

From ARTICLE 19

“We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life. Christian marriage is a mutual relationship in Christ, a covenant made in the context of the church. According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship.” (Article 19: Family, Singleness and Marriage)

The Six-Fold Ideal

1. a spiritual covenant like that of God with God's people (Eph. 5: 31-32)
2. mutually dignifying and empowering for both partners (Eph. 5: 21);
3. fully intended to be a lifelong commitment (I Cor. 7:10-11);
4. monogamous, exclusively and mutually faithful—not open to other sexual partners (Ex. 20:14);
5. heterosexual, between one man and one woman (Mk. 10: 6-9);
6. a covenant made and sustained “in the context of the church.”

HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES IN THE CONFESSION OF FAITH IN A MENNONITE PERSPECTIVE:

A. Hermeneutical Arrogance/Despair or Humility.

B. The Authority of the Bible for Lives and Communities of Discipleship

“We believe that all Scripture is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit for instruction in salvation and training in righteousness. We accept the Scriptures as the Word of God and as the fully reliable and trustworthy standard for Christian faith and life.”(Article 4: Scripture).

C. The Bible as the Starting Point of Ongoing Moral and Pastoral Discernment:

“We acknowledge the Scripture as the authoritative source and standard for preaching and teaching about faith and life, for distinguishing truth from error, for discerning between good and evil, and for guiding prayer and worship.” (Article 4: Scripture)

D. The Role of Experience

“Other claims on our understanding of Christian faith and life, such as tradition, culture, experience, reason, and political powers, need to be tested and corrected by the light of Holy Scripture.” (Article 4: Scripture)

E. Obedience, or The Effort to Obey and Apply the Bible

“Our response [to salvation] includes yielding to God's grace, placing full trust in God alone, repenting of sin, turning from evil, joining the fellowship of the redeemed, and *showing forth the obedience of faith in word and deed.* (italics mine).” (Article 8: Salvation)

F. Love as the Center and End of Biblical Moral Discernment

“God's awesome glory and enduring compassion are perfect in holy love. God's sovereign power and unending mercy are perfect in almighty love. God's knowledge of all things and care for creation are perfect in preserving love. God's abounding grace and wrath against sinfulness are perfect in righteous love. God's readiness to forgive and power to transform are perfect in redemptive love. God's unlimited justice and continuing patience with humankind are perfect in suffering love. God's infinite freedom and constant self-giving are perfect in faithful love. To the one holy and ever-loving triune God be glory for ever and ever!” (Article 1: God)

G. The Relationship of Love, Faith and Law

“True faith in Christ means willingness to do the will of God, rather than willful pursuit of individual happiness. True faith means seeking first the reign of God in simplicity, rather than pursuing materialism. True faith means acting in peace and justice, rather than with violence or military means. True faith means giving first loyalty to God's kingdom, rather than to any nation-state or ethnic group that claims our allegiance. True faith means honest affirmation of the truth, rather than reliance on oaths to guarantee our truth telling. True faith means chastity and loving faithfulness to marriage vows, rather than the distortion of sexual relationships, contrary to God's intention. True faith means treating our bodies as God's temples, rather than allowing addictive behaviors to take hold. True faith means performing deeds of compassion and reconciliation, in holiness of life, instead of letting sin rule over us. Our faithfulness to Christ is lived out in the loving life and witness of the church community, which is to be a separated people, holy to God.” (Article 17: Discipleship and the Christian Life)

Three kinds of biblical law:

1. Civil
2. Ceremonial/ritual
3. Moral

H. Christ as the Hermeneutical Key

“Because Jesus Christ is the Word become flesh, Scripture as a whole has its center and fulfillment in him.” (Article 4: Scripture)

I. A Biblical Anthropology

Because both Adam and Eve were equally and wonderfully made in the divine image, God's will from the beginning has been for women and men to live in loving and mutually helpful relationships with each other. [\[3\]](#)

J. Sin as a Subtle But Powerful Force

“Because of sin and its consequences, the efforts of human beings on their own to do the good and to know the truth are constantly corrupted.” (Article 7: Sin)

K. The Role of the Community

We participate in the church's task of interpreting the Bible and of discerning what God is saying in our time by examining all things in the light of Scripture. Insights and understandings which we bring to the interpretation of the Scripture are to be tested in the faith community.

L. A Sense for A Biblical Trajectory.

“We believe that peace is the will of God. God created the world in peace, and God's peace is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ...” It ends with “We give our ultimate loyalty to the God of grace and peace.... who sustains us in the glorious hope of the peaceable reign of God.
(Article 22, on Peace, Reconciliation and Nonresistance)

In Summary:

4. Since the beginning of the Anabaptist reformation in sixteenth-century Europe, Mennonites have sought to be a biblical people in ways that both borrowed from the Protestant reformation and differed from it. Mennonites have shared the traditional Protestant emphasis on the authority of Scripture for doctrine. In addition, Mennonites have underscored the following emphases:

- the authority of Scripture for ethics, for the relation of the church to society, and for church polity.
- the interpretation of Scripture in harmony with Jesus Christ, in the sense that his life, teachings, death, and resurrection are essential to understanding the Bible as a whole.
- the congregation of believers as the place where individual understandings and interpretations of Scripture are to be tested. (Note to Article 4: Scripture)

This confessional statement assumes and affirms these emphases.

**WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? SOME PASTORAL AND CONFERENCE
QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS**