

Committee on Theology

Standing Committee Report 35th General Assembly

The Standing Committee on Theology convened at 3:18 p.m. on Thursday, June 25, 2015 and met once. Chairman TE Tony Stiff opened the meeting with prayer. RE Carleton Smith served as Clerk for the committee.

The Chair granted privilege of the floor to several visiting commissioners and recognized the presence of four: Moderator TE Mike Moses, TE Matt Brown, TE Zachery Hopkins and Mid-Atlantic Stated Clerk Howard Shockley.

The Committee assigned review of Permanent Committee Minutes to TE Karyn Cartier, TE Kirk Bottomly and RE Ray Sawmiller.

A. Business Referred to Committee:

1. **Recommendation #55**
2. **Recommendation #56**
3. **Overture 15-B**
4. **Minutes** of the Permanent Committee

B. Recommendations:

1. That **Recommendation #55 [THEO-1]** from the Committee on Theology **be adopted as amended**, “that the 35th General Assembly (2015) direct the General Assembly Moderator to appoint a Special Committee to:
 - a. Review ~~and update~~ the Position Paper on Homosexuality,
 - b. Review ~~and update~~ the Position Paper on the Sanctity of Marriage,
 - c. **Draft an expansion** of the Position Paper on the Sanctity of Marriage to include **revisions** of the Position Paper on Homosexuality, a section on biblical singleness and other appropriate topics, and
 - d. Report back to the 36th General Assembly (2016)

Committee Comments and Rationale: overall the Committee considered that the current position papers on homosexuality and sanctity of marriage need revisions. Discussions of sexuality properly begin with the Biblical definition of marriage, and should be addressed in that context. As a result, the committee recommends that the position paper on homosexuality be revised and placed within a revised sanctity of marriage position paper addressing other like items like singleness. The special committee will report back to the 36th General Assembly (2016).

2. That **Recommendation #56 [THEO-2]** from the Committee on Theology, “that the finding of the Permanent Theology Committee regarding statements on the Sabbath in the **Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms** and the EPC *Book of Worship*” **be adopted:**

“When a Presbytery grants an exception to the **Westminster Confession of Faith** 21-8, it is acting well within the bounds of the EPC *Book of Worship* 2-2. Such an exception is consistent with our *Book of Worship* and does not make it difficult for Teaching Elders to take a vow to submit to the government and discipline of the EPC with integrity. Therefore, the Committee sees no need to amend the documents as suggested by the reference of the Theology standing committee of the 34th General Assembly (2014).” (see Attachment THEO-A for the constitutional texts)

Committee Comments: Standing Theology Committee concurred with the Permanent Theology Committee that when a Presbytery grants an exception to the **Westminster Confession of Faith** 21-8, it is acting well within the bounds of the EPC *Book of Worship* 2-2 and approved their recommendation with unanimous consent.

3. That **Overture 15-B** from the Rivers and Lakes Presbytery (*see Commissioner Handbook p. 21-23*), “that the Assembly create a study committee to examine and report on the Evangelical Presbyterian Church’s understanding of the Regulative Principle of Worship in our Reformed and Confessional heritage, and its application thereunto . . .” **not be adopted**.

Committee Comments and Rationale: The Standing Theology Committee had TE Zachery Hopkins and Mid-Atlantic Stated Clerk Howard Shockley present to speak to this Ascending Overture. The majority had concerns that the Ascending Overture did not reflect the culture or approach of the EPC toward the Regulative Principle of Worship. Because of these concerns, the Standing Theology Committee does not recommend adoption of the Ascending Overture by the General Assembly.

4. That the **Minutes** of the Permanent Committee dated January 29, 2015 and February 5, 2015 **be approved with minor notations**.

C. Additional Recommendations from the Standing Committee:

1. Per *Rules for Assembly* 9-6, the Committee voted to place the following eligible recommendation(s) on an omnibus consent motion:
 - **Recommendation #56 [THEO-2]**
 - **Minutes** of the Permanent Committee

The Standing Committee commends the members of the Permanent Committee on Theology for their good work during the past year.

The Committee moved to adjourn at 5:00 p.m. and RE Carleton Smith closed the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

_____, Chairman
TE Tony Stiff

_____, Clerk
RE Carleton Smith

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