

suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

FATHER

'I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.'

There are some people who do not believe in the existence of God or gods but for most religious people belief in a creator is the starting point of their faith.

People wonder about the answers to questions, such as 'How did the world begin?', 'Why are we here?' and 'What is life all about?' Science provides some answers but these ultimate questions also provoke religious responses. You cannot expect to prove beliefs in the way in which you might check a mathematical fact or a scientific formula. Beliefs are a matter of faith.

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'

The Apostles' Creed echoes these words which are found in Genesis 1:1 at the start of the Bible. The existence of God was taken for granted.

Christians reciting the Apostles' Creed begin with the same assumption. They accept that God is the ground of our being, the First Cause, the reason behind the existence of everything. They believe that God is the designer and creator of the universe. This is the same God who is written about in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. This is the same God that Jesus prayed to as Father.

Not only did God the Father create the universe but he sustains it. He continues to rule and control everything. God is almighty. He is omnipotent; having the power to do anything. He is omniscient; knowing everything. He is omnipresent; God is everywhere. No one can hide from God.

THINKING POINT

Theologians talk of the transcendence of God. By this they mean all the characteristics which portray God as mysterious and beyond human comprehension, imagination and explanation. God's supreme greatness, holiness and transcendence commands the response, from humans, of awe, worship, fear, wonder and respect. Even the word 'God' is beyond definition.

Can you think of any descriptions of God in Christian hymns which can add to this idea of the transcendence of the almighty Creator God?

Some religious people would never try to paint a picture of God. What do you think are their reasons?

It is natural to want to know about the character or nature of God. If there is one God who created the universe, what is this one God like? Is God really so distant and so remote that we can never know?

It is important to Christians that God is identified as Father even before acknowledging him as creator. Jesus taught his disciples to begin their prayers with the words 'Our Father'. Jesus taught that God cares about everything and everybody; that God the Father is a loving Father, who is kind and merciful but also just and fair. Christians affirm that we can know these things because God has revealed himself to humans in many ways and continues to do so.

One way God reveals himself is in the world which he created. Christians believe not only in the transcendence of God but also in the immanence of God. This means that he is close to and cares for even the smallest part of his creation. Christians believe that the natural world can point people

towards God. Of course, people need to be in a sensitive and receptive frame of mind to be able to see the spiritual dimension in the physical, material world.

To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an hour.

(*Auguries of Innocence*, William Blake (1757–1827))

God also reveals himself through the holy book, the Bible, through the Christian church and through the individual conscience. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are full of accounts of God communicating with individuals in all sorts of ways. Christians believe that God continues to do this. The Bible itself is called the Word of God by many Christians and they study it to obtain guidance from God in their daily life.

Most important of all for Christians is the belief that God revealed himself in his Son.

FOR DISCUSSION

Read the account of the creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3. Thousands of years old, it was originally written in Hebrew verse and was probably used in processions and ceremonies at the start of the Jewish year. What ideas is it expressing? How far does it fit with scientific ideas?

Some Christians feel uneasy that Christianity uses patriarchal masculine language so much. What do you feel about the suggestion that God should be called Mother rather than Father?

Keeping in mind Christian beliefs about God, suggest global issues which you think Christians might be concerned about and explain why.

SON IXTOS



I	Iesous	Jesus
C	Christos	Christ
TH	Theou	of God
U	Uios	Son
S	Soter	Saviour

Some historians think Christians may have hidden in the catacombs under Rome during persecution. It is certain that the Christians buried their dead in the tunnels because archaeological remains have been found there. These include inscriptions. Some use secret signs which were necessary at the time. It was dangerous to be a Christian.

The cross is an obvious symbol for Christians. Another symbol they use is a fish. The sign of the fish is appropriate for followers of Jesus whose first disciples were fishermen but it signifies far more. It is in fact an acronym. Each letter is the initial of a word. The sentence expresses belief in Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour.

Another symbol is known as the Chi-Rho. These are the first two letters of Christ in Greek.

The Apostles' Creed gives Jesus the title 'Christ'. It is often treated as if it were his surname.

The belief that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) runs throughout the New Testament. Both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark refer to him as Jesus Christ in their first verse. He is frequently