

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 22.-Of lawfull Oathes and Vowes.

III. Whosoever taketh an Oath, ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act; and therein to avouch nothing, but what hee is fully perswaded is the truth¹. Neither may any man bind himself by Oath to any thing but what is good and just, and what he believeth so to be, and what hee is able, and resolving to performe². Yet it is a sin, to refuse an Oath touching any thing that is good and just, being imposed by lawful Authority³.

Question 1.—*Ought whosoever takes an oath, duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act; and therein to avouch nothing, but what he is fully persuaded is the truth?*

Answer.—Yes. Ex. 20:7. An oath, being a solemn appeal to God, invoked as witness, that some statement made is true, the oath taker ought to consider the weightiness of the act, Deut. 5:11; 6:13. When used, not in giving evidence before men, but in religious exercises strictly personal, the oath is never sworn but to confirm truth. Thus, the oath prescribed for Israel on returning to the Lord was explicitly an owning of that which was true, Jer. 4:1,2. Therefore, they do err who maintain that it is a small thing or nothing to swear by the Lord God and call upon him for confirmation of some slight matter or matter of falsehood. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) God commands that men swear in truth because of who he is, Lev. 19:12. 2.) Those who do swear falsely are consumed and under the wrath of God, Jer. 5:2-4. 3.) There is a calling down of the wrath of God upon oneself when swearing to that which is slight or false, 1 Kings 8:31,32. 4.) The very hearing of such profaneness, when concealed by the hearer is grounds for condemnation before God, Lev. 5:1; and ignorance did not relieve one of culpability, ver. 4; how much more then profane swearing? 5.) The prophet Zechariah specifically includes false oaths as matters which are hated by God, Zech. 8:17. 6.) Christ himself so far from teaching that all oaths are unlawful, indicates that God is properly appealed to in swearing, but that it is better not to swear than to swear and not perform, Matt. 5:33,34 w/ Eccl. 5:4-6.

Question 2.—*May any man bind himself by oath to any thing but what is good and just, and what he believes so to be, and what he is able, and resolving to perform?*

Answer.—No. Gen. 24:2,3,5,6,8,9. The swearing of an oath is a devotional exercise. Every act performed in holding intercourse with God is religious; and therefore this, Deut. 6:13. Thus, a man acting in a devotional frame towards God, who is good and just, Mark 10:18; Jer. 50:7; must he not in the very act of taking an oath cleave to that which is good and just? Zech. 8:17. Additionally, it is imperative that the oath taker, like those who make vows, bind himself to that which he is both able and resolved to perform, Deut. 23:21-23; Num. 30:2.

¹Ex. 20:7; Jer. 4:2.

²Gen. 24:2,3,5,6,8,9.

³Num. 5:19,21; Neh. 5:12; Ex. 22:7-11.

Question 3.—*Is it a sin, to refuse an oath touching any thing that is good and just, being imposed by lawful authority?*

Answer.—Yes. Num. 5:19,21. The purpose of an oath being the confirmation of the truth, Heb. 6:16, no oath imposed by lawful authority ought to be refused. Thus, the Anabaptists and others do err maintaining that all oaths, even those imposed by lawful authority, are to be refused. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Lawful authority is duty bound to administer justice and do good, Rom. 13:4. Tendering of oaths is one means by which these ends are achieved, Ex. 22:7-11. 2.) In a reforming state, when Jerusalem was being rebuilt, the magistrate renewed this godly imposition, Neh. 5:12.