
3. Landis: op. cit., p. 189.

his home environment, his education, and even his Christian training may be negatively influential. In whatever environment the young person is living, potential sources of doubt regarding Christianity exist, and may begin to influence him at any time.

C. Significant Factors in College Experience

During the days of higher education, many of the factors which operated in pre-college days do not cease to influence the young person. Intellectual, emotional, social, and religious developments continue, moulded by past experience and recast in the shadow of collegiate events. However, the actual needle of doubt may begin to pierce with vigor, and the cry of Philip Wentworth may become that of the average struggling student:

"Only one thing was clear to me: if I could reconcile religion with intelligence, I could go on into my chosen career (the Christian ministry) fortified by the experience."¹

1. Environment

A completely different environment from that of former days may engulf the new collegian. Unfamiliar emphases and attitudes may impress themselves upon him without reservation. Busy routine combined with a desire for independence may drive Christianity into a secondary place and may eventually create questioning of its values.²

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1. Wentworth: op. cit., p. 679.
2. Wile: op. cit., pp. 142-145.

College work itself tends to make intellectual problems overshadow all others. The young student experiences a complete reversal of previous patterns of life. Physical health, good habits, morals and ideals may quickly be superceded by emphasis upon intellectual performance¹ and ideas.

In a cosmopolitan environment, the present-day college student meets a confusing mass of philosophies of life which are commonly founded on pragmatism and relativism. Such viewpoints may quickly corrode an absolute religion.² In their resulting bewilderment, students usually seek with sincerity a moral code which they can confidently accept. However, with sheltered home life behind, they may discover that they progress more quickly in the collegiate realm by keeping separate in their minds moral values and actual practice. This discovery often becomes an honest conviction.³ Furthermore, youth always desires to conform. He dislikes being eccentric, or even seeming to be so.⁴

2. Companions

Conformity also affects the realm of companionship. What is seen in or inferred from others' lives may

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1. Wyckoff: op. cit., p. 17.
2. William Hubben: "Where Are Our Adolescents?", Religion in Life, Winter, 1946-1947, pp. 79-80.
3. H. Gordon Hullfish: "Problems of Youth at College Age", Religious Education, July-August, 1947, p. 243.
4. Bernard Iddings Bell: "Universities and Religious Indifference", Atlantic Monthly, September, 1932, p. 317.

enter the daily pattern of the more naive student. For instance, the existence of doubt in the life of another may act as a stimulus to questioning in one who might never have known doubt except as he saw it, and possibly felt expected to display it himself.¹ The likely threat of others' disagreement with or laughter at his beliefs may cause a student to become uncertain about their validity. Intellectual competition with superior students, who are often non-Christian, may produce an emotional strain and accompanying doubt. On the other hand, lack of companionship at college may lead a lonely student to attach himself to a professor or student of liberal views.²

3. Philosophy of Education

The foundations of education spring from the prevailing cultural attitudes. Society today is generally critical.³ This negative effect of social life and consequently of educational experiences especially permeates attitudes toward religion and the super-objective.⁴

Wickenden emphasizes that the individual student tends to acquire the basic religious philosophy of a college as his own.⁵

Added to the frequently indifferent or critical religious viewpoint on many campuses is the minimal practical

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1. James Bissett Pratt: The Religious Consciousness, p. 118.
2. Wile: op. cit., pp. 141-142.
3. Diggle: op. cit., p. 138.
4. Wickenden: op. cit., p. 266.
5. Ibid., p. 264.

use made of religion. Negative faculty attitudes toward religion, religious organizations, and chapel services may discourage active student participation. References to religion's contribution to man's history are negligible. Classroom prominence is given to an intellectualism which holds little reverence for authority and convention, and which stimulates "investigation for truth".¹ In this supreme concern for the intellect, the religious life of the student is often considered to be of slight importance. The intelligent student cannot fail to draw the inference that the college does not regard one's religious life as a factor of any serious importance.²

4. Academic Factors

According to the findings of Katz and Allport, the content of certain college courses was the most outstanding influence in the change of religious convictions. Students' own estimates of the major influences were registered as follows: teaching in certain courses, 72 per cent; contact with fellow students, 46 per cent; personal maturation of thought, 37 per cent; reading, 29 per cent; professors' personal influences, 21 per cent; and other influences outside of college,³ 19 per cent. The various courses which contributed most heavily to changes in convictions were: philosophy, 46 per cent; biology, 30 per

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1. Nolan Rice Best: The College Man in Doubt, p. 10.
2. Wyckoff: op. cit., p. 10.
3. Katz and Allport: op. cit., p. 312.

cent; psychology, 25 per cent; sociology, 22 per cent.¹

Wyckoff lists the same general areas of study, and believes the cause to be the teaching and writing of unbelieving professors. He quotes Leuba's Belief in God and Immortality to show that the majority of the greater scientists in these departments did not then believe in the existence of a personal God.² Inasmuch as the same textbooks are still in use, and the same scientists and their students are now teaching the college generation, the conclusion is still valid.

The psychological appeal which the content of certain courses makes to young people is mentioned by Wyckoff. In their struggle for freedom from authority and for individuality, they hunger for findings of a contradictory nature. When intellectual professors dogmatically offer their findings, youth's mind is open and may overindulge.

"This overplus of undigested ideas starts up a fermentation of thought, this develops into metabolism of doubt, which causes a congestion of the reason, and acute unbelief results."³

When science teaches the universality of natural law and assumes a physical antecedent for all physical events, educated youth experience great difficulty with certain Christian teachings, especially the miracles recorded in the Bible. The method of physical science, in

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1. Doc. cit. Cf. Edwin Diller Starbuck: op. cit., p. 233.
2. Wyckoff: op. cit., pp. 31-32.
3. Ibid., pp. 20-21.

its emphasis upon the objective aspects of the universe, is at the opposite pole from religion, with its appeal to value-judgments and unseen truth.¹ As Philip Wentworth expressed the typical student reaction, a wonder-working, prayer-answering God was out of place in a universe of natural law; He was enclosed in His own creation. Belief in God as a First Cause, but now disinterested and immovable, was untenable. He was merely the product of man's mind as it sought to explain the first cause. Such an interpretation left no room for God as the universal moral foundation.² On campuses where biological evolution is taught as fact, no effort is made to present either intermediate or theistic viewpoints. An apparently unbroken chain of development is laid before the student, with the obvious necessity of choosing or rejecting this conclusion of the intelligent mind.

Philosophy as a challenger of faith brings before the mind significant problems which require a readjustment of the entire mental perspective.³ Questioning in the mind of a youth may begin as he hears intense but often inconsequential discussions of philosophies of religion and debates upon abstract doctrines. To an inexperienced mind, dissensions threaten the very foundations of Christianity. Problems are suggested in directions where he did

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1. Palmer: op. cit., pp. 72-73.
2. Wentworth: op. cit., p. 683.
3. Tracy: op. cit., p. 193.

not suspect they could exist. The student may realize that he has never considered many phases of Christianity. His religion may seem fragmentary and inadequate, and he¹ may become bewildered and uncertain.

At the heart of honest doubts is usually the problem of evil. Perplexity grows as a young person² considers why evil exists if God is all-powerful.

In regard to the Bible, certain apparently contradictory factors become known to the youthful seeker. The Bible is no longer the authority and guide for many so-called Christians. Yet it remains as the one source of information regarding Jesus, the center of Christianity. Science and critical scholars take issue with many Biblical³ phrases and teachings, and again the student wonders.

Academic subjects thus contribute to the atmosphere of doubt which surrounds the collegiate mind. Often taught as absolute facts contradictory to Christianity, their content provides the most frequent and obvious basis for doubt. The student is surrounded by apparent negations of his faith expounded by intellectually superior but unbelieving professors. Calm acceptance of orthodox Christian teachings fades, and is replaced by harassing bewilderment.

5. Moral Issues

Apart from the external influences which bear

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1. Best : op. cit., p. 14.
2. Diggle: op. cit., p. 120. Cf. Sidney A. Weston and S. Ralph Harlow: Social and Religious Problems of Young People, p. 198.
3. Weston and Harlow: op. cit., p. 234.

upon the young mind, the personal spiritual nature cannot be overlooked as a cause for doubt. Wile calls attention to the ease with which a relative morality is often¹ subtly substituted for religion. The gradual development of such characteristics as pride, laziness, envy, worldliness, and prayerlessness may likewise stimulate growth of² doubt.

The divine view of religious doubt and unbelief is adequately seen in the Bible. The Gospel according to John, for instance, traces the rising tide of unbelief despite abundant testimony concerning God's eternal purposes in Jesus Christ.

"The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world; he was in the world, and the world³ was made through him, yet the world knew him not."

Continual rejection of the Son of God produces the will to disbelieve and the desire to escape the transforming⁴ power of God. That the moral issue is basic to unbelief is well stated by Diggle:

"Very many religious doubters . . . lead lives which are unquestionably incorrupt, and noble. . . . Yet, on the other hand, it would be dishonest to deny that sin does lie at the root of no inconsiderable part of religious doubt. Sin is the enemy of faith, and faith the enemy of sin. . . . Sometimes, indeed, the doubter is scarcely conscious that his doubts are the consequences of his sins. . . . They who wilfully persist in disobeying God's commandments, at least desire to doubt His existence; and rejoice in any mountain of intellectual

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1. Wile: op. cit., pp. 307-317.
2. G. H. C. Macgregor: The All-Sufficient Saviour, pp. 51-53.
3. John 1:9-10.
4. John 12:37-50.

difficulty which may seem to hide them from His dreaded presence."¹

6. Other Factors

Other minor causes of doubt, especially among Christian people, include danger or calamity, unanswered prayer, loss of possessions, reputation, friends, or health, other Christians' misconduct, despair, and luxury.² Diggle also mentions the effect of increasing knowledge of values in non-Christian religions. Elements of their common ground in ethics and certain doctrines may prove to be basic points of confusion.³

7. Personal Consequences

In the development of doubt, a young man usually suffers from its cumulative effects. When one belief does not stand the test of reason, he is led to reject others with which the first is associated. The process usually moves from the specific question to the abstract universal issues, without a great and stormy crisis. On the other hand, young women frequently begin by doubting the existence of God, or by questioning everything in general. Their experiences are generally more emotional and stormy, but may lack deep intellectual difficulties and honest doubt⁴ regarding specific truths.

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1. Diggle: op. cit., pp. 117-118.
2. Cf. Starbuck: op. cit., pp. 235-236; Macgregor: op. cit., pp. 49-50; and Diggle: op. cit., p. 136.
3. Diggle: loc. cit.
4. Starbuck: op. cit., pp. 237-241. Cf. Tracy: op. cit., p. 195.

If a young person finds it necessary to discard any long-observed or held belief, without immediately substituting another logical one, mental unrest and discomfort may be very acute. The whole inner life may become restless, and the victim often is unable to make any definite statement as to causes.¹

Beyond the age of twenty-two, doubts are seldom emotionally attended, and hence seem less intense and less important to those who experience them. They are more purely intellectual thereafter.² In the Syracuse University group which was surveyed, periods of questioning and ultimate changing of religious views resolved in the following most common manners: a new, satisfying philosophy of life, 24 per cent; new satisfying convictions, but attended by certain doubts, 38 per cent; unaffected philosophy of life, 14 per cent; certain questions answered, but many others still troubling, 16 per cent.³

8. Summary

If founded upon un-Christian factors in pre-college experiences, certain disrupting forces of higher education may cause unbelief to appear among students. An intellectual and pragmatic college environment coupled with the influence of non-Christian friends may begin to promote doubt. Critical, non-religious philosophy of

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1. Tracy: op. cit., pp. 193-195. Cf. Wyckoff: op.cit., p. 13.
2. Pratt: op. cit., p. 119.
3. Katz and Allport: op. cit., p. 315.

education further produces an impression of religion's unimportance. Classroom teaching, particularly in philosophy and biology, is often imparted by unbelieving professors. Man's natural inclination away from God may also influence student opinion regarding Christianity. The ultimate result of the operation of these various factors often is bewilderment and doubt in the student's mind.

D. Summary

Like any other human viewpoints, religious attitudes of belief or unbelief develop as a result of a combination of factors. Thus in the life of a student, innumerable influences before and after his college entrance may produce the phenomenon of doubt. As the foregoing discussion indicates, one of the chief pre-college factors is the expanded mental processes of early adolescence. The ability to reason and discern logically is focused upon traditionally accepted teachings, including those of religion. Coupled with this normal development is the appearance of a desire for independent thinking and personal responsibility.

The ability and desire to think for oneself is soon confronted with everyday secular attitudes and conduct on the part of both professing and non-professing Christians. Common indifference to the values of and need for Christianity permeated the youthful mind. At this point the caliber of previous Christian training becomes the deter-

mining factor in the young person's maturing attitudes. If sincere growth toward Christ and decision for Him have been correlated with adequate training, the possibility of negative viewpoints and doubts may be averted. Yet the frequently dogmatic and irrelevant Christian preparation given to youth has been cited. The prospect of ultimate victory over the questioning spirit in early adolescence is dimmed.

To the pre-college influences which tend to create doubt are added those of higher education. Intellectualism and moral relativity predominate on the modern campus, where the student is drawn to conformity. However, the culminating factor in the production of the collegian's doubt regarding Christianity appears to be the classroom atmosphere. Science and philosophy particularly arouse the greatest challenges to specific Christian tenets. Reid summarizes the contributing factors thus: "2

"Two conditions which are largely responsible for the seriousness of the undergraduate's problems are poor precollege religious training and non-religious collegiate atmosphere."¹

An additional contribution may be made in certain lives by man's natural inclination away from faith in God. Doubt is one manifestation of sin, according to the Bible, and this fact must be considered in connection with other possible causes.

In conclusion, it may be seen that a network of

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1. Reid: op. cit., p. 225.

natural human intellectual and psychological developments, of social circumstances, and of academic stimuli may produce doubt in a college student regarding Christianity. A different combination of causes may operate in each individual case; but the foregoing discussion summarizes the most general possibilities out of which the combination is drawn.

CHAPTER III

PREVENTION OF DOUBTS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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A. Introduction

In the light of the prevalence and gravity of the problem under consideration, the possibility of avoiding its difficulties naturally arises in the mind of the Christian worker. Surely he can offer preventive assistance to the college student threatened by doubts, as well as seek the resolution of his questions. At this point, however, it may be well to recall the fact that a critical attitude toward previously accepted teachings is normal in the developing adolescent. He desires to consider for himself the validity of information imparted to him.¹ Tracy and Burton call attention to the inherent value of this youthful practice, saying that one does not really possess truth unless that truth has been reasoned² by the individual himself.

If this process of personal deliberation is thus conceived to be both natural and desirable in the adolescent, the Christian worker may quickly sense that his role is mitigatory: rather than seeking completely to prevent the appearance of doubts regarding Christianity, he may

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1. Ante, pp. 17-19.

2. Tracy: op. cit., pp. 191-192. Cf. Marion LeRoy Burton: Our Intellectual Attitude in an Age of Criticism, p. 70.

endeavor to alleviate their painful and disastrous consequences. He may attempt to retain the basic values of adolescent questioning, and yet assist the questioner in maintaining his Christian faith. This approach will be followed during the course of this chapter.

Regular church activities and fellowship provide the most accessible avenues by which the Christian worker may proceed. Rather detailed suggestions will be offered in this area for his benefit. However, he must be aware of the home and school or college itself as influential in preventing loss of Christian faith. Therefore these three centers of adolescent activity will be considered with regard to their possible contributions in alleviating the doubts of college students regarding Christianity.

B. Role of Parents

1. Influence

That the home exerts the dominant influence upon a growing child and his character is widely recognized. Parental attitudes and direct teachings regarding religion are likely more significant than in other areas of life; for

"without home religion it is difficult for the child . . . to learn those truths which cannot be learned apart from the family relationship in which our faith is set."¹

Moreover, in childhood the basic pattern of religious attitudes and feelings is largely determined. Personal influences of parents and friends upon the child make deep

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1. Homrighausen: op. cit., p. 117.

and lasting appeal long before adolescence begins.¹

2. Christian Training

In the atmosphere of a consecrated Christian home, the child may begin at an early age to learn the great stories of the Bible, its central message, and stories of the church, its growth, heroes, hymns, and art. Under the direction of parents, he may be constantly confronted with the teachings, life, and mission of Jesus Christ, and the claims of God upon his own life. Constant decisions for Christ in the light of His teachings may be elicited. As the child grows older, the reasonableness, necessity, and value of Christian choices may be explained.²

3. Counseling

Despite apparently adequate training, and surely in its absence, times of questioning enter the life of the maturing young person. Mudge calls attention to the value of sympathetic counsel from older persons, parents or friends, in alleviating or avoiding the painful nature of such doubts. Of necessity, these persons must be the ones with whom the youth may feel confident and willing to share his perplexities.³

Yet most parents lack the very qualities which would make them the most successful and influential

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1. Mudge: op. cit., p. 108.
2. Homrighausen: op. cit., pp. 120-127.
3. Mudge: op. cit., p. 124.

counselors. In vain youth generally desire these parental virtues: emotional security; understanding of their children; discrimination between right and wrong, and the setting of a good, fairly strict example; confidence to face and assist in solving children's problems; friendly atmosphere about the home; progressive and responsible personalities; and faith and trust in their children.¹ Homrighausen suggests that other desirable qualities among parents are natural, warm, and sincere religious expression; wisdom and love, which enable the child to be both free and disciplined, and to do his own choosing with guidance; and the adaptation of adult religious experiences to the level of their children, providing honest answers to theological problems in language and concepts which the growing young person may understand.² Wyckoff emphasizes the great importance of the latter virtue.³

To achieve the desirable qualities mentioned above, a parent must have definite Christian experience, training, and discernment. Only the one who is committed to Christ can guide his child to the Lord. One who is ignorant of Christian apologetics cannot advise a perplexed individual. Also one who is unaware of his children's progress in Christian living cannot discern the development of spiritual problems, in order to deal with them in their

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1. Weaver: op. cit., p. 159.
2. Homrighausen: op. cit., pp. 118-120.
3. Wyckoff: op. cit., p. 15.

early and less acute stages.¹ Thus the whole area of parent education is opened, but cannot be treated here.

C. Role of School and College

A major conclusion of the previous chapter was the outstanding contribution of the classroom to the appearance of doubts among college students regarding Christianity. If the classroom is a real source of these doubts, it may well be considered in a preventive light. What can be done to mitigate its negative influence? Where a critical, irreligious philosophy of education underlies secular training, the fundamental need for its transformation into a theocentric pattern should be recognized. Although this extensive process cannot be outlined in this study, three basic recommendations will be made. Particular colleges or professors may change the entire tone and emphasis of their teachings; and the first two suggestions are made with this principle in view.

1. Professors' Attitudes

A primary service may be rendered by an individual Christian professor in a secular institution. During the normal course of his teaching, he may quietly and assuredly lead his students to understand that he knows and believes in more than the mere objective facts of his particular field of study. He may make himself available for con-

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1. Ibid., p. 36.

ference with those who become confused and seek guidance¹ as a result of studying in his department. He may become an actual Christian counselor, using the principles and methods to be described in chapter four.

2. Scientific Procedure

Although frequently unstressed, particularly in science courses, the need for giving a student complete information is directly related to the problem of doubt. Teachings regarding evolution, for instance, are regarded as fact rather than theory, and alternative viewpoints regarding the development of life are ignored. Such procedure is unfair to students for two major reasons: first, the presentation of only one theory, and that one as fact, leads them to believe that it is the only explanation, and thus is the correct one; and second, presentation of only one theory, rather than all theories not yet disproven, reveals lack of objectivity, the goal of science, in failing to consider all available possibilities.² One of the possibilities which science often ignores is that information may be available to man beyond the ordinary means of scientific research. Insistence that such a possibility is incredulous tends to be unscientific, for the scientist must be unprejudiced and willing to accept factual data from every possible source. Concretely, then,

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1. Best: op. cit., p. 28.
2. Donald H. Bouma: "Students Re-Think Evolution", His Magazine, January, 1945, p. 35.

rejection of even the possibility that God may have revealed Himself in the world creates an unscientific¹ blind spot in the modern student's education.

3. Recognition of Religion

Related to the current educational philosophy is a gradual but sure elimination of religion in public² education. To meet this problem, Christian educators have begun to emphasize the function of general education in relation to religion. It should furnish intelligent understanding of the place of religion in human history and in contemporary life.³ With a goal of information rather than indoctrination, the public school can teach the values and contributions of religion to every area of life. It may thus add a new dimension to the student's thinking, and create a proper mind-set or attitude.⁴ Therefore, on a non-sectarian basis, it is recommended that the school

"confront all its pupils with a fair recognition of the existence and meaning of religion and religious institutions, put them in possession of an objective body of facts on the basis of which intelligent individual judgments may be made, and predispose them to give a fair and impartial consideration to⁵ the claims of religion on the loyalties of men."

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1. Paul B. Fischer: "Is Modern Philosophy Prejudiced?", His Magazine, September, 1947, p. 21.
2. Ante, pp. 23-24 and 32-33.
3. Paul H. Vieth, editor: The Church and Christian Education, p. 249.
4. Harry Emerson Fosdick: "Shall American School Children Be Religiously Illiterate?", School and Society, November 29, 1947, pp. 404-405.
5. Vieth: op. cit., p. 250.

D. Role of the Church

1. Awareness of the Problem

That college students frequently doubt the validity of Christianity has been indicated in chapter one. As the primary instrument for the spreading and confirmation of the Gospel message, the church should be vitally interested at points where questionings occur. Many individual churches need to be awakened to the threat of doubts among their youth; the proper methods for arousing such churches must be found elsewhere. The present study is concerned with particular steps which the church may take to prevent and resolve the doubts of young people regarding Christianity; and certain key preventive measures will now be considered.

2. Provision for the Desires of Youth

A basic confidence in the church and in the Gospel which it proclaims may be stimulated in youth as they find their desires fulfilled therein. Believing that Christianity can offer exactly what youth want, Homrighausen and Weaver suggest somewhat parallel listings of their desires. Essentially they are as follows: a strong faith, a transformed self, and a satisfactory philosophy of life; an understanding of oneself in the light of the Eternal; loyalty to a commanding Person and cause; power to live effectively; rootage in Christian teachings, doctrines, and interpretations of world events; opportunity to think upon these factors carefully and openly; stability, good

habits, and resolution of personal conflicts; and Christian¹ fellowship.

3. Bible Teaching

a. General Approach to the Bible

Major points of young people's questions regarding Christianity may arise from the contents of the Bible, and the approach which is adopted by its teachers. In their study of the Bible as a whole, youth should recognize the existence of and be able to distinguish the various types of literature therein: poetry and song, historical narrative, prophecy, biography, maxims, and drama.² Youth need guidance in Bible reading in proper sequence, not at random; they need background information by which to understand what they read; they need modern translations; they need to recognize that one cannot fully understand men of God and those who wrote of Him until one has similar experiences with Him; and they need confidence in the Bible as timeless and modern, in comparison with ever-changing theories of men.³

Perhaps the basic understanding which young people need is that the Bible records God's revelation of Himself over a period of time. The purpose of God is spiritual and ethical teaching, and He chose to use men as His scribes.

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1. Homrighausen: op. cit., pp. 132-133. Cf. Weaver: op. cit., p. 158.
2. Welsh: op. cit., pp. 218-220.
3. Palmer: op. cit., pp. 87-93.

His revelation of Himself and His truth is progressive and cumulative, moving forward as man advances in his grasp of truth. He begins His teaching where His children are (i.e., in slavery, polygamy, and animal sacrifice), and carries them to complete knowledge by His revelation in Jesus, the One who fulfills both the law and the prophets. The Bible records the process of learning, and the pupils were not ideal recipients of truth in most situations. They were carried from the false to the final Truth, from the simple to the complex, from a primitive to a mature concept of the same God.¹ The ultimate test of the validity of this progressive view of Scripture is whether the final revelation in Christ contradicts or broadens and adds to the total previous revelation. The highest concept of God is not contained in the Old Testament, but one must ask whether the Old Testament view is consistent with Christ,² even though in germinal state.

b. Approach to Specific Teachings

When interpreted in the college classroom, certain areas of orthodox Bible teaching frequently confuse young people. The church may well give special attention to these teachings as it prepares youth for college entrance. According to the emphases of various

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1. Welsh: op. cit., pp. 199-216. Cf. Wilbur Fisk Tillet: The Paths that Lead to God, p. 264.
2. "But My Professor Says", His Magazine, February, 1948, p. 37.

authors, these areas particularly include views of Scriptural inspiration, the creation narrative, and Old Testament judgment accounts. In approaching such issues, Christian workers should constantly offer reasonable views which modern thought cannot undermine.

Youth require clear understanding of the meaning of Biblical inspiration. They need to consider how God speaks and how men hear His voice.¹ They should be informed of scientific evidences for the accuracy of the Biblical record,² and of the superiority of the Bible to other sacred literature.³ Youth may study for themselves the internal evidences which mark the Bible as a divine revelation.⁴

When approaching the creation narrative, young people deserve to understand it in its true theological meaning, rather than as a scientific account.⁵ A logical correlation of Genesis with scientific discovery is a basic necessity for youth who will enter college.⁶

One of the foremost causes of doubt as related to the Bible is an inadequate and distorted view of the Old Testament judgments upon Israel's neighbors. In considering

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1. Welsh: op. cit., pp. 213-223.
2. Edwin A. Burt and Joseph P. Free: "A College Textbook's Challenge to the Bible -- and a Reply", His Magazine, March, 1945, p. 14. Cf. Kenneth N. Taylor: "Is Christianity Credible?", His Magazine, August, 1947, p. 20.
3. "But My Professor Says", His Magazine, January, 1948, p. 28.
4. Burt and Free: op. cit., p. 13.
5. Wilbur M. Smith: Therefore, Stand, pp. 309-310. Cf. Welsh: op. cit., p. 241.
6. Welsh: op. cit., pp. 238-241.

this issue, young people must be guided to see the correlation between the God of judgment and the God of love. Study of particular instances of the two attributes in harmonious operation is more to be recommended than¹ scholarly generalizations.

4. Assistance to New Christians

Homrighausen emphasizes the importance of an undergirding, continuous Christian nurture for the young person who has accepted Christ. Rather than being subjected to an adult mould of worship and fellowship, he needs² stimulation at his own intellectual and spiritual level. Recognition of and training in the simple fundamentals of Christianity are especially necessary, so that the youth may distinguish interpretative differences from the Biblical³ essence of Christian faith. In all his post-conversion experiences, he deserves to be challenged by positive emphases on new loyalties, transformed behavior, and group welfare. Conduct prohibitions, constant reminder of past sins, and other negative factors are particularly⁴ conducive to the development of insecurity and doubt.

The local church may make special contribution to the new youthful Christian in six basic areas, Homrighausen believes. These include stimulating Christian

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1. "But My Professor Says", His Magazine, February, 1948, p. 37. Cf. Welsh: op. cit., p. 209.
2. Homrighausen: op. cit., p. 125.
3. Diggle: op. cit., p. 309.
4. Cole: op. cit., p. 177.

fellowship; experiences of responsibility; feeling of belonging and worthiness; opportunity to use one's faith in practical social action; continuous Christian contacts, especially when he is away from home; and relevant preaching of the Word.¹ Personal contacts with a sympathetic Christian teacher may immeasurably assist the process of growth in a new convert. Knowing his background and daily personal experiences and temptations, the teacher may discern potential problem areas in their early stages. In the absence of Christian parents, the teacher's role increases in importance.²

5. Preparation of Prospective College Students

As the church seeks to assist its young people in their college experiences, certain preparatory measures may be recommended. The necessity for intelligently confronting young people with the realities of the Christian faith as soon as their expanding powers can receive the teaching has been previously noted.³ This practice guards against their thinking of Christianity in childish terms when their minds are becoming mature. Young people need to understand that the message of Christ transcends all other knowledge. "We must give young people the Gospel in its fullness so that it may truly confront them with the

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1. Homrighausen: op. cit., p. 136.
2. Roy A. Burkhardt: Guiding Individual Growth, p. 154.
Cf. Ibid., p. 133.
3. Ante, p. 29.

issues of destiny."¹

Equipped with adequate Bible knowledge, youth can be taught to think for themselves and to face objective facts with honesty. As they encounter scientific and Biblio-critical theories even in high school days, they may² be encouraged to compare them with Bible teachings. The assurance that proven facts in science do not contradict the contents of the Bible provides real incentive to sift³ truth from man's errors.

Before any one can deal with the expanding mental perspective of such high school students, he must necessarily master science and the content of Christianity himself. Thus trained, he may successfully counsel young people, who can trust his guidance. The value to youth of a counselor in whom they may have complete confidence is⁴ unlimited.

One of the most successful methods of assisting pre-college students is the small group conference with such a counselor. Informal discussion or question and answer periods may greatly promote intelligent faith among youth. Open expression of questions in a familiar atmosphere among friends provides a psychological influence⁵ which the college classroom cannot offer.

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1. Homrighausen: op. cit., p. 136.
2. Diggle: op. cit., pp. 132-133. Cf. Palmer: op. cit., p. 87.
3. Wyckoff: op. cit., p. 37. Cf. Palmer: op. cit., p. 207.
4. Wyckoff: op. cit., p. 37.
5. Burkhart: op. cit., pp. 106-107.

E. Summary

Consideration has been given to three major areas in which the doubts of college students regarding Christianity may be approached in a positive manner. As the dominant influence upon the developing youth, parents hold the key to their children's original and continuing faith. Christian parents may determine the concepts which their children hold regarding Christian faith, and may be continually ready to deal sympathetically with problems which may arise. Parents who develop qualities which attract their children will find themselves to be trusted counselors to whom puzzled young people will turn for guidance in religious problems as well as others.

A particular school or college may offer certain antidotes to the current critical philosophy of education. A Christian professor may reveal through his teachings an honest belief in that which is beyond his objective course of study. Accepted classroom procedure may stress the presentation of theories as theories, including all possible explanations, and scientifically recognize the possibility of extra-objective sources of information. An appreciation of religion's contribution to man's history may underlie all secular teaching, thus creating a positive acquaintance with its general values.

Any action by the church presupposes an awareness of the problem of doubts among college students. By first meeting the felt desires of youth, the church can create a

confidence in her mission and message. True understanding of the Bible as literature with a dominating principle is basic to youth's understanding of problems related to the Book. Specific treatment of such related questions as inspiration, creation, and judgment accounts may provide a sound foundation for interpreting critics' opinions. Continued nourishment, fellowship, and guidance for newly converted young people will enable them to be established in their faith as questionings arise. Encouragement to think for themselves and to discuss openly those issues which trouble them may be the most helpful preparation which a church can offer to prospective college students. Adequately informed leadership for counseling these youth is essential in this area.

It is therefore obvious that Christian workers may exert a wise alleviating influence, rather than a stifling effect, upon the ominous but beneficial doubts of college students. Christian workers may work through ordinary church channels, and indirectly into the home and school environments, to retain the values of questioning. Thus they may enable youth to undergird their faith with reasonable, self-formulated conclusions.

CHAPTER IV

RESOLUTION OF DOUBTS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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A. Introduction

Confronted with college students who doubt the validity of Christianity upon an intellectual basis, the Christian worker earnestly desires to be an effective counselor among them. Attention has already been given to the basic knowledge which he should possess regarding the causes of these doubts and preventive or alleviative measures with which to check them. The prospective Christian counselor must finally consider the resolution of these doubts. This study, which has been undertaken for his benefit, will therefore conclude with a discussion of the last and remedial phase of his work.

Techniques of successful personal counseling are unfamiliar to many Christian workers, who have been particularly trained only in pastoral or educational methods. Hence the role of the counselor himself and the general procedure which he uses in dealing with youth will first be considered in this chapter. These data of introduction will include a definition of counseling, its motivation and objectives in view of the stated problem, the resources of the Christian counselor, preliminary principles which he should observe, and the steps which he follows in interviewing.

In conclusion, specific approaches which the

Christian counselor may adopt in dealing with intellectually doubting students will be discussed. The major areas of approach to be treated include Christian apologetics, philosophy, and science.

B. The Counselor

1. Task Defined

In the field of individual guidance, personal counseling may be defined as a deep understanding or sharing of life between persons. It results in the changing of personality as a counselor assists the coun-¹selee in finding the solution of his own problems.

2. Motivation

Successful labors in any field are the result of adequate motivation. As the love of Christ radiates from the life of a Christian worker, an individual in personal need is naturally drawn toward him. An honest love for Christ can produce genuine interest in people on the part of a Christian. In turn this quality may also cause positive response in those whom he would serve. No greater remedy exists for sentimental and professional dealings with people than the sincere desire to serve Christ and² His children.

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1. Rollo May: The Art of Counseling, p. 120. Cf. Burkhart: op. cit., p. 97.
2. Russell L. Dicks: Pastoral Work and Personal Counseling, pp. 138-140.

3. Attitudes toward Doubt

Recognition of the inherent value of doubts among college students is a basic adjustment which the Christian worker must make.

"Doubt possesses great potentialities for our intellectual lives, that while it has its dangers, and seems to be a negative and destructive force, by some strange metamorphosis it becomes highly beneficial to earnest thinking and frequently¹ productive of genuine knowledge and abiding certainty."

Continuing his positive approach to doubts, the Christian worker should regard them as normal and natural phenomena in the life of a maturing person rather than as indications of sin or degeneracy.² Negative outlooks may easily produce such youthful responses as failure to do any thinking whatsoever, attitudes of defiance, or further doubts and settled patterns of unbelief.³

4. Objectives in Counseling

The goals of a Christian counselor in the particular area under consideration may be described as follows: he seeks to guide the student into a comprehension of the reasonableness of Christianity, and he endeavors to lead the counselee to a personal consecration to Christ.

a. The Reasonableness of Christianity

Rather than experiencing shallow religious emotions, the student deserves to be guided into an honest

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1. Burton: op. cit., p. 70.
2. Best: op. cit., p. 15. Cf. Mudge: op. cit., p. 125, and ante, pp. 17-19.
3. Welsh: op. cit., p. 21.

faith, however small. Since doubt cannot be overcome by the pretense and semblance of faith, the counselor must build reasonably and gradually upon whatever fragment may exist.¹ Confident that Christians may be loyal to their intelligence, the counselor is obliged to demonstrate the bases for his assurance to the doubting student. The difference between scientific knowledge and theory is an important distinguishing factor at this point.² Finally, the necessity for youth to do their own thinking cannot be overemphasized. Solutions to their problems are acceptable insofar as they result from personal conclusions, undergirded by guidance, rather than from authoritative³ dictation.

b. Personal Consecration to Christ

The problem before the Christian worker

"is not so much to convince the intellect of the truth of certain abstract propositions about Christ, as to hold up before the pupil the exquisite personality of Christ, as worthy of the highest devotion and the most complete service that can be rendered."⁴

Personal conviction of the validity of the Christian case, or mere acceptance of material and moral facts is insufficient; a personal decision to accept Christ as Saviour⁵ and Guide is the pivotal point of Christian work.

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1. Diggle: op. cit., p. 311. Cf. Wile: op. cit., pp. 303-305.
2. Palmer: op. cit., p. 207.
3. Hullfish: op. cit., p. 243. Cf. Ibid., p. 82.
4. Tracy: op. cit., p. 232.
5. Welsh: op. cit., pp. 175-176.

5. Resources for Counseling

a. In Christianity

Great power is available in the knowledge that one is not laboring alone as he seeks to bring young people to reasonable faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible clearly informs the Christian worker that God -- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit -- desires the salvation of men; that the power of believing prayer is unlimited; and that the Word itself can exert great influence upon the unbeliever. Whoever would successfully serve Christ among doubters must claim these divine resources before acting¹ in his own manners.

b. In Personal Christian Living

To witness the power and love of Christ in another's life is one of the most convincing testimonies² to the doubting mind. A counselor's strong and certain personal faith in Christ creates a unique atmosphere about the puzzled student. It reveals a zeal and affection for Christ, a spiritual poise, kindness and honesty, and a lack of preoccupations. In totality, such factors begin their influence even before words are spoken.³ In contrast, Dicks reminds the Christian worker of the necessity for

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1. Taylor: op. cit., p. 21.
2. Diggle: op. cit., p. 313.
3. Dicks: op. cit., pp. 146-148. Cf. A. R. Gilliland: "The Attitude of College Students toward God and the Church", The Journal of Social Psychology, February, 1940, p. 253; and Burkhart: op. cit., pp. 30-31.

resolving his own spiritual and personality problems before¹
attempting to assist others.

c. In Personal Skills

"Although techniques are important, knowledge, insight, experience, and spiritual sensitivity are also important. . . . There is no substitute -- certainly methods cannot be a substitute -- for wisdom, critical intelligence, human sympathy,² common sense, or whatever components make a good man."

Other writers have elaborated this basic statement to include specific suggestions and admonitions for the prospective counselor. Only a complete familiarity with the teachings and problems of science, religion, and modern thought in general enables one to be held in confidence³ by those whom he would counsel regarding such matters. Upon this foundation, one must build an honest interest in others and a desire to assist them for their own⁴ sakes. In a removal from himself and his prejudices, the counselor practices objectivity and empathy. The latter involves the losing of oneself in an identification with another. Real understanding of his attitudes and reasonings thereby results, and both personalities are influenced in the process. In the counseling situation, however, empathy lacks emotional involvement. Instead, the counselor shares

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1. Dicks: op. cit., p. 144. Cf. Harrison Sacket Elliott and Grace Loucks Elliott: Solving Personal Problems, p. 203.
2. Thornton W. Merriam and others: "Religious Counseling of College Students, American Council of Education, p. v.
3. Wyckoff: op. cit., p. 37. Cf. Ibid., p. 51.
4. May: op. cit., p. 177.

his own maturity and stability.¹

As he approaches a counseling situation, the Christian worker must be prepared to expend time and patience in order to attain lasting results. The sequence of difficulties may be difficult to trace, and complete readjustment in religious beliefs and attitudes is often an extended process.² When viewing the essence of a particular case of doubt, a counselor must allow the student to grasp the causal factors and to understand the ground upon which he stands. The skillful counselor does not outline the problem for the student.³ Furthermore, he does not resort to argument. This technique obscures the main issues of Christianity by extended discussion of minor details; it arouses emotions which are contrary to the person of Christ; and it produces a psychological disposition to disagree in spite of evidences.⁴

Certain other virtues which the counselor is advised to cultivate include the ability to listen at length, with alertness and interest, to another's views;⁵ the maintenance of strict confidence regarding the proceedings of interviews;⁶ the power to remain unshocked by

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1. Ibid., pp. 75-92. Cf. Elliott and Elliott: op. cit., p. 198; and Gilliland: op. cit., p. 255.
2. Burkhart: op. cit., p. 33. Cf. Paul W. Wyckoff: "Salvation via Argument", His Magazine, May, 1947, p. 10.
3. Elliott and Elliott: op. cit., pp. 206-208. Cf. Fritz Kunkel and Ruth Gardner: What Do You Advise?, pp. 104-105.
4. Diggle: op. cit., p. 313. Cf. Paul Wyckoff: op. cit., pp. 10-11.
5. Paul Wyckoff: op. cit., p. 11. Cf. Gilliland: op. cit., p. 265; and Palmer: op. cit., p. 82.
6. Kunkel and Gardner: op. cit., p. 103. Cf. Gilliland: op. cit., p. 265.

whatever the counselee may say;¹ and the restraint of judgments or personal opinions regarding the student's words or actions.²

6. Summary

Underlying the work of a Christian counselor is the motivation to serve Christ and His children. As he approaches the problem, the counselor should be aware of the inherent value of doubt to his basic goals: the doubter's comprehension of the reasonableness of Christianity, and personal consecration to Christ. Beyond the cultivation of certain counseling skills, the Christian worker should recognize the resources which are available in the power of God, and his own personal Christian living.

C. Counseling Procedure

1. Recognition of Basic Principles

Certain basic principles undergird the work of an effective Christian counselor. Since advance recognition and consideration of these foundations is essential to fruitful counseling, they will be discussed briefly at this point.

a. Unity of Experiences

A given student lives in a specific environment, and his religious attitudes are part of his whole multi-

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1. Gilliland: op. cit., p. 265. Cf. Palmer: op. cit., p. 82.
2. Gilliland: op. cit., p. 265. Cf. Kunkel and Gardner: op. cit., pp. 103-104; and May: op. cit., p. 175.

plicity of interactions. Religious experiences cannot be severed from the unity of his total everyday experiences.¹ Thus the counselor must be concerned with the total life of the counselee, his interests, attitudes, activities, and general outlook. Familiarity with these areas before the interview will enable the counselor to make a more careful analysis of the basic difficulties.² Without adequate understanding of the roots of the problem, no real solution can be reached.³

b. Individual Differences

"There are no two individuals with precisely the same physical and mental equipment. . . . Not only are there wide variations in intellectual abilities, but there are wide variations in emotional tendencies and reactions. . . . It will not do to treat all young people alike."⁴

Instead of seeking to classify him according to a general type, the counselor must recognize that each student has his individual pattern of life.⁵ Among doubting students, for instance, the counselor may observe those who sincerely desire to learn the truth; those who express doubts in order to attract others' attention; those who merely enjoy controversy; those who wish to substantiate their pre-conceived ideas; and those who are fearful or reticent about expressing their opinions.⁶ A galaxy of factors

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1. Merriam: op. cit., p. 5.
2. Burkhart: op. cit., p. 130,149.
3. Gilliland: op. cit., p. 262. Cf. Diggle: op. cit., p. 296.
4. Mudge: op. cit., pp. vii-ix. Cf. Merriam: op. cit., p. 6.
5. May: op. cit., p. 53.
6. Gilliland: op. cit., pp. 259-261.

has led the individual student to his present frame of mind, and his problem is not precisely like that of any-one else.¹ Thus it may be seen that individualized methods must be adopted for the solution of various student dilemmas.

c. Moral Issues

In addition to the general fact of individual personalities, the counselor must be aware of any moral factor which impedes progress toward belief. Reference has already been made to the moral issue as a cause of unbelief.² As he seeks to resolve the religious doubts of a student, the counselor should remember that the will of man is basically adverse to religion. Furthermore, even rational and forcible answers to objections cannot overcome them, if they are supported by the will to disbelieve or to doubt. Thus without the cooperation of the will, reason alone cannot solve problems of doubt.³ At this point, the counselor is powerless unless he uses the divine resources mentioned above.⁴

2. Contact

In order to serve the puzzled student, the Christian counselor must make himself available. May suggests public notice in print or by open invitation,

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1. Ante, pp. 43-44.
2. Ante, pp. 38-39.
3. Diggle: op. cit., pp. 326-329.
4. Ante; p. 67.

but emphasizes the value of word of mouth recommendations by students who have been assisted. Although the wise counselor exhibits readiness, he should allow the student¹ to take the initiative insofar as possible.

3. Interview

a. Environment

In an atmosphere of informality and privacy, the most desirable results may be attained from the counseling process. As he senses the relaxed and informal tone of the counselor and the surroundings, a student more willingly shares whatever is his particular concern. Privacy may be obtained during a leisurely stroll, behind a closed door, or in the quietness of a home. Some youth may desire extreme secrecy in their conversations, fearing² misunderstanding from those whom they know.

b. Plan of Interview

1. Establishment of Rapport

In order to conduct an interview successfully, the counselor should establish rapport with the counselee. This may be defined as a satisfying emotional relationship between two persons, involving positive feelings of goodwill, friendliness, confidence, trust, and affection.³ The existence of rapport may depend particularly upon the ease

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1. May: op. cit., pp. 124-126. Cf. Gilliland: op. cit., p. 256.
2. Gilliland: op. cit., pp. 257-258. Cf. Merriam: op. cit., p. 9.
3. Dicks: op. cit., p. 137

of the counselor, his non-professional manner, his use of the other's language, and his balance of robustness and sensitivity.¹ Rapport

"is the most important factor in bringing about healing and in gaining a feeling of emotional security. . . . Rapport is the experience of friendship."²

Such a relationship is best established at the opening of the interview by the counselor's sincere putting of the student at ease.³

2. Discovery of Facts

With the counselee before him, the counselor may encourage him to state his views freely. The counselor's aim is to uncover the complexity of the problems, and to gain complete information regarding the student's own thoughts.⁴ Aside from the asking of significant questions, the counselor now occupies his most important role, that of listener. Alert and attentive, he may begin to understand the factors which have contributed to the student's doubting.⁵ Aware of deeper meanings than those actually expressed, the counselor will endeavor to distinguish between what is said and what is actually the basic problem.⁶ Above all, the counselor will attempt to under-

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1. May: op. cit., pp. 127-129.
2. Dicks: op. cit., p. 138.
3. Burkhart: op. cit., p. 115.
4. Elliott and Elliott: op. cit., pp. 227-230. Cf. Burkhart: op. cit., pp. 116-118.
5. Kunkel and Gardner: op. cit., pp. 106-112. Cf. Dicks: op. cit., pp. 154-155.
6. Burkhart: op. cit., p. 130. Cf. Merriam: op. cit., p. 17.

stand the viewpoint of the student, and to evaluate what¹
the problem means to him.

Having at least a partial understanding of the
counselee's problem, the counselor will not shift the bur-
den upon himself. Instead, he will seek to relieve ten-
sions and anxieties by his own personal calmness, and by
suggesting that solutions and resources are available to
meet the difficulty. The student will continue to bear²
responsibility for his own perplexities and decisions.
After the counselee appears to have contributed all that
he knows or perceives regarding his doubts, the counselor
may assist him in clarifying their meaning. Through dis-
cussion rather than lecture, the counselor may indicate
causal factors and other relationships of which the student
may be unaware. Finally, he will guide the counselee to³
state for himself the crux of the issues involved. A
listing of specific doubts may be helpful, and may center⁴
attention upon basic questions. In drawing conclusions,
the counselor must be certain that his friend accepts all⁵
that he says, and must take no understanding for granted.

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1. Merriam: op. cit., p. 11. Cf. Burkhart: op. cit., p. 130.
2. Merriam: op. cit., p. 10, 12.
3. Ibid., pp. 15-17. Cf. Dicks: op. cit., pp. 158-159;
and Kunkel and Gardner: op. cit., p. 113.
4. Diggle: op. cit., p. 310.
5. Dicks: op. cit., p. 159. Cf. Elliott and Elliott: op.
cit., p. 230.

3. Resolution of Doubts

Following an understanding by the student of his doubts and their causes, the counselor may be ready to approach him upon an individual basis with specific Christian evidences and teachings. He will begin with whatever truth the student accepts, and build logically¹ and slowly upon that basis. Possible methods of approach will be presented in the following section. When the student has been confronted with the Christian message, he must necessarily make a decision in favor of Christ or otherwise. This should be based upon a consideration of² all possible solutions, and their respective implications. Again it is to be emphasized that the decision must be that of the student himself, apart from the advice or influence of the counselor.³ In order to gain valid conclusions, the student should be reminded that intellectual⁴ honesty is the only means by which these can be achieved.

D. Specific Avenues of Approach

The particular problem confronting the student, and the area or areas in which he has retained some certainty determine the approach which the counselor will use in attempting to resolve the difficulty. Beginning at the

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1. Best: op. cit., pp. 31-33.
2. Burkhart: op. cit., pp. 119-121. Cf. Elliott and Elliott: op. cit., p. 234.
3. May: op. cit., p. 150. Cf. ante, pp. 65-66.
4. Burton: op. cit., p. 117. Cf. Welsh: op. cit., p. 191; and Cole: op. cit., p. 181.

point of certainty or of most potential certainty, the counselor will endeavor to present the reasonable basis for Christian belief.¹ The following possible avenues of approach include frequent areas of doubt, and the most powerful historical apologetics to Christianity. A combination of several areas of approach may be desirable in most individual cases. In addition to their prophylactic value, certain measures suggested in chapter three may be appropriately used in curative counseling. In whatever approach is used, the counselor should challenge the student to discover truth for himself. Others have believed Christianity; where have they found it to be valid?²

1. Presuppositions

Because presuppositions determine one's ultimate conclusions, they are highly important in the process of achieving valid beliefs. Science, for instance, uses presuppositions and theories in order to further its work. Hence, to be consistent, science cannot deny the reasonableness of the basic Christian supposition, that of the existence of God. Furthermore, to presuppose that no God exists is to assert that one knows everything. Yet to admit that one does not know all things is to allow the possibility of the existence of God. Therefore, upon a basis of reasonable presupposition, the belief in the existence of God is tenable.³

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1. Ante, p. p. 76.
2. Wyckoff: op. cit., p. 38.
3. Taylor: op. cit., pp. 15-16.

2. Christian Apologetics

It has been indicated that the intellectual doubts of college students may include questions regarding specific Christian teachings.¹ Hence, the Christian counselor must be prepared to present a reasonable and convincing apologetic in these areas. According to various authors, he should be particularly informed of valid evidences for God, Jesus as the Son of God, the Bible as the Word of God, miracles, and personal immortality.

Frequent suggestions which have been advanced for an approach to God include the existence of the moral² law³ and variations of Immanuel Kant's three arguments. In dealing with Jesus Christ, the counselor is advised to consider His historicity,⁴ His personal character,⁵ His teachings and works,⁶ contemporary and later responses to His ministry,⁷ and evidences for His resurrection.⁸

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1. Ante, pp. 12-13.
2. C. S. Lewis: The Case for Christianity, pp. 7-30. Cf. Rudisill: op. cit., pp. 188-189.
3. A. Cressy Morrison: Man Does Not Stand Alone, pp. 13-36. Cf. Rudisill: op. cit., pp. 187-189; Best: op. cit., pp. 50-53; Tillett: op. cit., p. 256; Palmer: op. cit., p. 186; and Henry C. Thiessen: "So You're a Christian, Eh?", His Magazine, December, 1944, p. 14.
4. Wilbur M. Smith: "How to Help Skeptics Find Christ", His Magazine, June, 1945, pp. 19-20.
5. Diggle: op. cit., p. 229. Cf. Palmer: op. cit., pp. 190-191.
6. Thiessen: op. cit., p. 16. Cf. Ingram: op. cit., p. 41; and Palmer: op. cit., p. 190.
7. Thiessen: op. cit., p. 16. Cf. Taylor: op. cit., p. 18; Palmer: op. cit., p. 190; and Ingram: op. cit., p. 43.
8. Smith: Therefore, Stand: p. 363-427. Cf. Taylor: op. cit., pp. 13-19.

The authority and validity of the Bible might first be approached by a consideration of the logic of a recorded divine revelation.¹ Other methods which are suggested would deal with the Bible's internal claims to be the Word of God,² and its historical accuracy.³

In regard to the possibility of miracles, his basic presuppositions⁴ may well be considered by the student.⁵ The relation of natural law to miracles is a further step.⁶ Immortality may be approached upon the following bases: it is a universal belief and hope;⁷ it may be a practical necessity;⁸ and it is in harmony with man's own nature.⁹

3. Philosophy

The greatest classroom contribution to student doubts¹⁰ has been made in the field of philosophy. Awareness of and answers to problems which arise in this area are thus essential to the well-informed counselor. Various

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1. Best: op. cit., p. 61. Cf. Smith: "How to Help Skeptics Find Christ", pp. 19-20; Thiessen: op. cit., p. 15; and
2. Thiessen: op. cit., p. 15.
3. Welsh: op. cit., pp. 163-167.
4. Ante, p. 77.
5. Taylor: op. cit., p. 14. Cf. Ingram: op. cit., pp. 47-51.
6. C. S. Lewis: Miracles, pp. 15-18. Cf. Ward: op. cit., p. 133; and Taylor: op. cit., pp. 13-14.
7. Thiessen: op. cit., pp. 16-17. Cf. Ward: op. cit., p. 195.
8. Ward: op. cit., pp. 200-202. Cf. Weston and Harlow: op. cit., p. 286.
9. Weston and Harlow: op. cit., p. 283. Cf. Palmer: op. cit., p. 199.
10. Ante, p. 35.

authors have written that the limits of human knowledge are fruitful realms to be considered with the puzzled student.¹

Because the problem of evil is often central in the bewilderment of a student,² this issue may be a significant approach. The counselor is advised first to distinguish between physical and moral evil.³ As he talks with the student, The Christian worker should frankly acknowledge the misery caused by each type of evil. However, his emphasis may be upon the logical value, beneficial results, and Christian significance of each.⁴

4. Science

As he considers the relation of science to Christianity, the Christian counselor will remember that the basic question is the seeming sufficiency of science and lack of need for religion.⁵ The actual interrelation and interdependence of the two fields is recommended as a valuable and basic consideration.⁶ The limits of science and religion may be discussed in order to clarify the student's thinking.⁷

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1. Burton: op. cit., pp. 72-107. Cf. Rudisill: op. cit., p. 188; and Best: op. cit., pp. 47-49.
2. Ante, p. 38.
3. Burton: op. cit., pp. 92-93. Cf. Palmer: op. cit., pp. 192-194.
4. Cf. Welsh: op. cit., pp. 313-317; C.S. Lewis: The Problem of Pain, pp. 14-36; and 85-103; Tillett: op. cit., pp. 539-547; Burton: op. cit., pp. 94-95; and Ward: op. cit., pp. 19-24.
5. Ante, pp. 36-37.
6. Weston and Harlow: op. cit., pp. 171-172. Cf. Wickenden: Mouth Looks at Religion, pp. 34-38.
7. DeMille L. Wallace: "The Frustration of the Educated Man", Christendom, Winter, 1947, p. 63. Cf. John Brobeck: "Science Doesn't Prove the Bible", His Magazine, May, 1944, pp. 24-26.

By its use of hypotheses, science discovers that which is valid and that which is untrue. Palmer advocates the same technique for questioning young people. By proposing with honesty certain hypotheses based upon Christianity, one may discover pragmatically whether they are actually valid. Final judgment of the tenets of Christianity should be reserved until fair trial has been given.¹

Because evolutionary theories are still prominently taught as fact on many college campuses, the Christian counselor must be adequately informed of their theoretical nature. Latest scientific evidences should be in his possession so that he may indicate to the student that biological evolution is merely one theory of the origin and advance of life.²

5. The Faith of Scholars

In his assertion that Christianity is for the intellectual as well as the uneducated, Tillett stresses that truly great men of the world have acknowledged God and Christ. The doubting student may not have been cognizant of this fact. These great men have actually believed, not merely assented.³ The greatest scientists from 1650 to 1920 are generally agreed to be Newton, Faraday, Maxwell, Kelvin, Pasteur, and Raleigh. "These were earnest

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1. Palmer: op. cit., pp. 83-84.
2. "Facts on Evolution", His Magazine, September, 1945, pp. 26-35; Cf. Smith: Therefore, Stand, pp. 325-326.
3. Tillett: op. cit., pp. 495-499.
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seekers after truth, and yet every one of them has been a devout and professed follower of religion."¹ The current list of American Christian scientists includes Walcott, Osborn, Conklin, Coulter, Breasted, and Chamberlain.² Stone considers Augustine's famous principle to be particularly applicable to the area of intelligent belief: I do not seek to know in order that I may believe, but to believe in order that I may know.³

6. Use of Scripture

The most fruitful use of the Bible with a doubting student may be the challenge to read slowly and honestly the Gospel of John. If he understands the promise of John 7:17 beforehand, the sincere and objective student can only read with the realization that he is examining a time-honored and likely source of truth. The Spirit of God may begin to work when His Word is before man.⁴ If the student considers the Bible and its message to be non-intelligible and unimportant, the use of I Corinthians 1:18 and 2:14 and Psalm 14:1 may prove to be enlightening. Such passages as John 3:18-20 and 5:44 and II Corinthians 4:3-4 may indicate the basic sources of doubt and thus clarify a student's spiritual viewpoint.⁵

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1. Robert A. Millikan: "Religion and Science", Christian Education, September, 1947, p. 271. Cf. Rudisill: op. cit., p. 181.
2. Rudisill: op. cit., p. 181.
3. John Timothy Stone: Recruiting for Christ, p. 174.
4. R. A. Torrey: How to Bring Men to Christ, pp. 67-70.
5. Ibid., p. 66. Cf. Stone: op. cit., p. 180.

To substantiate the Scriptural insistence upon new birth, the Christian worker may use such external evidence as man's own sense of inadequacy to do the right, and the abundant examples of personalities transformed by Christ.¹ A consideration of the question of Scriptural inspiration may be necessary in connection with the use of the Bible among doubters. In whatever approach is adopted, the counselor may well repeat the emphasis of Homrighausen: "The Bible makes clear that true knowledge of God comes to those who are identified with and surrendered to him."²

7. Consideration of Personal Needs

As the counselor becomes familiar with the personal life of his counselee, he may gain definite response by appealing to the inner desires and needs of the youth. These may be more general³ or very specific in individual instances. At every point, Christianity is able to give constructive assistance. The challenge of the many thousands who have been inwardly satisfied with the Gospel solution to their needs may be an effective avenue of approach to doubts.⁴

8. Companions

Since doubts may arise from over-absorption in non-religious affairs, various authors suggest Christian

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1. Thiessen: op. cit., p. 17.
2. Homrighausen: op. cit., p. 65.
3. Ante, pp. 53-54.
4. Smith: "The Bible, Greatest of the Great Books", His Magazine, January, 1948, p. 30. Cf. Elliott and Elliott; op. cit., p. 302.

companionship and participation in spiritual activities as solutions to the problem. The joy of others' Christian faith, and the obvious effectiveness of Christian principles as they are utilized, offer forceful proof of Christianity's validity.¹

9. Daily Christian Living

As small or larger elements of faith appear in the young person, the Christian worker may begin to guide him into a daily relationship with God. Assistance in personal meditation and prayer, in group worship, in reading Christian literature, and in finding Christian companions is essential in the establishment of faith.² Believing that the practice of goodness breeds faith, Diggle writes, "The best way to understand religions is to practice it."³ The emphasis of positive modes of Christian conduct, rather than of negative prohibitions,⁴ is also advocated.

E. Summary

The primary objective of this chapter has been the presentation of information which will assist the average Christian worker who seeks to resolve the doubts

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1. Best: op. cit., pp. 40-44. Cf. Diggle: op. cit., p. 330; and Gilliland: op. cit., p. 68.
2. Merriam: op. cit., pp. 23-25. Cf. Isaac Beckes: "Emotions in the Religious Development of Young People", Religious Education, September-October, 1947, p. 282.
3. Diggle: op. cit., p. 313. Cf. Beckes: op. cit., pp. 281-282.
4. Burkhart: op. cit., p. 123.

of college students regarding Christianity. Before specific avenues of approach to individual doubts were considered, it was felt that the procedure of counseling should be introduced to the Christian worker who will use it. Hence the role of the counselor, and the procedure which he may follow in dealing with puzzled young people were first studied.

The task of the counselor has been defined as the establishment of a deep understanding or sharing of life with another, resulting in a changing of personality and the discovery by the other of the solution of his problems. Adequate motivation for the work of the Christian counselor is the love of Christ as it radiates from him. In approaching the questioning college student, the counselor must recognize the basic value of doubts. They are normal, potential avenues of true knowledge and certainty and are not to be regarded as sin.

As he deals with college students in doubt, the Christian worker has a two-fold objective. First, he seeks to guide the individual student into a comprehension of the reasonableness of Christianity. Second, the Christian worker strives to lead the student beyond mere intellectual assent to a personal decision to accept Christ as Saviour.

The resources of the Christian counselor may be found in the simultaneous working of the power of God for individuals' salvation, in the practical outworking of his own personal Christian faith, and in certain skills

required in the dealing with other people. These include common sense, empathy, familiarity with modern thought, patience, ability to guide another's thought, attentive listening, maintenance of confidence, and absence of argumentation and judgment.

Before undertaking the process of counseling, the Christian worker should be aware of certain basic principles which operate in the counselee's life. These include the unity of experiences in a person's life, individual differences, and the presence of moral antagonism to the Christian message in the average person.

In the counseling process itself, the Christian worker will endeavor to produce an atmosphere of informality and privacy. His concerns as he speaks to the student will be to establish rapport and to discover by listening and interpretation the facts underlying the expressed doubt. Discussion may then reveal the causal factors to the student, who should be led to state the essence of the issue for himself.

Beginning with whatever truth the student accepts, the counselor will build logically upon this foundation in his efforts to resolve the doubt. Positive, reasonable approaches will be used, and the student will be confronted with the necessity for intellectually honest choice upon the basis of what he has heard. The approach to be used by the counselor will be chosen with the nature of the particular doubt in view. In the area of Christian apologetics,

he may consider reasonable bases for acceptance of God, Jesus as the Christ, the Bible as the Word of God, Biblical miracles, and immortality. In the philosophical realm, possible approaches may be a consideration of the limits of human knowledge and the problem of evil. The most fruitful uses of science may be discussion of its relation to religion, their respective limits, and evolutionary theories. Other possible approaches include recognition of the faith which many scholars have held, the Scriptural view of doubt and unbelief, Christian answers to personal needs, Christian companionship, and daily practice of Christianity.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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A. Restatement of the Problem

Numerous authors have revealed the presence of doubts regarding Christianity among college students. Although the majority of these students do not appear to experience difficulties in belief, the problem is a prevalent minority issue. Christian pastors, teachers, laymen, and other leaders who deal with college students will therefore encounter this problem of doubt.

In order effectively to assist these young people in attaining a vital personal faith in Jesus Christ, Christian workers must understand the nature of the problem and the possible methods for its solution. Hence this study has been undertaken for the benefit of the average Christian who may lack this understanding. It has been designed to give further insight into three aspects of student doubts: their sources, their prevention, and their resolution.

B. Summary

According to the findings of chapter two, a variety of interrelated factors contribute to doubts in the mind of an individual student. Those factors which operate in pre-college experiences appear to be even more influential than those which are associated with higher

education. During early adolescence, abstract thought and a desire for personal independence appear. The young person begins to draw his own conclusions regarding religion as he has learned it and as he sees it in others' lives. The validity which Christianity begins to hold for him therefore depends upon the quality of the Christian teaching which he has received. The possibility of the appearance of doubt is enhanced by dogmatic and irrelevant teaching which is the inheritance of many youth. Upon such foundations are added the basic influences of many modern colleges: an intellectual spirit which has little regard for religion's contribution to man's life, and instruction in science and philosophy which is often counter to orthodox Christianity. These developments may be considered to be the primary causes of doubt regarding Christianity among college students.

Recognition of the dual nature of doubts regarding Christianity was noted in chapter three. They may be extremely destructive and painful, but they also are potential reinforcements of abiding faith. In a positive approach designed to retain the values of reasonable questioning on the part of young people, three areas of action have been mentioned. In the home, primary Christian teaching and attitudes are learned. Parents may exert powerful influence upon childhood concepts of Christianity, and may be sympathetically and informatively prepared to counsel youth in all areas of bewilderment, including

religion. The school and college may promote honest expression of Christian belief by professors in all departments. They may also provide the student with complete information regarding all possible theories, and recognize the possibility of sources of data beyond the realm of science itself. Finally, the school or college may undergird all of its teaching with an emphasis upon the contribution of religion to human history. In order to prevent or alleviate the negative characteristics of doubt, the church may emphasize reasonable and discriminating teaching of the Bible as literature. The church also may develop the confidence of youth in its work by meeting their expressed desires, by nourishing new Christians, and by frank consideration of young people's problems regarding Christianity as they arise. Adequately trained counselors for prospective college students are particularly valuable.

The function and procedure of the Christian counselor, as he deals with doubting students, has been considered in chapter four. Motivated by the love of Christ, the Christian counselor seeks to share the student's life and assist him in uncovering the solution to his own problem. His objectives for the student are a comprehension of the reasonableness of Christianity, and his personal consecration to Christ. The resources of the Christian worker are the power of God, personal Christian living, and skills of human understanding. Recognizing the variety of experiences which influence an individual life, the counselor first

seeks to establish rapport in his contact with the student. He then endeavors to understand causal factors and their interrelations. After guiding the student to an understanding of his difficulty, the counselor may begin to build upon whatever element of truth which his counselee accepts. His chosen approach may be a reasonable discussion of certain areas of Christian apologetics, philosophy, science and religion, or practical demonstrations of Christianity.

C. Conclusions

1. In view of the tremendous non-Christian forces which operate in the social and educational worlds of the adolescent, his Christian training assumes paramount significance. Only a reasonable and thorough faith in Christ, gained in the home and church, can adequately counter modern secular influences.

2. The fact that doubts among college students may be traced in part to the character of both Christian and secular education today further emphasizes the vital need for revision in these areas. Almost a platitude in many Christian circles, this recommendation nevertheless gathers new weight as each negative evidence is submitted.

3. In the establishment of reasonable faith among young people, the church might wisely arouse the interest of educated Christian laymen. Their bases for Christian belief, and the thought processes by which they

achieved these beliefs, could be stimulating testimony to students who are learning to think for themselves.

4. Where the church is ineffective in providing a positive approach to doubts among college students, an even more central position must be assumed by the Christian home. The fruitful companion-counselor role which parents may undertake, if they possess the ability and will, has been indicated.

5. In order to be effective, curative counseling of doubting students involves more than the ability to converse regarding one's own basis of faith. Understanding of the many possible sources of doubt and of the most fruitful areas of approach to the doubter seems essential in restoring or establishing reasonable Christian faith in young people.

6. Related to the previous conclusion is the fact that presentation of Biblical statements of truth is insufficient to one who cannot yet believe in supernatural revelation. Merely to insist upon belief in that which holds no validity for the student is ill-directed counseling.

7. In the pursuit of this study, it has become obvious that no literature now exists to assist the Christian worker in dealing with students who doubt. The problem and its causes have been somewhat discussed; but no compact and useful sources are available to the Christian worker as he considers positive approaches and curative methods. The field is therefore open for exploration and

contribution.

8. Finally, the student doubter of Christianity is not a lost cause. With the power of God and the reasonable Christian message of salvation at his disposal, intelligent and abiding faith in Christ may be his inheritance.

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