We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
The Nicene Creed.

‘In the beginning God ...’ The Bible begins with that basic assumption. God exists. But how do we know that? Can we prove God exists?

There is no clear-cut scientific evidence for the existence of God. That’s not surprising. After all, if we could put God under a microscope or dissect him on an operating table, God would no longer be God.

Yet, down through the centuries, men and women have felt the need to try to prove the existence of God.

Some point out that all human societies, with few or no exceptions, worship some god or other; that all people seem to have a built-in need to worship someone or something greater than themselves. If that built-in need exists, they argue, it seems reasonable to suppose that the means of satisfying that need might also exist.

Others set out to prove the existence of God by raising the question of a First Cause. They point to the fact that most events seem to be caused by another event, which seems to be caused by yet another event, and so on. Ultimately, they say, we would arrive at a First Cause; something or somebody who started it all.

Others point to beauty and harmony in nature and argue that behind that beauty and harmony there has to be a First Designer, a Great Architect. It couldn’t, they claim, have happened by accident.

Still others note the phenomenon of human love. It seems to be at variance with our natural instinct to 'look out for number one'. Without the example of a loving God, they ask, how can we account for the phenomenon of self-giving love?; especially in a world where the survival of the fittest would seem to be the rule.

Nowadays we accept that none of these arguments will ever really prove the existence of God. At best they provide pointers or clues for the person who is seeking towards God.

And it is important to remember that our belief in God is not founded upon argument. As we have already noted, to believe requires faith. By faith we believe that God exists then by faith we set out to build on that conviction.

God in the Bible

One of our primary sources of knowledge about God is, of course, the Revelation of Scripture.

The Bible begins by assuming that God exists but it then goes on to reveal the nature of God:

• It says God as One - Creator and Sustainer of the universe.
• It says God Strong and Powerful, but also Trustworthy; not petty and capricious as the gods of the other nations seemed to be.
• It says God is a Personal God and able to be approached directly by his people
• It says God is a Moral God, requiring that his people should act towards others with mercy, justice and care.
• And it says God makes demands on the political and social life of the nation.

By the end of the Old Testament era, the Hebrew people already knew all these things about God. But there was more to come.
In the person of Jesus, God was revealed to be a loving and self-giving God.

Abba, Father

Jesus addressed God as Abba; an Aramaic word used by small children.

Just as 'Mummy' or 'Daddy' are among the first words spoken in our own society, so the children of Jesus’ day would use the Aramaic words Mima and Abba. These words were also used by adults as titles of special affection for their natural parents.

So, when Jesus called God Abba, he was expressing his own very special relationship with God.

Jesus taught his disciples to use that word. He said: 'When you pray, say Father (Abba), hallowed be your name...' Luke 11:2 and he gave his disciples permission to share his own special relationship with God.

Saint Paul sums up that relationship when he says: 'God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!' So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.' Galatians 4:6-7

Talking about God

It has never been easy to talk about God and most of us recognise that the words we use to describe God never quite make the grade. So, inevitably, there have been those who have tried to 'redefine' God.

In recent years one group of scholars made the cover of Time Magazine by claiming, 'God is Dead'. Some of them were saying, in a rather dramatic way, that the old ways of talking about God no longer make sense to many modern people.

Other scholars have abandoned the word 'God' altogether and have replaced it with other words like 'The Ground of Our Being'.

But most of us, while recognising that the words we use about God are nearly always inadequate, are willing to use the words Jesus used. We know our words will never quite make the grade. But they are the best we have.

A good example of the way in which our words about God never quite make the grade, is the way we talk about God as though he is male.

It was inevitable that the Hebrews, members of a male dominated society, should talk about God in this way but even they could think of God in feminine images. In the Old Testament book, The Song of Songs, God is portrayed as a bride and mankind as a reluctant bridegroom.

In fact it is a modern preoccupation to worry about whether God is male or female. Julian of Norwich, a fourteenth century English mystic, talked about God as her Mother and Jesus as her Sister and her contemporaries saw nothing wrong with that.

Of course, it would be just as inadequate to talk about God solely in the feminine gender. Inadequate, but not wrong.

Think about it

God is inexpressible. It is easier for us to say what he is not than to say what he is. Nothing is comparable to him. If you could conceive of him you would conceive of something other than God. He is not at all what you have conceived him to be.
- St Augustine of Hippo 354 - 430

I believe that Dirac and Einstein, in making their great discoveries, were participating in an encounter with the divine. It has become common coinage with contemporary writers about science to invoke, in addressing the general public, the idea of a reading of the Mind of God. It is a small, but significant, sign of the human longing for God that apparently this language helps to sell books. There is much more to the Mind of God than physics will ever disclose, but this usage is not misleading, for I believe that the rational beauty of the cosmos indeed reflects the Mind that holds it in being.
- John Charlton Polkinghorne, KBE, FRS. Theoretical physicist, theologian and Anglican priest.

I want neither a terrorist spirituality that keeps me in a perpetual state of fright about being in right relationship with my heavenly Father nor a sappy spirituality that portrays God as such a benign teddy bear that there is no aberrant behavior or desire of mine that he will not condone. I want a relationship with the Abba of Jesus, who is infinitely compassionate with my brokenness and at the same time an awesome, incomprehensible, and unwieldy Mystery.
- Brennan Manning