

Introduction

This book is one of the first in the Modern Church 'Making Sense of Christianity' series. As with the rest of the series, it aims to promote a liberal and compassionate approach to its subject. There are many people who are put off Christianity by the way the doctrines of atonement and redemption are communicated. People find it hard to believe in a loving God who appears at the same time to be so angry and vindictive. Many of them also feel that the things Christians teach, publicly or privately, do not connect with them in any meaningful way. This is either because they are put off by the narrow theological framework in which Christianity is often presented, or because what is said about atonement and redemption seems highly theoretical and remote from their experience of life as it really is. The book therefore seeks to address some of the difficult questions that these people are asking. It is also written for those who may be wanting to return to their faith, or who would like to explore it in greater depth or in a more open theological landscape, having perhaps suffered personally as a result of too great an emphasis being placed on the penal substitutionary theory of atonement. My hope is that they will all find in this book a new understanding of what it really means to live as people who have been forgiven and brought home into a more honest and deeper relationship with God through the atoning and redemptive work of Jesus Christ.