

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 22.-Of lawfull Oathes and Vowes.

II. The Name of God only, is that by which men ought to sweare; and, therein it is to be used with all holy fear and reverence¹. Therefore, to swear vainly, or rashly, by that glorious and dreadfull name; or, to swear at all, by any other thing, is sinfull, and to be abhorred². Yet, as in matters of weight and moment, an Oath is warranted by the Word of God, under the New Testament, as well as under the old³; so, a lawful Oath, being imposed by lawful Authoritie, in such matters ought to be taken⁴.

Question 1.—*Is the name of God that only by which men ought to swear?*

Answer.—Yes. Deut. 6:13. So then, the Papists err, who, in their swearing join with their calling upon the name of God, the calling on saints departed and their relics. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because swearing is a part of divine worship, which is only due to God, Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Isa. 65:16. 2.) Because God only is the judge of hidden and secret truth; and the avenger to take vengeance on them that do not swear in truth. Therefore he only is to be called on as witness of these things which are asserted and promised; which was the practice of the apostle Paul, Rom. 9:1; Phil. 1:8. 3.) Because God condemns swearing by them that are no gods, Jer. 5:7.

Question 2.—*Is swearing vainly or rashly, by that glorious and dreadful name of God; or to swear at all by any other thing, sinful and to be abhorred?*

Answer.—Yes. Ex. 20:7; Jer. 5:7; Matt. 5:34,37; Jas. 5:12. Thus do they show themselves wicked and profane who do such vain and rash swearing. They are exposed in their iniquity because an oath rightly taken is an act of religion, whereby we glorify God and adore his attributes. This becomes clear if we consider: 1.) We thereby solemnly acknowledge his being and existence. 2.) We acknowledge his ubiquity—that he is present in all places, and in all times, and within our hearing, Ps. 139:7. 3.) We acknowledge his omniscience, that he is the searcher of the heart, Acts 15:8. 4.) We acknowledge his truth and reality: he is a witness brought into the court that cannot lie, nor be imposed upon, Gal. 6:7. 5.) We acknowledge his supremacy over all creatures, for verily men swear by the greater, Heb. 6:16. 6.) We acknowledge his vindictive justice, as he is the revenger of perjury. 7.) We acknowledge his providence, and fatherly care of mankind, owning the cause of righteousness. Thus, to swear vainly or rashly is among the highest handed sins among men.

Additionally, consider the case of Abraham, the father of the faithful, who would not give his servant an oath rashly, Gen. 24:2,3,9. Likewise, the example of Jacob, who made a covenant with, and swore to his uncle Laban, by the fear of his father Isaac, Gen. 31:53.

¹Deut. 6:13.

²Ex. 20:7; Jer. 5:7; Matt. 5:34,37; Jas. 5:12.

³Heb. 6:16; 2 Cor. 1:23; Isa. 65:16.

⁴1 Kings 8:31; Neh. 13:25; Ezra 10:5.

Question 3.— *Is an oath warranted by the word of God under the New Testament, as well as under the Old in matters of weight and moment?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 Thess. 5:27. Thus the Quakers and Anabaptists err who maintain there is no lawful use of an oath under the New Testament. Likewise, the Papists err, who make it a degree of perfection to abstain from all oaths. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) From Isaiah 65:16. Where it is promised under the time of the Gospel, that the nations, to be converted to Christ, shall swear by the name of God, as is clear also from Jer. 4:2. 2.) Because the calling upon the name of God with due fear and reverence in swearing, is commanded in the third command, as the profanation of his name is forbidden, Ex. 20:7; but Christ came not to abolish the moral law, Matt. 5:17,18. 3.) From the approved examples of the saints in the New Testament, 2 Cor. 1:18,23; 11:11; 12:19; Gal. 1:20; Rom. 1:9; 9:1; Rev. 10:6. 4.) Because the end of an oath is approved of God, and is in all ages necessary to all men, being the end of all controversy, Heb. 6:16.

Question 4.— *Should a lawful oath, imposed by lawful authority, in such matters of weight and moment to be taken?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 Kings 8:31; Neh. 13:25; Ezra 10:5. Oath taking being a matter of the moral law, the examples of the saints before the giving of the Mosaic, both judicial or ceremonial, laws, confirm. 1.) Abraham swore to Abimelech that he would not deal falsely with him, Gen. 21:23,24. 2.) A king of the same name desired that an oath might be between Isaac and him; and they swore one to another, Gen. 26:31. 3.) In like manner, Jacob swore to Laban, Gen. 31:53. 4.) So too, Joseph swore to his father, Gen. 47:31.