

# *Preface*

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The Modern Church 'Making Sense of Christianity' series aims to defend Christianity by offering accounts of it that make sense to the modern mind. Many people are put off Christianity because the versions they have heard of seem superstitious, anti-scientific or immoral. We hope these books will help make Christianity accessible to those seeking a credible account of how we relate to the divine, inviting readers to affirm rather than suspend their critical faculties. Each book focuses on one contentious issue.

To some, perhaps, these books may seem destructive, as they challenge certain versions of Christianity. The intention, however, is constructive. Christianity as it is sometimes expressed demands a stance of defiance, refusing to accept modern society's beliefs about evolution, or gender equality, or whatever symbol of difference is current at the time. These books respond to society more positively, with critical support. By and large we welcome modern society's search for understanding and its new insights. The support remains critical because what seems true at any one time may later turn out to be mistaken, and we expect Christianity to be a constructive contributor to modern knowledge, offering insights as well as receiving them.

The focus of this book is God. Although the idea is declining, many still believe that science has disproved God's existence. I aim to show that the claims of science are supported, rather than denied, by the belief that there is a divine being, a creative mind with intentions and values.

The text is an edited version of a series of lectures I gave at St Bride's Church, Liverpool, in 2010 and 2011. The discussions on those occasions enabled me to clarify the issues, and I am especially grateful for the contributions of Steve Flatt and Petra Elsmore. I have been greatly helped by discussions with supportive friends who are unbelievers; as well as Steve, discussions with Paul Doran, John Halliday and others at the local branch of Philosophy in Pubs have helped me think

## Preface

through the issues. I am also grateful to Paul Badham and my wife Marguerite for reading the text, spotting errors and advising improvements in a supportive manner.

I have tried to avoid repeating ground covered in my earlier books, but Chapter 1 summarizes a case made at greater length in *Liberal Faith in a Divided Church* (O Books, 2008) and Chapter 4 makes a similar case to Chapter 7 of *Good God: Green Theology and the Value of Creation* (Jon Carpenter, 1997).

I have finished writing this book at a time when world capitalism is in crisis. The Occupy movement is growing. EU leaders are agonizing over Greece's debts and which country will be next. It may seem that analysing theories about God is an unnecessary luxury. I believe the opposite. If human minds are the only minds capable of working out what we ought to do, then the best humanity will ever do is serve the interests of the most powerful. If, on the other hand, a wiser, more benign mind is responsible for the way we have evolved, then it makes sense to hope that humanity can rise above self-interest and achieve a better way of living.