

AL-ITQĀN

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Volume: 5

Issue No. 2

August 2021

EDITOR IN-CHIEF

Dr. Wan Mohd Azam Mohd Amin

MANAGING EDITOR

Dr. Masitoh Ahmad

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr. Syed Arabi Aidid, IIUM.

Dr. Hassan Basri Mat Dahan, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia,
Nilai, Negeri Sembilan

Dr. Kamaruzaman Yusuff, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak,
Kota Semarahan, Kucing.

Dr. Kamar Oniah, IIUM.

Dr. Mumtaz Ali, IIUM.

Dr. Noor Amali Mohd Daud, IIUM.

Dr. Adibah Abdul Rahim, IIUM.

Dr. Haslina Ibrahim, IIUM.

Dr. Siti Akmar, Universiti Institut Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam

Dr. Thameem Ushama, IIUM.

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Muhammad Afifi al-Akiti, Oxford University, UK
Dr. Abdullah M. al-Syarqawi, Cairo University, Egypt.
Dr. Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu, Kwara State University, Nigeria.
Dr. Anis Ahmad, Riphah International University, Islamabad.
Dr. ASM Shihabuddin, Uttara University, Dhakka, Bangladesh.
Dr. Fatimah Abdullah, Sabahattin Zaim University, Turkey.
Dr. Ibrahim M. Zein, Qatar Foundation, Qatar.
Dr. Khalid Yahya, Temple University, USA.

© 2017 IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia. All rights reserved.
eISSN:26008432

Correspondence

Managing Editor, *Al-Itqān*
Research Management Centre, RMC
International Islamic University Malaysia
P.O Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Tel: +603 6196 5558
Website: <http://journals.iium.edu.my/al-itqan/index.php/alitqan/index>
Email: al-itqan@iium.edu.my

Published by:
IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Phone (+603) 6196-5014, Fax: (+603) 6196-6298
Website: <http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop>

Table of Contents

A Muslim Brief View on the Trinity: The Doctrine of Oneness of God in Christianity	<i>Ungaran Rashid</i>	5-19
Examining the Concept of Pan-Islamism	<i>Spahic Omer</i>	21-51
Atheism and Atheists: Western and Islamic Perspective	<i>Nur Afifah Abdul Razak Wan Mohd Azam Mohd Amin</i>	53-70
Islamic and Western Higher Education Systems: A Comparative Analysis	<i>Nur Irdina Hakimah Nor Razali Nur Suriya Mohd Nor</i>	71-97
Abū Zayd al-Balkhi's Sustenance of the Soul and the Development of Self-Control	<i>Afifah Shamsuddin Amilah Awang Abd Rahman @ Jusoh</i>	99-115
The Notion of Afterlife in Islam and Sikhism and Its Implication on Muslims and Sikhs Lives	<i>Muhammad Hanif Ismail Mohd Noh Abdul Jalil</i>	117-135
Social Cohession in the Views of Islam and Buddhism: A Textual Analysis	<i>Mohamed Ashath Nur Suriya Mohd Nor</i>	137-158
The Muslim Minority in Myanmar: The Struggle for Identity amidst A Continous Political Crisis	<i>Tin Aung Myint @ Asad Noor Amali Mohd Daud</i>	159-198
Rahmatullah <i>al-Kairanawi</i> and His Work Entitled " <i>Izhar al-Ḥaq</i> " External Criticism toward Gospel	<i>Aisyatur Rabiah Abdullah Maziah Mustapha</i>	199-218
The Rebuttal of the Literalist Interpretation of the Bible: The Example of Stepphen Sizer	<i>Bachar Bakour</i>	219-248
The Foundation of al-Qawā'id al-Fiqhiyyah According to Four <i>Madhhabs</i>	<i>Heri Firmansyah Irham Dongoran</i>	249-275

Author Guidelines

Manuscript article can be either in English, Malay or Arabic using software Microsoft office (Word, and Excel), Font 12 Times New Roman. Only tables, figures and appendix can be written using Font 10, Times New Roman.

If there is a usage of Quranic verses or Hadith from Prophet P.B.U.H., it only needs to be done by translation only.

The manuscript should be in 1.5 single spacing and justified, with the margin of 2.5cm.

Article needs to have a title and author's name and second author's name along with the full address (institution's or university's address, e-mail, handphone's number, office's number, fax together with the second author's details).

Every article must include an abstract in Malay and English. The length of the abstract is no more than 150 words including 5 keywords.

The length of each article must not exceed 6000 words.

The Arabic words in manuscript should be in a transliterated form.

Reference for each article must be written according to **Chicago Manual**.

Notification Letter :

Letter of Acceptance – editorial board will send an e-mail to the author to notify that the manuscript is received.

Letter of Acceptance/Rejection for Publication – editorial board will send a letter by an e-mail to the author to notify if the manuscript judged by the panels is approved or declined to be published.

Letter of Publication – editorial board will send a letter by e-mail to the author if the article has been judged, repaired, and corrected to be published in the college's journal.

Certificate of Appreciation– editorial board will send a certificate of appreciation by mail to the authors who have sent their articles.

A Muslim's Brief View on the Trinity: The Doctrine of Oneness of God in Christianity

Ungaran Rashid*

Abstract

This article tries to observe the understanding of God in Christianity. The researcher chooses Christianity because the idea of God in Christianity is unique. On the one hand, Christianity claims a monotheistic religion because Christianity follows the belief system of Abraham, who understands God as one. On the other hand, Christianity also believes that God is in three persons, which are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which seems to be polytheistic. The uniqueness of the concept of God in Christianity will be examined, either biblical-based or philosophical. This article is primarily based on the library research, including books, journals, encyclopaedias, and internet resources. Besides, the researcher uses mostly Christian literatures to maintain the objectivity of the research.

Keywords: Trinity, Bible, Christianity

Introduction

God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth and all things in them, has revealed Himself to His creation, especially humankind. God also tries to communicate with humanity through His messengers and prophets. Nevertheless, human beings understand God, as their Creator, in different ways, depending on their religious and cultural background, or perhaps depending on their way of thinking. Therefore, some people believe that God is one, according to their interpretation of the Scriptures, but some may hold that God is more than one, or perhaps, some may say that God exists in every part of His creation.

This article tries to observe the understanding of God in Christianity. The researcher chooses Christianity because the idea of God in Christianity is unique. On the one hand, Christianity claims a monotheistic religion because Christianity follows the belief system of Abraham, who understands God as one. On the other hand, Christianity also believes that God is in three persons, which are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which seems to be polytheistic. The uniqueness of

* Asst. Prof. Dr. Department of Uṣūl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS), International Islamic University Malaysia. Email: ungaranrashid@iium.edu.my

the concept of God in Christianity will be examined, either biblical-based or philosophical.

Doctrine of Oneness of God in the Bible

The Old Testament, which written in Hebrew, uses אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*), which is derived from אֵל (*El*) in the singular to express the concept of deity or divinity. Even though *Elohim* is in the plural form, it does not mean that God is many. It sometimes used to augment its meaning as divine majesty. Thus, *Elohim* is used to point to one God with many attributes.¹

Besides, the Old Testament also uses יְהוָה (YHWH) to direct the personal name of God. According to the Bible, Enos, the grandson of Noah, is the first one who called the name of God as YHWH.² It is not clear either the name YHWH has been used at that time, or Moses, as the author of the Torah, uses that name to explain his understanding of God. The Bible, however, does not explain obviously the root name of YHWH, so there are many theories to clarify the origin name of YHWH. Nevertheless, the researcher opines that YHWH is derived from the phrase אֶחָד אֲשֶׁר אֵינִי אֵל אֶחָד (ehye asher ehye) which means “I am that I am.”³

Meanwhile New Testament, which written in Greek, uses θεός (*theos*) as the name of God. In Greek, *theos* can be used to refer to: God, a god; divine beings; divine in nature; figuratively, a human magistrate; or the devil. Furthermore, the application of the word *theos* to God and humans usually distinguished by using the article.⁴ The application of the word *theos* to God and humans usually distinguished by using the article. For example, ὁ θεός (*ho theos*) used to point to God; ὁ here is a definite article, which is *the* in English.

To examine the concept of the oneness of God in the Bible, one can see directly what the Bible says on that issue. Torah states, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, The Lord is one.”⁵ Jesus also says, “This is the most important one: Hear O Israel, The Lord our God, The Lord is one.”⁶ Besides, Paul mentions, “We know that an idol is nothing in the world and

¹ G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Editors), *Thological Dictionary of the Old Testament Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans: 1997), p. 273.

² Genesis 4:26

³ Exodus 3: 14

⁴ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 356-358.

⁵ Deuteronomy 6: 4

⁶ Mark 12: 29

that there is no God except one.”¹ Thus, there is not doubtful that the Bible clearly states that God is one.

Doctrine of Oneness of God in Christianity

Almost every religion has a confession of faith; the Creed may come either explicitly or implicitly in the Scriptures interpreted by the founders of the religion. This issue also applies to Christianity because Christianity has the Holy Scriptures and has some Creeds such as the Apostle's Creed, Creed of Nicaea, Nicene Creed, Chalcedonian Creed, and Athanasian Creed.

The Apostles' Creed, which is the oldest among other creeds, adapts several passages from the Bible and does not mention the divinity of Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, the other ancient Creeds, which developed in the early of Christianity, declare the divinity of Jesus. Athanasius' creed, which is the latest creed among the ancient confessions, begins to allude to the Trinity doctrine, which is the most crucial doctrine in discussing the unity of God in Christianity faith.²

Christian Scholars such as Wayne Grudem say that the three in the oneness of God based on the Bible, although the word Trinity or three in oneness never found in the Scriptures. Furthermore, the doctrine of the Trinity used to summarize the teaching of the Scripture or the Bible that God is three persons yet one God.³ However, Christianity claims that Trinity is a monotheistic belief since Abraham is the ancestor of the faith of Christianity. Thus, the doctrine of God in Christianity seems to be different from the concept of God in the Bible.

Trinity

Terminology

The dictionary reference.com states the term Trinity as follows:

“Trinity, fundamental doctrine in Christianity, by which God is considered, has existing in three persons. While the doctrine is not explicitly taught in the New Testament, early Christian communities testified to a perception that Jesus was God in the flesh; the idea of the Trinity has been inferred from the Gospel of St. John. The developed doctrine of the Trinity purports that God exists in three coequal and coeternal elements - God the Father, God the Son, and

¹ 1 Corinthians 8: 4

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), p. 226.

³ Ibid.

God the Holy Spirit. It sees these "persons" as constituted by their mutual relations, yet does not mean that God in his essence is Father, or a male deity. Jesus spoke of a relation of mutual giving and love with the Father, which believers could also enjoy through the Spirit.”¹

Meanwhile Encyclopedia of Religion mentions the term Trinity as follows:

“The doctrine of the Trinity is the summary of Christian faith in God, who out of love creates humanity for union with God, who through Jesus Christ redeems the world, and in the power of Holy Spirit, transforms and divinizes. The heart of trinitarian theology is the conviction that the God revealed in Jesus Christ in involved faithfully and unalterably in covenanted relationship with the world.”²

Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity is the summary of the concept of God in the Christian faith, which believes that God exists as one being in three persons who are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Moreover, every person in Trinity has different function and characteristic.

The Foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity

Nicene Creed

It is not too sure when the doctrine of the Trinity taught for the first time. Nevertheless, some early Christian theologians such as Tertullian and Origen,³ had mentioned the divinity of Jesus before the concept of Trinity has been decided as the orthodoxy teaching of Christianity in the first council of Nicaea (325 CE). Moreover, the council of Nicaea decreed that Jesus is God as mentioned in the Nicene Creed, “.... And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only- begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father....”⁴

The root of the problem of the Trinity issue was the decision to make Jesus as God in the Nicaea Council. There were two opinions to decide the nature of Jesus; most of the participants, led by Athanasius,

¹ “Trinity Definition & Meaning,” Dictionary.com (Dictionary.com), accessed August 27, 2021, <http://www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/Trinity>.

² Lindsay Jones (ed), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, (Farmington Hills: Thomson gale, 2005), 9360.

³ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church Vol II*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing House, 1995), 550.

⁴ Nicene Creed in Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1169.

believed that Jesus has the same essence (*homoousia*) as Father, who is God. On the Contrary, Arius believed that Jesus has similar nature (*homoiousia*) with Father. However, the majority of the participant, led by Athanasius, dominated the council and decided that Jesus is God. Consequently, Arius' teaching about *homoiousia* restricted by the mainstream but could not be stopped and taught by the Eastern Church.¹

One of the most significant issues in the Nicene Creed is the intervention of Constantine as the Caesar of the Rome Emperor in the council of Nicaea. Constantine was the authority involved in the congress of Nicaea. Therefore, one can see that a political aspect had a role to form the concept of God in Christianity. One of the most substantial issues in the Nicene Creed is the intervention of Constantine as the Caesar of the Rome Emperor in the council of Nicaea. The ex-communication toward Arius, who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, was the evidence to prove that there was a political aspect in the council of Nicaea.

Biblical Basic of the Trinity

Christianity claims that the doctrine of the Trinity based on the Bible because some verses in the Bible expresses that God is not only one being and one person but one being with three persons. Furthermore, some Christian scholars, such as Wayne Grudem, use John 1:1, which state, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," as one of the prominent examples to prove that God is not only one person. Grudem says that the Word is fully God, but the phrase "with God" shows the distinction between the Word from God the Father. Moreover, Grudem realizes that the phrase "the Word was God" is changeable because there is a group of Christian that translates it as "the Word was a god", which means that the Word is not fully God, but only a heavenly being. In addition, one should know about John 1:1 in Greek that the first God is different from the last God because in front of the first God is used definite article while the last God not used definite article, even though both use the term *theos*.²

It seems that Grudem does not exegete John 1:1 carefully, but he puts his understanding into the verse. Two aspects could criticize the opinion of Grudem. Firstly, it is transparent that the phrase 'the Word with God' shows two different entities in this phrase. Moreover, when John states that 'the

¹ Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1968), pp. 71-75.

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 231-233.

Word was God', it does not mean that the Word and God are the same beings because there is a definite in front of the first God but not found in front of the second God. Besides, the preposition 'with' shows two different things or persons. Consequently, the problem of this case is the use of capital G for the second God that should be a small g. Thus, the correct translation of the phrase is 'the Word was a god' or 'the Word was divine' because *theos* is not used only to communicate God but also other things or beings.

Secondly, Grudem does not relate John 1:1 with John 1:14 that states, 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us,' which cannot be separated. The researcher thinks that John contrasts the phrase 'the Word was a god' in verse 1, which means unseen, with the phrase 'the Word became flesh,' which can be seen. Thus, the phrase 'the Word was a god' does not inform that the Word is God but that the Word was unseen.

The Issue on the Son of God

The term son of God is a common term in the Bible to draw to someone or a people group, either in the Hebrew Bible or in the New Testament, and it appears in singular or plural form. However, some scholars, such as Grudem, argue that although the term son of God may refer to Israel or man, especially a king when it deals with Jesus, it denotes equality with God. To support his argument, Grudem mentions some verses, such as Matthew 11: 25-30, 1 Corinthians 15: 28, and Hebrew 1: 1-3.¹ Consequently, the title Son of God used as one the primary foundations in building the doctrine of the Trinity in the function of the second person, God the Son.

The researcher seems that Grudem does not interpret those verses in a proper way, but rather by doing eisegesis because those verses do not show equality between Jesus and God, for example, 1 Corinthians 15: 28 states, "When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all."² On the contrary, the researcher sees 1 Corinthians 15: 28 as evidence that Jesus is under the authority of God. The word subject in this verse is the translation of the Greek term *ὑποτάσσω* (*hypotassō*), which means obey or submit to God. Furthermore, the researcher observes that Grudem holds the tradition in Christianity that states that

¹ Ibid., p. 546

² (NIV Translation)

Jesus is God when he interprets the verse. As a result, one cannot use the verse as the Biblical basis to prove that Jesus is equal to God.

In the Old Testament, the term son of God usually points to the king of Israel and Messiah, which are human. Besides, this epithet used to express that the king or Messiah is the representative of God. Unfortunately, in the Hellenistic period term son of God had divine sense because it influenced by Egyptian mythology.¹ So, the term son of God used by Church fathers to point Jesus is God is because of the influence of Egyptian mythology.

Prominent Figure in Developing the Doctrine of the Trinity

As mentioned, the Bible does not write the doctrine of the trinity explicitly. This doctrine arose because of the interpretation of some church fathers. This section discusses some of the prominent figures in the development of the doctrine

Irenaeus

Irenaeus, born around 120-140 CE, was one of the early church fathers who played a significant role in developing Christian theology in the second century. He built Christian theology supported by faith and biblical traditions, which brightened by exegetical and logical arguments. Uniquely, he did not use only biblical foundations in developing his theology but also by collecting and uniting the traditions of his precursors from Asia Minor, Syria and Rome to fight against Gnosticism that tried to destroy Christianity at that time.²

The most important writing of Irenaeus was *Against the Heresies* which was written in Latin. The book demonstrated sharply that the God of Christianity who is the same God as YHWH the God of the Jews had revealed himself through Jesus. Moreover, *Against the Heresies* was employed to denounce Gnostic teaching.³

Irenaeus considered one of the mature theologians of Trinitarian theology. He mentioned essentially that the baptism of Jesus was the anointing of the Messiah. When Jesus baptized by John the Baptist, there was the voice of God and Holy Spirit descent like a dove. Irenaeus identified this situation as *vestigium trinitatis*, as a mark of the three because he saw that three divinity aspects appeared at the same time.

¹ Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing co., 2008), p. 47.

² Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, (Taylor and Francis E-Library, 2009), p. 1.

³ Vivian H.H. Green, *A New History of Christianity*, (New York: Sutton Publishing, 1996), p. 15.

Furthermore, Irenaeus classified the voice of God as one who has anointed, Jesus who baptized as one who has been anointed, and the Holy Spirit as the ointment.¹ Nevertheless, he never mentioned or used the term Trinity explicitly.

Tertullian

Septimius Tertullianus lived in Carthage about 160-240 CE. He was a productive Christian author who wrote almost all of his writing in Latin. Hence, he is called the father of Latin Christianity. Some scholars believe that Tertullian finally left the church and joined the Montanism, a heretical movement, in Asia Minor, although there is no valid evidence on this issue.² Furthermore, he was formerly a pagan who converted to Christianity in his thirties. Tertullian denounced Marcion, who said that the God in the Old Testament is different from the God in the New Testament by defending the unity of the Old and the New Testament. In addition, he rejected Christian theologies or apologetics, which based on a non-scriptural source.³

Regarding the Trinity, Tertullian was the first theologian who used the term Trinity to the doctrine. He also was the first one who suggested the formula of three-ness in the unity of God. Tertullian says that God is one substance who has three persons, which are Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Besides, the Father and the Son are one identical substance (*homoousia*), which is not divided but extended. In other words, the Father is the perfect substance while the Son derived from and a portion of the whole.⁴

It seems that Tertullian is not consistent in doing theology. On the one hand, he rejected Christian theologies that developed on the non-scriptural source; on the other hand, he developed Trinity theology without a Biblical basis because the Bible does not mention this doctrine explicitly.

Athanasius

Athanasius was born and raised in Alexandria around 295-299 CE to a pagan family. Later, he was baptised with his mother and to be a disciple of Bishop Alexander. During Athanasius' time, Alexandria was a melting pot of Egyptians, Greeks, Jews, as well as other communities. Alexandria was also

¹ David S. Cunningham, *These Three Are One*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 1998), p. 177.

² David W. Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), p. 639.

³ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 1997), pp. 11-12.

⁴ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, (London: A&A Black, 1993), pp. 113-114.

known as the clerical centre in Egypt. Besides, the Patriarch of Alexandria had direct authority over the whole church in Egypt and were responsible for appointing bishops all over Egypt, Libya, and the Pentapolis.¹

Athanasius' theological writings can be classified into two major sections: the earlier works, such as *Against the Greeks-on the Incarnation*, which do not directly mention Arius' name, and the later writings, which he wrote openly to oppose Arius teachings. The later writings emphasise the ontological issue, namely the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which are consistent with the Nicene doctrine, namely the Trinitarian doctrine. His theological arguments for the Trinity always aligned with the nature and character of Christian salvation.² He continually defends the understanding of identical substance (*homoousia*) of Father and Son and attacks Arius' teaching. He, verily, devoted his entire life to write and teach against the Arian.³

Augustine

Augustine of Hippo, known as St. Augustine, was born in 354 CE to an impoverished family in Thagaste, Algeria. Even though he came from a miserable family, he was a member of the Roman town of North Africa. To become a member of the Roman town, one did not have to be rich but had to be free and civilized. Fortunately, Augustine's father, who lived a miserable life as a farmer, was able to send his son to get a good education. As a result, Augustine got the position of professor of rhetoric in Milan in 385 CE.⁴

Augustine contributed some significant aspects of thought in developing Christian theology, which is the doctrine of the church and sacraments, the doctrine of grace, and the doctrine of the Trinity.⁵ In the doctrine of the church, he compared the church with a mother because the believers were born from the church, believers fed by the church; and believers are made alive by the church. In the doctrine of grace, Augustine mentioned that man inherited a frail disease and sin through Adam's fall; consequently, man needs the grace of God.⁶ In the doctrine

¹ Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius*, (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1-2.

² Ibid., pp. 31-32

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 251.

⁴ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2000), pp. 8-9.

⁵ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 13.

⁶ Vivian H.H. Green, *A New History of Christianity*, pp. 39-40.

of Trinity, he depicted the Trinity in a metaphor of human “memory, will, and understanding” or human “mind, knowledge, and love.”¹

Models of Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine that is not easy to understand because this doctrine is not explicitly explained in the Bible. Therefore, a Christian's understanding of this doctrine is not necessarily the same as another Christian's understanding. Some Christian theologians developed the Trinity model according to their thought of the ontology of God. This section briefly describes some of the Trinity models suggested by several theologians.

Cappadocians

Cappadocian theologians were Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus. Basil fought against the idea that Christ is half God and half man. Meanwhile, Gregory of Nazianzus created the definitive formula of the doctrine of the Trinity. Moreover, they became a close friend when they were students in Athens.²

Cappadocian's model of the Trinity understood as a defence of the divine unity that one Godhead exists in three different kinds of being, which are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The formula was built by “one substance in three hypostases.” Moreover, the Father is seen as the source of the Trinity because the Father imparted his being to both the Son and the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the Son or Spirit is subordinate to the Father.³ In other words, the starting point of the argument is not in the account of the essence of the Trinity but the divine persons.

Augustine

Augustine developed his model of the Trinity by taking Genesis 1:26, “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground,’” as the Biblical basis. The terms ‘let us’ and ‘our’ in this verse refer to God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Augustine's model of the Trinity explains that person and divine attributes of God are identical, as are persons and the sum of attributes,

¹ G. R. Evans, “Augustine of Hippo”, in G. R. Evans (Ed), *The First Christian Theologians*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 241.

² Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, (1968), p. 76-77

³ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 303.

the divine essence. The divine essence is “the thing itself that God is.” Besides, God of the Trinity is the only instance of Godness or divinity or the essence of God. God the Trinity is indeed identical with Godness itself, the only divine thing. In other word, God has exactly one instance God the Trinity itself. Even though there is greatness in each of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but there is only one greatness.¹ So, the starting point of the Augustinian Trinity seems in opposition with the Cappadocians one, where Augustinian lies on the essence of the Trinity, not the persons.

Karl Barth

Karl Barth is one of the significant theologians of the twentieth century. He trained in German Protestant Liberalism, but he rejected his training in the predominant liberal theology, typical 19 century Protestantism. Further, he developed his theology that emphasized the sovereignty of God.

Barth's starting point in Trinity is different from both the Cappadocians and Augustian models. He developed the concept of the Trinity based on the actuality of God speaking and of God being heard. He argued that sinful humanity is fundamentally incapable of listening to the Word of God. Then, God revealed himself to sinful humanity, so the sinful humanity will have the ability to hear the Word of God. Concerning the Trinity, the Father revealed in the Son, and the capability to understand the Word of God is the Holy Spirit. Thus, the process of revelation is from God who is the Father, to God who is the Son, and by God who is the Holy Spirit. In other words, there is only one God with three different modes.²

Karl Rahner

Karl Rahner was the most influential Roman Catholic theologian of the 20th century. He was born in Freiburg on the 5th of March 1904 and died in Innsbruck on the 30th of March 1984. His theology influenced the Second Vatican Council and seen as a modern understanding of Catholicism.³

According to Rahner, the theory of Trinity must be analysed through the relation between the economic and the immanent Trinity. Economic Trinity deals with the perspective of the function of each person of the

¹ Cornelius Platinga, Jr., “Social Trinity and Tritheism” in Thomas V. Morris, Gen. Ed., *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre dame Press, 1989), pp. 32-33

² Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, pp. 306-308.

³ Declan Marmion and Maru E. Hines (Editors), *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, (Cambridge: Cabridge University Press, 2005), p. 1.

Trinity in carrying the mission of salvation. Meanwhile, immanent Trinity discusses the essential, ontological and eternal aspects of the Trinity. The economic Trinity can be seen through the diversity and unity of God revealed in history, and the immanent Trinity is understood through the diversity and unity of God in God's own existence. Further, the economic Trinity cannot be separated from the immanent Trinity, which means they are tied to each other. In other words, the way God is revealed and sensed in history is in accordance to the way of God's essence. Besides, the economic Trinity relates to the economy of salvation which the entire work of salvation is the work of one divine person.¹

Robert Jenson

Robert William Jenson is an American Lutheran theologian of international ecumenical stature who has dedicated about fifty years as a professional theologian to describe a consistently evangelical doctrine of God. His theological program brings one of the most modern, broader and creative contemporary theological feedback too many questions Barth raises for the trinitarian dogmatics.²

According to Jensen, it is a must that God has a proper name. He argues that "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" is the proper name of God known to Christians in and through Jesus. Jenson conveys that Ancient Israel lived in the midst of a polytheistic environment. The term god they believed in in their hearts, who also raised Jesus from the dead, must be distinguished from the gods worshiped by people around them. Therefore, a proper name is necessary for the god of the Christians because the use of god's name, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, is not very clear.³

Furthermore, Jensen affirms that the proper name of God is a name assigned to the Christians, not a name chosen by the Christians. It is the difference between the name of God in Christianity and the concept of God of other nations. The God of the Christians revealed himself with a name that is consistent with that described in the Bible. One of the products of theology unveiled in the Bible is the language and thought of the Trinity.⁴

¹ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 309.

² Scott R. Swain, *The God of the Gospel: Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Theology*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), p. 15.

³ Ibid. pp. 310-311

⁴ Ibid.

A Muslim's View on the concept of the Trinity

The doctrine of the oneness of God in the Bible is uncomplicated and states that there is only one God. Nevertheless, some terms should be carefully interpreted because God reveals Himself to humankind by using the language and understanding of humanity in particular times and situations. The meaning of a word in a specific time and context is not necessarily understood in the same connotation by people in different times and situations. Language is a changeable aspect of human life; hence the interpretation of one term in ancient literature like the Bible should follow the idea of the first reader of that literature.

The difficulties of translating ancient literature also seem to be experienced by Christians. Christians from generation to generation still have to continue to understand what is written in the Bible correctly. The difficulties of translating ancient literature also seem to be experienced by Christians. Christians from generation to generation still have to continue to understand what is written in the Bible correctly. For example, how to interpret the term Theos, which has a broad range of meanings; do they have to understand it as the God or a god? Besides, how to translate the first person or third person plural pronouns when refers to God; do they have to understand God in a polytheistic sense or still in a monotheistic impression? There seems to be some confusion in this matter; therefore, the trinity theology arose to accommodate the oneness of God in three different persons.

Many early church fathers, which developed early Christian theology, had a pagan background. So, they might interpret the Bible through the pagan understanding. For example, they depicted the term son of God as God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, while the Ancient Israeli framework understood this term as a saviour king and messiah. The researcher opines that interpreting the Bible should use the understanding of the first readers of the scriptures; otherwise, it may lead to many differences in theological understanding. It is not surprising that the interpretation of the oneness of God varies based on the interpreter's explanation.

The concept of the oneness of God in majority Christian communities seems to be different from the Jewish community, even though they shared the Scriptures, namely the Hebrew Bible, which the Christians call the Old Testament. In the Hebrew Bible, the concept of the oneness of God is unambiguous, as mentioned above. Besides the Hebrew Bible, the Christian community also uses the New Testament as the basis of their faith. The New Testament that was also written by the Jews, of course, has the same concept of the oneness of God as the Hebrew Bible, interpreted differently

by those who were not from among the Jews, especially the early church fathers, who had a pagan background. Thus, there is a modification of the concept of the oneness of God in non-Jewish Christian circles. This modification of the idea of the oneness of God eventually became the mainstream theology in Christianity.

Conclusion

The concept of the oneness of God in Christianity developed based on the Bible, both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, which mainly were written by Jewish people, obviously explain that God is one. In the beginning, Christianity developed among the Jewish community, but then it spread out over the gentile. The gentile theologians who interpreted the Bible seemed to misunderstand the concept of the oneness of God in the Bible because the majority of them had a pagan background. Consequently, there is a modification of the idea of the oneness of God in Christianity. Rather than saying that God is purely one, Christianity believes that there are three persons in one God, known as the Trinity. Thus, the concept of the oneness of God in Christianity is slightly different from Judaism, even though they came from the same root. In other words, the philosophical approach seems to be stronger than the biblical approach in terms of interpreting the oneness of God among Christians.

Reference

- Anatolios, Khaled. *Athanasius*. London: Routledge. 2004.
- Arndt, William F. and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1979.
- Bercot, David W. *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers. 1998.
- Botterweck, G. Johannes and Ringgren, Helmer (Editors). *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament Vol. 1*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans. 1997.
- Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo*. Los Angeles, University of California Press. 2000.
- Collins, Adela Yarbro and John J. Collins. *King and Messiah as Son of God*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing co. 2008.
- Cunningham, David S. *These Three Are One*. Oxford: Blackwell Publisher. 1998.
- Evans, G. R. . “Augustine of Hippo”, in G. R. Evans (Ed). *The First Christian Theologians*. Oxford: Blackwell. 2004.
- Grant, Robert M. *Irenaeus of Lyons*. Taylor and Francis E-Library. 2009.
- Green, Vivian H.H. *A New History of Christianity*. New York: Sutton Publishing. 1996.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 1994.

- Jones, Lindsay (ed). *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Farmington Hills: Thomson Gale. 2005.
- Kelly, J.N.D. *Early Christian Doctrines*. London: A&A Black. 1993.
- Marmion, Declan and Hines, Maru E. (Eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2005.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publisher. 1997.
- Morris, Thomas V., Gen. Ed. *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*. Notre Dame: University of Notre dame Press. 1989.
- Platinga, Cornelius, Jr. "Social Trinity and Tritheism" in Thomas V. Morris, Gen. Ed. *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*. Notre Dame: University of Notre dame Press. 1989.
- Schaff, Philip. *History of the Christian Church Vol II*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing House. 1995.
- Swain, Scott R. *The God of the Gospel: Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Theology*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press. 2013.
- Tillich, Paul. *A History of Christian Thought*. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc. 1968
- "Trinity Definition & Meaning." Dictionary.com. Dictionary.com. Accessed August 27, 2021. <http://www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/Trinity>.

AL-ITQĀN

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Volume: 5

Issue No. 2

August 2021

EDITOR IN-CHIEF

Dr. Wan Mohd Azam Mohd Amin

MANAGING EDITOR

Dr. Masitoh Ahmad

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr. Muhammad Afifi al-Akiti, Oxford

Dr. Muhammad Kamal Hassan, IIUM

Dr. Syed Arabi Aidid, IIUM.

Dr. Hassan Basri Mat Dahan, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia,
Nilai, Negeri Sembilan.

Dr. Kamaruzaman Yusuff, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak,
Kota Semarahan, Kucing.

Dr. Kamar Oniah, IIUM.

Dr. Mumtaz Ali, IIUM.

Dr. Siti Akmar, Universiti Institut Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam

Dr. Thameem Ushama, IIUM.