

Analyzing The Trinity In The Corinthian Church

Edward Sitepu

Lecturer at Baptist Bandung School of Theology,
Indonesia
edwardsitepu103@gmail.com

Milisi Sembiring

Department of English language and Literature at
University Methodist Indonesia
milisi_sembiring@yahoo.com

Mathias. A

Lecturer at Baptis Bandung School of Theology
mathiasbaptis@gmail.com

Abraham. B. Sigalingging

Lecturer at Baptist Bandung School of Theology
Indonesia
abrahambarlian@gmail.com

Abstract

The horizon of understanding the Trinity from the beginning of the church until now is still a subject of discussion that causes resistance. It takes place and is discussed among theologians and teachers of God's people. This cannot be separated from historical ignorance regarding the development of Christian doctrine. So it is deemed necessary to re-examine this noble subject by considering the methodology and history of its development. For later application in the Corinthian church. The hope is that this article can provide actual and contemporary understanding, even though it is not something new, through the presence of a thought that touches the depth of the problem. And giving birth to a conclusion focused on reconstructing the crucial point (the existence and existence of God in Christ). He approaches it with caution before expressing a theological opinion about the existence of God and His way of life. The findings show that the Corinthian congregation's understanding of God was only limited to a path to wisdom without knowing that Jesus was the God who saved humans throughout history. Applying it to the contemporary congregation, God's people must experience Jesus and accept Him personally in their faith. So that the understanding of Christ is rooted in the way God saves humans and can be accounted for historically.

Keywords: Doctrine, Triune, Congregation, Corinthian, Revelation.

INTRODUCTION

Quoting D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' statement that the biblical approach is a very important approach, the existence of God and the way God exists is a noble subject. The existence of God and the way he exists is not appropriate if its placement is included in human rational thinking. Because God, who is unlimited, eternal, and not limited by space and time, has a purpose for His existence. This initial provision must be seen from the perspective of salvation and the progress of

God's saving action towards sinful humans. And His self-declaration is contained in the provisions or minutes of the agreement.

Fundamental teachings regarding the 'being' of God have been studied since the ancient Greek era as proposed by Aristotle. And given a philosophical-theological charge by Augustine the church father in the fifth century AD. Also reaffirmed by Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages. In the nineteenth century, it was put forward by several theologians who were opposed by Herman Bavinck and Charles Hodge. And its development until now has also become the subject of thought among theologians, such as a figure named Herwi Rikhof, from the Netherlands among the Catholic church there. Also no less important is the thought of the theologian from Germany named Jurgen Moltmann related to the Trinity-being in the activity of Creation. Until the figure of Karl Barth, the theologian who lives in Basel Switzerland who is the initiator of the neo-orthodox school.¹

The essence of the issue of the existence of the Triune God in the fourth century AD in a historical perspective is a form of resistance to Arianism theology. Where the emphasis is not able to distinguish the unity of God and his multiplicity. This theological fact received the full attention of Augustine, the father of the church in the West. He is the main figure in studying the doctrine of the trinity. His thinking is known as; the threefold unity.² The primacy of this basic teaching has a historical spectrum. And this means, the doctrine of God's existence in all trajectories of events and time has developed and can lead to polemics. So, a comprehensive assessment is needed.

Various propositions put forward by many theologians have implications for the reality of God's people. There is a prioritization of using a methodological approach related to philosophical understanding which has content that can be criticized objectively and biblically.

PROBLEM AND METHOD

By using a historical approach, at least this research can provide a concrete perspective, both from the background to the emphasis that is considered logical at the time, regarding the Trinity. Historical approach leads to what is said by Hans Conzelmann who says, foreign both to history and to reality, and from a practical point of view a reduction of Christianity to general religious consciousness, a formal dialectical of existence.³ This German theologian places the events of the past in a critical description of the content and reconstructs the building of theological thought with the lens of modernity. The historical approach as a method is interested in bridging critical content descriptions with theological reconstruction efforts.

¹ J Messakh, "Basic Teaching About the Trinity God: The Theological Dynamics of His Existence and Significance for Faith," *The Way: Jurnal Theology and Education* 5, no. 2 (2019): 126 the author ensures that the Trinity in its historical focus is a process of transformation in line with F. Hahn's view, the kerygma of the gospel then goes to dogma for the church without ever getting opposition from the church. 126/ accessed August 24, 2023.

² Messakh, "Basic Teaching About the Trinity God: The Theological Dynamics of His Existence and Significance for Faith."

³ Hans Conzelmann, *The Problem of Christ in The Twentieth Century*, ed. W.R. Matthews (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1951), 54.

In Christian metaphysics, the world and its underlying system are open systems, which differ from scientific postulates based on Greek philosophy by prioritizing that everything is a series of causes and effects in a closed system. For Aloys Grillmeier, Catholic historians see the existence of an infused philosophy in the kerygma tradition of the church/believer as a new interpretation effort. The mention by historians is certainly not without reason. As Arius and the second generation of Arius followers formulated the interpretation of the Trinity. Grillmeier further examines that the problem of the Trinity is a development of the content of Christ's preaching and His uniqueness is related to how the church understands it in the monotheistic creed that has been held so far.⁴ The period ranges from the three to the fourth century AD.

Roni Ismail said similarly when he examined the objections of the Jehovah's Witnesses regarding the Trinity doctrine. He puts their objections in this way, Jehovah's Witnesses hold to the influence of Plato when the Greek fathers used the trinity in teaching while using the knife of Plato's philosophy and the occurrence of infiltration into the church. And they make sure the origins of the trinity teachings are pagan teachings.⁵ Is this Jehovah's Witness true?

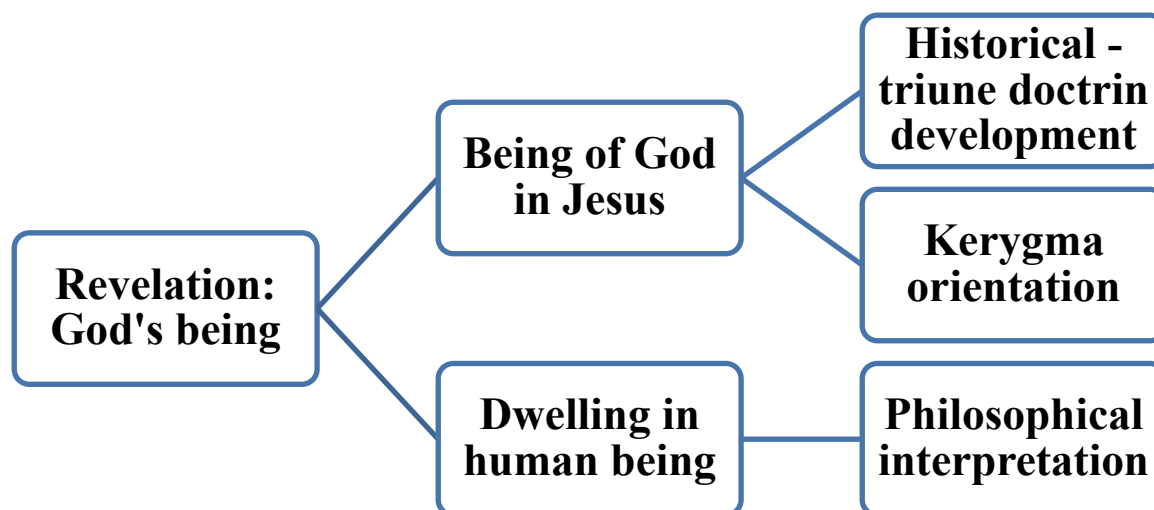
A struggle for two centuries and its solution was pursued by various Councils in many places until the fifth century. In the current era, this still leaves problems, especially in teaching in theology classes, in the form of reducing a trinity to dignity by the statement of a teacher, for example. Can this reduction of God be justified and narrowed down to a duality?

In the context of heresy, for example, the humanity of Jesus is highly valued by the Jehovah's Witnesses but not for the pre-existence of Jesus who existed before all things existed (cf. Jn 1:1). This fact certainly requires building in understanding the way God exists. The estuary of this discourse is the need for healthy and accountable theology.

In the theological understanding and faith, as witnessed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, the meaning of the gospel is centered on the crucifixion of Christ and pure faith whose foundation is in the complete life of Christ (His suffering, death, and resurrection). The three events in His unity constitute the proclamation of the true gospel of salvation. So from these three methodological perspectives, a methodological area regarding the doctrine of the trinity can be formulated as shown in Figure 1 below.

⁴ Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, ed. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 8,9.

⁵ Rony Ismail, "The Dogma of The Trinity According to Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses," *Religion: Journal of the Study of Religion* 13, no. 2 (2017).

Fig. 1. The Historical Spectrum of the Trinity

Looking back at the methodological description (figure 1), the actual formulation regarding the Trinity doctrine can be stated as follows:

"The Trinity doctrine of God reveals himself in history humans, the emphasis is inseparable from God's plan of salvation revealed in a covenant (Gen 3:15; 12; 15 and 17). This agreement is progressing and clearer its meaning is in Christ (Isaiah 53). HE'S YHWH's God revealed Himself to humans first, then to Abraham, the contents of the covenant in practice became the preaching of the gospel of salvation (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16,17; 1 Cor 15:3,4; 1 Pet 2:24; 1 Pet 3:18). By This gospel, the church and the believers who base their faith continue to expand The proclamation is until the second coming of Christ."

The historical context of God's existence and its increasingly concrete development when God reveals Himself to humans shows where God shows humans the continuation and continuity of His Oneness, but at the same time exists as Father, Son, and Spirit.⁶ Seen in Jesus' mandate for the preaching of the gospel both in Matthew 28 and Mark 16 to Acts 1:8. So it can be concluded that God exists and the way He reveals Himself is in line with the development of the kerygma or the preaching of faith in salvation to His own according to His promise to Abraham. All of these were initiated and comes from God.

Preaching Faith and Salvation to the Corinthian Church

⁶ Catherine M. Lacugna, "The Relational God: Aquinas and Beyond," *Theological Studies* 46 (1985) downloaded 07 August 2021.

The context of the Corinthian church itself when examined from the contents of the letter of 1 Corinthians cannot be separated from the theological reality about God and its implications for the way the congregation worships relates to fellow believers even when performing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The background of this gift ensures that the cosmopolitan Corinthian church is also still struggling with the issue of the trinity which they feel still needs to be equipped with training according to Hellenistic culture.

The theological issues in the Corinthian section are summarized in terms of, law, sin, righteousness, and faith. In this vocabulary, Richard A. Horsley said, in the collection of letters now combined into 2 Corinthians, that the conflicts became worse and came into involving his conflict with some in the community.⁷ Such writing at least indicates an objection to Paul as a minister of God with the church at Corinth. And it results in efforts to internally separate and create groups that do not reflect unity in life together as disciples of Christ.

Integration rather than fragmentation when talking about *koinonia*. In fact, it must reflect the common unity both in social reality, psyche (: heart in soul) and feelings (: share in feeling) to the unity of spirit (*pneuma*). Like the hope and prayer of Jesus in John 17, it can be stated: that all may become one. The unity of the church reflects a witness to this world. In unity as His body, God's abundant grace is revealed to all believers (John 1:16). Same as mentioned Chuckwuemeka Anthony Atansi, the community that can be described as Jesus spiritual progeny.⁸

The word Corinth itself has a meaning: wealthy, meaning prosperous, rich. The area that shows this city is indeed magnificent and is filled with commercial activities followed by the presence of two main ports in the city of Corinth (this city is a link between mainland Asia and mainland Europe). Gordon D. Fee⁹ said that although the city was rich and indeed majestic, the immoral behavior of its inhabitants was also conspicuous as reflected in the use of the term *korinthiazos* to mean: the behavior of the Corinthian people who persisted with fornication.

The literal meaning is committing fornication. This initial picture at least shows that this church has not been free from the sin of fornication¹⁰. Apart from that, in tracing the text of 1 Corinth 11:17-34, the congregation's membership itself is a combination of economically well-off congregations (although not many) and lower economic class congregations, such as the poor, slaves and those in need. In this congregation the population of those who are less fortunate is larger. According to Fee in his comments, this congregation itself at the beginning of its formation still brought its idols into the Christian faith, in addition to their habit of being attached to the world of prostitution (1 Corinth 6:12-20) and their rejection of the resurrection body after death (1 Corinth 15:1-58). So, in the letter 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul provides many arguments and explanations regarding the characteristics of this heterogeneous congregation. In line with this

⁷ Richard A. Horsley, *Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 22.

⁸ Chuckwuemeka Anthony Atansi, *Christ The Image Social Transformation*. Dissertation.(Leuven-Belgia: KU Leuven, 2020), 73.

⁹ D. Fee. Gordon, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 2.

¹⁰ Horsley.

statement, Horsley¹¹ stated that there are many aspects of the following historical reconstruction that will be justified and clarified in his argument.

Paul carried out his mission in Corinth by holding on to or relying fully on the Holy Spirit, the source of God's wisdom and power (1 Corinth 2:4). This dedication to his dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from his affirmation to the congregation to do (practical aspect): a. the Lord's Supper correctly and declare b. his creed to the true gospel creed, namely to the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ. This is seen in 1 Cor 11:23-29 and 1 Cor 15:3 and 4. The goal is of course that this congregation be free from competition or competition for status, a way of life of self-interest to the spirit of competition to become prominent.¹²

In conclusion, in this luxurious city, the exploitation of human beings against their fellow human beings is so obvious to the physical eye. The presence of disparity or economic inequality is a characteristic in this city and is still carried over into life together as members of the body of Christ. Economic prestige is more real than unity. This contrasts when compared to the early church in Acts 2. Neighbors in the Corinthian church are defined as what they have from a material point of view, not as members of the body of Christ that are attached and unified.

Based on this historical fact, and looking at the contents of the Corinthian letter, both the first letter and also in the second letter, the source of the dispute between Paul and the church revolves around two sublime matters, firstly Paul himself as an apostle and evangelist and secondly regarding the theology that developed at this time. that. Fee said that there had been a penetration of the Hellenistic worldview (Greek worldview) on the gospel of grace. The source is in the vocabulary: pneumatikos (: spirit). In reality for the Corinthians wisdom was spirit itself, as they understood in the reality of Greek philosophy at the time. This is what Fee calls a basic theological problem.¹³ The wisdom of reason is true spirit. This is the understanding of the Corinthian church, which does not reflect the personal Spirit of God.

Horsley further mentions, the influence of Apollos who has taught the congregation the need to practice gaining wisdom (: Greek – Sophia) overlaps with the gospel of Christ. He added, from what we know of the cultural background of the Corinthians, the Sophia Devotion, spiritual status, and personal transcendence taught by Apollos would have been far more readily assimilated than the gospel of the crucifixion and resurrection presented by Paul, embedded as it was in a historical-eschatological orientation toward reality.¹⁴ The pure gospel of grace met resistance from the Greek culture through the practice of acquiring wisdom towards attaining a high spiritual status, the status of freedom to live on earth, to spiritual experiences of transcendent fulfillment. This is similar to today's contemporary psychological teaching which trains participants to imagine something as an entrance to a transcendent world.

Guthrie gives his analysis of the Corinthian church in such a way that the possible Christology of the Bible, with its combination of true humanity with divine nature, is expressed in

¹¹ Horsley

¹² Horsley.

¹³ Gordon, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 10.

¹⁴ Horsley, *Corinthians*, 35,36.

contemporary terms to counterbalance the docetic type of emphasis on the divine at the expense of man. This opposition brought a real danger to the stability of early Christian Christology.¹⁵ This is also the Apostle Paul's 'concern' to this Corinthian church. It should be so: the presence of the spiritually living Christ sanctifies every place where Christians are present.¹⁶ A strong understanding of the resurrected and glorious Emmanuel is in the believer.

And the embodiment is expressed in the right way of life, including with brothers and sisters in the faith despite different social status backgrounds, different educational backgrounds. For all were united and sanctified in one faith, one baptism. This is possible because of its focus on the lives of people who are connected with the existence of God through His Holy Spirit. The Corinthian congregation is classified as a charismatic church and is prone to splitting due to the occurrence of grouping or siding with certain groups of leaders who are considered more powerful and charismatic.

On this basis, the point of understanding the Trinity in the context of *koinonia* should be seen as the wisdom of God within the framework of the salvation of God's people. That wisdom was revealed in Jesus Christ and not through Hellenistic training. Poythress asserts, the central events in redemption also receive interpretation afterward as the apostles looked back on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and the Old Testament history that led up to his coming.¹⁷ Man's redemption was solely God's act from the beginning and man's response was to believe in the truth that Christ was the only one sent by God to the Jews and the nations. The following text explains this:

John 6:29 - Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

John 6:39 – And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that he has given me, let nothing lost, but that I may raise him at the end of time."

God's way of revealing Himself and His purpose of redeeming mankind from the bondage of sin are things that are beyond the bounds of nature and reason.¹⁸ Jesus declared Himself to be the messenger of God and He called God His Father, which is the key point to know the real God. When Jesus said the Father and I are one, once again through these words of Jesus, the meaning of the theological segment that he wants to preach is that the existence of God and the way he exists can now be fully recognized through the humanity of Jesus. The life of Jesus from the beginning had eternal glory. For He is the Word made flesh and through His death and resurrection He is the Word and the Spirit who gives life (see John 6:63 and Heb. 7:8 and 1 John 5:20). This last text or verse speaks very strongly about Jesus the Living God.

¹⁵ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (London: Intervarsity Press, 1981), 329.

¹⁶ Christopher J.H. Wright, *Hidup Sebagai Umat Allah* (Jakarta: Gunung Mulia, 2012), 93.

¹⁷ Vern Sheridan Poythress, *Inerrancy and The Gospels* (Wheaton-Illinois: Crossway Press, n.d.), 36.

¹⁸ D.E. Pandey confirmed that the trinity stems from two words: the first-word *ousia* and the second-word *hypostasis*. The first word is the mode of existence of God and the second is about the persons of God who exist in a special form. D.E. Pandey, "The Triune God: A Biblical-Theological Treatise on the Oneness and Trinity of God," *Dava: Journal of Theology* 1, no. 1 (2000): 46.

RESEARCH RESULT

The following is an understanding of the Trinity that many of its appearances have been given by Dutch theologians.

Dutch theologian Berkouwer agrees and is in Rahner's position¹⁹. Berkouwer mentions the dangers of modalism when discussing the Trinity. The foundation was laid in the thoughts of Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), that the Trinity is not rooted in metaphysics or philosophical speculation. Rahner and Berkouwer's thinking is based on the existence of God, not on the level of metaphysical thought and speculative liberal philosophy²⁰.

Meanwhile, H. Berkhof (1914-1995), a theologian who came from the land of Windmills, gave his views on the Trinity. Berkhof focuses himself on God's Holy Love. But later, he removed the doctrine of the Trinity from the great theme of God. He even said out loud, "as the Creator of all things, the establisher of the covenant, and the one who revealed Himself to us, we know that He is God in one person. And from this foundation, it is impossible to go to the Trinity²¹. This is Berkhof's assertion. This fact shows that the context of the statement of the Trinity at that time for theologians was not the main thing and was not a topic to be discussed in depth regarding the existence of God.

Next is a theologian named E. Schillebeeckx, a Dutch Catholic theologian in his book entitled: *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, his description of the Trinity leads to his understanding that the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus leads us to see that the Trinity is the perfect way to present God in His unity. Jesus' experience with His Abba as the source of the sermon, even the soul of the sermon, ministry, and death – as well as His resurrection, makes it possible to say anything about the Father, the Son, and the Spirit²². Schillebeeckx's understanding brings readers to see the Trinity in the framework of *Deus humanissimum*, where God takes the form of a human face who cares about humanity and is involved in human history and even human experience, only understood through three in one deity. God reveals himself.

Next theologian P. Schoonenberg is a Jesuit from the Netherlands. The basis of his understanding is expressed in postulates centered on the theology of the immanence of the Trinity. This has no

¹⁹ This is known as Karl Rahner's axiom. Contents: Rahner's origins in his theology of grace and the consequences he draws from this for the doctrine of revelation, but also in his Christology. It is in connection with the former, Rahner's theology of grace, in particular his recovery from the scholastic category of uncreated grace, and his defense of the explanation of grace in terms of quasi-formal causality, that builds his belief in the story of revelation as God's self-communication. The point is that grace was not created connected with the way God revealed Himself through Christ. He affirms that Christ is God's eternal gift because God is eternal. Ref: Declan J. O'Byrne, "Spirit Christology and Trinity in the Theology of David Coffey" (Dublin City University School of Theology, 2009), 149.

²⁰ Gijsbert van den Brin and Sthephan van Erp, "Ignoring God Triune? The Doctrine on the Trinity in Dutch Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 1 (2009): 74 accessed Juli 24, 2023

²¹ *Ibid*,77.

²² This is similar to Viorel Coman's intention, that God's relationship with His church can be stated as follows: Like the invisible Body of Christ, the Church is the realization and continuation of Christ's saving work into the world and for the world. Based on this, the whole life of the Church has a sacramental nature that is completely dependent on Christ, therefore the sacramentality of the Church occurs in the sacramentality of Christ. The church is rooted in the incarnate Son of God and lives as long as the church continues to absorb the power and grace of Christ, which is the source of infinite life E. Schillebeeckx, "The Sacramentality of The Church in Dumitru Stanislas's Theology," *Pro Ecclesia* XXVII, no. 2 (2018): 233 accessed July 24, 2023

other meaning than salvation history. This must be taken into account when touching on the teachings. In fact, for him, the Trinity in theological reflection is a subject that is prioritized and undergoing change. Through creation and incarnation, God transformed into fully connected persons as Father, Son, and Spirit. P. Schoonenberg sees that the continuity of creation and incarnation in the context of saving mankind is purely God's initiative from eternity. His omniscience is expressed in the historical space of human civilization and uses language that humans can understand. The orthodoxy of the Christian faith includes creation, incarnation and at the same time, the gift of God's Spirit to His church, and all these realities are written in the holy scriptures. This is what McGrath also touched on about the importance of writing the Bible for mankind. He said that the author of the fourth Gospel no longer used who the true Jews were, but instead claimed that Christians were the true people of Israel and those who remained faithful to the heritage of Israel's traditions and Scriptures.²³

Jürgen Moltmann, the theologian who initiated the doctrine of creation, said that the desire to recognize God Almighty as an absolute being must be seen from the level of the Trinity as the unity of the Father, Son and Spirit. However, Moltmann's statement, which borrows Hegel's idea of God as an absolute subject, still leaves the problem of the past, how the divine unites with humans in the form of an absolute God. The union of God with humans. Moltmann's impression of putting forward the Trinity in Himself turns out to be far from the true Trinity. In Moltmann's thought, he gives the limits of His Love, namely complete love that cannot be separated from Himself, and thus God does not exist except Himself as The Creator. Meanwhile, Yudha Thianto echoed the cross of Christ in the event of human redemption. Concretely, the cross of the Lord is in fact a revelation of the Triune God in human history²⁴. So in Moltmann's mind there is synergy in the formation of a sacred and eternal community.²⁵

This philosophical reality regarding the existence of God raises the question of how to place God's 'existence' on the level of eternity and at the same time whether His freedom is connected to the world? This crucial point must be resolved through revelation of Himself, His mind and will and it must be revealed. And in understandable human language. Revelation is a means of communication towards God's understanding of everything that exists and comes into existence. Thomas Aquinas, who adopted Aristotle's thinking, also gave his opinion about the Trinity in a static or silent context. He based his thinking on Aristotle's categories. The categorical form is divided into two domains, as follows.

Two categories of the existence of God rests on Aristotle's Philosophy

De unitate Dei

a. Divina existit

De trino Dei

a. Divinum iungitur

²³ James F. McGrath, *John's Apologetic Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13.

²⁴ Yudha Thianto, "Jürgen Moltmann's Doctrine of the Trinity and Its Problems," *Veritas: Journal of Theology and Ministry* 14, no. 2 (2013): 151.

²⁵ Ibid.

- b. *Recognovit et nominavit Deum*
- c. *Divinae actiones / facta*

- b. *Nomine et cognoscente Deum*
- c. *Personae divinae*

On the unity of God

- a. The divine exists
- b. He recognized and named God
- c. Divine actions/deeds

On the trinity of God

- a. The Divine is joined
- b. By the name and knowing God
- c. The divine person

The logic developed under this category is certainly a philosophical approach and is applied to God concerning the foundation of the believer's faith. Can you place the Eternal God in the category of philosophical logic? So, it is not surprising that Thomas Aquinas later with his synthesis or his affair with Aristotelian philosophy has also separated grace from nature. Both become autonomous and are not connected. Indeed, Grace is eternal, logic is revealed and comes into existence because the Being willed it.

While remembering, the essence of revelation as witnessed by Scripture shows that early faith did not separate or question grace from creation. This is very clear if we rely on Proverbs 8. The vocabulary of wisdom is questioned by Jehovah's Witnesses where they view Jesus as the firstborn of all creation (cf. Col. 1:15), so that Jesus himself is a mere creation. This view is certainly not true, Jehovah's Witnesses fail to understand God's wisdom in the person of Jesus, these are two realities in Jesus.

Refer to Proverbs 8 as a continuation. The context of Proverbs 8, especially verse 27, shows that the most important or part of the purpose of reading and understanding is: wisdom is personified speaking and was present at the creation of the world. The theological meaning is explained in John 1:1-11 that God's wisdom in creating everything is now expressed in a person named Jesus. Its emergence into human history did not happen suddenly. He exists because of the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12, Gen. 15, Gen. 17) and in the Gospel of John 1 in verse 12. The term "sons of God" includes those who accept Jesus and believe in Him. God's wisdom is revealed as his Son and his mediation through the incarnation. The Word became flesh (*logos sarx*-John 1:14). To become children of God, the Word that created all things worked through Abraham's descendants. And He has said let there be light, so that Word works in the human heart so that he is free from the power of darkness (cf. 2 Cor 4:6). Inner darkness is replaced with the eternal glory of Christ. This is the important purpose of God's revelation to humans who are in the mortality of their lives.

What about the church in the West and the church in the East in understanding the Trinity? The thing that appeared earlier came from the thought of the church fathers in the West and the East. The West represented by Augustine reflects the unity and the East reflects the diversity regarding the being of God. As alluded to by Stanley Grenz where Augustine focused on the oneness of God in contrast to the east of the trinity of God. As is well known, Augustine had

studied Plato's philosophy and indicated that the existence of God was understood in terms of psychological analogies, and this fact led to an understanding of modalism. On this basis, a theologian named Keith Johnson identified Augustine's thinking in a chiasmic pattern,²⁶ as follows:

A The unity of the three persons which is inseparable in substance

B. The distinction between the persons of divinity was originally by eternal relationship.

B' The distinction on the basis of the actions of the three persons is within the framework of safety

A' The inseparability of the three persons is also within the framework of salvation.

Examining major premise A, and the next major premise A' reflects: the existence of God and the relationship that remains in each of His persons. This is the manifestation of God who is eternal from the beginning.

Then looking at the minor premise B and the next minor premise B', then the reflection of God's actions is always in an eternal configuration, namely eternal salvation. Such provisions are the reason why God exists for humans. God is in this world. The focus remains salvation for people who believe in God's saving action through the prophet's prophetic message and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

The resonance of this structure is Augustine's commitment to God's saving action towards humans because it is based on its ontological aspect, namely: (the existence of) His unity in three persons.

Augustine's commitment to the action of each individual of the trinity in saving humanity rests on the eternal relationship of the three from the beginning as God. At least this theological picture makes it possible to say that Augustine's statement based on 1 Cor 1:24 was misunderstood by Arianism because it differentiated the essence of Jesus from the essence of God. In Augustine's understanding, God's existence cannot be separated from God's actions.

The essence of the eternal relationship between the three united in eternal harmony by Arianism is different from Augustine's emphasis. Arianism does not understand the diversity in God and also the unity in Him.

Refers to Augustine's understanding of the agreement of the Church Fathers in the 5th century AD and is associated with the Council of Nicaea which discussed sharp contradictions with Arian theology. The description of the development of the doctrine of the existence of God in the West and East as well as the existence of the Eastern vs. Arian Consensus actually reflects differences in interpretation. Differences in understanding of God and the way he exists. And this has given rise to a long debate.

²⁶ Messakh, "Basic Teaching About the Trinity God: The Theological Dynamics of His Existence and Significance for Faith," 24/accessed August 24, 2021. The chiasmic approach has been one of the many attempts to understand the biblical text so that a complete understanding can be produced.

So it can also be said that Augustine's understanding of the trinity is a rule of theology. Augustine in his theological thinking held this. This is what Alan Spence says about John Owen's theology, that Owen adhered to Augustine orthodoxy. Would Augustine's orthodoxy be relevant today? It will be seen especially in the context of the congregation and the maturation of their faith.

In order to frame the maturity of the faith of the Corinthian church, aspects of the teaching about Christ conveyed by the apostle Paul are found in 1 Corinth 12:4-14. In this interest, James G. Dunn pays attention to the content of Paul's theological emphasis, its primacy on the regulation of cohabitation. Live as a charismatic church.²⁷ The writing context in the form of doctrinal teaching about God and the existence of God in the congregation reflects the presence of the Spirit of God is the embodiment of the unity of the body of Christ. Through unity and diversity in the church, God is truly present for His people. Christ becomes the axis of the preaching of God and the continuation is the giving of spiritual gifts to the church. The importance of Christ in the common life of the whole congregation must be interpreted as Unity in diversity and not division.

DISCUSSION

The doctrine of the Trinity at the level of faith of the church and believers in today's era cannot be separated from the long history of understanding the existence of God. From things that are simple and easy to understand without ever separating or differentiating the existence and existence of Allah. A similar thing can also be seen in the apostles' teachings about Christ who is always connected with Almighty God. The preaching of Jesus' work for the salvation of mankind is related to God the Creator. The oneness of God in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 was given a new understanding by the Apostle Paul, especially in 1 Tim 2:5. The 'existence' of Allah is One and the intermediary between Allah and humans is also One. So the 'form' of Jesus Christ is the form of God from the beginning (cf. John 1:1-5).

The danger for today's church is to use the strict emphasis on the knowledge of God as emphasized by orthodox Jews. Until then fell into modalism. And an inappropriate position also places too much emphasis on the plurality of God in his relationships without ever looking at the nature (ousia) of God from the start. Eternal and unchanging but still in a dynamic relationship is the theological benchmark. It is also wrong if the understanding of the trinity is reduced to duality as a middle way. Historical facts and dynamics in the current context mean that understanding the trinity is not just read but must also be understood. Kevin J. Vanhoozer quotes Hillary and Poitiers as saying the same thing, *Scriptura est non in legend, sed in intelligendo*

Scripture does not lie in reading but understanding.

²⁷ The emphasis is on the same Spirit. Diversity in the congregation both stewardship comes from the same God. Diversity in activities, God is the same. For the common good, the manifestation of the spirit expressed in the Corinthian community includes wisdom, knowledge, the gift of faith, healing by the same Spirit. This includes the gifts of healing, miracles, prophecy to tongues, and their interpretation. This fact describes as the one body of Christ – Christ, too, is not divided. The unity of the body leaves no difference as Jews or Greeks, slaves or free because all have been baptized in the same spirit. See James G Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 552–553.

Based on the deviation of understanding in some overemphasis, ignoring historical data, at least Gerald O Collins's observations deserve attention, it would be wise if I had put forward some guidelines for finding Tradition (capital T- reliable and normative as in the events of various Church Councils) , even in many traditions (small t), to later be joined by Hans Georg Gadamer. Therefore recognizing traditional data as an indispensable aid to interpreting biblical texts is a necessity. It is necessary to pay attention to previous agreements in expressing views about the 'existence' of God. Don't do it carelessly.

Be wise (: careful attitude) because that is a sign of wisdom in thinking and understanding. Something similar can be mentioned by David Gooding, when he explores the reality of worship in a large, festive community in heaven – Revelation 4:1-7:17. The atmosphere of worship is centered on the throne of God as the Creator God and his kerygma is specifically stated in verse 11 which reads:

“Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for Thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they are, and were created.” (Rev 4:11)

The doxology in the book of Revelation also emphasizes that the God that believers believe in from the beginning is focused on the Creator and Provider of all things. Because of His will everything exists and was created. God's 'existence' and 'way of existing' can be recognized whether it is through His creation or in the salvation of His people (in this case Israel and the nations). The unifying element in living together as His people is the recognition of God as the Provider of all things and of the Lamb of God, His only Son (Revelation 4:11). These virtues are important in true worship. There must be no other substitute elements in worship. Because the finality of Christ is at the heart of humanity's collective worship. Christ does both, creation and redemption (cf. Romans 4:17)

CONCLUSION

There is an opinion that the attempt to separate the Oneness of God and His Trinity allows for the rejection of God's relationship with creation. And finally the rejection of historical perspective. This is easy to understand because of the affair between Hellenistic philosophy and God's revelation. As seen in the Corinthian church, seeking wisdom outside of Christ..

The determination of a category model to highlight God's 'existence' as done by Thomas Aquinas in his book *Summa Theologica* has brought about a deep separation between "being" and "the way of being". The implication is a separation between grace and nature. It is unfortunate that the application of a method of understanding that uses Aristotle's philosophy in understanding God has resulted in the merging of the philosophical framework with the revelation of the holy book. The Confession of Faith becomes blurred in the reality of the testimony and service of the kerygma, like the diction: a little leaven will leaven the whole dough, the Gospel is no longer pure.

It is indicated that the reduction of the text regarding the existence of God and the way of his existence is seen in the conclusions of Arianism and Jehovah's Witnesses. Their ignorance of the biblical text because they separate God's existence and God's actions leaves a crucial problem, namely that the essence of the Christian faith according to apostolic orthodoxy has experienced such erosion. The root lies in their closed thinking about the dynamics of God's existence and the harmony of the relationship between the Triune God. It can be said that the basic understanding of the trinity since its development by the church from ancient times to the present has indeed encountered such opposition. This happens because of the marriage of philosophy with the Christian Scriptures

Paying attention to the context of worship in the Corinthian congregation, the introduction of the idea of training to acquire 'wisdom' within the framework of Hellenistic philosophy, has influenced faith and actual relationships as members of the body of Christ. The Corinthian congregation was prone to division. The need for strong attention to the preaching and teaching of Christology. Through strong emphasis a strong faith will be realized, without the need to add anything to the noble work of Christ. Paul uses the phrase cross and not the Greek version of wisdom. Because justification by faith alone is the criterion for receiving true salvation (cf. Rom. 5:1 & 8). The same is true of the theological sermon in 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18. The Apostle Peter emphasized this in the congregation's way of life so that God's church has an orthodox creed. Centered on the "name that saves" the meaning of the name Jesus - The event took place at the time of His crucifixion. This assertion is in line with the content of Peter's second sermon in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 4:12).

REFERENCES

- Anthony Atansi, Chuckwuemeka, Christ The Image Social Transformation. Dissertation.(Leuven-Belgia: KU Leuven, 2020),
- Brin, Gijbert van den, and Sthephan van Erp. "Ignoring God Triune? The Doctrine on the Trinity in Dutch Theology." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 1. 2009..
- Collins, Gerald O. *A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Conzelmann, Hans. *The Problem of Christ in The Twentieth Century*. Edited by W.R. Matthews. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1951.
- Dunn, James G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.
- Gordon, D. Fee. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1988.
- Grilmeier, Aloys. *Christ in Christian Tradition*. Edited by John Bowden. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975.
- Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Theology*. London: Intervarsity Press, 1981.
- Horsley, Richard A. *Chorinthians*. Nashville: Abindgdom Press, 1988.
- Ismail, Rony. "The Dogma of The Trinity According to Christians, Jahovah's Witnesses." *Religion: Journal of the Study of Religion* 13, no. 2 (2017).
- Lacugna, Chaterine M. "The Relational God: Aquinas and Beyond." *Theological Studies* 46 1985.

- Lloyd-Jones, Martyn. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*. London: InterVarsity Press, 1976.
- McGrath, James F. *John's Apologetic Christology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Messakh, J. "Basic Teaching About the Trinity God: The Theological Dynamics of His Existence and Significance for Faith." *The Way: Jurnal Theology and Education* 5, no. 2 2019..
- O'Byrne, Declan J. "Spirit Christology and Trinity in the Theology of David Coffey." Dublin City University School of Theology, 2009.
- Pandey, D.E. "The Triune God: A Biblical-Theological Treatise on the Oneness and Trinity of God." *Dava: Journal of Theology* 1, no. 1 . 2000..
- Poythress, Vern Sheridan. *Inerrancy and The Gospels*. Wheaton-Illinois: Crossway Press, n.d.
- Schillebeeckx, E. "The Sacramentality of The Church in Dumitru Stanislav's Theology." *Pro Ecclesia* XXVII, no. 2. 2018..
- Spence, Alan. *Incarnation and Inspiration: John Owen and the Coherence of Christology*. London: T&T Clark, 2007.
- Thianto, Yuda. "Jurgen Moltmann's Doctrine of the Trinity and Its Problems." *Veritas: Journal of Theology and Ministry* 14, no. 2 . 2013..
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Doctrinal Drama*. Surabaya, Indonesia: Momentum, 2011.
- Wright, Christopher J.H. *Hidup Sebagai Umat Allah*. Jakarta: Gunung Mulia, 2012.