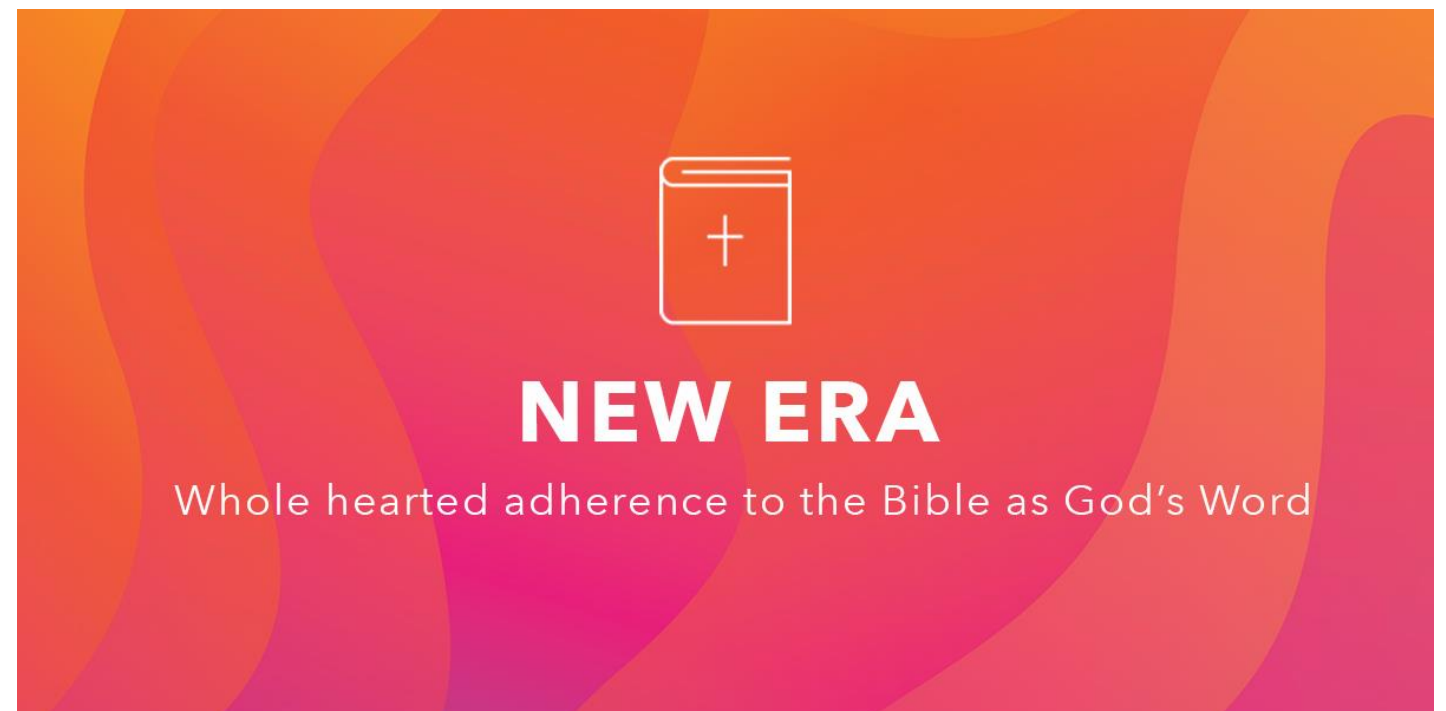


# “The God we serve”

..... *“God in three persons, blessed trinity”*

Craig Wood.

15<sup>th</sup> March 2020



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# Our limitations:



Gaining an understanding of the nature of God is a tough challenge:

- Our default frame of reference tends to be the world around us;
- We cannot limit God to our human nature;
- We can only have a limited understanding of God until we stand in glory;
- Start with an open mind - put aside our preconceptions and assumptions.



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*“in no other subject is error more dangerous, or inquiry more laborious, or the discovery of truth more profitable.”*

St Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, AD 354-430



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# Introduction:

1. A clearer understanding of the nature of God strengthens our relationship with him;
2. Greater clarity in our understanding of Jesus Christ helps to strengthen our understanding and wonder at what God has done for us;
3. God as Trinity: central belief of mainstream Christianity; implicit but not explicit in Scripture;



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# Introduction:

4. Our relationships within SCF need to mirror the example of the Trinity.
5. Understanding the nature of God enables us to describe Him better.

***“We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.” 1John 5:20***



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# SCF Statements of Faith:

## We believe in abstract

1. The one true holy God, eternally existing in three equal persons—**Father, Son and Holy Spirit**. Everything in heaven and on earth, all that is seen and unseen, comes from the Father; everything that has been created has come through the Son;



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# The nature of God:

- 1. There is only one God;**
- 2. The Father is God;**
- 3. The Son is God;**
- 4. The Holy Spirit is God;**
- 5. The Father is not the Son;**
- 6. The Son is not the Holy Spirit;**
- 7. The Holy Spirit is not the Father.**



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# The nature of God:

**“The Father”**: the ultimate source of all creation;

**“The Holy Spirit”**: indivisible as part of the “essence”;

**“The Son”**: eternal as part of the Trinity - unchanging - immortal - everything that has been created has come through the Son;

**Jesus Christ**: the incarnation (ie came to earth in bodily form) of “The Son” as the “Son of Man” - born of a virgin - still divine and yet fully man.



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# What we DON'T believe:

“monarchianism”: only one person (mono) with different attributes;

“modalism”: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different names for the same God acting in different roles;

“Arianism”: denies the full deity of Christ;

“tri-theism”: the three members of the Godhead are, three distinct beings, three separate Gods.



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# The Nicene Creed:

**312 A.D.** Constantine won control of the Roman Empire - convened a council in the year 325 - first [ecumenical council](#) of the Christian church, meeting in ancient Nicaea (now İznik, Turkey.);

**381 A.D.** Emperor [Theodosius I](#) summoned the second church council i.e. “the first [Council of Constantinople](#)” which produced the “Nicene Creed”;

**430 A.D.** Augustine, Bishop of Hippo dies;

**451 A.D.** Council of Calcedon finally adopted the Nicene Creed & it became the definitive statement of mainstream belief.



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# The Nicene Creed:

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,**

contd/



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# The Nicene Creed:

/cont

**begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from  
heaven,  
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin  
Mary and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

contd/



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# The Nicene Creed:

/cont

**On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right  
hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and  
the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,**

/cont



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# The Nicene Creed:

/cont

**who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped  
and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic  
Church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness  
of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come.**

**Amen.**



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# Athanasian Creed c500 A.D.

Abstract from updated version:

**“Now this is the catholic faith:  
That we worship one God in trinity  
and the trinity in unity,  
neither blending their persons,  
nor dividing their essence.  
For the person of the Father is a distinct person,  
the person of the Son is another, and  
that of the Holy Spirit, still another.  
But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
is one,  
their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.”**



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# The nature of God: Recap:

**“essence”**: “godness” - all three Persons of the Trinity share the same “godness” - one is not more God than another - none is more divine than the rest;

**“persons”**: particular individuals, different natures & roles;

**“trinity”**: all three **persons**, each of them co-eternally part of the divine **essence**.



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# Sharing the Gospel:

- **Islam:** emphasises unity - without allowing much variance for diversity;
- **Post-modernism:** emphasises diversity - without attempting to see things in any kind of overall context of unity;
- **Christianity:** God as three in one, allows for diversity and unity.



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# Relationships within SCF:

The persons of The Trinity are distinct;

Different characters & roles;

All part of the same essence;

Eternally together in unity & perfect love.

*"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:....he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant" (cf Phil. 2:5-8).*



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# Scriptural basis:



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# One essence / three persons:

## One essence:

- ***"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one."*** [Deut. 6:4](#);
- *"This is what the Lord says - Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God."* [Isa. 44:6](#);
- *"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."* 1Tim1:17:

## The plurality of God:

- *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light"* Genesis 1:1-3
- ***"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" Genesis 1:26.***
- *"Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language."* Genesis 11:7.
- *"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'"* Isaiah 6:8



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# The Holy Spirit is God:

The Holy Spirit has divine attributes:

**everlastingness:** *“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Heb. 9:14),*

**omnipresence:** *“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.” (Ps. 139:7-10),*

**omniscience:** ***“ these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.” (1 Cor. 2:10-11),***

**omnipotence:** *“ The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’ (Lk. 1:35).*



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# The Son is God:

***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” John 1:1-3***

*“Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God” Philippians 2:6 (NKJV)*



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# The Son: interceding:

*“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?” Rom8:31-35 NIVUK*

***“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Hebs4:14-16 NIVUK***



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# Jesus: Fully human & divine:

***"I and the Father are one" (Jn. 10:30);***

***"Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"?" (Jn. 14:9).***

**Jesus willingly received worship from his disciples:**

- *"Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" [Luke 24:52](#);***
- *"Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'" [John 20:28](#).***



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# Jesus: Fully human & divine:

*"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: **who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!**"*

**(Phil. 2:5-8 NIVUK).**



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# Jesus, The Christ:

*“All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’).” Matt. 1:22-23 NKJV*

***““Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’***

***‘I am,’ said Jesus. ‘And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’” Mark 14:61-62 NIVUK***



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# Summary:

**“The Father”**: the ultimate source of all creation;

**“The Holy Spirit”**: indivisible as part of the “essence” - everlasting, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent - dwells in us - is our comforter, advocate and guide;

**“The Son”**: co-eternal as part of the Trinity - unchanging - immortal - fully God - all things that were made, were made by him - chose to “empty himself” by temporarily setting aside his glory and dignity for a while to take up human form and come to earth as a servant;

**Jesus Christ**: God “The Son” with us on earth as the “Son of Man” - born of a virgin - still divine and yet fully man - feeling what we feel - tempted as we are - yet lived a sinless life - chose to die on a cross as a once and for all sacrifice - arose from the dead - ascended back to heaven to resume his position within the God-head - all powers and principalities will be made subject to his rule.



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**The hands that placed the stars in the sky, allowed themselves to be nailed to a tree. He, that was perfect, became cursed so that we can go free.**



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1. “St Augustin: On The Trinity” translated by Rev Arthur West Hadden BD, Fellow Trinity College Oxford;
2. An introductory essay by William G.T. Shedd DD, (1820-1894) Professor of Systemic Theology, Union Theological Seminary, New York;
3. “THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY: NO CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT IT” September 2011: KEVIN DEYOUNG, senior pastor of University Reformed Church (RCA) in East Lansing, Michigan;
4. “Foundations of the Christian Faith.” James Montgomery Boice. Inter Varsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515. 1978;
5. “A close look at these two creeds helps define what Christians believe.” JoHannah Reardon, Christianity Today;
6. [www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org) :Church of England website;
7. [www.eauk.org](http://www.eauk.org) :Evangelical Alliance UK website;
8. [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org) : Christian Reformed Church North America, website

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