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THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN CHRISTIANITY: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Juhansar Andi Latief

Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta

(juhansar@mail.ugm.ac.id)

Abstrak

Artikel ini memberikan konsep tentang Tuhan dalam ke-Kristen-an. Konsep ini didasarkan pada perspektif Islam. Ini secara singkat menjelaskan bagaimana kekristenan mengeksplorasi konsep Tuhan deskriptif kemudian membandingkan dan kontras ini wawasan, konsep Allah yang didasarkan pada dua agama Ibrahim, Kristen dan Islam. Ini juga terlihat pada beberapa kritik Islam pada konsep Allah dalam kekristenan. Penelitian ini kemudian menemukan bahwa bahkan mereka dua agama memiliki akar yang sama seperti agama-agama Abrahamik tetapi mereka benar-benar memiliki interpretasi yang berbeda tentang konsep Tuhan itu sendiri. Tidak seperti tradisi Islam, Kristen memiliki konsep trinitas Allah.

This article provides a concept of God in the Christianity. The concept is based on the Islamic perspective. It briefly explains how the Christian concept of God explores descriptive and then compare and contrast these insights, the concept of God which is based on the two Abrahamic faiths, Christianity and Islam. It also looks at some of the criticism of Islam on the concept of God in Christianity. The study then found that even those two religions have the same root as the Abrahamic religions but they actually have different interpretations of the concept of God itself. Unlike the tradition of Islam, Christianity has the concept of the trinity of God.

Key Words: God, Christianity, Islamic perspective

A. Introduction

Christianity is the second of the-three Abrahamic religions. It has the biggest population among all religions in allover the world, specially the western world. It has almost two thousand million adherents. As we have well known, it has origin in the teaching of Jesus, a Jew by birth and reported to be born of a virgin mother, she is Mary. It began as a small Jewish sect in the Roman Empire, but by the fourth century it had become the official religion of the Empire. It later split, like the Empire, into the Eastern Byzantine Churches, centered on Constantinople, and the Latin Western Church, centered on Rome. It was introduced into Latin America in the sixteen century by the Spanish, and in succeeding centuries to Asia and Africa and throughout the worldwide British Empire.¹ Today there are Christians in every country and it has 1.5 billion diverse adherents.²

Before talking about specific beliefs, it's probably worth saying something about the role of beliefs in Christianity. Christianity tends to put more importance on proper belief than many other religions. The term "orthodox" (from roots meaning "right belief") is used to describe beliefs that are in agreement with the standards set up by the Christian community.³ When saying that someone is a Christian, we normally mean that he or she accepts the major Christian beliefs. That's not the whole story, since Christianity is also a way of life and a community. But most Christians do not think it is appropriate to apply the term Christian based simply on the fact that someone has Christian parents and grew up as a Christian, or even based on the fact that they admire many of Jesus' teachings. To be classified as a Christian, one is normally expected to accept the major Christian beliefs, to be following the way of life that Jesus taught, and to be a part of the Christian community.

¹Keith Ward, *Christianity: "A Short Introduction"* (New York: Oneworld Publications, 2000), p. 2

²David A. Rausch and Carl Hermann Voss, *World Religions: "Our Quest for Meaning"* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993), p. 173

³Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, (New York: Crestwood; ST Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002)

Jesus is treated variously in Christianity. He is often regarded by the Christian as the “son of God”⁴. They (Christians) believe that in Jesus, God’s word became flesh. On the other hand, according to Christianity, if God had not revealed Himself, religion would have been impossible. Man could not have possibly had any knowledge of God, if God had not made Himself known.⁵ Therefore, they believe that he [Jesus himself] as revelation of God and he himself as a son of God. However, in Islam God’s word became the book or mentioned in the (holy Qur’an), different in Christianity where God’s word became the flesh in the form of Jesus. Jesus was the only incarnation of God.⁶ Furthermore, God acted especially in the person of Jesus.⁷ That is way; he is regarded as the true image of God, and his representative, his messiah carrying his God’s true image to men. Sometimes also, in Christianity, Jesus is regarded as a God and sometimes as a man. He is in a sense taken as God-man, Man is God image.⁸

Unlike Islamic teaching; man is not created in the image of God (QS. 42: 11) but man is created out of the dust of the earth (QS. 23: 12) and Allah breathed life into man (QS. 32: 9; 15: 29). Furthermore, Christianity believes that he forms the second person of Christian Trinity. Sometimes, he is also taken as the incarnation of God to give people the true define message. Here also is much more different with Islamic teachings where Jesus (Isa) is believed by Moslems as prophet of God not as a son of God. He was a very great prophet, second only to Muhammad. Indeed, Jesus is not the son of God (QS. 9:30) and certainly is not divine (QS. 5:17, 75) and he was not crucified (QS. 4:157). So, who and what is the real God in Christianity and how is a Moslem’s point of view?

⁴David Craig, *What Christians Believe*, (England: Oxford; Oneworld Publications, 2000), p. 62

⁵Louis Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine*, (Michigan: Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1938), p. 13

⁶Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions; Fifth Edition*, (Upper Saddle River, N.J. 07458: Prentice-Hall, 2002), p. 332

⁷Keith Ward, *Op.Cit.*, p. 44

⁸Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom; The Doctrine of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 166

B. God as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)

God in Christianity perspective is a Trinity of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is not three gods in one god, nor is it one person who took three forms. Trinitarians is strictly monotheistic, according to them. However, in Islam, God is well-known as Allah. Allah is one person, a strict unity. There is no other God in existence. He is the creator of the universe (QS. 3: 191), sovereign over all (QS. 6: 61-62). There is no other God in existence.

Christianity believes in the reality of only one supreme God (Monotheistic religion). God, in Christianity, is of the nature of a Person, although not in the ordinary sense of the term 'Personality'. He has consciousness, will and is of the nature of Pure Spirit.⁹ In Islam, God is unlimited, infinite, omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. He is eternal and his existence is necessary. Nobody can conceive his non-existence. He is without beginning and end. God is the creator and the sustainer of this world. He has created the world out of nothing. He lives within it and also beyond it. He can also destroy the world at his own will. He is both transcendence and immanent.¹⁰

Christianity is essentially monotheistic believing in only one God, but however God is painted as three persons into one. This idea of God as three persons into one known as the idea of Trinity, the three persons in one or He (God) exists in three persons called: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These are not three persons in the ordinary sense of the word; they are not individuals, but rather three modes or forms in which Divine Being exists.¹¹ The Trinity says that there is one God, existing as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the doctrine of God is the three descriptions of God as a Father, as Spirit, and as Love, express together a complete and comprehensive doctrine of the Godhead.¹² Therefore, according to Armstrong, the

⁹Kedar Nath Tiwari, *Comparative Religion* (Motilal Banarsidas: Delhi Mumbai Chennai Calcutta Bangalore Pune patna Varanasi, 1997), p. 132

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 133

¹¹Louis Berkhof, *Op.Cit.*, p. 42

¹²J. F. Bethune-Baker, D.D, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, (London: Great Britain, Methuen & CO. LTD, 1954), p. 11-12

Trinity should not be seen as a literal fact but as a paradigm that corresponds to the real fact in the hidden life of God.¹³

As a matter of fact, Christian lays almost emphasis upon God's attribute of kindness and love. In any way, God identified as Love, "*the greatest (teachings of Christianity) of these is love*".¹⁴ It is really this emphasis upon God as Love that distinguishes Christian God from the Judaic one. The idea of God as loving, He is like a loving father who loves his children without any precondition, contract or sense of return: God is now no cause for fear.¹⁵ He is absolutely benevolent and kinds and forgives even the worst of the sinners if they sincerely repent for their sins. As a Moslem, that is fine to say that God can bless everyone even the sinners because in Islam God also regards as God who has greatest *Love* and *Affection* but for me, we must not say that God is like our father by assumption that father has limitation, he cannot fill whatever his children want, he (father) cannot fill all children's need. Therefore, God does not like our father who has limitation but more than it.

Basically, the word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible, but the Bible itself is thoroughly Trinitarian from first to last. On the other hand, Christians believe Trinity. Despite the fact, I am as a Moslem, not saying that Christianity is wrong but I just would like to say that why does Christianity proclaim and believe the concept of *Trinity* if it was not mentioned in the Bible? I personally think that the Bible is a corrupted and an unreliable book. It is thus imperative for Christian to understand the biblical basis of the Trinitarian doctrine of God. In simplest term, George says: "*The doctrine of the Trinity is the necessary theological framework for understanding the story of Jesus as the story of God.*"¹⁶ It is the exposition of the Old Testament affirmation "God is one" and the New Testament Confession "Jesus

¹³Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), p. 110

¹⁴David A. Rausch and Carl Hermann Voss, *Op.Cit.*, p. 145

¹⁵Kedar Nath Tiwari, *Op.Cit.*, p. 134

¹⁶Timothy George, *Understanding the Differences between Christianity and Islam: Is the Father of Jesus, the God of Muhammad?*, (United States of America: Zondervand, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002), p. 59

Christ is lord,”¹⁷ neither of which can be understood apart from the person of the Holy Spirit.

The Trinity deals with the relationship among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The only distinctions within God are the relations “begotten” (the relation between Father and Son) and “proceeding” (the relation between Father and Holy Spirit). Initially one might think that a relation implies at least two different things. However that’s not necessarily the case. There are relations such as “identity” that apply to just one thing. Thus begotten and proceeding are not seen as relations that result in multiple gods. Rather, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are different ways in which God exists, i.e. different personal roles. But they are not separate things.¹⁸ The Catholic Encyclopedia gives the following answer to the question of whether there are three self-consciousnesses in God: Neither person nor mind is self-consciousness; though a person must need possess of self-consciousness, and consciousness attests the existence of mind. Granted that in the infinite mind, in which the categories are transcended, there are three relations which are subsistent realities, distinguished one from another in virtue of their relative opposition then it will follow that the same mind will have a three-fold consciousness, knowing itself in three ways in accordance with its three modes of existence.¹⁹ But I think, it is impossible to establish that, in regard of the infinite mind, such a supposition involves a contradiction.

While these basic terms are common, the East and West tend to speak of them in different ways. The West typically starts with the concept of one substance. While the term “substance” is open to different understandings, in the typical Western understanding, God is thought of as one “thing”. We can classify properties into properties of a thing itself (size, color, etc), and relational properties (e.g. one thing is to the left of another). God is considered to be one in all respects except a couple of relational properties: begotten and proceeding.²⁰ His power, eternity, etc, are all one. If you try to count God, you end

¹⁷Mary Pat Fisher, *Op.Cit.*, p. 286

¹⁸Bishop Kallistos *Op.Cit.*,p. 32

¹⁹Bruce D. Marshall, *Trinity* in Gareth Jones, *The Blackwell Companion to the Modern Theology*, (Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 183

²⁰Bishop Kallistos Ware, *Op.Cit.*,p. 32

up with only one: none of the distinctions that would allow you to identify separate entities apply to God. But how come we count begins at one and ends at one also. The East tends to start with persons. The Trinity is the model for personal existence. Several Greek writers saw the key to God's unity as being unity of action. The three persons aren't a committee, each acting separately but in a coordinated way.²¹ Rather, they are so closely tied together that they act with a single action. Furthermore, all the things that make God is only one. The three persons act together as a single authority. So there is one ultimate authority, one God. If so, It means that there is not son of God but prophet of God and there is not Holy Sprits but angel of God. Indeed, we may not say that Jesus is son of God but prophet. As a result of discussions about the Incarnation, the Church came to an agreement that Christ had two wills, the will of God and a human will. Technically, this associated wills and action with the nature (of which there are two in Christ) rather than the person (of which there is one). This pushed discussions about the Trinity to be clear that God has a single will, since the Trinity has only one nature. But how come we say that God can be God himself and man himself? For me, we have to separate both two terms. I mean God is God and man is man. Man does not create God but God himself create man.

It's worth noting that the terms "substance" and "person" came to be technical terms with specific theological definitions. They were originally taken from Greek philosophy, although in the context of the Trinity and Incarnation they don't necessarily mean exactly what they meant in general philosophical usage. In common English usage, talking of three persons with one nature could mean three separate people who are alike in many ways. However in this context, nature is an actual thing.²² I am tempted to say that God is thought of as a single "thing", not as Trinity (three in one; like a softener so clean). But for me, as a Moslem, what you (Christianity) believe is your belief and that would probably be true for the West. On the other hand, it may not be precisely accurate also for the Eastern model.

One key difference between East and West focuses on a change made to the Nicene Creed in the West. The Western Church

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Jurgen Moltmann, *Op.Cit.*, p. 164

added the Latin word *filioque* (“and the Son”), so that instead of saying that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, in the West it says “from the Father and the Son.”²³ From the Eastern point of view, this is a big problem, because the unity of God depends upon the fact that there is only one uncreated, the Father, who is the source of the entire Trinity. However many Western writers seemed to be thinking of the relationship between God and us here. Jesus talks about sending the Holy Spirit to us. Hence from our point of view the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, although probably “through the Son” would be better language. If “and the Son” is simply referring to Christ’s role in sending the Spirit to us, it’s not a problem. However the context in the Creed is one that is describing the relationship among the Persons. In that context, “and the Son” is questionable.

Furthermore, Christians believe that when humans needed help, the way God chose to do it was to join human being. Because this human being was God’s presence, he was able both to live as humans are intended to, and to pass this ability on to others around him through spiritual union with him. So what Christianity says is that God is inviting human to join him in his way of living, his love. But why bad things happen to good people.²⁴

In Unitarian religions such as Islam and Judaism, God is outside us. He is the creator, father, and lawgiver. He loves us, but he experiences love only from one side: the side of the father. But Christianity says that God also experiences the other side: the obedient son who dies for his friends. A Unitarian God asks of us a loving obedience; but that kind of love is one he hasn’t experienced himself. The Christian God invites people to join him in a relationship between Father and Son that started with God. However, in Christianity, the Trinity says that God is both Father and Son. This doesn’t make him two Gods: these are two separate ways in which God experiences love, two roles or two “modes of being”.

1. The Father

The first person of Trinity, the God Father, is the “fountain” of the Godhead, the source, cause of principle of origin for the other two

²³Bishop Kallistos Ware, *Op.Cit.*,p. 32

²⁴See Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, Translated by Mitra Utama Editor Team (Jakarta: Mitra Utama, 1998)

persons. He is the bond of unity between three: there is one God because there is one Father. "The union is the father, from whom and to whom the order of the persons runs its course".²⁵ The other two persons are each defined in terms of their relationship to the Father: the son is "begotten" by the Father, the Spirit "proceeds" from the Father. In the Latin West, it is usually held that the Spirit proceeds "from the Father and from the Son" and the word *filioque* ("and from the Son") has been added to the Latin text of the Creed.²⁶

Furthermore, Christians believe in one God, who created the universe and all that is in it and it is similarly with Islamic teachings. However, in Christianity, God is a person, but of a somewhat different type than human beings. While humans have both physical and spiritual elements, God is entirely spiritual. That is, he exists in a sphere outside the normal physical universe. On the other hand, human beings are created in the image of God.²⁷ It is different with Islam where man is not made in the image of God (QS. 42: 11). Man is made out of the dust of the earth (QS. 23: 12) and Allah breathed life into man (QS. 32: 9; 15: 29). Obviously there are differences, since we are physical and God is not. What we share with God is the fact that we are rational beings, capable of making responsible decisions, and capable of relationships with each other and with him. Indeed, the Christian concept of God as creator holds a middle ground. Christianity conceives of God as One. But it is not an isolated One. Rather, God is a person, who is capable of affecting and being affected by others. This is implicit in the concept of God as Father, which is one of the most characteristic teachings of Jesus. The concept of God as personal ultimately led to the Trinity, which is surely one of the most distinctive and controversial ideas in Christianity. In contrast to pantheist and related concepts, the creation is genuinely distinct from God. The world has a genuine existence of its own. God cares about and interacts with the creation. Human beings are responsible to God. As the creator, God is responsible for the world and its history. While I have said that the world is distinct from God, it is not completely independent. God is thought of as continuously sustaining the world.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶Bishop Kallistos Ware, *Op.Cit.*, p. 32

²⁷Jurgen Moltmann, *Op.Cit.*, p. 166

2. The Son

The second person of the Trinity is the Son of God, His 'Word' or 'Logos'.²⁸ To speak in this way of God as Son and Father is at once to imply a movement of mutual love, such as I indicated earlier. With human beings, father and son are completely separate people, who come into existence at different times. This is not true of God. The relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is part of what God is. Father and Son are not exactly separate people in the usual sense. They are equally eternal, because they are both essential to God's being what he is. You cannot have a Father without a Son. The term "Son" is used because the relationship between Father and Son in the Trinity has close analogies to the relationship among human fathers and sons. Indeed, human relationship is modeled after God's but it is an analogy. It should not be pushed farther than makes sense.²⁹ Christian language sometimes talks about the Son being "begotten" by the Father.³⁰ Some people (primarily Moslems) have taken this to mean that the Son is the result of a sexual relationship between father and mother. However, according to Christianity that it is impossible, since God the Father is a purely spiritual being. But if so, why does Christianity call God as a father? Furthermore, the term "begotten" was used to emphasize that the Son is just as much God as the Father is. Just as human beings beget other human beings, the Father begets a Son who is just as much God as he is. Nevertheless, we should not push the language any further than that.³¹ It does not mean that God reproduces in the same way that human beings do. In fact the son is "eternally begotten". That is, he is not born at one time, as a human child is. The Father is the source of the Son continuously, as a spring is the source of a river.³²

One thing that we should pay attention: "The Bible shows Jesus praying to God. If Jesus is God means that God was praying to himself." How could be? However, according to Christianity that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, i.e. God and man. Christ prayed to his

²⁸Bishop Kallistos Ware, *Op.Cit.*, p. 32-3

²⁹Jürgen Moltmann, *Op.Cit.*, p. 164-6

³⁰Bishop Kallistos Ware, *Op.Cit.*, p. 32-3

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

Father because he is a human being, and the way humans communicate with God is by pray. If so, we should not call Jesus Christ as God but it will be better to call him as prophet, the chosen one of God. In Christian theology, Jesus is seen specifically as the incarnation of the Logos. While Jesus shows his adherents all of God, he shows God specifically from the perspective of the Logos. But the Logos is the obedient Son, the recipient of the Father's love. Indeed, a term used to designate that Jesus is divine though he is not the literal son of God in a physical sense (John 5:18). If it is a literal son of God, therefore, Jesus cannot be the son of Allah. On the other hand, as the second person of the Trinity, He is the word who became flesh (John 1:1, 14). He is both God and man (Col. 2:9). Nevertheless, he is not God. He is a very great prophet, second only to Muhammad. Jesus is not the son of God (QS. 9: 30) and certainly is not divine (QS. 5: 17, 75) and he was not crucified (QS. 4: 157).

3. The Holy Spirit

The third of Trinity is the Holy Spirit, the "wind" or "breath" of God. While appreciating the inadequacy of neat classification, Christians say that the Spirit is *God within them*, the Son is *God with them*, and the Father is *God above or beyond them*.³³ The Holy Spirit is fully God in nature. On the other hand, in Islam, I assume that what Christianity believes as Holy Spirit is the arch-angel Gabriel who delivered the words of the Holy Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad SAW.

Christians live in community. Jesus described himself as a vine, with us as the branches. It is not possible to be united with him without also being united with other Christians. The motivating force behind the Christian life is love. Since love is a personal relationship, there is no way to grow in love other than to be with others. This Christian community is called the "Church".

The Creed speaks of the Church as holy and catholic. The term "catholic" means "universal".³⁴ Because the Church is Christ's body, there is ultimately only one Church. While the ideal is that the Church is holy and one, the reality is that it is human. That means that it is often less than holy, and it is all too often far from one. This does not

³³*Ibid.*, p. 33

³⁴Bruce D. Marshall in Gareth Jones, *Op.Cit.* p. 56

mean that we can live without it. Christian love is not real unless it is willing to come to grips with real human relationships and the problems that arise with them. The term “communion of saints” refers to the unity of all of Christ’s followers, living and dead.³⁵ Forgiveness of sins is one of the key marks of Christianity. Christ died to seal our forgiveness by God. We are expected to respond by forgiving each other, and acting as a force for reconciliation in the world.

C. Islamic Perspective of the Concept of God in Christianity

In Islam, I am kind of thinking that what Christians believe as Trinity refers to God Himself (the God Father), Prophet Muhammad in Islam and (Jesus [Isa] in Christianity who is considered as a son of God) because he had something special that other people do not have or in Islam we call it *mu’jizât*, and Angel (holy spirit). As a comparison, I am going to try to explore what is Trinity concept in Christianity and my critical respond as a Moslem. First, in Christianity teaching, God is a trinity of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is not three gods in one god or one person who took three forms. Trinitarianism is strictly monotheistic. However as a Moslem I believe that there is no other God in existence. God is known as Allah. Allah is one “person”, a strict unity. There is no other God in existence. He is the creator of the universe (QS. 3: 191), sovereign over all (QS. 6: 61-62).

The second, the first person of Trinity, God the Father, is the “fountain” of the Godhead, the source, cause of principle of origin for the other two person. He is the bond of unity between three: there is one God because there is one Father. It is different in Islamic teachings where there is no one called as a God Father, unlike Christianity. The third, Son of God (the second person of the Trinity) is a term used to designate that Jesus is divine though he is not the literal son of God in a physical sense (John 5:18). He is the word who became flesh (John 1:1, 14). He is both God and man (Col. 2:9). If he is as a literal son of God, therefore, Jesus cannot be the son of God. But he is only a very great prophet, second only to Prophet Muhammad SAW. Indeed, that is also mention in Holy Qur’an that

³⁵*Ibid.*

Jesus is really not son of God (QS. 9: 30) and certainly is not divine (QS. 5: 17, 75) and he was not crucified (QS. 4: 157).

The fourth, Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity; the Holy Spirit is fully God in nature. However in Islam, I assume that what Christianity believes as Holy Spirit is the arch-angel Gabriel who delivered the words of the Holy Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad SAW. The fifth, in Christianity perspective, Man is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). This does not mean that God has a body, but that man is created like God in abilities (reason, faith, love, etc.). Nevertheless, as a Moslem, I believe that man was not created in the image of God (QS. 42: 11). Man is created out of the dust of the earth (QS. 23: 12) and Allah breathed life into man (QS. 32: 9; 15: 29).

D. Conclusion and Critical Comments

As I know that the Bible does not commit Christianity to think of God as a Trinity because the concept of Trinity is not mentioned in the Bible, only the Christians' interpretation. Furthermore, there is only one God as mention in Bible, "...listen Israel that actually our God is only one" (Mark, 12: 28), not Trinity (three in one). Furthermore it mentions also, "...you are right, teacher (Jesus), that God is one and only one" (Mark, 12: 32). It means that Jesus is not God (Son of God) but only prophet or messenger of God, but why they (Christians) believe that Jesus is God? Furthermore, Jesus himself never claims himself as a God, but why do Christians believe and proclaim him (Jesus) as a God? Is there something behind it? I do not know. As a comparison, the holy Qur'an also mentions clearly that God is one and only one (QS. 112: 1-4). So as monotheistic religion, we need to see a single God, with a distinction within him, not a trinity (three in one but one in one).

Indeed, I am completely unimpressed by arguments that the Trinity is incoherent because there is no way three persons constitute one God, and if so, it means that God is not omnipotent, how could be? Either he is one or he is three. These arguments are based on knowing just human beings. Nevertheless, the moment we move beyond into science fiction or computer science, people have no problem conceiving of separate entities tied so tightly together that they form a single being (colonial telepathy and distributed systems). Computer science also gives us examples of a single entity that interacts with the world as multiple actors (a multiprocessor). I am not suggesting that Christians God is actually a computer. I am simply

indicating that once you start thinking more broadly than human beings, it is easy enough to conceive of all kinds of other ways of being. In fact, even among human beings, marriage may be taken as an example of two persons becoming one actor. With us this is largely a metaphor. However, in some particularly successful marriages it begins to go beyond just the metaphorical. The Trinity provides Christians with a model for ways in which persons can relate that avoids the opposite problems of a tyranny and a committee. In short, I am still confused about trinity (Christians' concept of God). What is going on with the doctrine? I do not know?

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