

## 6) GOD Part 3

### God as Trinity

In this final part on God, we explore why as Christians we profess that God is one and that God is three. God is one as love and God as love moves and flows throughout the universe and through mother earth and all she gives, through animals and people too. But God is also revealed and manifested in three unique ways, as: 1. Abba and Creator God, 2. Jesus the Christ, and 3. The Holy Spirit.

**1. “Abba” God.** Abba is the Aramaic word for “Father.” It is the special word Jesus used for God and taught his followers to use as well. It is a term of personal intimacy, tenderness and love, and a big part of the revelation of God in Jesus is that we can approach God and trust that God’s love for us is infinite and steadfast despite our imperfections and moral failures (sins). Abba God also manifests qualities of loving as Jesus reveals it that are as maternal as they are paternal, breaking through any gender based stereotypes for what makes a good father versus a good mother in society. The analogy of God as parental love must transcend gender biases. God’s love is tender affection, warm mercy and understanding as much as a call to rise up for justice. God’s love is a call to repentance but also the offer of forgiveness, the healing that must happen after we face the consequences of our mistakes, opportunities for reconciliation, and the inner peace of acceptance. We meet God as love in all these ways and more.

**God as Creator.** While in eastern Christianity the emphasis of God as Trinity has been on the internal relations of Abba God, Christ and Holy Spirit (the technical term for this is “*perichoreisis*” – *peri* (circle), *choros* (dance) conveying an image of the three persons holding hands and dancing in a circle of love), in western Christianity the emphasis has been less speculative or “immanent” (what God is doing in God’s inner world) and more biblical, on-the-ground relational or “economic” (from the Greek: *economia*, meaning the management of the everyday earthly household). God is creator of all that is and God puts God’s imprint on all living things. The unique imprint of God in us humans created in God’s image (Genesis 1: 27) means we are not only created and called to live out the love that has made us (a call we share with mother earth and all creatures), but we are also called to delight in it all as God so delights (“God saw everything God has made and it was good. Indeed, it was very good!” (Genesis 1)).

**2. Jesus Christ.** Most people of other faiths and no faith acknowledge that Jesus was a great human, a profoundly loving person who stood up for justice and was crucified as a traitor to the state in solidarity with other state-victims of a violent colonizing regime with the collaboration of corrupt local leaders. Muslims and Jews also acknowledge Jesus as a great prophet and one of their prophets too. What is unique about Christianity is that we profess that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah or the Anointed One of God) and that Christ reveals and embodies God like no other human can. Within the first generation of Christianity Jesus was being worshiped alongside God and within a hundred years he was also being worshipped as

fully equal to God. How this happened is a story for another time. But as Christians we have come to the paradoxical confession that Jesus is fully human like any one of us, and yet fully equal to God (divine) like no other human. More on this to come in a later section called “CHRISTOLOGY.”

**3. The Holy Spirit.** While the bible speaks of God in multiple ways and the New Testament speaks of Jesus as the Christ of God, the Holy Spirit is typically spoken of as transforming energy emanating from God or Christ and manifesting in people in all kinds of beautifully loving ways. And while Jesus was being worshipped as the Christ alongside God, it took a few hundred years before the Holy Spirit was also being acknowledged as person-like alongside Jesus Christ and Abba-Creator God. Why the need to make the Holy Spirit person-like? In the worldview of the time, anything less than a person makes the Holy Spirit less equal to God and therefore, less powerful in its capacity to transform life in the world.

But in my opinion (and that of other theologians), making the Holy Spirit into a person also makes it, potentially, independent of God and Christ. In the bible, whenever the Spirit is mentioned (*Ruach* in Hebrew and *Pneuma* in Greek), it is always as an energy and power reflecting the presence and movement of God or Christ. Equality of power does not need to be an issue if the Spirit is Jesus-energy or God-energy which is: love-energy as reflected in Abba-Creator God and revealed/embodyed in Jesus the Christ. And so, at Armour Heights, we use the language of energy when referring to the Holy Spirit in our faith statements. More on this to come in a later section called “PNEUMATOLOGY.”

**4. The Trinity in the Bible.** A) We encounter God as creator in the opening chapters of the bible and throughout, and even though it is Jesus who uses the word “Abba” for the God he reveals, Moses’ encounter with God as “I am” (YHWH in Hebrew) also reflects personal encounter and intimacy. Jesus teaches his followers and now us that such intimacy with God is a doorway for all people to enjoy. B) God above us becomes God beside us or with us (Emmanuel (Matthew 1)) when Jesus the human walks among us, teaches, transforms, challenges, gets crucified and rises up to be everywhere present, calling us to become his ubiquitous (everywhere present) body on earth. C) Finally, God moves further within us as Holy Spirit, energizing and empowering us in the face of all that seeks to harm creation and us, and as a force of love seeking to rise up in us through all our relations. This is the story of God revealed in the bible and it is trinitarian – God above also becomes God beside and finally becomes God within for those whose hearts open to the divine so revealed.

What do you think?