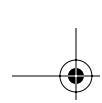


PREFACE

I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). We don't know the name of the man who spoke these memorable words to Jesus. Whoever he was, his words capture perfectly the anxieties of many Christians. They have discovered in Jesus Christ something far more wonderful than they had ever dared to hope. God often seems very close in the first days of faith. Yet nagging doubts sometimes remain. Can I really trust in the gospel? Surely it's just too good to be true! Does God really love me? Can I be of any use to God? Deep down, many Christians worry about questions like these, often feeling ashamed for doing so. And so they suppress them. They hope that they will go away. Sometimes they do—but often they don't.

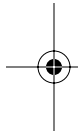
In this book I try to explain, as simply and clearly as possible, what doubt is and how it arises. We live in a culture that doubts everything as a matter of principle, often seeing commitment to any beliefs as the ultimate secular sin. Yet it is not enough to discuss doubt in such general terms. For this reason, I move on to deal with a series of very specific doubts and anxieties that many Christians experience, often in the first few years of their lives as believers. I offer some suggestions for handling doubt and for





making your faith less vulnerable to it. Its main theme is simple: Doubt is an invitation to grow in faith and understanding, rather than something we need to panic about or get preoccupied with. We must all learn to grasp and value what Alfred, Lord Tennyson calls the “sunnier side of doubt.”

This work had its origins in some talks given to students from Oxford University at a house party in December 1988. I rewrote it in December 2005 to take account of major cultural changes since that time, as well as my own deepened experience of engaging with the questions that trouble so many people. I hope that it will be a useful resource to those who experience doubt themselves, or would like to help their family and friends cope with its challenges.



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