

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 22.-Of lawfull Oathes and Vowes.

I. A Lawful Oath is a part of Religious Worship¹, wherein upon just occasion, the person swearing, solemnly calleth God to witness what he asserteth, or promiseth; and to Judge him according to the truth, or falshood of what he sweareth².

Question 1.—*Is a lawful oath a part of religious worship?*

Answer.—Yes. Deut. 10:20. Thus, the Quakers and Anabaptists greatly err, in condemning the use of lawful oaths and vows. Likewise, they do err who assert that all oaths are lawful regardless of the matter or manner in which they were taken. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Moses very clearly makes oath taking a matter of religious worship, Deut. 6:13. 2.) The prophet Jeremiah marks this duty of oath taking to be a religious duty, Jer. 4:2. 3.) That an oath, when duly taken, is a species of divine worship, appears from many passages of Scripture, as when Isaiah prophesies of the admission of the Assyrians and Egyptians to a participation in the covenant, he says, “In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts,” Isaiah 19:18. Swearing by the name of the Lord here means, that they will make a profession of religion. In like manner, speaking of the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom, it is said, “He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth: and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth,” Isaiah 65:16. 4.) Additionally, the prophet Isaiah notes the prevalence of oaths during the Gospel age, Isa. 45:23. 5.) The New Testament declares that we are to be followers (*lit.* imitators) of God as dear children, Eph. 5:1. But Hebrews declares that God himself confirms what he does by oath, Heb. 6:13, 17. *Cf.* Isa. 45:23; Jer. 49:13; 51:14; Amos 6:8. 6.) John, in the Revelation, beheld the mighty angel lift up his hand in an oath, Rev. 10:6. 7.) Lastly, oaths may be taken in an unlawful matter or manner, but Scripture accounts such, not a part of religious worship, but a profaning the name of God, Lev. 19:12.

Question 2.—*Ought a person upon just occasion swear, thereby calling God to witness what he asserts or promises?*

Answer.—Yes. Neh. 13:25. Moses expressly commands the people to swear by the name of Jehovah, whenever they did swear, Deut. 6:13. This surely implies that there is a right and proper time to swear. The Israelites were carefully instructed how to swear, Lev. 19:12. Oaths were appointed to be administered by Divine authority, in certain cases, Ex. 22:11; Num. 5:19. We find that the apostles also, and especially Paul, frequently appealed to God in oaths, Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:20.

Question 3.—*What is the difference between an assertory oath and a promissory oath?*

Answer.—An assertory oath is when a person swears to the facts past or present. Scripture gives us numerous examples of this type of oath taking; e.g. Gen. 24:8, 41; Num. 5:19, 21. A promissory oath is when one swears that he will perform a certain deed

¹ Deut. 10:20.

² Ex. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; 2 Cor. 1:23; 2 Chron. 6:22, 23.

or deeds in time to come. Scripture also gives numerous examples of this type of oath, e.g. Gen. 26:28; Jos. 2:17, 20.

Question 4.—*Does he who swears an oath call upon God to judge him according to the truth, or falsehood of what he swears?*

Answer.—Yes. 2 Cor. 1:23; 2 Chron. 6:22, 23. This is apparent from the following considerations: 1.) The taking of oaths is tied in the Third command to the name of God, Ex. 20:7; which name is not to be profaned by dealing falsely in matters pertaining to his name, Lev. 19:12. In fact, God has declared his judgments against those that so profane his name, Deut. 5:11. 2.) The Scriptures hold forth the link between the oath and the calling upon God to judge, 1 Kings 8:31, 32. 3.) Those who took the oaths recognized they exposed themselves to God's judgments, if they failed to keep the oaths, Jos. 9:20; Ezek. 17:16-19.