

Church of the Redeemer – Los Lunas, NM

Amendments to the London Baptist Confession of 1689

Chapter II: Of God and of the Holy Trinity

Section 1

- “a most pure spirit”:

We prefer instead “is spirit.” A better translation of John 4:24 being “God is spirit.” We are not denying that God is absolutely pure, but we do not like the use of the indefinite article “a” before “spirit,” since it is not the best understanding of the Greek construction. The Greek construction in John 4:24 is the same as in John 1:1, which is properly translated as “the Word was God.”

- “without....passions”:

By this wording we do not intend it to say God is without emotions.

Chapter IV: Of Creation

Section 1

- “in the space of six days”:

By this we mean literal solar days.

Chapter XV: Of Repentance Unto Life and Salvation

Section 1

- “at riper years”:

A better statement of repentance would remove “at riper years.”

Chapter XIX: Of the Law of God

Section 2

- “The same law”:

Jesus’ twofold summation of the Law in Matthew 22:37-40 is simply this, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” This is the Law which is universally and eternally known to all (cf. Romans 1:18-25).

Section 3

- It is best not to divide the Law into the categories of ceremonial, civil, and moral, but rather as the shadow and substance fulfilled in Christ (Col 2:16-17; Hebrews 10:1-10).

Chapter XXII: Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day

Sections 7 & 8

- The Sabbath finds its substance in the rest that comes with believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Col 2:16-17; Rom 14:5-7; Heb 4:1-11). We believe the spirit of these sections is fulfilled in the corporate worship of the local church and the fellowship of the believers therein (Heb 10:24-25).

Chapter XXV: Of Marriage

- Please refer to the additional article which adds a needed section on divorce and remarriage.

Chapter XXVI: Of the Church

Section 4

- “the Pope of Rome....is that antichrist”: The Pope may or may not be the antichrist, but we do not deny that he is definitely opposed to Christ and His church.

Sections 8 & 9

- Biblically qualified elders appoint officers and make decisions in the church as servant leaders, as in the relationship with a husband and wife, the wife is consulted but the husband makes the final decision.

***Section 16**

- In the event that only one elder is leading the church, other elders of likeminded churches will be called in to help with the appointment process of a potential elder.

Chapter XXX: Of the Lord's Supper

Section 9

- In accordance with Acts 2:41-47, believers were baptized and then added to the church, which preceded their taking of the Lord's Supper. We believe this serves as a biblical pattern for us today. Thus there is a temporal priority in the observance of the two biblical ordinances of Christ.

Chapter XXXII: Of the Last Judgment

Eschatological Supplement for Chapter 32:

Although the current elders of the church hold to a Historic Pre-millennial position, we hope to exercise grace in considering future elder candidates that hold varying positions. We will do so with careful and prayerful consideration. The following, however, is a list of excesses to avoid in each of the three other main eschatological positions within orthodoxy. The discussion of any eschatological position should be balanced by its frequency in Scripture and the greater occurrence of more clear and central doctrines. Therefore, eschatological discussion should be a small part of a believer's dialogue in its more specific forms.

1. **Amillennialism:** One should avoid applying the non-literal hermeneutic employed in arriving at Amillennialism in other genres of biblical literature (historical, didactic, etc.). Also, one should not allow the commonly held position of Satan being "bound" to influence a less serious concern about a believer's battle against heavenly spiritual powers, as mentioned in Ephesians 6 and elsewhere. Replacement Theology is opposed to God's covenant faithfulness.
2. **Postmillennialism:** One should avoid excessive political activism, especially when taking precedence over the supremacy of the gospel in social reform. One should also realize the world is currently quite evil and shows no immediate signs of improvement. Complete Preterism bodes dangerous theological ramifications. Again, Replacement Theology is opposed to God's covenant faithfulness.
3. **Dispensationalism:** One should avoid an escapist mentality that fails to see God's use of suffering and trials positively in the experience of the church. One should also realize that Israel is still an enemy of God, and one should not treat physical unbelieving Jews as brothers.

Divorce & Remarriage

Supplement for Chapter XXV: Of Marriage

Sadly, in our day and age divorce and remarriage are more and more commonplace. Thus we believe it necessary to provide biblical clarity on this issue for the sake of Christ's church and its purity.

The Lord takes divorce very seriously, noted in both the Old and New Testaments. The best translation of Malachi 2:16 reads, "'For I hate divorce,' says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'and him who covers his garment with wrong,' says the LORD of hosts.'" In the NT, in Jesus' dialogue with the Pharisees on the issue of divorce, Jesus responds to the Pharisees by stating that the man and woman who join together in marriage are one flesh, quoting from Genesis 2:24. He follows this by saying, "What therefore God has joined together let no man separate" (Matt 19:6). Clearly then, God takes marriage and its ripping asunder in divorce very seriously, and so then should we.

There are only a few places in the NT which deal with the subject of divorce and remarriage: Matthew 5:31-32 (Luke 16:18); 19:1-12 (Mark 10:2-12); 1 Cor 7:10-11, 12-16. First, we will examine the two sections in 1 Corinthians 7, then we will move to look at the passages in Matthew.

In 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, we have the situation of a believing spouse presently married to an unbelieving spouse. This was brought about due to one spouse being converted when he or she was already married. Both the man and woman were unbelievers when they married, but after the fact, one of the couple was converted to Christ by the gospel. Thus instructions are given for the believing spouse in relation to their unbelieving partner. The believing spouse is commanded not to divorce from their unbelieving spouse as long as they consent to live with them. They are a gospel influence to their unbelieving spouse as well as to their children. But if the unbelieving spouse decides to divorce the believing spouse, then the text says to "let it be so." God has called them to peace in that situation. Therefore in this section, we see that a believing spouse is permitted to be divorced in the event that they are deserted by an unbelieving spouse. The believing spouse is not enslaved, but is at peace, and thus is "free to marry," since they are no longer bound to their unbelieving spouse (cf. 1 Cor 7:39).

The section immediately preceding 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 is verses 10-11. These two verses are directed to believers who are presently married. They are commanded not to separate or divorce. In the event a believing woman or man disobeys God's command and divorces their spouse, then the text continues and says they have two choices. The first choice is to remain unmarried. The second choice is that they can be reconciled to their believing spouse. This reconciliation would only be permissible if their former spouse did not already get married and join themselves with another person (cf. Deut 24:1-4). In this case, they are not allowed to be reconciled in marriage but "should remain unmarried."

A brief comment should be made in reference to 1 Corinthians 7:39-40. A man or woman is free to marry again if their spouse has died, but only "in the Lord."

Now, we will turn to the passages in Matthew. In Matthew 5:31-32, Jesus is referring back to Deuteronomy 24:1. The Lord Jesus shows us the correct interpretation of the passage as well as the sad consequences of divorce. Also, in these two verses, we find what is commonly referred to as "the exception clause." The parallel passages in Mark 10:2-12 and Luke 16:18 do not contain "the exception

clause.” Jesus states that there is permissible divorce in the event of ‘porneia.’ This Greek word is translated variously as “marital unfaithfulness,” “sexual immorality,” “unchastity,” or “fornication.” This is also the word used in “the exception clause” found in the extended discourse on divorce and remarriage in Matthew 19:1-12. Both passages are clear, to divorce except for porneia is to sin against God and to sin against one’s former spouse, because it leads them to commit adultery by marrying another. Thus there is only one exception for divorce provided in this passage, only in the event of porneia. We will now turn to discuss the meaning of this word below.

The Greek word porneia is a general term used for “unlawful sexual intercourse,” such as prostitution in pagan temples, unchastity, adultery, or fornication outside of monogamous marriage (BDAG Greek Lexicon). Depending on the context, porneia is interpreted more broadly or narrowly. There is presently not a consensus among Bible believing evangelicals as to the exact meaning of porneia in the Matthew accounts.

Some take the accounts in Matthew 5:30-31 and 19:1-12 with the use of porneia, to refer exclusively to the betrothal period of Jewish marriage. During the betrothal period, the man and woman were legally married according to Jewish custom, but their marriage was not yet consummated by sexual union. In this case, if the man found his future spouse guilty of sexual immorality before the marriage was consummated, then he was free to divorce his legal wife. Those who hold this position would say that once the marriage is consummated then there is not an exception for divorce. The passages to which one appeals to support the betrothal view of “the exception clause” are John 8:41, Matthew 1:18-25 with Joseph and Mary, and Deuteronomy 22:20-21. Further, they state that the terms porneia and moicheia (adultery) are distinct terms, and they opt to take porneia as exclusively meaning sexual immorality during the betrothal period in this context. Some more known scholars and pastors who hold this position are Mark Geldard, Abel Isaksson, James Montgomery Boice, and John Piper.

Others hold that what Jesus means by using the word porneia in “the exception clause,” is for sexual immorality which violates the marriage covenant, including adultery, sexual union with another while married. Many would say that Jesus uses porneia, a general term, because it correlates more closely with Deuteronomy 24:2-4. He defines further what he means by the general term porneia in the next clause by using the word moicheuo, translated as “commits adultery.” Since they are discussing the biblical view of marriage, it is best to understand the term porneia to refer to adultery, sexual relations with another who is not their spouse. Passages in the OT which support defining the general term porneia with the narrow term moicheia, “adultery,” are Jer 3:8-10 & Hosea 2:2-5a (2:4-7a LXX). Generally speaking, this is the majority position among evangelicals.

Jesus upheld the original design of God for marriage in Matthew 19:1-12. He states that marriage is still intended to last for a lifetime, since by marriage the man and the woman are joined together as one flesh. Divorce then is a perversion of God’s original design. Jesus clearly tells the Pharisees that God **does not require** divorce for porneia, but He **permits it** due to their hardness of heart. In other words, it was their selfishness and unforgiveness which led to divorce, after which it had to be further regulated by God so that it would not lead to further perversion (cf. Deut 24:1-4). Jesus states then that God permits divorce for porneia but does not require it, which went beyond the views of that day.

In the preceding passage to Matthew 19 on divorce, Jesus calls us as his followers to forgive one another “seventy times seven” (Matt 18:21-35). Since we have been forgiven ‘much’ by God in Christ, then we need to forgive those who have offended us in ‘little’ by comparison. This includes adultery. It is not the ideal for a Christian to divorce the minute they discover their spouse has committed adultery, but instead to seek to rectify the situation and to forgive their spouse. Forgiveness and reconciliation in marriage is the opposite of the hardness of heart which leads to divorce. Thus, keeping the context of Matthew 18:21-19:12 in mind, the biblical exception for divorce in this passage is only for **unrepentant** adultery. If one’s spouse commits adultery but desires to repent and be reconciled, then the Christian response is for the offended party to forgive them and to continue together until they are separated by death. Only if the offending spouse is unrepentant and unwilling to reconcile, and thus proving themselves to be an unbeliever, is the unoffending spouse free to remarry, but “only in the Lord.”

Below are the unified conclusions of the elders of Church of the Redeemer on the biblical passages on divorce and remarriage.

Affirmations by the Elders of Church of the Redeemer on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage:

On Marriage:

- 1) Marriage in the Scripture, both OT and NT, is between one man and one woman, who are committed to one another until they are separated by death (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:4-6). All other types of marriage or dissolutions of marriage, outside of what is biblically permissible, are less than God’s design for biblical marriage and are therefore sinful.
- 2) In order for the elders of Church of the Redeemer to marry a couple, and for the church facilities to be used for a marriage ceremony, we require that at least one of the couple is a member in good standing or is faithfully attending and desirous of membership. Also, they must undergo pre-marital counseling with the elder who is to marry them.
- 3) The elders of Church of the Redeemer will only marry a couple if both the man and the woman are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul is clear that a believer is only permitted to marry “in the Lord” (1 Cor 7:39; cf. 2 Cor 6:14).

On Divorce & Remarriage:

- 4) The elders of Church of the Redeemer will never counsel a couple to divorce (1 Cor 7:10-11).
- 5) In the event a believer is married to an unbeliever, the believing spouse will be commanded to stay with their unbelieving spouse, in accordance with 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 & 1 Pet 3:1-7. Only if they are deserted by their unbelieving spouse will they be free to remarry, but only “in the Lord” (compare 1 Cor 7:15 with 7:39).
- 6) In the event a person was divorced prior to their conversion to Christ, that person is free to remarry a believer, since they are now a “new creation in Christ” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).

7) If a believer is married to another believer, and they separate or divorce, then they are to seek to reconcile with their former spouse, unless they have already remarried and been joined to another. In this case, they are to “remain unmarried.” Remarriage should not be considered an option if reconciliation is still available (Matt 19:1-9; Rom 7:2-3; 1 Cor 7:10-11).

8) In the case of a divorced believer who is desirous of remarriage, the elders will examine each situation on a case by case basis with the Word of God.

9) If a believing couple is in their second marriage and recognizes that they committed adultery biblically by remarriage, then they are not to divorce, but to repent of their sin toward God, reconcile with all parties, and remain bound in marriage until they are separated by death (1 Cor 7:20, 24).

10) A potential elder or deacon who is divorced will not automatically be disqualified from the offices of elder or deacon. The circumstances will be carefully examined by the relevant biblical passages, so as to ensure that the man is currently “above reproach” (1 Tim 3:1).

In writing this article on divorce and remarriage, the author referenced the chapter entitled “Separating What God Has Joined Together: Divorce and Remarriage” in the book, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, by Andreas J. Köstenberger.