Studying the Bible

(or if you want to call it something else 'Using the Bible')

A series on how to
engage with your Bible
and let the BOOK that reads us, read us.

Part 3

What happens if there is no direct reference to a Doctrine in the Bible, can it be legitimate?

The Trinity
A way of visualising to understand The Triune God

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Adapted by Simon Lewis

The First Commandment: there is One True God

The Trinity (also know as The Triune God) is a doctrine - belief - that has caused debate for many centuries. The central statement of it, that there is *One True God*, seems to often get lost by readers! The concept of anything being One and Three at the same time is pretty tough to deeply understand.

For most Christians, the whole subject is often just considered too complicated to think much about, so the Trinity is just accepted on Faith. That may not actually be a bad thing! Other religions, like Judaism and Islam, even think that Christianity worships more than the One True God they know; an unfortunate misunderstanding since Christianity definitely believes the First Commandment and always confirms that we have One True God!

> While the Bible will always be the main evidence and the ultimate test for Christian beliefs, those beliefs are often based on reasoning and experience, and not solely on the Bible itself.

The Trinity is not in the Bible

Humankind has struggled for thousands of years with the concept of the Trinity. It is useful to consider how the concept of the Trinity first arose.

Nowhere in Christian Scripture can the doctrine of the Trinity be found. Matthew's Gospel ends with the exhortation to 'go an make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28.19). But there is no mention that Father, Son and Spirit are all co-equal persons of the one God. The relation of the Son to the Father is left obscure, and

the relation of the Spirit to both of them is never discussed. So it was quite possible for Bible-believing Christians in the early centuries to deny that Christ was co-eternal with God, or to deny that the Holy Spirit is actually identical with god, or to deny that Christ was co-equal with God. Such Christians even had biblical texts to support their views - Christ described as 'the firstborn over all creation' in Colossians 1.15, and in Greek it sounds even clearers that Christ is in some sense created. In John's Gospel, Jesus speaks of 'the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name' (John 14.26), which sounds as if the Spirit is subordinate to the Father. And again in the same piece Jesus says, 'the Father is greater than I' (John 14.28).

It was only after long discussions - and sometimes heard arguments so the records report - that these texts were held to be part of larger pieces of writing, or were explained in a sophisticated way which made them consistent with what came to be the 'orthodox' (generally accepted, traditional) doctrine of the Trinity. Those who believe in Trinity, and other doctrines such as Incarnation, give high authority to the Councils of the early Christian Church, and accept their interpretations of the Bible, which develop and systematise biblical teachings in important ways. Years of reflection and argument took place before the belief that Jesus was both fully God and fully human was generally agreed - and to bet that agreement ideas and words had be used (like 'nature' and 'person') which were not in the Bible at all.

So if we believe in the Trinity we are accepting the results of long theological discussion, and not simply reading it off from the Bible. And the long theological discussions of the past are the same as they are now. The importance of this is that:

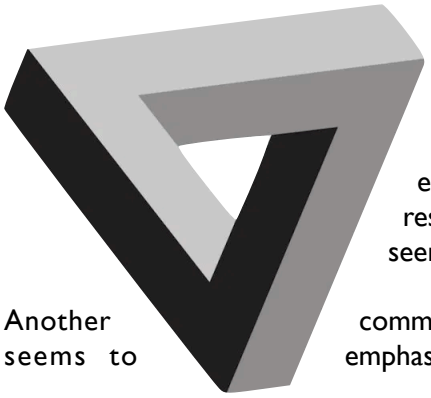
- it shows how the most central Christian believes have arisen from theological reflection on the Bible;
- it shows the the vital importance of theology;
- it shows the need to understand the history and development of biblical interpretation;
- it shows that the Bible does not just speak for itself.

While the Bible will always be the main evidence and the ultimate test for Christian beliefs, those beliefs are often based on reasoning and experience, and not solely on the Bible itself.

So what about The Trinity, what are we to make of it?

Using 'comparison' to understand The Trinity

With such a concept as the Trinity, which seems to strain human intellect, Christian scholars have traditionally looked for more understandable comparisons (some call them apologies), which might help us pictorially understand The Trinity. Saint Augustine (in *De Trinitate*) considered comparisons from human personality. He figured that, since humankind was made in the image of God, such comparison should apply, but probably faintly.



A self-conscious man might "argue with himself" over some ethical dilemma. As a husband, father, employee, Church-goer, neighbour, he has various demeanours to others, and has various internal thought processes and attitudes. As father, there is often the responsibility for establishing and enforcing rules (socially permitting), but as employee, the responsibility is to follow the rules of others. This sort of comparison seems to emphasise "oneness".

Another common type of comparison is regarding identical triplets. Such a comparison seems to emphasise "threeness".

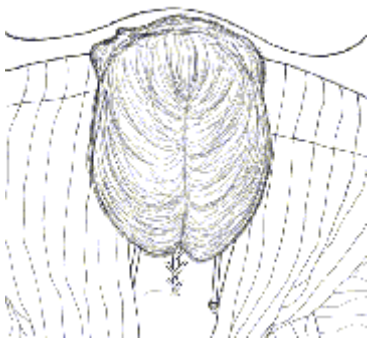
Many of the comparisons that have been used by scholars have been based on "physical realities" (that cannot be other than they are) that we all accept:

Egg: yolk, white and shell

Clover: three leaf

Water: ice, liquid, vapour

What about this: consider these three views of a man. How many men are actually present?

An authoritative, stern, intimidating person	A caring, love-filled, gentle person	A 'Person' who is hard to define
		

Person: one, without the slightest doubt! But how many rather different "perceptions" seem to be present, which are so different as to possibly appear to be distinctly different people? Apparently, three!

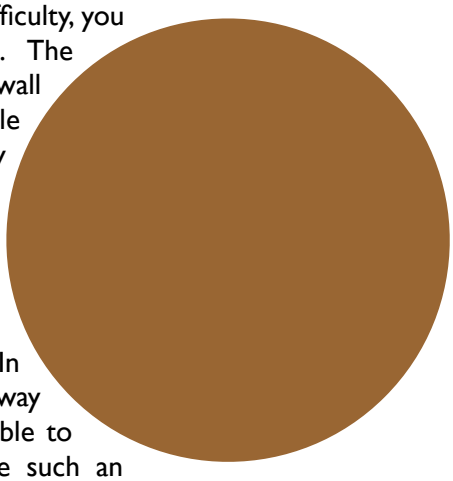
Ok, criticism is easily made which finds fault in such examples, mostly because they seem to always tend to be either *tritheistic* (the doctrine of or belief in the three persons of the Trinity as three distinct gods) or *modalistic* (also known as Oneness Christology - a Christian theology that upholds the oneness of God as well as the deity of Jesus Christ; it is a form of Monarchianism and as such stands in contrast with Trinitarianism, and is in fact a heresy). Therefore, comparisons are not truly an example where both situations (one and three) are simultaneously and continuously true.

What is interesting about the following comparison, is that the author believes it overcomes this problem. It appears to totally support the *universal*, *continuous* and *permanent* presence of both Three and One, with no "preference" for either perception. I therefore, share it with you, if you are interested.

The Trinity

a different comparison

Time to use your imagination.



Think of being in some very desolate mountain locale. With great difficulty, you climb up to discover a lone building on the very top of a mountain. The path you happened to climb up only enables you to approach a single wall of the building, and therefore you are only able to look into the single small window centred on that wall. As you look in, you see a basically empty room with a single round, brown, apparently old, wooden object in the centre of the room. On the way up the mountain, you had discovered a Book that assured you that there was One object in the building. Looking in, that certainly makes sense now.

Your curiosity is such that you want to explore more of the building. In order to do this, you quickly see that you would have to climb all the way back down the mountain and then back up a different path, to be able to come up to the building from a different side. Because you are such an inquisitive person, you choose to do this, even though you know it will involve many more days of very difficult climbing, first down, then up.

As you finally approach the building again, you notice that there is also a small window centred on this wall. Excitedly, you run up to the window to look in, pretty much expecting to see the same lone, round, brown, apparently old, wooden object in the centre of the room. Instead, you are surprised to find a single beautiful bright green rectangle, which seems reflective as though it is made of smooth metal. Rectangular and not round? Green and not brown? Shiny and not dull? Apparently metal and not apparently wooden? You are REALLY confused now!

Have you gone mad? Are you now a raving lunatic? Are you really looking into the same building, at the same object you saw before with your own eyes? And this is so very different! Could it really be the same object? But that seems impossible! You even start to question exactly what you saw the week before from that other window! Your logic clearly tells you that this obviously could not be the same object.

OK! You are a truly persistent person! On the way up, you had noticed yet another path up the mountain, so you climb all the way back down again and then take that third path up. This again is a very difficult and time-consuming climb, and you again get near the building a week later. This path arrives at the building with access to only the roof of the building, which is flat like the walls and has one small skylight-type window in the centre of it. Apprehensively, and now not knowing what to expect to see, you approach the window to look down into the building. You look in to see a single greyish rectangular, almost squarish, object that appears to be made of some kind of linen or other cloth.

You will certainly spend a lot of time afterwards trying to figure out just what you actually saw. Could you have been mistaken in seeing the round, brown, old wooden thing? But you are really sure you actually saw it. What about the other memories you had of what you saw in the building. It just doesn't seem logical! Over and over, you mull through what you know. In each case, you confirm to yourself that you always saw just ONE object present. But, 'Wow', the differences! It seems absolutely clear to you that you have looked at 'three different' objects! How could you question that?

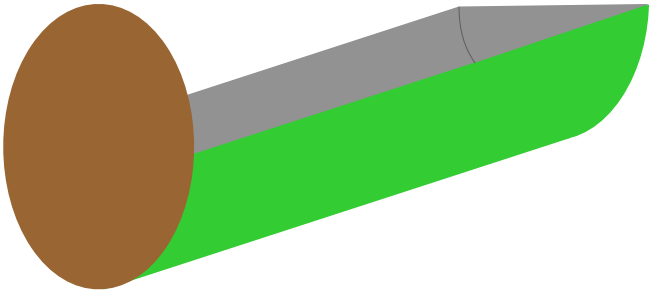
Otherwise, you couldn't even consider the most basic of things about it, like its colour. (What colour *is* it, anyway?) But then there is that Book, which, absolutely said that there is ONE object in the building! You later even feel the need to retrace your arduous climbs to each window, to confirm that it wasn't a hallucination and it actually was the one and same building and that there was only one object in the centre of the otherwise bare room: and you so wish you had had a camera!

Add to this situation, you happen to have that Reference Book you had come to previously believe is accurate. The Book does not actually offer explanations for the differences you see but it does assure you, there is only ONE object in the room. Eventually, you will either get so frustrated that you will probably try to forget (or ignore) the whole experience, or you might eventually come upon the actual truth of the matter.

Then you come to realise

You might come to realise that there actually *is* a single, real three-dimensional object in the room that could give each of the three very different appearances you had witnessed through the different windows.

What if it was most of a 55-gallon oil drum, lying on its side, with the (complete) top (round, brown, old, wooden) surface facing the first window.



The view through the second wall window was of the green painted outside of the shiny new metal sidewall of the drum but it was not as tall as the round view because most of the top half of the drum had been cut away. That made it appear very rectangular and not very tall. (You may or may not have noticed this apparent difference in height.)

The view through the roof skylight window was actually looking at the interior of the bottom half of the drum, which had been lined with grey cloth. The materials, textures and colours of the drum's side and top and interior lining are different, which explains the other disparate findings of the three views.

To be Open-Minded

The point here, is that if you choose to be narrow-minded as to only believe what your own eyes see, without reflection and contemplating what you are looking at, you will probably never learn much about the true nature of the object. Each view gave you certain information about it. You might even somehow conclude that there were THREE different objects in the room! The fact that each window was small limited your view, so you couldn't move around and get different perspectives of the object. Since your Book insisted that there was actually only one object, it was then up to you to believe that Book to be able to come to understand the object better.

Each view made sense in itself and did not appear to be incomplete in any way. Nothing seemed to be missing. But, with just the information from the view through any one window, you could never actually figure out what it really was.

Once you came to accept this more comprehensive concept of the object, you could then probably learn more by comparing the similarities and differences you saw through the three windows. Unfortunately, because of the location and position of the building, you could never look in more than one window at a time. But you could start to compare your notes on the various views and ask yourself productive questions to refine your understandings of the actual object. For example:

- You might now notice the apparently insignificant vertical line above the right hand edge of the second view, and realise it must represent the edge of the round disk you saw from the first view.
- You might come to realise that the third view must be concave.

Will all of your resultant conclusions be absolutely correct? Probably not, particularly since you would never be able to actually access the object. However, your conclusions will certainly be a *lot* more correct and complete than would otherwise have been possible. You have certainly noted that there was *One* object in the room, but it looked like *Three* very different objects through the small windows.

This is centrally important here. How many actual objects are in that room? Without a doubt, we know it is One. But how many *very* different appearances did we see through the windows we could get to? Three.

This analogy is meant to suggest that the One actual object certainly can convince us that there are Three, rather different objects in there.

Important to Note

Some of you might think that this comparison is like various previous one, such as the elephant and the several blind men. It is actually quite different. The blind men each only feel a small portion of a larger whole, and make incorrect conclusions from that very limited perception. Please note that each of the views seen here is complete by itself. *The entire barrel is viewed*, and not just a corner of it. Each view appears to be complete, with no apparent missing information. Where each blind man, given enough time and curiosity, would likely explore more of the elephant and eventually learn more about it, each view of the barrel does not seem to be lacking any information, so there is no incentive for further (external) exploration. **This conclusion, of believing that one sees the *whole* truth in each view, is central to this premise.**

Our Experiences with the Persons of the Trinity

This approach seems to be very illuminating regarding the Trinity. It indicates that, under certain conditions, a *single* object might have *three* very different appearances, appearances so different that they appear incompatible.

Let us now extend our analogy and say that, instead of part of a 55-gallon drum in that room, there was a Person (Substance?), God, sitting at that same spot, in a chair in the centre of that room.

The View into the First Window

(Apologies to anyone who might be offended by an attempt to pictorially depict God. The image is not actually meant for that purpose, but rather, to try to demonstrate the point being made. It is also not meant that we are implying that Abraham and Adam actually saw a 'profile' and we are just using this imagery to better present the concept of this approach.)

YHWH

Around 1600 BC, Moses gave us the first real view into the room. (Earlier, Adam and Abraham and Jacob had also witnessed him, but the interactions were only briefly recorded in the Bible.)

[*All three views were already available, but not yet witnessed.*]

The window he "looked into" (in our symbolic comparison) gave him a profile view of the Person in the room. From that profile view, the great Might and Power and Authority of the Person were obvious. Yet, the profile view also gave a sensation of Justice.

It is realised that Moses did not actually "look at" God, but he definitely got a "feel" regarding that Might and Authority and Justice.

For a long time, that was the only view of God that anyone knew about. Therefore, the Jewish Faith arose based on this view. For this reason, Judaism is properly and clearly Monotheistic. The Person in the room was perceived as very Authoritarian and incredibly Powerful. Such a Person is normally feared. The Hebrew Scripture or Torah regularly emphasiaes such characteristics. Above this window might be a sign saying "The One God" or "Father" or "YHWH" or "Jehovah". The testimony from Moses established absolutely that there was but One God in that building.

The View into the Second Window

Jesus

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ as a Baby born of the Virgin Mary made possible a "view through a second window". [*Again, note that this view had always existed prior to that time but was just not viewed by humankind.*]

Around 27 AD, Jesus began his public Ministry. We humans were thus able to get a comprehensive view of Jesus. In our comparison, this represents a view through a second window. Instead of looking at the profile view of the Father, we were now looking directly into the face of the Person in the room. From this vantage point, we could quickly and easily sense the Love and Gentleness and Kindness in his face - human facets. Anyone who would look into the eyes of Jesus would be immediately aware of these things. Our ancestors got a "close up" view of the many characteristics of Jesus.

Above the second window might be a sign that says "Jesus" or "Christ" or "Messiah".

Seeing this view does not invalidate the "original" view of God. At any time, it was still possible to look in that first window and see the profile view of the Powerful Person. This second view just added some additional information, in a sense of progressive illumination or possibly progressive revelation.

> It is important to note that the perspective and knowledge gained through either window gives a *complete* view of the Person in the room and is not actually "dependent" on the view from the other window.

This has turned out to be important because we humans have concluded that the two images we have "seen" are apparently so incompatible, that we believe we are looking at two distinct Persons. We have then come to consider the Father to be a unique Person and Jesus to separately be a unique Person, *when we view through the appropriate window.*

(No one has ever witnessed the two simultaneously, even though all of Christianity accepts that they simultaneously exist! Incidents such as Matt. 3.16 say that Jesus saw the Spirit of God, but no human apparently did. There are a number of other such Scriptures. There seems to be a single reference in Acts 7.55-56 where the First Commandment seems to be violated. There seems to be no explanation for that. In the nearly 800,000 words of the Bible, that seems to be the lone "challenge" to there being One God.)

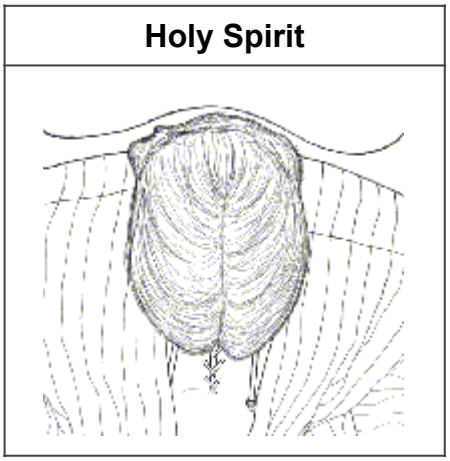
In the same way that the colour brown had no relevance or even meaning through the second window of our earlier analogy (even though it actually still had an unseen validity), the Authority and Might of the Father do not seem to be very relevant to us when we view Jesus and his gentleness and love.

[*Note also that Gentleness and Love and Kindness were also unseen attributes of the God seen through the first window by the Jews, but that such characteristics might have been perceived as signs of "weakness" at that earlier time.*]

Such characteristics are certainly actually all present, of course (but generally unseen), because it is, after all, *One Essence*. But the individual views we have, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are independent views.

The View into the Third Window

About three years after he began his public ministry, Jesus was crucified (around 30 CE or AD). About seven weeks later, on Pentecost, we were able to see a view through the third window, when the Holy Spirit was first witnessed. That event is often considered the actual beginning of the Christian Church, fifty days after the Crucifixion.



Thinking about the windows analogy again, people would now have been able to get the view through that skylight window in the roof. Imagine what that view would have looked like. Neither a profile or face view would be present. All that would be seen would be a view of the top of the head of the Person in the room. Now, considering that all of these windows are dark and dirty anyway, where getting clear views is difficult, think of how hard it would be to really understand what they were looking at! The hair on the top of a person's head isn't really very helpful in understanding the Person or Personality present. It is therefore easy to understand that concepts of the Holy Spirit are always so vague and unspecified.

However, this premise clearly suggests that the Holy Spirit shares the Power and Authority, and the Love and the Gentleness, witnessed through the other windows. Those characteristics just are not obvious from this view. There are some references in the Hebrew Scripture to the Spirit, and there are certainly examples of Helpfulness and Guidance.

Advantages of this conceptualisation of the Trinity

This building comparison of conceptualising the Trinity has a number of advantages over previous approaches.

1. First, we can very easily accept and agree that there really is truly One Being in the room, and yet our Christian perceptions of that Being through the three windows present very different and independent appearances to us. This gives us the "One Substance (or Essence)" and "Three Persons" that are the traditional definitions of the Trinity. This approach does not appear to give "preference" to either the One or the Three conceptualisation. At the same time, it presents a logical harmonisation of these two apparently disparate perceptions.

   Christians (actually, ancient Jews) would look in one window and see the Powerful and Stern Father; in another, and see the Loving Jesus; in the third, and see the Helpful Holy Spirit. **In each case, we are clearly actually looking at the One, True God, as the Bible clearly tells us!**

   Instead of just seeing different colours or textures on a simple object in my simplistic first analogy, we see really complicated images and sensations with complex differences. In other words, under certain circumstances, we find ourselves looking in one or another of the windows, and seeing that "Person". Since it is an impossibility for any one person to simultaneously look in through all three windows, our perception must necessarily be concluded as being of Three Persons. **Our guidebook, the Bible, confirms to us that there is actually only One (Substance?) God actually there.**

   The author is essentially claiming that a "group portrait" of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit would be impossible!

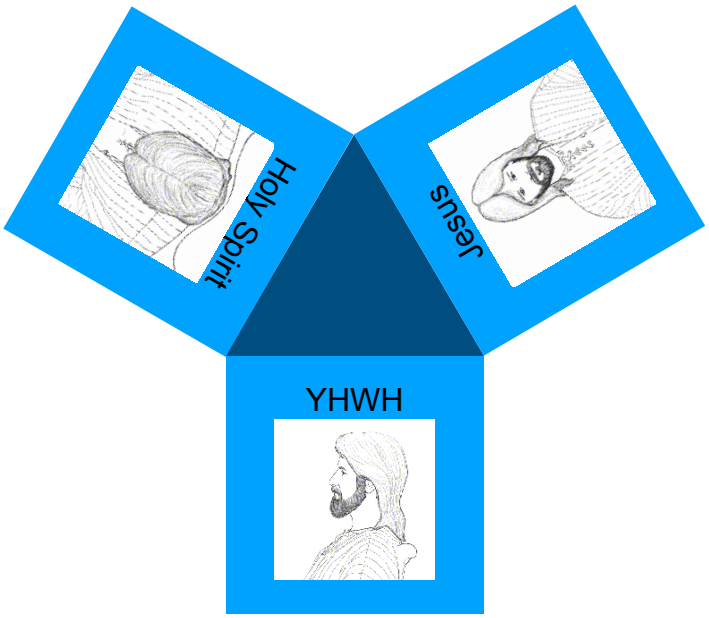
2. Secondly, our views of the Father and the Holy Spirit have been at a distance and through a small, dirty window. This situation would explain how our scholars have sometimes come to different conclusions from each other.

   Our example images have each seemed to show "depth" which might easily lead an inquisitive mind to speculate about edgeways views. The wonderful artistic images here have helped us see the inter-relationships between the three images. But what if we only had these "flattened" images available to us? (The drawings of the views of the drum object did not include shadows or any other evidence of "depth" in any of the images, which caused them to seem especially incompatible with each other).

When we look at these views, there might not seem to be any obvious clue that an image includes a "depth". They each appear to be "flat". If they are flat, and they each seem to be complete in themselves, then why even think about what the edge view would be?

The author thinks that this is the reason why many scholars had not earlier considered the present premise. Without third-dimensional clues in each of the views, there would be little reason to even consider such a possibility, and the three views would be considered (confusingly) absolutely independent of each other.

If scholars had been able to effectively look into nice large picture-windows, they could have moved around to see slightly different perspectives through different parts of the large window, and they might then have been able to better sense a depth of each view, and possibly more fully understand what they were seeing. In that case, the current conceptualisations of the Father and the Holy Spirit would be far more comprehensive than they are. Of course, if the scholars could have somehow gotten *into* the room, they would have been able to walk around and again get various, even better perspectives. (*That last opportunity would not be available until we experience physical death.*)



Instead of these things, scholars have had to work with a rather limited view of God, particularly the Father and the Holy Spirit, just like our comparison's person looking through small, dirty windows at a moderately distant Person. It is therefore easy to see how scholars might come to disagree about some aspects of the Trinity. Hopefully, this perspective might help in that regard.

Advantages of this Mountain/Building Conceptualisation

This approach has many apparent additional advantages over previous ideas. For example, it is easy to see how Jews and Muslims, who have only had access to that first window, would devoutly believe in the same God/Jehovah/Father/Allah/YHWH as Christians do, and yet not see significance in Jesus or the Holy Spirit. They see a view that appears to be complete (it is) and without internal contradiction (it is).

> Even though their cultures have come to different conclusions and their beliefs are therefore very different from Christian beliefs that centre on Jesus and the Trinity, this conceptualisation - of a mountain with three paths leading to three different parts of a building each with a window and inside of which is an object which will be seen from three different aspects - offers an opportunity to find compatibilities between the three God-centred belief systems.

Christians might try to comprehend what conclusions they would have come to had they not had access to the second and third windows. Realistically, they might have come to conclusions very similar to those of Judaism or Islam. Muslims and Jews might try to see how Christians, who believe they have additional perspectives on God, might have come to differing conclusions based on those perspectives. There may be further extensions of this concept to even better encourage dialogues between different God-centred belief groups.

Applying the comparison to life

For the author, personally, applying this sort of perspective to the Trinity has enabled a better envisioning of the three very different Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, while also knowing that they are actually One and the Same Substance. Whatever characteristics we recognise or attribute to one or another do not have to be obvious or even (visibly) present in either of the other two (views). Remember how the brown colour of the round end of our original object in the room was not visible in either the second or third windows? But it is obvious to us now that the brown colour still (and always) existed, even when it was not seen.

When there are characteristics of two of them that appear to be incompatible with each other, then that just seems to confirm that it is not possible to "look in two of the windows" at the same time! The views are greatly independent. Trying to enforce some meaning of the concept "brown" in our second view of the shiny green object would be artificial and inappropriate, even though "brown" actually had an invisible meaning.

Obviously, the actual situation with the Trinity is much more complicated than some simplistic conceptualisation involving some piece of modern sculpture in a mountain cabin, or a person sitting in a room. Rather than dealing with a solid, material object, we are now considering entities that have seldom been individually witnessed by anyone! We cannot even ask questions of Moses or Adam or Mary Magdalene, to learn more of what they witnessed. Actually, the author is not sure that there has ever been any mortal who has ever witnessed all Three in her or his lifetime! (Possibly, John, in Revelations.) However, it is felt that there is value in considering this perspective. In a subject area that is so difficult to conceptualise, this approach can allow confidence in knowing that the three Persons in the Trinity can each have their own apparent identities and yet be our One, True God.

Problems solved by this conceptualisation

Referring to the Trinity as three Persons

An additional point: it is common for people to refer to the three "Persons" of the Trinity. This has even been done in this essay to match the common descriptions, including the images of the man. This has always caused the author distress. Why?

1. First of all, none of the Three are likely to be actual people in any sense that we normally apply the term.
2. Second, this presentation is meant to suggest that there is actually only a single Entity (Essence???) (Substance???) (Person???) who is God, and that the three separate Persons that we have come to be aware of as the Trinity are actually just extremely different appearances or perceptions of this one truly remarkable God, because of the various perspectives we might have from our three windows.
3. And, yes, I know that God made Adam "in His own image" (Gen. 1.26-27).

This approach has some interesting implications on a number of other Christian subjects. An example is the Pre-existence of Christ. Scholars have long argued about whether Christ had existence before he was born of Mary. This perspective makes it obvious that he did (since He and the Father share the same actual existence as God), and that the Trinity has therefore been in existence forever.

Many other areas of Christian debate and conflict, such as Subordination, Arianism, Monarchianism, Adoptionism, Sabellianism, the Council of Nicaea, Modalism, Kenotic Theology, Unitarianism, Deism, and many other topics are equally impacted. In nearly every case, very clear and obvious resolutions to these various controversies seem to present themselves. This conceptualisation, is a seemingly obvious conclusion, quite compatible with mainline modern Christian thought. There would no longer be any need to consider questions of the co-equality or co-eternality of the Three. They are and always have been One and so such questions become superfluous. As it says in Deuteronomy 6.4:

"The Lord our God is one Lord."

Plural reference for God

The debate over seeming plural references in Genesis and elsewhere (*Genesis 1.26, 11.7, 18, and Isaiah . 48.16*) could suddenly make obvious sense. God early realised that our limited minds could never comprehend God's Fullness, and that we would certainly perceive aspects of God in Three different senses.

Subordination

The whole concept of Subordination loses all significance if one recognises that Jesus actually was God while he was on Earth. How could he have then been "less than God"? Ancient Arianism and modern-day Jehovah's Witnesses (and others) believe that Jesus is/was not fully God. This premise shows they are/were clearly wrong in that opinion.

Adoptionism

The whole concept of Adoptionism also loses all significance. This premise clearly establishes that God did not just choose to "Adopt" a particularly virtuous Galilean to become the Son. Jesus didn't need to be "Adopted" because he was already the Son of the Trinity, essentially the Person in my room analogy. Ancient Adoptionism and modern-day Unitarian belief systems hold this view, which this premise clearly shows to be incorrect.

Use of the word "Son"

It may be unfortunate that we humans have elected to use the word "Son" to refer to Jesus. Our normal understanding of the meaning of that word is involved with immaturity, subordinate existence, and derivation from a father figure. The present premise establishes that this approach is inappropriate. If we humans had somehow chosen to think of the Father and Jesus as "Brother One and Brother Two" we may have never been faced with some of those debates! (The author realises how arrogant it would have sounded to others if Jesus had referred to God as His brother! His Humility must certainly have required that he use the term Father, to intentionally imply an inequality, even though that inequality didn't actually exist.)

Pre-Existence of Christ

As to the subject of the Pre-Existence of Christ, again, this premise shows that the subject does not even need to be debated! There can be no doubt that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit must be co-eternal and co-equal, because they are actually one and the same Being (in the room)! Jesus therefore Pre-Existed, where no argument could possibly claim otherwise.

The Churches meaningless Schism

If this conceptualisation…

> of a mountain with three paths leading to three different parts of a building each with a window and inside of which is one object which will be seen from three different aspects,

…is valid, the primary reason for the Great Schism, which broke apart the Catholic and Orthodox branches of Christianity, might become meaningless. Catholic (and therefore Protestant) belief is that the Son is exactly equal to the Father and that both of them initiated the Holy Spirit (called *filioque*). Orthodox belief is that the Son is, well, a son, and therefore less than equal to the Father. The "*Filioque Clause*" addition to the Nicene Creed by the Catholic Church (by a Pope around 600 AD), formalised this difference of opinion.

The Orthodox Church has always insisted that the Holy Spirit "proceeded" from the Father (called single procession) while the Catholic Church has insisted that the Holy Spirit "proceeded" from the Father and the Son (called double procession). This premise suggests that the Holy Spirit has existed since before Genesis, and therefore did not need to "proceed" in either way, because it already existed! The Filioque clause eventually greatly contributed to the Church breaking apart.

This current conceptualisation is that the Three are actually just different perceptions (on our part) of the One, True God, and that this situation has forever been true. This would therefore mandate an exact, permanent equality and identity between all Three. With that hurdle removed, Catholic and Orthodox beliefs become quite similar, and a final resolution of the Schism might be possible!

Message from Simon

If you have read through the whole of this, well done.

And I encourage you to contemplate what you have read. To pray about it, offering it to God, and saying, 'Help me understand YOU more. Amen.'

And then just rest in the contemplation of the Trinity.

[*The Trinity* Icon created by Russian painter Andrei Rublev in the 15th century]

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Any concept as complex as the Trinity necessarily involves a vast multitude of consequences. The author has studied many of the potentially affected areas and is convinced that this approach is absolutely Christian and strictly Scriptural. It is certain that there will be some who will see real or imagined dangers in these thoughts. If so, and if anyone feels that this is a heretical concept, it would be appreciated to receive a (non-passionate) note which presents such challenges. The author feels confident that this concept does not impugn any previous reasonable Trinity conclusions, and is solid enough to withstand any and all such attacks.

This page is at: http://mb-soft.com/public/trinity2.html This presentation was first placed on the Internet in May 1997.

As far as the author knows, none of the conceptualisations presented before takes the following perspective, so it is humbly offered here for consideration. These thoughts are not meant to challenge in any way the previous thoughts of Biblical scholars. On the contrary, these thoughts are actually meant as supporting structure, merely being a way to better visualise the possibility of seeing three apparently very different and distinct personalities from a single entity, God. The author believes that this concept is totally compatible with all rational previous thought.