

HUMAN SEXUALITY

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Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality

A. *Materials*

1. Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality Report, pp. 313-487
2. Council of Delegates Report (section II, A, 9, including Appendix A), pp. 38, 57-71
3. 73 Overtures and Communications, Deferred Agendas 2020-2021, Agenda 2022 and Supplements

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod recommend the HSR to the churches as providing a useful summary of biblical teaching regarding human sexuality.

Grounds:

- a. The report is consistent with Scripture.
 - b. The report is consistent with earlier Synodical reports on the interpretation of Scripture, including “Infallibility and Inspiration” (1961), the “Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority” (1972).
 - c. The report is consistent with shared convictions of the majority of Christian traditions and denominations historically and globally.
2. That synod affirm that “unchastity” in the Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 108 encompasses adultery, premarital sex, extra-marital sex, polyamory, pornography and homosexual sex, all of which violate the Seventh Commandment. In so doing, synod declares this affirmation “an interpretation of [a] confession” (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 603). Therefore, this interpretation has confessional status.

Grounds:

- a. “When a synodical pronouncement is set forth as an interpretation of the confession, this is its use and function” (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 603).
- b. We discern the need to call the church to radical obedience for chaste living.
- c. This is consistent with the intent of Recommendation D in the HSR.
- d. This action is consistent with prior synodical decisions regarding human sexuality (Report 42: Committee to Study Homosexuality, *Acts of Synod 1973*, pp 609-633).
- e. This action is grounded in a Reformed approach to the authority and inspiration of Scripture as expressed in “Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority” (1972).
- f. This reflects the shared perspectives of the majority of the Christian traditions and denominations historically and globally.
- g. The advisory committee chose to clarify the language of the HSR committee’s Recommendation D because of the confusion expressed by several of the

overtures received over the scope of the confessional status of this interpretation of the Heidelberg Catechism.

3. That synod add a footnote to Q. and A. 108 of the Heidelberg Catechism with regard to “unchastity,” and that synod direct the executive director to consult with historical theologians and denominational staff for the language, ensuring that this footnote is consistent with Recommendation 7.

Grounds:

- a. This addition is warranted to establish clarity in what the Heidelberg Catechism teaches and puts this teaching into the hands of the churches.
 - b. There is precedent for adding a clarifying footnote to the confessions (e.g., the footnote included with Heidelberg Catechism QA 80 (*Acts of Synod 2006*, 710-711)).
4. That synod affirm that “unchastity” in the Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 108 also encompasses “sexual violence within and outside of covenantal marriage.” The complete sentence would thus read, “‘unchastity’ in the Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 108 encompasses adultery, premarital sex, extra-marital sex, sexual violence within and outside of covenantal marriage, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex, all of which violate the Seventh Commandment.”

Observation: While members of the minority report were unable to agree in full with this recommendation, they do affirm the intent of including sexual violence in the Seventh Commandment.

Grounds:

- a. Scriptural prohibitions against sexual immorality warn against wronging or taking advantage of anyone: e.g., “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister” (I Thess. 4:3-6).
- b. Concern over the weighty sin of sexual violence has been affirmed by Synod in its decisions to establish, instruct, and affirm the work of the Safe Church office--originally called Abuse Prevention (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 178-81, 555-65, and several subsequent Acts of Synod), adding ministries focused on sexual violence to the approved list of offerings, and its actions on judicial code matters over several years.
- c. Concern over sexual violence and abuse within and outside of marriage was identified as an urgent matter by several entries in the *Agenda for Synod 2022*, including:
 - references in Agency Reports: pp. 92, 108, 110, 217, 234, 238, 239, 242
 - references in the Human Sexuality Report: pp. 319, 332, 352, 354, 355, 356, 358, 362-369, 375, 397, 403, 410, 425, 428, 443, 445
 - Overtures 36, 52
 - Several poignant stories shared by members of the CRCNA included within overtures and communications
- d. Concern about sexual violence is consistent with the theology of the body in HSR (esp. section 15)

- e. Sexual violence within and outside of covenantal marriage is a grievous matter, causing devastating trauma and impairing the witness of the church.
5. That synod declare that Church Order 69-c is to be interpreted in the light of the biblical evidence laid out in this report.

Grounds: A change in the text of Church Order 69-c is not necessary.

6. That synod declare these recommendations to be its answer to the following overtures received:
- a. Recommendation 1: Overtures 18-22, 26, 27-29 (*Deferred Agenda for 2021*), 14-19, 20-24, 35, 36, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 51, 55, 56 (*Agenda for Synod 2022*) and 57 (*Agenda for Synod Supplement 2022*).
 - b. Recommendation 2: Overtures 21, 24-29 (*Deferred Agenda for Synod 2021*), 20-21, 25-35, 37, 38, 39, 49, 50, 55 (*Agenda for Synod 2022*)
 - c. Recommendation 5: Overtures 24-29 (*Deferred Agenda of Synod 2021*) and 23, 36 and 37, 56 (*Agenda for Synod 2022*)

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