

1689 London Baptist Confession

Addendum for Sacred Mission Church's Articles of Faith

In issues of faith and doctrine, Sacred Mission adheres to the spirit, biblical foundation, and theological conclusions of the [1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith](#). Noting the historical nature of this document, some minor clarifications must be made in the addenda below.

A [modern translation of the 1689 LBC](#) is also available. It should be noted that, as with any historical document, the interpretation of the meaning of some parts for the original 1689 LBC are debated. Sacred Mission does not endorse the interpretation of this modern translation when it comes to the explanation of election of elders to the local church through voting. A thorough explanation of Sacred Mission's understanding of this issue is located below under *Of the Church*. This modern translation is meant to serve as a tool to better explain the majority of the original 1689 LBC.

Below are listed selected addenda to better explain Sacred Mission's doctrinal stance on theological issues relevant to the cultural context in which Sacred Mission does ministry.

Addenda

Of the Holy Scriptures

- Sacred Mission recognizes that there are differing interpretive methods of the Holy Scriptures that have emerged since the writing of the 1689 LBC. Most notable has been the interpretive method known as Dispensationalism. This is a method of Discontinuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The primary interpretive method employed by elders and teachers of Sacred Mission will be a method of Continuity. This is a view that understands The Old and New Testaments as containing the same revelation of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament holds the promises of the coming Savior, while the New Testament explains the promises fulfilled (John 5:39; Heb. 10:1).

Of Creation

- Sacred Mission recognizes that the interpretation on the time and nature of the creation events in the first two chapters of Genesis can be contentious and divisive. Therefore, recognizing that many different views meet the requirements for orthodoxy, Sacred Mission believes that the interpretation of 'day' at the time of creation may be open, but any interpretation that outright denies the order and events as untrue will be rejected.

Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof

- Chapter 6, Paragraph 1 states that God created man “upright and perfect.” While the Bible describes the creation of man as “very good” (Genesis 1:31), there is no hint that humanity was created perfect. Perfection would lead some to logically conclude that humanity would not be able to sin if created in perfection. However, humanity did fall into sin. Therefore, it is best to say that humanity was created very good rather than perfect.
- Chapter 6, Paragraph 5 uses Romans 7 as a proof text to support why the regenerate continue to sin, i.e., the normative Christian life is to sin. The elders of Sacred Mission understand the *wretched man* to, at a minimum, describe a believer attempting to live under law rather than grace or Paul expressing the futility of his life as a pharisee which was to attempt to find righteousness through legalism. We have removed this as a proof text while keeping the language of the LBC as it is true that the regenerate fail to live perfectly.

Of Free Will

- Chapter 9, Paragraph 4 again uses Romans 7 as a proof text for remaining corruption. As noted in Chapter 6, Paragraph 5, we understand that regenerate man continues to sin although no longer a slave. And as such, they must practice repentance. But we do not understand Romans 7 as a proof text of this.

Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath

- Chapter 22, Paragraphs 7 and 8 of the 1689 LBC describe how Christians ought to pursue a Sabbath rest on Sunday, the Lord’s Day. Sacred Mission has adopted a more holistic approach as articulated in D.A. Carson’s summary in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective* [\[here\]](#).

Of the Church

- Due to the standard of Continuity in interpreting the Holy Scriptures outlined above, elders of Sacred Mission will be required to uphold this standard. This will disallow prospective candidates for eldership who hold to a position of interpretive Discontinuity.
- The question of women serving the local church in the role of Deacon has been a controversial issue for some time. While the Scriptures are somewhat ambiguous on the gender of deacons in the New Testament, Sacred Mission believes the Scriptures reflect the participation of women in the office of deacon. This is due to the fact that the Greek noun for deacon, *diakonos*, is applied both in a masculine and feminine context in the New Testament. Therefore, Sacred Mission joyfully encourages women to discern the calling to this office.
- In Chapter 26, Paragraph 4 of the 1689 LBC, the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church is named the antiChrist, the man of sin, and son of perdition. Due to social, political, and

religious circumstances of the time of writing the 1689 LBC, many Protestants believed the Roman Catholic Pope to be the literal antiChrist. While Sacred Mission believes the Roman Catholic Church has exalted the Pope to an unbiblical position, this does not mean that the Pope in the 17th century, or now, is the literal antichrist. Any gospel that exalts man over God is by nature anti-Christ. The Roman Catholic Pope has in no way claimed himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

- In Chapter 26, Paragraph 8, it is stated that elders and deacons are to be chosen and set apart by the church called and gathered ... for the distinctive purpose of administering ordinances. The Elders of Sacred Mission understand the descriptive norm of Scripture for both Baptism and the Lord's Supper to be in the context of the church. It is also understood that these ordinances have some symbolic benefit for the church. Since the gathering of the Church is under the authority of the Eldership, it is understood that these ordinances should normatively be done under the authority of the Eldership with the church gathered. However, there is no text prohibiting the administration of these ordinances by a qualified person outside of the church gathered. For that reason, as circumstances dictate, it would be permitted for an individual other than an elder to baptize or administer the Lord's Supper.
- In Chapter 26, Paragraph 9 of the 1689 LBC, it is stated that men seeking the office of elder are "chosen thereunto by the common suffrage of the church itself." Deacons are, likewise, to be "chosen by the like suffrage." Many Baptists have taken this to mean that elders and deacons must be elected through a voting process by members of the local church. Sacred Mission does not believe that the use of suffrage within the 1689 LBC should be understood in such a way given a few arguments.
 - While it is difficult to discern exactly what the writers of the confession meant by their use of 'suffrage,' other texts of the period have suffrage meaning "consent" or "voice" or "help."
 - The Savoy Declaration, which is a slightly earlier document (1685) of common descent from the Westminster Confession of Faith, is the reformed document most closely associated with congregational polity. In the appended section meant for congregational polity of the declaration entitled [*The Institution of Churches, and the Order Appointed in Them by Jesus Christ*](#), Paragraph 11 matches the language of Chapter 26, Paragraph 9 of the 1689 LBC in that elders and deacons are chosen by the common suffrage of the church. However, Paragraph 12 of the appended section in Savoy notes: "The essence of this call of a pastor, teacher or elder unto office, consists in the election of the church, together with his acceptance of it, and separation by fasting and prayer." While Savoy clearly notes the election of elders through methods of congregational voting, the 1689 LBC makes no such argument.
 - Given that Sacred Mission does not believe the Biblical evidence supports congregational voting for the offices of ministry (see Section 8, Parts 2 and 3), and that the context of suffrage at the time of the writing of the 1689 Confession more likely meant congregational affirmation than voting, Sacred Mission upholds the idea of Chapter 26, Paragraph 9 of the 1689 LBC to mean that elders and deacons should be appointed by prayer and affirmation and not through voting.

- In Chapter 26, Paragraph 10, it is stated that all pastors are to give constant attention to the service of Christ in his churches. It continues to state that these should earn their living by the Gospel. The Elders of Sacred Mission concur with the notion that those Pastors called to the full-time work of the church should not suffer financial hardship; it is also understood that not all Pastors are called to this and it is permissible for some to be employed outside of the church while still serving as Pastor.

Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

- Sacred Mission believes that the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, both appointed by the Lord Jesus, are not merely dead practices meant to be performed by duty, but also serve as signs that communicate a spiritual relation or communion between the sign and the thing signified (Mat 26:27-28; Tts 3:5). The ordinances are a means of grace towards the Church. These duties can be mutually referred to as ordinances or sacraments.
- The grace that is communicated by these ordinances or sacraments is not granted by any power within them, nor is the efficacy of the ordinance or sacrament based on the spiritual piety or intention of the person who administers these sacred practices. This grace is only established through the work of the Holy Spirit (Mat 3:11; 1 Cor 12:13) and the institution of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mat 26:27-28; 28:19-20).

Of the Last Judgment (Eschatology)

- Sacred Mission recognizes there are numerous views orthodox Christians hold regarding different elements to understanding the end times. Some of these elements are: understanding of biblical covenants, interpretive Continuity between the Old Testament and New Testament, timing of eschatological events, and understanding of the composition of the Church and Israel. As stated above, elders of Sacred Mission hold to an interpretive view on Continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Because of this requirement for eldership, eschatological views that promote Discontinuity between the two testaments (Dispensationalism) will be generally avoided in promotion within Sacred Mission except for informational/teaching purposes.
- Persons who desire membership with Sacred Mission and hold views of Dispensationalism are in no way restricted from becoming members of Sacred Mission but must understand that elders of Sacred Mission will not teach from such an interpretive point of view.