The background is a painting of a stormy sea. The sky is filled with heavy, grey, and white clouds, suggesting an overcast or stormy day. The sea is dark and turbulent, with white-capped waves crashing and churning. The overall mood is dramatic and powerful.

The Doctrine of
GOD

The Ground of Being and Truth
and the Goal of Theology and Life

The Doctrine of **GOD**

*The Ground of Being and Truth
and the Goal of Theology and Life*

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*All Scripture referenced within this booklet is from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV).
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Follow along on social media with **#EFCATheoConf**.



Greetings in the Lord!

We extend a warm welcome to you and are grateful for your presence at the 2023 EFCA Theology Conference.

We are greatly encouraged you have joined us for these days of learning, worship, fellowship, reflection, and discussion. Your attendance reflects your interest in and commitment to these important and timely biblical and doctrinal issues. We are here because these issues affect our own personal lives and the ministries and local churches where we serve.

This year we will focus on the ground of truth and the Christian faith, the foundation that anchors us in the midst of the blowing cultural winds, the doctrine of God. It is captured in our Conference theme, “The Doctrine of God: The Ground of Being and Truth and the Goal of Theology and Life,” which is grounded in Article 1 of our Statement of faith, God.

As one rightly noted, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” That foundational truth of God impacts all of life and ministry. Since we seek to live and minister faithfully by God’s grace, for the good of God’s people, and for the glory of God, it is essential we ground all of what we do in God. And then from this fundamental posture, we think about and respond to the postmodern and increasingly post-Christian sentiments in our culture.

Our Preconference theme is “A Theology of the Body and Human Sexuality: God’s Divine Design and ‘Did God Actually Say?’” Of the acronym LGBTQ+, it is the T that is not only exploding but also imploding. Parents and pastors alike need help in understanding these issues and navigating through them with biblical faithfulness and pastoral wisdom.

Thank you to President Nicholas Perrin and the staff at Trinity International University for the warm welcome they have extended. Please offer your appreciation and gratitude to all the excellent staff who serve us so well.

We invite you to stop and visit with our conference sponsors. Free Church Ministers’ and Missionaries’ Benefits & Retirement (FCMM) assists churches in providing a retirement plan, long term disability insurance, payroll service, and access to group health insurance. Jerry Rich, Ric Stanghelle, and Jeff Englin are here on behalf of FCMM. Consider stopping by their booth for more information or to set up an appointment with them.

Trinity International University, our EFCA school, is a ministry partner to our churches. Our school has been “entrusted with the gospel” and they are faithfully preparing and equipping students for life and ministry. Please plan to visit with them and hear of the ways God is using TIU, and to learn of ways you can partner with them.

We are also grateful for the generosity of a benefactor who enabled us to provide 200 copies of *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*, which chronicles the history of Trinity International University/Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS), our EFCA seminary.

Additionally, we are grateful to the EFCA for providing 200 copies of the 2nd edition of *Evangelical Convictions: A Theological Exposition of the Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America*, which expounds our doctrinal convictions. All registrants will receive one of these two excellent books.

Aaron Uran with NextStep Resources is also here eager to serve you with good books. Many of the books written by our speakers will be available, along with their recommended bibliographies on the topics they will be addressing.

Crossway publishing has graciously provided 3 sets of the updated and unabridged two-volume classic by Stephen Charnock, edited by Mark Jones, *The Existence and Attributes of God*. These sets along with books written by our speakers, will be the book giveaway at the conclusion of the conference. Fair warning: you must be present to win!

The conference recordings will be available the week following the conference on the EFCA Theology Podcast (efca.org/podcast).

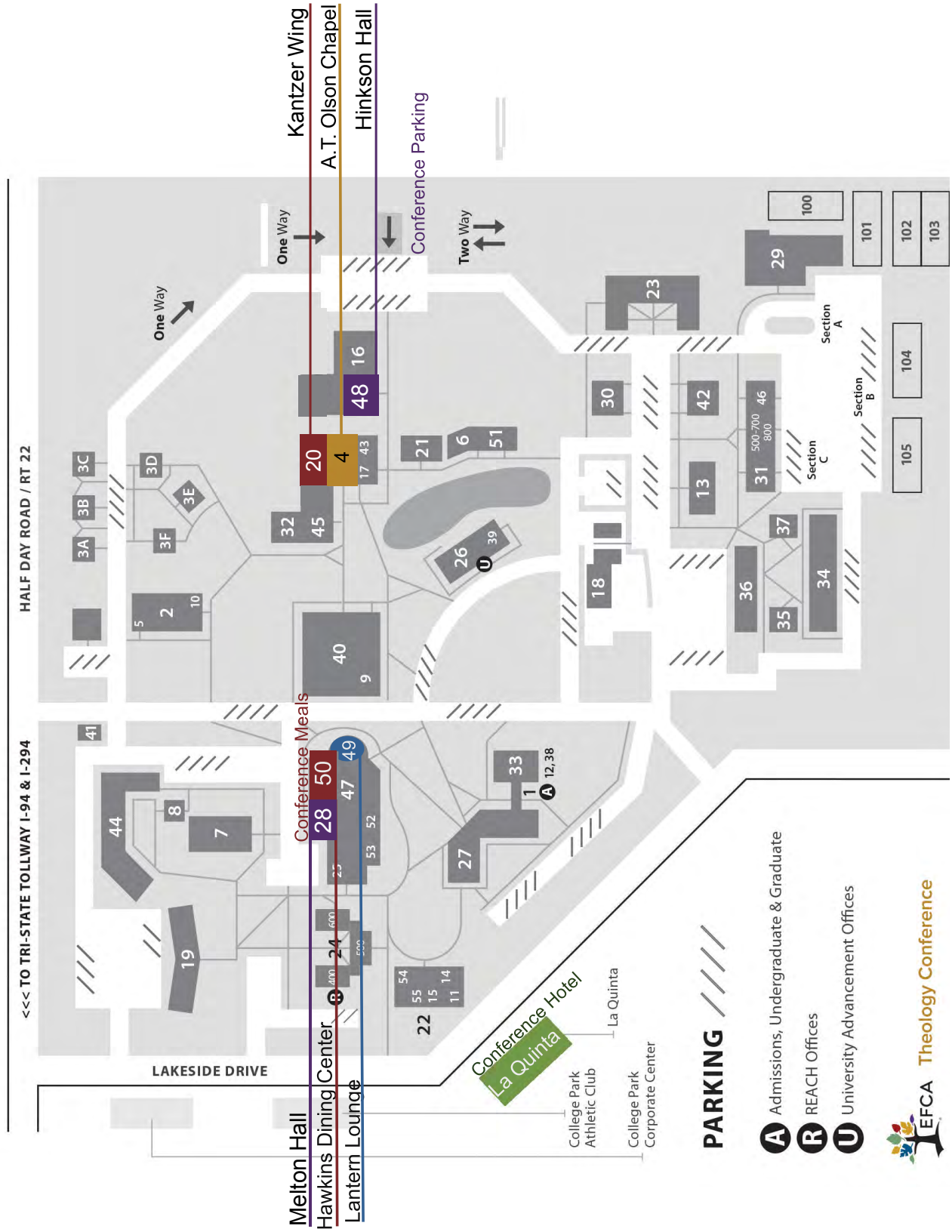
Thank you for attending the 2023 Theology Conference. The conference team is available to assist you with any questions or needs you may have.

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

GREG STRAND

Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing

TRINITY INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY / Deerfield, IL / Campus Map



PARKING

- A** Admissions, Undergraduate & Graduate
- R** REACH Offices
- U** University Advancement Offices



NUMERICALLY

BUILDINGS & DEPARTMENTS

- A** 1 Admissions (*Petersen Wing - Ground Level*)
- 2 Aldeen
- 3 Apartments A, B, C, D, E, F
- 4 A.T. Olson Chapel
- 5 Health and Wellness (*Aldeen*)
- 6 Gundersen Building
- 7 Carlson Hall
- 8 Carlson Hall 111
- 9 Henry Computer Lab
- 10 Clothes Horse (*Aldeen*)
- 11 Marketing/Creative Services (*Lew Center*)
- 12 Financial Aid (*Petersen Wing - Lower Level*)
- 13 Gundersen Apartment
- 14 Graphic Design Studio & Lab (*Lew Center*)
- 15 University Student Success Center (*Lew*)
- 16 Rodine Global Ministry
- 17 Human Resources
- 18 Facility, Safety & Campus Services
- 19 Johnson Hall
- 20 Kantzer Wing
- 21 Lee Center
- 22 Low Center
- 23 Ludwigson Apartment
- R** 24 Madsen Hall/**REACH Offices**
- 25 Mail Services (*Waybright Center*)
- U** 26 **University Advancement** (*Mansion*)
- 27 McLennan Academic Building
- 28 Melton Hall (*Waybright Center*)
- 29 Meyer Sports Complex
- 30 North Apartment
- 31 Owens Hall

- 32 Peterson Academic Wing
 - 33 Petersen Wing
 - 34 Quad 1
 - 35 Quad 2
 - 36 Quad 3
 - 37 Quad 4
 - 38 Records (*Petersen Wing - Lower Level*)
 - 39 Rockford Room (*Mansion*)
 - 40 Roling Library
 - 41 Security
 - 42 South Apartment
 - 43 Student Accounting
 - 44 Trinity Hall
 - 45 Veenstra Wing
 - 46 Counseling Center / Health Services
 - 47 Waybright Center
 - 48 Hinkson Hall (*Rodine*)
 - 49 Lantern Lounge (*Waybright Center*)
 - 50 Hawkins Dining Hall (*Waybright Center*)
 - 51 Center for Bioethics & Human Dignity
 - 52 Nyberg Exec. Meeting Room (*W.C.*)
 - 53 Student Affairs (*Lower Level*)
 - 54 Information Technology
 - 55 Career Services (*Lew Center*)
- FIELDS**
- 100 Softball Field
 - 101 Scharfner Field
 - 102 Baseball Field
 - 103 South Fields (2)
 - 104 Center Field
 - 105 Leslie Frazier Field

ALPHABETICALLY

BUILDINGS & DEPARTMENTS

- A** Admissions (*Petersen Wing - Ground Level*) / 1
 - Aldeen / 2
 - Apartments A, B, C, D, E, F / 3
 - A.T. Olson Chapel / 4
 - Career Services (*Lew Center*) / 55
 - Carlson Hall / 7
 - Carlson Hall 111 / 8
 - Center for Bioethics & Human Dignity / 51
 - Clothes Horse (*Aldeen*) / 10
 - Counseling Center / 46
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 - Quad 1 / 34
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SPEAKERS

Preconference Speakers



GREGG ALLISON

Professor of Christian Theology
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

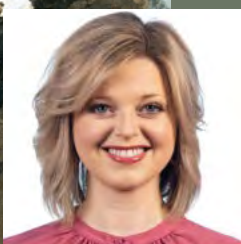
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LAURIS KALDJIAN

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KATIE MCCOY

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Conference Speakers



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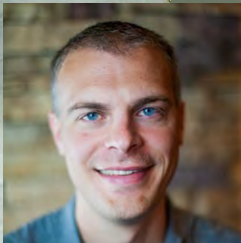


STEVEN DUBY

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SPEAKERS



GAVIN ORTLUND

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DEREK RISHMAWY

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FRED SANDERS

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KEVIN VANHOOZER

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ADONIS VIDU

Andrew Mutch Distinguished Professor of Theology,
Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts

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EFCA THEOLOGY PRECONFERENCE

A Theology of the Body and Human Sexuality: God's Divine Design and "Did God Actually Say?"

At our 2013 Theology Conference, we addressed the topic, **Sex Matters: The Theology of Human Sexuality**. In conjunction with the 2013 Theology Conference, the Spiritual Heritage Committee wrote **A Church Statement on Human Sexuality: Homosexuality and Same-Sex "Marriage" – A Resource for EFCA Churches**, which has been helpful to many. In the decade since that time, there has been a moral tsunami, with the moral waves continuing to ebb and flow and overcome anything and anyone in its path that is not anchored.

LGBTQ+ is now the expected norm. That one's gender is considered a social construct, malleable, not a biological fact, is considered a given. Not only do many people think that this view of human sexuality ought to be considered one view among others, or that it ought to have a place at the table with other views: for these people, this view must be acknowledged, accepted, affirmed, and applauded by others. And if not, there will be a price to pay through being cancelled. "Pride month" is included on standard digital calendars, and it is expected to be celebrated. This speaks volumes. And for those who do not celebrate, the way they are treated also speaks volumes.

God's true, good, and beautiful creation of male and female has been tarnished by sin. But his purposes for sex remain and are restored through the gospel. This truth today is regarded by many as hurtful, hateful, and harmful to individual flourishing. The body is merely instrumentally good, to do with it as one desires, it is not intrinsically good to be received as a gift. This distorted and broken notion of human sexuality and morality has become pervasive and assumed. Christianity's truth claims about God's creation of male and female, and our affirmation that human flourishing will not happen if one goes against God's good design for human sexuality and the limitations of moral expression of that

sexuality, are considered defeater beliefs for many, making the Christian belief implausible. These truths do not fit their individual expressivist worldview.

Of the acronym LGBTQ+, there is a growing divide between the LGB community, which has traditionally affirmed biological sex is a given though expression of one's sex is not determined, and the T community, which denies biological sex is a given. Ideologically there is a widening gap between the two communities, and culturally, the T is exploding (but also imploding—consider those detransitioning to their biological sex, e.g., **The Detransition Diaries**, and the closing of Tavistock, the most influential and well-known clinic in the UK for treating adolescents claiming to be transgender or non-binary, which will likely be one of the next important ministries in the church). Some struggle with even responding to the question, “what is a woman?”

A new term has arisen diagnosing the problem many teens encounter through social media, Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria (ROGD). This is a phenomenon in which young teens are socially influenced through peer contagion primarily through social media platforms, or otherwise referred to as social contagion. As further evidence of how pervasive this has become, in the past 10-12 years, there has been an astronomical increase in children claiming/declaring they are transgender. The majority of them are females, teenage girls and young women.

You cannot disregard and defy creation without cost and consequence to the creature, human beings created in the image of God (*imago Dei*).

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

We live in a day in which the words God speaks (present tense intentional!) are foundational and fitting about creation and its purpose: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’ . . . And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:26-28, 31).

We affirm the truthfulness of the fall (Gen 3) and the spiritually deadening effects of sin (Rom 5:12-21), though not necessarily final, since the hope and promise of the gospel is for a new act of creation through faith in Jesus Christ: “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will

inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:9-11).

We in the EFCA, grounded in the Scriptures, God’s Word, in our Statement of Faith affirm the truthfulness of God (Article 1, God) and the Scriptures (Article 2, The Bible), they are inspired, inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient: “We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.”

We affirm Adam and Eve’s rebellious defiance against God, original sin, with its accompanying guilt and shame, that now affects all born in Adam, with our hope to be born again through union with the second Adam, Jesus Christ (Article 3, The Human Condition): “We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God’s saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.”

And we affirm that God’s justifying grace is the ground of his sanctifying grace in the lives of believers (Article 8, Christian Living), meaning there is sanctification, that is being set apart by and to God through justification, and there is ongoing transformation into the likeness of the Son: “We believe that God’s justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed.”

These truths are fundamental to how we understand and approach human sexuality.

THEOLOGICAL AFFIRMATIONS

Additionally, we affirm specific theological affirmations in relation to human sexuality. These four points are an excerpted summary of what was included in **A Church Statement on Human Sexuality**.

God created human beings as male and female (Gen 1:27). The complementary, relational nature of the human race as “male and female” reflects the created order given by God when He created human beings “in His image” (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1, 3; 9:6; 1 Cor 11:7; Jms. 3:9; cf. Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:23-24; Col 3:10). It is with joy in our finitude that we are to receive the gift of being either male or female.

All of human existence, including our sexuality, has been deeply damaged by the fall into sin (Gen 3; Rom 3:23; 5:12). We all are sinners, broken in some measure by this fall. Though Christians are rescued,

reconciled, renewed and in process of being transformed, this brokenness also affects us in that we groan, as the whole creation, eager to experience final redemption knowing at present we live in a not-yet-glorified state (Rom 8:22-23).

Everything, from our environment to our bodily genetic code, has been ravaged by sin and the fall. Whether the homosexual attractions people experience are the product of their environment, their genetics, or another source, they are not what God intends and so do not render homosexual behavior legitimate.

Though recognizing that due to sin and human brokenness our experience of our sex and gender is not always as God the Creator originally designed, our recognition of our sex as male or female as a gift from God dictates that we cannot support or affirm the resolution of tension between a person's biological sex and experience of gender by the adoption of a psychological identity discordant with that person's birth sex, nor support or affirm attempts to change via medical intervention one's given biological birth sex in favor of the identity of the opposite sex or of an indeterminate identity. (We recognize that in rare cases some are born with both sets of sexual organs [intersex]. This is another one of the implications of living in a fallen world, and another reminder that our sexuality has been deeply damaged by the fall. This Statement primarily addresses those who self-select sex and/or gender.)

PARENTAL AND PASTORAL NEEDS

Gender dysphoria, a “disconnect or conflict between their biological sex (what their body says about whether they are a boy or a girl) and their gender identity (their internal sense of being a boy or a girl),” is a real thing. Affirming the doctrine of sin and recognizing the brokenness caused by sin means we are not surprised by gender confusion or dysphoria. In those instances, in which it is a real struggle, we lovingly call that person back to God's design for men and women, remembering you save life by losing it for the sake of Christ (Matt 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24), not to resolve it by pursuing one's personal desire (remember, identity is determined by biological sex, not desire). But not all who claim they live with gender dysphoria makes it real. Consider the reality of social contagion. And for those who do experience it to one degree or another, most grow out of it.

For those who live with gender dysphoria, the transition recommended by the world, and many in our society today, follows a general path which includes *social*, e.g., name, pronouns, clothes, *medical*, e.g., hormones, puberty blockers, and *surgical*, e.g., mastectomy, sex reassignment surgery.

Carl Trueman has traced the history of the sexualized modern self. It happened, first, through the psychologization of the self, then it turned to the sexualization of psychology, that is, our sexual desires and acting on those desires is essential to who one is, one's identity, and finally, it resulted in the politicizing of sex, whereas oppression and victimhood is considered in psychological terms. The sexual

ideology of the day has become a religion, and most every avenue of our society—schools, sports, social media, movies, music, medicine, business, politics, law, etc.—has become both fundamentalists to this new religion and evangelists for the acceptance and adoption of it. Many are being cajoled, convinced, and converted to this new sexualized religion. Christian families and churches are not exempt.

For parents, because there are concerns for the mental and emotional health and physical wellbeing of their child, they will often concede or capitulate to the desires of the child. If/When they seek counsel from pastors or the church, what is the counsel given? Is the church family there to support them in upholding God’s truth over against the deceptive lies of the world? Does the church affirm and celebrate God’s very good design of male and female in its gatherings and through its liturgy?

Parents and pastors alike need help in understanding these issues and navigating through them. Most have their theology right on human sexuality, but the moral tsunami along with the thorny pastoral issues accompanying this unbiblical morality are new ground for most. And we recognize all pastoral issues are theological issues, and all theological issues are pastoral issues.

It is a pertinent topic, but not just anyone should address it. The topic requires qualified people who are unshakable on the foundational truths of God’s very good creation of male and female, along with sufficient nuance because of the fall and its implications. It is essential that one consider redemption and the doctrinal truth and experiential reality of union with Christ (1 Cor 6:9-11). It is also important they address this topic with convictional kindness, conviction of the faith once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3), and kindness as a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

SESSIONS AND PANEL

We will be approaching this preconference session in an interdisciplinary manner, with uniquely and eminently qualified people to instruct us.

Gregg Allison, Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, will give the opening message addressing the *biblical and theological foundation* (Gen 1:26-28, 31).

This will be followed by Lauris Kaldjian, Professor of Internal Medicine and Director of the Program in Bioethics and Humanities, College of Medicine, University of Iowa, who will address the *medical and ethical realities* behind this and shed light on diagnoses and procedures that have become shrouded in darkness, with many loving darkness rather than light (Jn 3:19-21).

Katie McCoy, Director of Women’s Ministry, Texas Baptists, will focus on *practical theology and missiology*, addressing the practical issues facing teenagers and parents in the home, and providing

counsel for pastors and leaders of churches in how to lead in and through this. We must love God and love others (Matt 22:37-39), and because of this love, it is necessary to dismantle the deceitful and deadly lies of the enemy (Col 2:6-10).

Each speaker will address specific aspects of this important issue. Through this approach, we will receive a broader understanding and perspective on human sexuality and the ways God's design is being undermined and denied today, even by those in the church. There will be some repetition between the speakers, which is to be expected and welcomed. Consider repetition a point of emphasis. The final message will be followed by a panel discussion.

CONCLUSION

Carl R. Trueman, in **The Church of the Sexual Revolution: Today's theological fault lines mostly concern matters of earthly morality**, writes that a challenge to the church the past 50-100 years was the doctrine of God, theology. Today it is the doctrine of humanity, male and female, and what it means to be human, anthropology.

“There's one more oddity of our present religious woes. Whereas the problems for Christian institutions in the early 20th century might be described as having been a crisis in the understanding of God--could he become incarnate, rise from the dead and reveal himself to his creatures?--the problems of the early 21st century are different in kind.

They can be characterized as a crisis in what it means to be human. Are embryos persons? Are sex differences morally significant? Is “gender identity” different from sex? It's ironic that disagreements about the creature may prove more devastating to the church than those about the Creator.”

We stand firmly on God's Word, with love, assurance, and convictional kindness. Friends, God is not silent!

God Said/Says, It Is “Very Good,” And So It Is,

GREG STRAND

Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing



DR. GREGG ALLISON

Professor of Christian Theology

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

Session 1: A Theology of the Body and Human Sexuality: God's Divine Design and "Did God Actually Say?": Biblical and Systematic Theology

Dr. Allison's Select Bibliography:

Allison, Gregg R. *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021.

Kleinig, John. *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body*. Bellingham: Lexham, 2021.

Pearcey, Nancy. *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018.

Sprinkle, Preston. *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2021.

Tennent, Timothy C. *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.



DR. LAURIS KALDJIAN

Professor of Internal Medicine and Director of the Program in Bioethics and Humanities, College of Medicine, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa

Session 2: A Theology of the Body and Human Sexuality: God's Divine Design and "Did God Actually Say?": Medical and Ethical

Dr. Kaldjian's Select Bibliography:

Grabowski, John S. *Unraveling Gender: The Battle Over Sexual Difference*. Gastonia: TAN Books, 2022.

Meilaender, Gilbert. *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*, 4th edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020.

Trueman, Carl. *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2020.



DR. KATIE MCCOY

Director of Women's Ministry,
Texas Baptists, Dallas, Texas

Session 3: A Theology of the Body and Human Sexuality: God's Divine Design and
"Did God Actually Say?": Practical Theology and Missiology

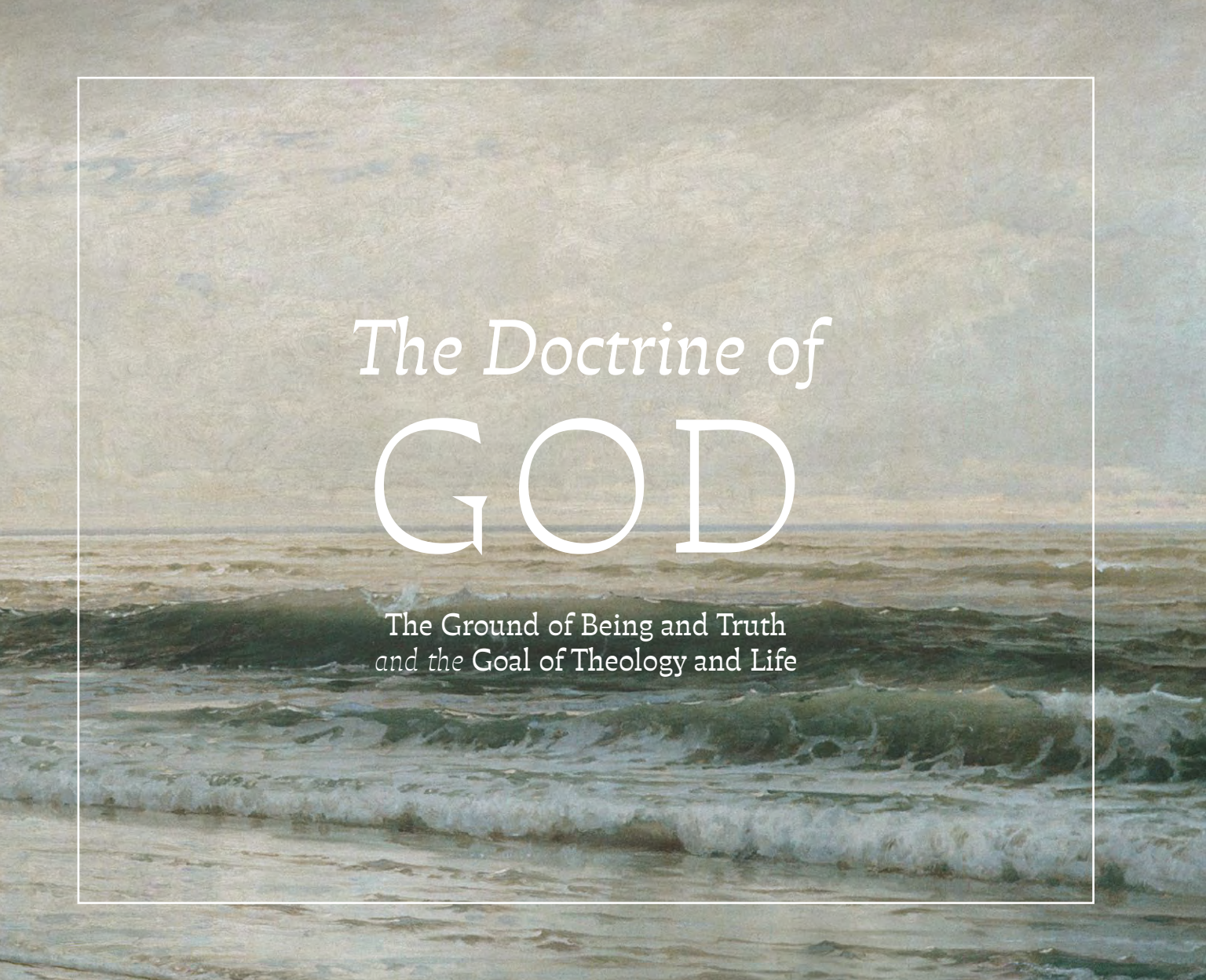
Dr. McCoy's Select Bibliography:

Anderson, Ryan T. *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*. San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2018.

Pearcey, Nancy R. *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018.

Sprinkle, Preston. *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2021.

Walker, Andrew T. *God and the Transgender Debate: What Does the Bible Actually Say About Gender Identity?*, Expanded and Updated. Epsom, Surrey: The Good Book, 2022.



The Doctrine of GOD

*The Ground of Being and Truth
and the Goal of Theology and Life*

EFCA Theology Conference

In the past few years, we have focused on contemporary issues, the blowing cultural winds, and responding to them with biblical truth and theological fidelity, with a goal of providing pastoral wisdom for those engaged in ministry in the local church. For example, last year's theme was **Our Citizenship Is In Heaven: Exiles Who Are In But Not Of the World**. We had six plenary messages and four breakout sessions addressing some of the key issues of the day and in the present culture with a reminder to us that "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil 3:20-21). (Our **2020** theme was "Contending for the Faith – 7 Critical Contemporary Doctrinal Challenges: A Biblical, Theological and Pastoral Response."; our **2021** theme in the midst of the pandemic was "The Psalms: The Undershepherds' Shepherd.")

This year we focus on the ground of truth and the Christian faith, the foundation that anchors us amidst the strong cultural headwinds. With these strong and relentless headwinds doctrinally and morally, we remain anchored in God, who is unshakable, immovable, and unchangeable, and his Word, which is inerrant, infallible, authoritative, and sufficient. We focus on “The Doctrine of God: The Ground of Being and Truth and the Goal of Theology and Life.” In essence, we affirm two essential truths: (1) The ground of being and truth is God, and (2) theology is the doctrine of living unto God through Christ.

GOD AND THEOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

When we address theology, we are addressing theology that is theological, that is, theological theology. For John Webster, “theological theology,” was a way to remind himself that theology has to be about God at all times. Webster often said that theology was about (1) God and (2) all things in relation to God. To emphasize this he said, “Theology is about everything; But it is not about everything about everything, but about everything in relation to God.”

Or consider these definitions of theology that consist of both doctrine and life. To put asunder what God has put together is not only sad, but deleterious to the Christian life and the spiritual health of the church. Consider Martin Bucer: “True theology is not theoretical, but practical. The end of it is living, that is to live a godly life.” Or William Ames: “Theology is the doctrine or teaching of living to God. . . . Since the highest kind of life for a human being is that which approaches most closely the living and life-giving God, the nature of theological life is living to God.” Or John Frame: “Theology is the application of God’s Word by persons to all areas of life.” Or Stephen Wellum: “Systematic theology is the study of the triune God and all things in relationship to him and that it involves the application of God’s word to all areas of life.”

THE WEIGHTLESSNESS OF GOD

When considering the foundational and fundamental doctrine of God, how do we approach this? Some conclude this is not relevant or pertinent to life or ministry. That is tragic. With this assessment of God, it is not surprising to read the sad results of theology surveys (cf. **EFCA 2018 Doctrinal Survey** or **State of Theology Survey 2022**) on the doctrine of God or the doctrine of the Trinity. There is nothing more important than God!

Years ago A. W. Tozer, in *The Knowledge of the Holy*, wrote,

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. . . . For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. . . . Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God."

Remember David Wells' critical claim and insightful indictment of the church's perception of the weightlessness of God in *God in the Wasteland*? He writes,

"It is one of the defining marks of Our Time that God is now weightless. I do not mean by this that he is ethereal but rather that he has become unimportant. He rests upon the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable. He has lost his saliency for human life. . . . When God becomes weightless, as I believe he is so often today, we lose the doctrinal signals that might otherwise warn us that some profound change has taken place – the sorts of signals that once warned of the threat of heresy. . . . The doctrine is believed, defended, affirmed liturgically, and in every other way held to be inviolable – but it no longer has the power to shape and to summon that it has had in previous ages. . . . Unless God is understood to be transcendent in his holiness, the world can have no objective moral meaning, no accountability beyond itself, no assurance of salvation from guilt through Christ's death, and, in the end, no assurance that God will be the final line of resistance to all that is evil. And without this assurance, the hope dies that one day truth will be put forever on the throne and evil forever on the scaffold."

Wells wrote this about 30 years ago, and his claims have become much more pronounced and problematic in the intervening years. In reality, there is nothing weightier and more important than the doctrine of God. The right approach to God and his Word is found in Isaiah 66:2b, as one humbly, tremblingly, and awe-full-ly hears and responds: "But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word."

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Our plenary messages will arise from what we confess/profess in our EFCA Statement of Faith, Article 1, God, which captures and summarizes God's revelation of himself in the Scriptures:

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

What we affirm is how God initially reveals himself: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). The Scriptures begin with God. Therefore, all right thinking about God, thinking God’s thoughts after him, must begin with God. In our statement, we give preeminence to God in all His Trinitarian fullness. God existed before the Bible. This God, however, is a talking God, which means we receive his Word to us. What we know of God, he has revealed to us in the Scriptures, which consists of ontology, epistemology, and morality.

In this revelation from God himself, we affirm the eternal processions of the Persons (eternal relations of origin), that is, the three Persons of the Trinity have eternally existed as Father (unbegotten), Son (begotten of the Father [filiation]), and Holy Spirit (proceeding from the Father and Son [spiration]). We also affirm the temporal missions of the Persons of the Godhead in redemptive history. (Some refer to this as the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, but the notion of eternal processions and temporal missions seems better to capture this Trinitarian truth.)

Therefore, grounded in what we affirm, we highlight/emphasize seven truths about God in our plenary sessions.

- 1 God is: “We believe in one God . . . infinitely perfect, and eternally existing.”
- 2 God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: “We believe in one God . . . three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”
- 3 God is Creator (Maker of Heaven and Earth): “We believe in one God, Creator of all things.”
- 4 God is Holy: We believe God is “holy.”
- 5 God is Love: We believe God is love “and eternally existing in a loving unity.”
- 6 God is Sovereign: We believe God has “limitless knowledge and sovereign power [and] has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new.”
- 7 God is Blessed and Glorious: We believe God, “existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons,” is “infinitely perfect” and has “graciously purposed” all things “for His own glory.”

We are humbled and grateful for the speakers who will be with us to espouse different aspects of the truths contained in this Article we profess about God (rather, more accurately, what God has revealed of himself to us). Each speaker is uniquely qualified and gifted to teach on the specific topic they will be addressing. In each of the messages, they will address the specific aspect of truth articulated in the Article, then address the ways the truth of God is being challenged, changed, or denied today, and finally conclude with how this truth shapes how we live, think, and worship, personally and corporately in the church, which is grounded in God.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

We will provide three different options during our two breakout sessions. The three messages will be repeated in the second breakout session, which will allow you to participate in two of the breakouts. These sessions will consist of instruction and provide some time for Q&A and discussion. All these breakout topics are excellent, which will make it difficult for you to decide what two to attend. As you read, one of the sessions will be an expansion of the theme of the Conference, while the other two focus on other issues pertinent to ministry in this present day. Be assured, all will be recorded.

- “The Church—The Pillar and Buttress of the Truth: Theological and Ecclesiological Tendencies, Trends and Trajectories”
- “How to Be Helpful About the Trinity”
- “How to Read a Culture—What Every Pastor Needs to Know: A Primer on Cultural Exegesis”

CONCLUSION

We are grateful to the Lord for the joy and privilege we have to gather, to learn from the Word, to worship as a doxological expression of our theology, and to fellowship on the basis of our union with Christ. J. I. Packer, in *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1973), p. 29, asks and answers a series of questions that are at the heart of the doctrine of God in the Christian’s life, and remind us of why we are here immersing ourselves in the study of God:

“What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the ‘eternal life’ that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. ‘This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent’ (John 17:3). What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment, than anything else? Knowledge of God. ‘Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me’ (Jer 9:23f.). What, of all states God ever sees man in, gives Him most pleasure? Knowledge of Himself. ‘I desire . . . the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings,’ says God (Hos 6:6). . . . Once you become aware that the main business that you are here for is to know God, most of life’s problems fall into place of their own accord.”

Our goal for our conference is captured by Stephen Wellum as he articulates the goal of theology in his

forthcoming *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, “What is the goal of theology? Ultimately, it is to enable the church to know and worship our triune Creator-Covenant Lord rightly, to live obediently and faithfully under Christ’s Lordship, and unashamedly to witness to and defend the life-changing truth of the gospel.”

In closing, I include a lengthy statement from a sermon preached by Charles Haddon Spurgeon on *The Immutability of God*. It is worth reading slowly and pondering deeply, and then following that by confession, both of its truth and how far we have fallen short of delighting in God, and worship of God in all his fullness, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

“It has been said by some one that ‘the proper study of mankind is man.’ I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. . . . No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God. . . . But while the subject humbles the mind it also expands it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. . . . the most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. And, whilst humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead’s deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead.”

“To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever,”

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BREAKOUT SESSIONS

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How to Read a Culture — What Every Pastor Needs to Know:
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RESOURCES

EFCA STATEMENT OF FAITH*

Adopted by the Conference on June 19, 2019

The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of autonomous churches united around these theological convictions:

GOD

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

THE BIBLE

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

THE HUMAN CONDITION

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

JESUS CHRIST

4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

THE WORK OF CHRIST

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

THE CHURCH

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

CHRISTIAN LIVING

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

CHRIST'S RETURN

9. We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

RESPONSE AND ETERNAL DESTINY

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

*Our EFCA Statement of Faith is grounded in the Scriptures, the inspired, inerrant, sufficient, and authoritative Word of God, *sola Scriptura*, the magisterial authority, and guided by the church's beliefs about the Scriptures in Creeds and Confessions, a ministerial authority.

IRENÆUS' RULE OF FAITH (C. 190)*

... this faith: in one God, the Father Almighty, who made the heaven and the earth and the seas and all the things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was made flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who made known through the prophets the plan of salvation, and the coming, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the bodily ascension into heaven of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and his future appearing from heaven in the glory of the Father to sum up all things and to raise anew all flesh of the whole human race . . .

*This is the *regula fidei*. The “rule of faith” or “canon of truth” is the official church teaching that is grounded in and in agreement with Scripture and is considered a summary of the teaching of Scripture. This “faith” is what Christians are to believe, over against heresies. Additionally, this “rule” grounds and guides believers “in the correct exegesis of Scripture and the discernment of its unity and consistency.” In other words, it provides a doctrinal grammar to interpret the Scriptures.

OLD ROMAN CREED (C. LATE 2ND, EARLY 3RD CENTURY)*

I believe in God almighty
And in Christ Jesus, his only son, our Lord
Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried
And the third day rose from the dead

Who ascended into heaven
And sitteth on the right hand of the Father
Whence he cometh to judge the living and the dead

And in the Holy Spirit
The holy church
The remission of sins
The resurrection of the flesh
The life everlasting.

*This early Creed is the basis for the Apostles' Creed.

THE APOSTLES' CREED (*APOSTLES, SYNOD OF MILAN, 390, 750*)*

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,

and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell.** The third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic*** church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

Amen.

*Although there were early versions of this Creed, e.g., the Old Roman Creed, the final version was adopted later.

**This is a later addition.

*** The term "catholic" means universal, not the Roman Catholic Church.

THE NICENE/CONSTANTINOPLE CREED (381)*

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And [we believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit,** the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son;*** who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

*The Nicene Creed (325), adopted at the Council of Nicaea, served as the foundation for the revision that occurred at the Council of Constantinople (381).

**What was added was a clearer and explicit statement about the deity of the Holy Spirit, that He is God, expanding on the Nicene Creed which affirmed the simple statement, “And I believe in the Holy Spirit.” And the concluding anathemas were removed: “But those who say, Once he was not, or he was not before his generation, or he came to be out of nothing, or who assert that he, the Son of God, is of a different *hypostasis* or *ousia*, or that he is a creature, or changeable, or mutable, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them.”

***Although the phrase “and the Son” was added to the procession of the Holy Spirit after the Council of Constantinople (381), it is a truth affirmed by the Church in the West. This phrase, referred to as the *filioque*, was at the heart of the Great Schism (1054) between the Eastern (Orthodox) and the Western Church.

CHALCEDON CREED (451 A.D)*

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation,** of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer;*** one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

*This Creed was the fourth Council of the Church (Nicaea [325], Constantinople [381], Ephesus [431], and Chalcedon [451]).

**This Christological confession became and remains the standard of orthodoxy concerning the one Person and two natures of God the Son incarnate. It is affirmed in the truth Jesus Christ is “at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man . . . one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.”

***This Creed states what was affirmed at the Council of Ephesus (431), viz., that Mary was “the “God-bearer” (*theotokos*), not only a Christ-bearer (*christotokos*). The latter is an inaccurate belief claiming Mary was the mother of His humanity, but that was totally distinct from His divinity. Against the Nestorians (two separate persons in Christ, a human person and a divine person), the Creed both described Mary as *theotokos*, not to exalt Mary in the slightest, but to affirm Jesus’ true deity and a real incarnation, and spoke throughout of one and the same Son and one person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons and whose natures are in union without division and without separation. This was to preserve the full deity and humanity of Jesus, not to exalt Mary, which happened later in the history of the church.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED (*FOURTH-FIFTH CENTURIES*)*

1. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith;
2. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.
3. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;**
4. Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance
5. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son and another of the Holy Spirit.
6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.
7. Such as the Father is, such is the Son and such is the Holy Spirit.
8. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated.
9. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.
10. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal.
11. And yet they are not three eternal, but one eternal.
12. As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensibles, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.
13. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty;
14. And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty.
15. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God;
16. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.
17. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord;
18. And yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord.
19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord;
20. so are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say: There are three Gods or three Lords.
21. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.
22. The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten.
23. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.
24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.

25. And in this Trinity none is afore, nor after another; none is greater, or less than another.
26. But the whole three persons are co-eternal, and co-equal.
27. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.
28. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.
29. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.***
30. For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man.
31. God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and made of the substance of His mother, born in the world.
32. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.
33. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood.
34. Who, although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ.
35. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.
36. One altogether, not by the confusion of substance, but by unity of person.
37. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ;
38. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead;
39. He ascended into heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty;
40. From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
41. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;
42. And shall give account of their own works.
43. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.
44. This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

*Although the title of this creed is the same as Athanasius, he is not likely the author. By the time of the Reformation, this was considered one of three classic creeds of Christianity, the others being the Apostles' and the Nicene/Constantinople.

**Statements 3-28 affirm the doctrine of the Trinity and they are unsurpassed in articulating Trinitarian truth: "that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity" (line 3), and anyone who will be saved "must thus think of the Trinity" (line 28).

***The second section of the creed expresses the Scripture's teaching and the church's faith in the incarnation and its importance: "...it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (line 29). It affirms doctrinal truths espoused in previous controversies regarding the deity and the humanity of Jesus, being fully God and fully man.

HEIDELBERG CATECHISM (1563)*

LORD'S DAY 1

Question 1. What is your only comfort in life and death?

Answer. That I am not my own,[1] but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death,[2] to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.[3] He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil.[5] He also preserves me in such a way[6] that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head;[7] indeed, all things must work together for my salvation.[8] Therefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life[9] and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him.[10]

[1] I Cor. 6:19, 20 [2] Rom. 14:7-9. [3] I Cor. 3:23; Tit. 2:14. [4] I Pet. 1:18, 19; I John 1:7; 2:2. [5] John 8:34-36; Heb. 2:14, 15; I John 3:8. [6] John 6:39, 40; 10:27-30; II Thess. 3:3; I Pet. 1:5. [7] Matt. 10:29-31; Luke 21:16-18. [8] Rom. 8:28. [9] Rom. 8:15, 16; II Cor. 1:21, 22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13, 14. [10] Rom. 8:14.

Question 2. What do you need to know in order to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

Answer. First, how great my sins and misery are;[1] second, how I am delivered from all my sins and misery;[2] third, how I am to be thankful to God for such deliverance.[3]

[1] Rom. 3:9, 10; I John 1:10. [2] John 17:3; Acts 4:12; 10:43. [3] Matt. 5:16; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 5:8-10; I Pet. 2:9, 10.

LORD'S DAY 9

Question 26. What do you believe when you say: I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

Answer. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and all that is in them,[1] and who still upholds and governs them by His eternal counsel and providence,[2] is, for the sake of Christ His Son, my God and my Father.[3] In Him I trust so completely

as to have no doubt that He will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul,[4] and will also turn to my good whatever adversity He sends me in this life of sorrow.[5] He is able to do so as almighty God,[6] and willing also as a faithful Father.[7]

[1] Gen. 1 and 2; Ex. 20:11; Job 38 and 39; Ps. 33:6; Is. 44:24; Acts 4:24; 14:15. [2] Ps. 104:27-30; Matt. 6:30; 10:29; Eph. 1:11. [3] John 1:12, 13; Rom. 8:15, 16; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5. [4] Ps. 55:22; Matt. 6:25, 26; Luke 12:22-31. [5] Rom. 8:28. [6] Gen. 18:14; Rom. 8:31-39. [7] Matt. 6:32, 33; 7:9-11.

LORD'S DAY 10

Question 27. What do you understand by the providence of God?

Answer. God's providence is His almighty and ever present power,[1] whereby, as with His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures,[2] and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty,[3] indeed, all things, come not by chance[4] but by His fatherly hand.[5]

[1] Jer. 23:23, 24; Acts 17:24-28. [2] Heb. 1:3. [3] Jer. 5:24; Acts 14:15-17; John 9:3; Prov. 22:2. [4] Prov. 16:33. [5] Matt. 10:29.

Question 28. What does it benefit us to know that God has created all things and still upholds them by His providence?

Answer. We can be patient in adversity,[1] thankful in prosperity,[2] and with a view to the future we can have a firm confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature shall separate us from His love;[3] for all creatures are so completely in His hand that without His will they cannot so much as move.[4]

[1] Job. 1:21, 22; Ps. 39:10; James 1:3. [2] Deut. 8:10; I Thess. 5:18. [3] Ps. 55:22; Rom. 5:3-5; 8:38, 39. [4] Job 1:12; 2:6; Prov. 21:1; Acts 17:24-28.

*Creeds, confessions and catechisms were instrumental ways the doctrine and theology of the Reformation were taught and propagated. The Heidelberg Catechism, written by Casper Olevianus and Zacharias Ursinus, was one of the early ones (1563). The 129 questions are divided into three parts following the structure of the book of Romans. The third edition, published later in 1563, divided the questions into 52 Lord's Days to reflect the year. According to Ursinus, the purpose of studying doctrine at the systematic level is "that we may be well prepared for the reading, understanding, and exposition of the holy Scriptures. For as the doctrines . . . are taken out of the Scriptures, and are directed by them as their rule, so they again lead us, as it were, by the hand to the Scriptures." Pertinent sections are included which emphasize some of the implications of the truth that God is our creator, redeemer providential protector and provider.



2024 EFCA THEOLOGY CONFERENCE

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SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8

8–8:30 a.m. Registration — AT Olson Chapel Foyer

Preconference — A Theology of the Body and Human Sexuality: God’s Divine Design and “Did God Actually Say?”
AT Olson Chapel

8:30–8:45 a.m. Welcome and Introduction — Greg Strand

8:45–9:35 a.m. Biblical and Systematic Theology — Gregg Allison

9:35–9:50 a.m. Break

9:50–10:40 a.m. Medical and Ethical — Lauris Kaldjian

10:40–10:55 a.m. Break

10:55–11:45 a.m. Practical Theology and Missiology — Katie McCoy

11:45 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Panel

12:30–2 p.m. Lunch — Hawkins Dining Hall

Conference — The Doctrine of God: The Ground of Being and Truth and the Goal of Theology and Life
AT Olson Chapel

2–2:20 p.m. Scripture and Worship

2:20–2:45 p.m. Introduction — Greg Strand

2:45–4 p.m. God is — Gavin Ortlund

4–4:30 p.m. Break

4:30–5:45 p.m. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — Steven Duby

6 p.m. EFCA Chaplains Dinner — LaQuinta Inn & Suites

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9

7–8 a.m.	TEDS Alumni Breakfast — Lantern Lounge Waybright Center
8–8:30 a.m.	Scripture and Worship
8:30–9:45 a.m.	God is Creator (Maker of Heaven and Earth) — Adonis Vidu
9:45–10:15 a.m.	Break
10:15–11:30 a.m.	God is Holy — Derek Rishmawy
11:30 a.m.–1 p.m.	Lunch provided by the EFCA Network — Hawkins Dining Hall
1–1:15 p.m.	Scripture and Worship
1:15–2:30 p.m.	God is Love — D.A. Carson
2:30–2:45 p.m.	Transition time
2:45–3:45 p.m.	Breakouts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Pillar and Buttress of the Truth: Theological and Ecclesiological Tendencies, Trends and Trajectories — Steven Duby, Hinkson Hall• How to Be Helpful About the Trinity — Fred Sanders, Kantzer Lecture Hall• How to Read a Culture — What Every Pastor Needs to Know: A Primer on Cultural Exegesis — Kevin Vanhoozer, AT Olson Chapel
3:45–4 p.m.	Break
4–5 p.m.	Breakouts — repeated from above
5:15–6 p.m.	EFCA Network Annual Meeting — AT Olson Chapel

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10

8:30–9 a.m.	Scripture and Worship
9–10:15 a.m.	God is Sovereign — Kevin Vanhoozer
10:15–10:30 a.m.	Break
10:30–11:45 a.m.	God is Blessed and Glorious — Fred Sanders
11:45 a.m.–noon	Closing comments with book drawing — Greg Strand

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