



Alister McGrath (D.Phil., Oxford University) is president of the Oxford Center for Christian Apologetics and professor of historical theology at Oxford University. His numerous and wide-ranging historical and theological studies include *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (2 vols.), *The Twilight of Atheism*, *Theology for Amateurs*, “I Believe”: *Exploring the Apostles’ Creed*, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundation of Doctrinal Criticism*, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation and Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*.

### Doubt: What It Is—and What It Isn’t

*“It’s surprising how many Christians prefer not to talk about doubt. Some even refuse to think about it. Somehow, admitting to doubt seems to amount to insulting God, calling his integrity into question. It is quite understandable that you might feel this way about doubt: on the one hand, you may think that admitting to doubt is a sign of spiritual or intellectual weakness; on the other, you may be reluctant to admit those doubts to your friends, in case you upset them, perhaps damaging their own faith.*

*“Many Christians thus suppress their doubts. They think that it is improper to own up to them. Or they are afraid that they will look stupid if they do. Maybe they are worried that their pride or self-esteem would suffer. Yet one of the reasons why so many Christians have difficulty in coping with doubt is that they confuse it with two quite separate ideas, which at first seem similar but are actually rather different.*

*“In the first place, doubt is not skepticism—the decision to doubt everything deliberately, as a matter of principle.*

*“In the second, it’s not unbelief—the decision not to have faith in God. Unbelief is an act of will, rather than a difficulty in understanding. . . .*

*“Doubt often means asking questions or voicing uncertainties from the standpoint of faith. You believe—but you have difficulties with that faith, or are worried about it in some way. **Faith and doubt aren’t mutually exclusive**—but faith and unbelief are.*

*“Doubt is probably a permanent feature of the Christian life. It’s like some kind of spiritual growing pain. Sometimes it recedes into the background; at other times it comes to the forefront, making its presence felt with a vengeance. . . . It is helpful to think of doubt as a symptom of our human frailty, of our reluctance to trust God. . . .*

**“Faith assures us that, though we do not see the picture totally, we nevertheless see it reliably.”**

**Book Info:** *Doubting*, January 2007 Release, 156 pages, paper, 5 1/2 x 8 1/4 inches, \$13.00, ISBN-13 978-0-8308-3352-8