

Apologeet.nl's statement

January 2019, the Dutch are in conflict with each other!

the Nashville declaration is a document in which [Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood](#) from the US states what the church's believes are on the topic of marriage. In short the document declares precisely what the church's doctrine on marriage has been for centuries. Namely, God created the first humans as male and female. Marriage is inaugurated by God as a covenant between one man and one woman and sexuality is intended to be an intimate relation between a man and a woman within the boundaries of marriage. Sexuality outside of marriage or between



two men, two women or all deviant forms outside the order set by God is labelled as sin in His word, the Bible. A heterosexual can thus sexually sin if this sexuality practised outside of marriage or within marriage when he or she is satisfying his or her lusts in other ways than with one's own partner. Just as well, it is clear in God's word that sexuality between two persons of the same sex is considered to be a sinful act.

In many countries, marriage no longer an ecclesiastical affair. That means that couples can still marry in the church but that this marriage is not legally valid. The marriage must be performed by an official. It is precisely for this reason that the government can also determine what it recognizes as a marriage. In the Netherlands it is possible for gay couples to enter into marriage. It is not relevant that this form of marriage goes against the Bible's teachings—it is a marriage as the government says it is, with exactly the same rights and obligations as any other marriage in the Netherlands. It will be different if a gay couple also wants to ask a blessing over their marriage in the church. They are already married! But God does not recognise it as a covenant set by Him. Biblically, the Christian churches have no ground to bless such a marriage, because by definition no blessing can be requested.

Organizations have been revolting for a long time about this, in their eyes, discriminating and old-fashioned church doctrine. In the last decades many churches have been involved in this debate and came to the conclusion that there *is* Biblical ground to marry homophile couples in the same way they have done for centuries with heterosexual couples. The discussions are often on an emotional level. Confusion arose among Christians, what are the biblical arguments and which arguments come from emotion? Yes, it is a very emotional subject. It's about the right to happiness, the right to love, the right to ... You name it.

It is because of the emotional content of this subject that Christians should carefully deal with the it. At the same time, Christians are called to conform to the word of God, the Bible and not to the word

of man. With pride, Christians have confessed the five solas since the Reformation: Sola Fide (by faith alone), Sola Grace (by God's grace alone), Sola Scripture (The Bible alone), Solus Christus (by Jesus Christ alone), Soli Gloria Deo (to the honour of God alone). These are the five pillars of the Protestant churches (regarded as an unity since the beginning of the twentieth century). Sola Scripture is especially important for all ecclesiastical discussions (or discussions that concern the church). When, for example, a discussion arises about Jesus' sacrifice and whether His sacrifice was enough to save us, then, as Christians, we should adhere to the Bible. In this example we go to Hebrews, and while reading it forming our theology.

Back to the Nashville declaration. The emotions are running high, outside as well as inside the church walls. Just some statements from brothers and sisters in Christ on social media:

"Sometimes I am ashamed to be a Christian"

"Congratulations Christians! You have become who you love to follow, the Pharisees."

"I am ashamed of the hypocritical Christians who sign this declaration."

"This is not love!"

"Jesus cries because of your heartless statement."

Excuse me? But where are the substantive arguments? The people who wrote the Nashville declaration have done so in agreement with the Bible. The Bible, this book of which, for centuries, Christians have said that it has the final say on matters. Apparently it is no longer permitted to argue from the Bible. A much heralded sound is: "We should not beat each other over the head with the Bible, that is not love!" Could it be that this slogan is a hidden excuse for inadequate knowledge? Studying the Bible is not a favourite leisure activity of some Christians. Many do not like to admit this and so, during discussions, the mouths are gagged with an emotional argument: "It is hurtful and therefore unloving", "That is low, to try to win the argument by quoting the Bible", "There he or she comes with the Bible, are you incapable to think for yourself?" This article does not lend itself to discuss or even critically examine the aforementioned comments on social media. We merely included it here to indicate how intense the discussion is.

The intention of the declaration is by no means *against* people (of whatever group). On the contrary, Christ calls us to love our neighbour as ourself! Those who recognize a homosexual orientation in themselves or struggle with their sexuality should not be labelled as *sick* (something that, according to various media, is clearly stated in the declaration) as that would not do justice to the biblical doctrine. The declaration does not mention that we are dealing with a sickness. Article 13 could be explained in a way to be understood that a transgender self-understanding can be cured. However, this is not what the article intended. The Bible teaches that we live in a broken world. Jesus Christ has come, died and risen again to save mankind from sin. When someone lets himself be saved by Jesus, he receives the Holy Spirit as a seal from God. The Holy Spirit wants to help the believer to live a life that is pleasing to God. This means, although difficult, that a person with a transgender self-understanding can learn, through the power of the Spirit, to accept his or her biological gender and self-understanding as male or female. Accepting is *not* the same as curing a disease. It is therefore a pity that Christians fight each other so bitterly over this statement—a statement that has always been part of ecclesiastical teaching¹. The big difference now is that the

doctrine is written down and can be read by everyone. That was also the case, but now, in the time of the internet, it is easily available to everyone. As Christians, we can not and should not let our opinions depend on the spirit of the time. God has given us His word. His word is our foundation. His words are not popular but this should not surprise us. The message of the Bible is seen as intolerant. The latter comes from the fact that the Author of the Bible pretends to be the only way and truth and that no one can come to God except by Him. Let's stay close to His word and let's reason together with His word as our starting point.

For the time being, this is what Apologeet.nl has to say about this statement: Apologeet.nl supports this statement because the statement expresses the biblical viewpoint of marriage and sexuality the way it is. Apologeet.nl is *not anti* LGBTI+ or whatever other names there are for different groups. On the contrary! Apologeet.nl calls on Christians to love their neighbour as themselves. At the same time, Apologeet.nl believes that sin in any form can never be brushed under the carpet in the name of love. God loves the world! It is because of His love that He sent His Son to save people from their sins. This salvation is for everyone, regardless of colour, origin, orientation, gender. Everyone should be welcome in the church of Christ, but the church of Christ can not be quiet about sin. Sin, in every form, stands in the way of a rich and fruitful life that is pleasing to God.

Below is the English version of the Nashville Declaration²

The Dutch version gives a postscript to the declaration. This postscript can be viewed on the Dutch page of this article:

<https://www.apologeet.nl/nl/nashville-declaration/>

Note that is written in the Dutch language.

[Downloadable pdf document.](#)

Nashville Statement

*“Know that the LORD Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves...”*

-Psalm 100:3

Preamble

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God's design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God's beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual's autonomous

preferences. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God's good design for his creatures is thus replaced by the path of short-sighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonour God.

This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity, and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage from Jesus, and unashamedly proclaim his way as the way of life? Will she maintain her clear, counter-cultural witness to a world that seems bent on ruin?

We are persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female. Christian Scripture teaches that there is but one God who alone is Creator and Lord of all. To him alone, every person owes glad-hearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise, and total allegiance. This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves. To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for he made us for himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing him who made us. We did not make ourselves. We are not our own. Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be.

We believe that God's design for his creation and his way of salvation serve to bring him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good. God's good plan provides us with the greatest freedom. Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it in overflowing measure. He is for us and not against us. Therefore, in the hope of serving Christ's church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church.

WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

Article 3

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female.

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

Article 5

WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God's design for self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.

Article 6

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

Article 7

WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption.

Article 8

WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God's original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

Article 9

WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality— a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality.

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behaviour.

Article 10

WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

Article 11

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonour God's design of his image-bearers as male and female.

Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

Article 13

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender self-conceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God's revealed will.

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ's death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Saviour, Lord, and supreme treasure.

WE DENY that the Lord's arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.

Scripture References

Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-24; Ex. 20:14; 20:17; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 5:18, 21; 22:5; Richt. 19:22; 2 Sam. 11:1-12:15; Job 31:1; Ps. 51:1-19; Spr. 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27; Jes. 59:1; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 5:27-30; 19:4-6, 8-9, 12; Hand. 15:20, 29; Rom. 1:26-27; 1:32; 1 Kor. 6:9-11, 18-20; 7:1-7;

2 Kor. 5:17; Gal. 5:24; Ef. 4:15, 20–24; 5:31–32; Kol. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; 1 Tim. 1:9–10, 15; 2 Tim. 2:22; Titus 2:11-12; Heb. 13:4; Jak. 1:14–15; 1 Pet. 2:11; Judas 7.

Scripture texts are not a part of the original document but have been added subsequently for reference.

1. Walter A. Elwell (ed.) *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Baker Book House Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984. pp.693-695.
2. Nashville-Statement (2019) Available from: <<https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement?>> [Accessed 9 January 2019], text Anglicised by Jurgen Hofmann.