12th July 2026

Parts

"The whole is more than the sum of the parts."

Attributed to Aristotle

In the first verse of the Bible's Book of Genesis, God is introduced by the name *Elohim,* a Hebrew noun in masculine form. In the next verse, the Spirit of Elohim – that "moves over the waters" – is *Ruach,* a Hebrew noun in feminine form. So from the very start, God is referred to in both masculine and feminine terms. This isn't about gender or sexuality. To see it that way is too narrow by far. Instead, this is about the nature of God.

The writer Carol Wimmer suggests,

> The masculine, Elohim, creates. The feminine, Ruach, stirs or activates … The details of this text are thoroughly designed. Genesis 1 is not sloppy storytelling. It is a highly organized, well thought out masterpiece. We can be assured that the introduction of masculine and feminine gendering was not an accident.

But we're not done there. In Genesis 1:26, we find this: "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'" And in Genesis 3:22 we read, "And the Lord God said, 'The man has now become like one of us.'" This is not the "royal we", such as in a king's communication. This is a deliberate use of the plural for God which makes it clear that God is everything, God is "all in all", God is all encompassing.

If we know God – and many say that they do – then the God we know is only part of what God is. For example, though I may define God as father, God is also mother, with all that this metaphor might teach me. No one should ever say that they know the whole of God – even though they may believe it to be true and forcibly communicate that belief. The writers of the Book of Genesis were well aware of that!

So my thought today is this … we will only ever know a part of God, but we will never know the whole. Someone else might know another part of God and have insights we don't yet have. Such is the nature of God … If you know God in your way and I know God in mine, we are aware of that part of God which belongs to the whole – and that whole is *much* greater than the sum of the parts.

A prayer for today

Loving, amazing, complete God, the part of you I know is enough for now. Amen

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