

# **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.*”<sup>38</sup> *This is the great and first commandment.*<sup>39</sup> *And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*<sup>40</sup> *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 like-minded 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 XXXI: Of the State of Man After Death and of the Resurrection of the Dead**

- Please refer to the additional article on this chapter.

## **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.

## Personal Eschatology

### **Supplement for Chapter XXXI: Of the State of Man After Death and of the Resurrection of the Dead**

The Bible clearly teaches that all will die and after that the judgment. All mankind, saved and unsaved, will face a reckoning and an eternity in accord with that reckoning: for the saved, eternity in heaven and for the unsaved, eternity in the lake of fire. Until that day of reckoning the dead will rise in two different events, one to glory and one to damnation. For the believer, blessed and holy will be this first resurrection for the second death will have no power over them (Rev. 20:4-6), but for the wicked, this second resurrection will cause their works-based hope to be proven hopelessly insufficient and they will be sent to eternal hell (Rev. 20:11-15). It is at the time of this first resurrection that Paul notes the start of a believer's immortality and incorruptibility. Therefore, it is at this point that the saved take on a glorified state whether living or already deceased at this, Christ's second return (I Cor. 15:50-58 & I Thes. 4:15-18).

Paul also speaks of the Christian's desire to be clothed (possessing a new body) and not unclothed (apart from the earthly tent that is wasting away but not clothed in glory). Therefore, Paul is declaring a hope of a glorified body and not a time apart from such in the experience of the conscious Christian (II Cor. 5:1-8). Paul then, in context of this passage in Corinthians, declares: absent from the body (this fleshly perishing tent) is present with the Lord (robed in new glorified bodies in his presence). This, of course, was the hope of the Patriarchs who sought burial not only for the purpose of bodily resurrection but also a burial in the land of promise, because they believed they would experience a resurrection into that very land as their next cogent reality (note Israel and Joseph's pleas to return their bodies to the promised land). When Jesus spoke to the thief next to him on the cross with the encouraging words, "today you will be with me in paradise," he did not mean that actual day, for Christ would remain dead for three days after uttering these words, and even after the resurrection, he assured an overjoyed Mary that he "had not yet ascended unto the Father." Therefore it is better to see this verse as a promise of this man's salvation fully achieved in his bodily resurrection in the future, an event that would seem to him as occurring that very day.

"Lazarus and the rich man" is best understood using the same hermeneutical tools one would employ for any other of Jesus' parables. Therefore it should be understood that his main point is to declare the darkness of man's heart, as they would not believe even if one rose from the dead. This declared the problem not to be with fallen man's head but rather his heart and clearly foreshadowed Jesus' own soon to be rejected resurrection, and not attempt to see the parable's intention bound up in the explanation of an afterlife. An intermediary state is well known in Greek thought, but is imposed on the New Testament; rather one should see this event occurring in the final state described in Isaiah 66:22-24. Abraham's bosom, is merely his side (culpon), and therefore is not meant to describe a holding tank



for the dead anymore than Christ's descension into the lower (earthy) parts of the earth is meant to explain a group of expectant Old Testament saints finally, as captives, receiving their heavenly reward as they are led in a triumphant train to heaven. Rather, we should note that this passage in Ephesians 4 is actually speaking of the incarnation, his exaltation, and with this his privileged position in the sight of the Father, the resulting merit bringing good gifts of offices to the church on earth.

Jesus' preaching to the dead in I Peter 4:1-6 is best understood in this light, not as preaching to the dead while dead, but rather a preaching of the gospel about Christ. This is accomplished through a Spirit empowered Noah, that preacher of righteousness, to those who at the time of the writing of I Peter were dead due to their unwillingness to turn when hearing Noah's Gospel. Therefore, they became a negative example for Peter's current audience. Throughout the Old Testament, we discover that Sheol (best defined as the grave) is a place "where" animals reside (Ps. 49:14), a place "where" men enter alive at times (Num. 16:30-33), men cannot praise God (Ps. 6:5), a place "where" his love is not declared (Ps. 88:11), and a place "where" God will not leave a believer (Ps. 16:10).

Therefore a Jewish perspective of a grave that is the holding place for a dead, incoherent, yet to be certainly raised body is very opposed to a Greek perspective of disembodied spirits waiting in limbo. It is this Jewish perspective however, that obviously flavors the New Testament perspective on death, as we see Jesus describe Lazarus' state in death, and Luke Stephen's state as sleep. This does not mean, as the heresy of soul sleep would purport, that the unsaved dead never rise, but rather that all mankind waits in the grave, unconsciously, for a resurrection either to eternal glory or eternal damnation. From the state of the dead this time of waiting is instantaneous, seemingly that very day in the case of the repentant thief hanging next to Christ. This is certainly in keeping with the anthropology of man described by Moses in Genesis 2:7, for it is only when the body is infused with the life giving breath of God that he is deemed a living (thinking and comprehending) soul. Throughout the Bible man's death is described as the spirit of man returning back to God (Ps. 146:4) meaning man's animating life essence and not his faculties. Therefore the very ability of man to think and reason is bound inextricably with his animated body. It is through an animated body, either carnal or glorified, that man is able not only to reason but also to praise, serve, and communicate.

Therefore, it is most biblical to understand all elect mankind that dies before Christ's second coming as entering the grave in a dead and unconscious state until they are raised to an immortal and incorruptible state at Christ's appearing. The rest of the dead will then await their resurrection at the great white throne judgment, from whence they will be sent to an eternal and conscious hell called by the Scriptures the lake of fire.

This position, although held by the current Elders, is not required to be held by future Elders or Elder candidates.