

The Nature of God

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| Omnipotence | God's power is immense and immeasurable, seen through creation, miracles, wonders of universe. Nothing can ultimately defeat God's power. God created the heavens and the earth 'Let there be light'. |
| Omniscient | God judges us based on our actions so he knows everything that we do |
| Omnibenevolent | Jesus' death on the cross is the supreme example of agape. The parable of the prodigal son also shows God's all-loving nature – he was given a fresh start even though he had wasted away all his inherited money. |
| Omnipresent | God hears all prayers and so he must be everywhere all at once 'nothing is impossible with God' |
| Just and Fair | The Bible says that God expects believers to treat their neighbours fairly, but also helping to relieve suffering and injustice. 'let justice roll on like a river' |

The Oneness of God and the Trinity

- God can be known in three ways, and each has its own characteristics, they are three forms of the same single entity.
 - Most Christians believe that God's nature has been revealed to the world in distinct ways:
 - As the loving creator and sustainer of universe (God the Father). Shows omnipotence of God.
 - As the saviour who became incarnate and lived, died, and rose again (God the Son). Reassures that God understands suffering and shows the omnibenevolence of God.
 - As the source of strength which Christians find at work in their hearts (God the Holy Spirit). Can take any form, giver of life, answerer of prayers, brings people to God and comforts them, shows omniscience and omnipresence of God.
 - The nature of God is totally beyond human understanding, so it is not possible to make full sense of it
 - Belief in God as Trinity makes the best sense of what is in the Bible and experience in their lives.
- At his final meeting on Earth, Jesus said '...baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'

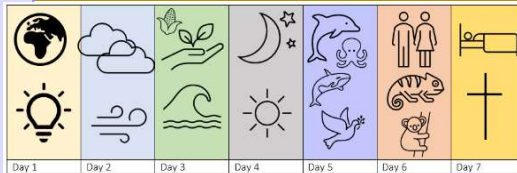


How belief in the Trinity influences Christians

- In baptism ceremonies, Christians mention the Trinity throughout, including during the anointment and before when the godparents declare their faith in God as Three-in-One.
- Many hymns mention the Trinity, and at the end of saying or singing a psalm, there are the words: 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit'
- Christians must try to show people the same love and respect that flows between the three Persons of the Trinity

Creation: role of Trinity

- If God is the trinity, then the Trinity must have existed before the created, so for Christians, the Trinity is the way in which the world was created.
- The Nicene Creed begins with 'We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth.'
- Genesis begins with 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth'
- The role of the Son of God is described in the Gospel of John. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Through him all things were made.' John makes it clear that Jesus was vital for creation.
- God created the world by acting through the Holy Spirit 'the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.'



Creation: significance and message

- God is the sole and omnipotent Creator and the source of everything in the universe
- God created a universe that was ordered not chaotic
- The universe does not exist by chance and human lives have meaning and purpose, so this encourages Christians to adopt a positive approach to life.
- Every aspect of God's creation was good: it fulfilled His purposes for it. 'God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.'
- Human beings are created in God's image, so they reflect God's capacity for creativity and relationship. 'So God created mankind in his own image'
- Humans should behave like God by being loving and fair, humans are important to God so everyone should be treated with respect
- Human beings are given authority over the rest of the created world. 'Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky'

Interpretations

- Creationists:** take the story literally believing that the process took 6 days, and they are descended from Adam and Eve.
- Liberal:** Genesis is more of a parable, or a symbolic description. They are open to other theories such as the Big Bang theory and evolution. Roman Catholic Church has accepted both theories.
- The creation story can help Christians further understand God's nature. God is eternal as he made time and was present prior to it. He is omnipotent as he created the universe through words. He is benevolent as he brought humankind to life and gave them the world.

Afterlife and Judgment

- Life after death is the idea that, although your body may die, your soul can live on, the body will be resurrected for Judgement Day, just as Jesus was after crucifixion.
- Christians believe this resurrection happens at the Last Judgement

Interpretations

- Some Christians believe Jesus will return in the Second Coming. The Nicene Creed states that Jesus 'will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead' so Jesus will make and deliver the judgement. 'No one comes to the Father except through me'
- Roman Catholics** believe there are two judgements: the particular and general. The particular judgement occurs immediately after death and is personal, and the general judgement takes place at the Second Coming.
- Some do not believe in the Second Coming; they think Jesus was trying to express something that humans cannot fully understand.

Afterlife: impact

- Some Christians reject the idea of cremation because of their belief in that physical resurrection
- Christians will both strive to keep their faith strong by following the teachings of Jesus, and show the same agape to their neighbours (Parable of sheep and goat)

Heaven/Hell

- God will judge you to go to heaven or hell. Those that God finds acceptable will enter heaven, as in the Parable of the sheep and the goats. Many see heaven and hell as states of mind

| Heaven | Hell |
|--|---|
| Great beauty and serenity, a paradise where you'll spend eternity with God – as long as you believe in Jesus and follow his teachings you can be saved by God's grace. 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life' | A place of torment and pain without God – nonbelievers and those who have led bad lives 'Eternal punishment' |
| | Roman Catholic: any connection to God will be severed forever 'This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God...is called hell' (CCC) |
| | God wouldn't punish people for eternity. Those who God finds unacceptable will be annihilated. 'The only end is total non-being' (CofE report) |
| | Some believe that a loving God wouldn't send anyone to hell (Universalism). |

- Purgatory:** Roman Catholics believe that here, sins are punished, and the person must 'Undergo purification' (CCC) before the soul can move on to heaven. They will pray for lost loved ones to spend as little time in Purgatory as possible and to help them get into Heaven.

Sin

Original sin

Incarnation

Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension

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| The Last Supper | Shortly before his death, Jesus and his disciples ate their Passover meal in Jerusalem. At the meal Jesus gave the disciples bread saying, 'this is my body' and wine saying, 'this is my blood' 'do this in remembrance of me'. These words are important to many Christians today who remember Jesus through the Eucharist. Jesus also washed his disciples' feet, which teaches Christians about how important it is to serve others. |
| The arrest | Jesus went to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he was arrested. |
| Trial | Jesus was found guilty of blasphemy and tried before the Roman governor Pilate – he offered to release him, but the crowd said, 'Crucify him!'. He was flogged before being sent to die. |
| Crucifixion | Jesus was crucified in Golgotha next to two robbers. A sign was fixed to his cross 'The King of the Jews' and passers-by mocked how he couldn't save himself. Jesus cried 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' so Jesus understands how people can feel abandoned in suffering. 'Father into your hands I commit my spirit' |
| Resurrection | Jesus's body was put in a tomb, but it was found empty. 'He is not here; he has risen' The resurrection is important as it shows Christians that there is life after death – death becomes less frightening. It shows how powerful God is, giving people strength in life and it is proof that Jesus is the Son of God. 'I am the resurrection and the life' |
| Ascension | Over 40 days after resurrection, Jesus's disciples met him, then he ascended into Heaven to be with God the Father. He told his disciples that he will 'prepare a place' for them. The ascension shows Jesus's power, and that there is a place for all humans with God. 'He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father' |

Jesus' role in Salvation

- Jesus was aware that his death was necessary in order to restore the right relationship between humans and God
- On the Cross Jesus bore the consequences of human sin
- This led to reconciliation between God and humanity – the atonement 'He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins...for the sins of the whole world.'
- It inspires humans to take the moral lead in reconciliation in the world today e.g. following Jesus' example by showing love

Salvation

Salvation means the soul being saved from death and sin, allowing it to reach heaven. For this to happen, Christians must have faith in Jesus. 'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus'

Grace: Grace alone means that God loves, forgives, and saves us not because of who we are or what we do, but because of the work of Christ. By believing in Jesus and following his teachings. 'For it is by grace you have been saved'

Spirit: Through prayer and seeking forgiveness for sins they have committed. The Holy Spirit helps Christians to follow the teachings of God and his laws and keep their faith, helping them to find salvation. 'He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit'

Law: People must try to live a good Christian life by following the Ten Commandments and turning to God in repentance when they have sinned. Through these laws, Christians believe that God has helped them to identify sin. 'the doers of the law who will be justified'

Did Jesus have to die?

Not necessary for a loving God to forgive people's sins 'love keeps no records of wrongs' Jesus's ministry showed people how to be free of sin and live in Godly way His death shows God's love through the sacrifice and how God can triumph over sin, so people do not fear evil

Prayer

Sacraments: Baptism

- A sacrament is a ceremony (usually carried out by a minister or priest) through which Christians believe they receive God's grace. It's a sign of God's grace working within them. They bring people closer to God.
- Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches believe in 7 sacraments, but most Protestants accept only baptism and Eucharist – they believe only these were prescribed by Jesus in the Gospels.
- Quakers don't celebrate the Eucharist or any other sacraments seeing them as unnecessary symbols for the inward acceptance or God's grace. God speaks directly to the believer's heart and there is no need of any form of 'go-between'.

| Origins and importance | Infant baptism | Believers' baptism |
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| <p>Baptism is seen as a sacrament because Jesus was baptised. After his resurrection, he said 'go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them'. Jesus said 'no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baptism welcomes someone to the Church and makes them a member of God's family. • It cleanses people of original sin. • The person dies from their old way of life and is reborn into eternal life. • Person receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit. | <p>Many denominations practice the baptising of a baby and central to all is the use of blessed water combined with the Trinitarian formula.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roman Catholic and Anglican churches use a font, pouring water 3x over the baby's head • In Orthodox church, the baby is immersed totally <p>Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anointing of oils and making sign of cross for strength to fight evil and of salvation • Promises by godparents on behalf of child to reject evil • Lighting candle as sign that they have received the light of Christ <p>Why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is natural for Christian parents to want to bring up their child as a practicing Christian • The child receives the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit e.g. wisdom, patience • Enables child to receive other sacraments | <p>Some denominations such as Baptists and Pentecostals believe in this. Adults who wish to join the Church are baptised by total immersion.</p> <p>Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White clothes are worn as a sign of the new life that is about to begin • The testimony, which is a statement by the person, explaining their journey • Declaration of penitence shows intention to show lifelong dedication <p>Why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus himself was baptised as an adult, as were most people in the Early Church • Only those old enough can fully commit to the decision and know what they are doing. • When they are older children might resent promises made on their behalf as babies • For many people infant baptism is simply a practice to name a child • Many who have been baptised to not commit to a life in faith. |

Sacraments: Eucharist

| Origins and importance | Interpretations of meaning | Different ways it's celebrated |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |

Pilgrimage

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| Lourdes | Iona |
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Role of the Church in the local community

Food Banks

Street Pastors

CAFOD/Christian Aid/Tearfund

Role and importance of celebrations

| | Origins | Celebrations | Importance |
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| Christmas | Christmas is celebrated by most Christians on 25 th December (for Orthodox Christians its 7 th January). It celebrates how Jesus was born in Bethlehem. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advent is getting ready to celebrate Jesus' birth: candles are lit, and Advent calendars used Some churches e.g. Anglican have Midnight Mass Christingle service represents the Jesus as the Light of the World Gifts are exchanged to symbolise gifts of wise men <p>Some Christians dislike modern traditions (expensive presents, excessive eating) because they devalue the true meaning of Christmas. Others feel that it has retained too much pagan influence such as Christmas trees.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christians thank God for, and celebrate with joy, the incarnation 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us' Giving and receiving from loved ones, so is a symbol of love 'The people walking in darkness have seen a great light' The birth of Jesus fulfils the prophecy told in the Bible, strengthening Christian faith Time to remember those who, like Jesus and his family, live in difficult circumstances, so Christians give generously to charities |
| Easter | <p>Psalm Sunday: Jesus's triumphant entry to Jerusalem.</p> <p>Maunder Thursday: commemorates the Last Supper held on the night before Jesus died</p> <p>Good Friday: recalls Jesus's crucifixion</p> <p>Easter Sunday: joyous occasion when Jesus's resurrection is celebrated</p> | <p>Some Christians fast during Lent to make when Jesus fasted for 40 days in the desert. Christians are given palm crosses in church and on Ash Wednesday, ash is put on foreheads to show they're sorry for their sins. On Maunder Thursday the Queen gives out silver coins to remember the 30 pieces of silver Judas betrayed Jesus for. On Good Friday, decorations are taken down, vicar wears black, processions through streets carrying heavy wooden cross, eat fish rather than red meat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easter Vigil held, and Paschal candle is lit during services in Anglican and Catholic churches Sunrise services to remember how Mary Magdalene discovered the tomb and is symbolic of Jesus rising from the dead 'I am the resurrection and the life' Eggs are a symbol of Jesus's new life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It reminds people that God loves them so much that he was willing to suffer death His resurrection proved Jesus as the Son of God No need to fear death as Jesus's victory proves eternal life Victory of good over evil, there is assurance that God's love will triumph <p>'He is not here; He is risen just as He said'</p> |

Mission and Evangelism

Mission: 'a sending', the belief that you have been 'sent' to do something.

Evangelism: spreading Christian message with the aim of converting people.

Why?

- Many Christians believe that only those who believe in God and Jess are able to get into heaven, all non-believers will go to hell, as such they see their role to convert non-believers to be saving them in the afterlife.
- Jesus' last words before he ascended 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations' encouraged his disciples to spread the word of God, and some Christians would argue that this was their holy duty in the world today.
- Through Evangelising, they can help people discover their real purpose in life and in salvation.
- 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation'

How?

For some, it is about telling people directly about God. Others try to demonstrate God's love through actions, to bring people closer to God.

- 'Fresh Expressions': The form of the new churches are not 'one-size fits all' e.g. skate park, pubs, cafes.
- Spring Harvest:** holds events at Butlins' holiday camps, delivering Bible teachings and seeking God's presence in worship.
- Serving in Mission (SIM):** They are helping to re-establish churches after Boko Haram attacks.

Working for reconciliation

Reconciliation: coming together and making peace after separation

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| Significance | Jesus's death was an act of reconciliation. The tearing of the Temple curtain at the point of his death is the symbol of his. Jesus said 'Blessed are the peacemakers', so reconciliation is needed between people who have been in conflict just as Jesus brought God and humankind together through atonement. |
| Corrymeela | A community in Northern Ireland, founded to help heal the country's political and religious divisions. It works with people in areas where there is tension and strives to help people understand each other and reconcile through group activities and discussions. |
| Pax Christi | International Catholic organisation working for human rights, disarmament and peace. They work to create a world where people can live in harmony. |
| Archbishop Desmond Tutu | Created Truth and Reconciliation Commission where the perpetrators of horrific acts of violence and their victims came face-to-face. The perpetrators asked for, and victims granted, forgiveness. |

Responding to persecution

Persecution: hostility and ill-treatment, usually because of prejudice

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| Significance | Christians believe in justice – all people are equal in God's eyes, so they should be treated fairly. In the story of the sheep and goats, Jesus explains that people who have been good and helped others will be looked after by God, and people who haven't will suffer. This story tells Christians that they are helping Jesus when they help others. 'Treat others as you would like to be treated' 'love your neighbours' |
| Open Doors | Organisation that supports persecuted Christians. For example they deliver Bibles to North Korea and give practical support and theological training. |