

Faith is a gift we receive, most often as a child, the 'feeling' that life is good, people are basically good (though sometimes we cause each other pain), that there is something (one) greater than us who loves us, and that 'nothing is lost.'

Sometime during adulthood it is necessary to **deliberately decide** to affirm what we 'felt' as a child. Evangelicals call this 'born again'; we call it **Confirmation**.

In the end this decision is a **leap of faith** since we cannot prove these now willed beliefs, but we can make this faith a **reasonable, understandable** proposition. This is the work of **theology**.

There are many different theological approaches to faith from Evangelical Fundamentalism, to traditional Catechism question/answer, to nature-loving agnostic Episcopalians. **Existential Theology** begins with human existence and the issues of **meaninglessness, loneliness, guilt and fear of death, dis-eases** even the least aware of us experiences in retirement, divorce, traumatic illness, personal suffering, mistakes and death of loved ones. We turn to God during these times, not only because we feel compelled to look for meaning and solace, but because we seem 'hard wired' to seek something greater than ourselves – thus the Old Testament and the Hebrews search for Yahweh.

God-talk divides itself generally among five explanations – **Deism**: God creates a world that has internal rules of operation, sets it in motion and retires (**Deus Ex-Machina**); **Theism**: God is involved in the world but completely separate from it;

**Panentheism**: God-is-in-the-world and the-world-is-in-God; and **Pantheism** wherein God is equated with the forces and laws of the universe ('primitive' religious beliefs).

**Incarnational** people understand that God is intimately involved with the world (especially incarnate in and through its person and message of Jesus). We seem to have an inclination toward **Panentheism**.

In this explanation, if there is a God, there can be nothing 'outside' of God. God is the **All**, and everything that comes to be is in some way part of God. In this sense God 'feels' the movement of creation. God, then, suffers with creation and, because God is invested, God needs, persuades, saves and constantly resurrects creation. In this sense the evolution of creation 'enriches' God. This aspect of God is called the **Consequent Nature** of God, and since God is **All**, and you and I live in a world pregnant with possibilities, that 'raw material' for the future is also part of God and is understood as the **Primordial Nature** of God.

In this theology (**Di-Polar Theism**) one is able to say that God is 'in' all things. Everything comes from God and God saves all things.

Using the image of the Trinity we could say that we experience God in three different ways: as Creator (Father/Mother) from whom and in whom all things come to be; as that part of God incarnate in the world – the Son/Daughter-ship of God; and as that power (Spirit) that pushes and persuades all creation to change, grow and better itself.