

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 22.-Of lawfull Oathes and Vowes.

VI. It is not to be made to any Creature but to God alone¹: and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made voluntarily, out of Faith, and conscience of Duty, in way of Thankfulness for mercy received, or for the obtaining of what we want; whereby we more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties; or, to other things, so far, and so long, as they may fitly conduce thereunto².

Question 1.—*Is a religious vow to be made to God alone, and not to any other creature?*

Answer.—Yes. Ps. 76:11. Thus, the Papists err, maintaining that vows are to be made to saints departed, and to priors of monasteries and abbeyes. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because vows are a part of our gratitude and thankfulness due to God only, for his favours and mercies conferred upon us, Ps. 50:14; 66:13,14. 2.) Because we are commanded in the word to make our vows to God, and perform them. But nowhere are we appointed to make vows to saints departed, Ps. 50:14. 3.) Because God only tries and searches the heart. And it is he only that knows the sincerity of the man's mind that vows, and is able to punish such as violate, and break their vows, Deut. 23:21. 4.) Because the Lord threatens those severely, that had vowed to any other gods but to himself alone, and accuses them of very great sin, Jer. 44:25,26.

Question 2.—*Ought a vow to be made voluntarily, out of faith, and conscience of duty?*

Answer.—Yes. Deut. 23:21-23. We are left at our liberty whether we will make vows or not. Vows ought to be entered into voluntarily, and in the exercise of faith, or in dependence upon the grace of Christ for enabling us to perform them, Phil. 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:9. Faith will not only put men upon making their vows to God, but paying their vows after the mercy received, Ps. 61:5,6.

Question 3.—*Ought a vow, when made, be made in way of thankfulness for mercy received, or for obtaining of what we want?*

Answer.—Yes. Ps. 50:14. By religious vows we give glory to God, own our dependence upon him, and lay a bond upon our own souls to engage and quicken our obedience to him. Thus David, when he took God's vows upon him, *sang and gave praise*, Ps. 56:12. Our prayers for pardon and acceptance with God should be always accompanied with sincere purposes and vows of new obedience, Hos. 14:2. When Jacob was in fear and distress, he vowed, Gen. 28:20-22; and it is seasonable to make vows in times of trouble, or when we are in pursuit of any special mercy, Jon. 1:16; Ps. 66:13,14; 1 Sam. 1:11; Num. 21:1-3. Mercies in answer to prayer are to be remembered with peculiar expressions of thankfulness, Ps. 116:1. We do not acceptably praise God for our deliverance out of trouble unless we make conscience of paying the vows we made when we were in trouble, Ps. 66:13,14.

Question 4.—*Do we, by means of vowing, more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties; or, to other things, so far, and so long, as they may fitly conduce thereunto?*

¹Ps. 76:11; Jer. 44:25,26.

²Deut. 23:21-23; Ps. 50:14; Gen. 28:20-22; 1 Sam. 1:11; Ps. 66:13,14; 132:2-5.

Answer.—Yes. Ps. 66:13,14; 132:2-5. Persons may bind themselves by a vow, either to necessary duties or to other things not expressly required, so far and so long as they may be conducive to the better performance of these duties. Our occasional vows concerning that which before was *in our own power*, Acts 5:4, when they are made, are bonds upon the soul, Num. 30:1,2. But no man may vow to do anything which is either unlawful or which is not in his own power, and for the performance of which he has no promise of ability from God. A vow has an intrinsic obligation, distinct from the obligation of the law of God. In the law God *binds us* by his authoritative command; in a vow, we *bind ourselves* by our own voluntary engagement, Deut. 23:21; Eccl. 5:4; Ps. 50:14; 76:11.