

Christian Speaking of God – A Helpful and Timely Document from the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe

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<https://www.eva-leipzig.de/de/fischer-poder-christliches-reden-von-gott-i-christian-speaking-of-god>

Tomi Karttunen

Since the 1960s, European churches have wrestled with their identity and mission in increasingly secular and pluralistic societies, where the traditional status of Christianity has been challenged. Churches are seeking new ways to be missional communities. Discussions have emerged around the internal secularization of churches and the dominance of ethics in preaching. It seems that even many pastors feel uncertain when speaking about God and spirituality. At the same time, younger generations—especially Generation Z—appear more open to spiritual questions and even to traditional Christian teachings than their predecessors. Undoubtedly, the climate crisis, wars, and societal polarization have intensified the need to reflect on life’s deeper questions. There is a growing need for hope and spiritual guidance.

It is therefore timely and valuable that the CPCE General Assembly approved the study document *Christian Speaking of God* in 2024 as a resource for Protestant churches in Europe. The text takes seriously both the modern, practical context and the shared tradition of Christian faith from a Reformation perspective.

The starting point is not only rooted in Reformation theology but also ecumenical, drawing from Scripture and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. As stated in chapter 4:

“We can speak of God, in Christ, only in such a way that we speak of the God of Israel as the Father, of Jesus as the Son and of the Holy

Spirit. In other words, we speak of God in a trinitarian way” (para 33). “The Trinitarian Creed aims at preserving simultaneously this distinction between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and expressing the divine unity (1 Cor. 8:5–6)” (para 35). “Scriptural binitarian (1 Cor. 8:6) and later trinitarian (2 Cor. 13:13; 1 Tim. 3:6; 1 Pet. 3:18–22) speech about God is not mere speculation but rather an interpretation of the revelation of God in the Son through the Spirit. The challenge of Christian speech about the triune God and the divine self-revelation in Jesus is to receive as Lord and God the Jesus who speaks from the Bible and through the proclamation of the Gospel” (para 38).

Chapter 5 explores how God acts in the world — a topic that often raises questions. It also discusses divine election, God’s powerful work especially on the cross, and the idea of change in God out of faithfulness. These themes are presented in a theologically rich yet generally accessible way. Chapter 6 focuses on God speaking to us in worship, while chapter 7 addresses our speech to and with God in prayer and praise. Chapter 8 expands the discussion to Christian speech in the public and political spheres. Chapter 9 considers private and professional contexts, chapter 10 explores contemporary culture, and chapter 11 reflects on ecumenical and interreligious dialogue from the perspective of speaking of God.

The “Conclusions” part emphasizes that the document is both encouraging and critical, including self-critique. It aims to be positive yet realistic, approaching the theme of Christian speaking of God from both theological and practical perspectives. The approach is rooted in faith and church communities, not solely academic, which I find both welcome and necessary.

The methodology of the study is both traditional and, one might say, postliberal: it takes the perspective of faith communities seriously while remaining open to critical theological developments of recent decades and their constructive outcomes. The foundations of Christian theology — Scripture and the Creeds — are upheld. As the document concludes:

“190. Our speaking of God returns again and again to its sources,

that is, to the Bible and the confessional writings, including their history and context. It approaches these sources in the context of worship and prayer while looking ahead to the fulfilment of creation.”

The perspective is not limited to internal church discourse but is open to dialogue and missional renewal: “194. Protestant churches aim to bring people together from the depths and corners of their yearning and suffering to their transformation in prayer and praise...”

Although the document does not explicitly highlight the relevance of the Nicene faith in the context of the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Ecumenical Council, the connection is easy to recognize. The intention to seek Christian unity and proclaim the apostolic gospel ecumenically today aligns with the affirmation of the 6th Faith and Order World Conference in Wadi El Natrun, Egypt (24–28 October 2025):

“12. Some question the importance of doctrine. Radical relativism argues that teaching about truth is irrelevant and divisive. We affirm that what we believe about God informs how we live and relate to others. Our shared belief in the Trinity as a communion of love enables and requires us to engage honestly with doctrinal and religious difference. Human beings, created in the image of God, are called to reflect that Trinitarian communion in how they love God, each other and God’s creation.”

I highly recommend this document not only for students and church workers but for anyone interested in the foundational truths of Christian faith and life from a Christian and protestant perspective.