



Of Lawful Oaths and Vows | 2/5/23 1689 Confession, Chapter 23, Part 2

23:3: Our Considerations in Taking an Oaths

Whoever takes an oath authorized by the Word of God should consider with due gravity the seriousness of such a weighty act and to affirm nothing in it except what one knows to be true. For the Lord is provoked by ill-advised, false, and empty oaths, and because of them this land mourns.

- The seriousness of oaths demands truthfulness (cf. Ps 15:4)
- We should only swear to what we know to be true
- Can we make an oath to commit sin? **Acts 23:12**, cf. Judges 11:29ff
- The Lord is provoked by false oaths (**Leviticus 19:12**)
- Because of false oaths this land mourns (cf Jer. 23:10)

23:4 : Sincerity in Oaths

An oath is to be expressed in the plain and ordinary meaning of the words, without any ambiguity or mental reservation.

- Oaths are to be taken with sincerity (**Psalm 24:3–4**)

23:5: Vows and Their Rightful Use

A vow must not be made to any creature but to God alone. Vows should be made and performed with the most conscientious care and faithfulness....

- Vows are made to God alone. (cf. Numbers 30:2)
- Perform a vow with vigilance and faithfulness.
 - **Deuteronomy 23:21–23** (cf. Psalm 76:11)

- Examples of Vows
 - Gen 28:20-22; Ps 56:12-13

...However, Roman Catholic monastical vows of perpetual single life, professed poverty, and obedience to monastic rules, are by no means steps to higher perfection. Instead, they are superstitious and sinful snares in which Christians may not entangle themselves.

- Historical context: Roman Catholic Monastic Vows
- Protestants strongly rejected these types of vows.
- Don't take superstitious vows

Next Steps

1. Why can't we make an oath to commit sin?
2. What kind of language should a sincere oath taker use? What kind of language should that person avoid?
3. What is the difference between an oath and a vow?
4. Why did Protestants reject Catholic monastic vows? How might we today fall into superstitious vows?