

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 24.-Of Marriage, and Divorce.

III. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment, to give their consent¹. Yet, is it the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord²: And therefore such as profess the true reformed Religion, should not marry with Infidels, Papists, or other Idolaters: Neither should such as are godly, be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are notoriously wicked in their life, or maintain damnable Heresies³.

Question 1.—*Is it lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment to give their consent?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 Cor. 7:36-38; Gen. 24:57,58. The Roman Church allows that marriage is lawful for the great mass of men as a concession to the weakness of the flesh, but maintains that a life of celibacy is both meritorious and more conducive to spiritual elevation. Hence they say a life of celibacy is recommended by Christ, Matt. 19:10–12, as one of his evangelical counsels, by the observance of which supererogatory merit may be attained; and hence the Roman Church imposes it as a universal and imperative obligation upon its clergy. However, the Popish church does err, forbidding and discharging marriages to their church men. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because the marriage bed is honourable among all men, and the bed undefiled, Heb. 13:4. 2.) Because the apostle commands, for avoiding fornication every man to have his own wife, and every woman to have her own husband, 1 Cor. 7:2. 3.) Because the apostle reckons up the forbidding of marriage, among the doctrines of devils, 1 Tim. 4:3. 4.) Because the bishop must be the husband of one wife, 1 Tim. 3:2,4; Tit. 1:6. 5.) Because the apostle reckons over the qualifications which are requisite for bishops' wives, 1 Tim. 3:11. 6.) Because it can be gathered from Scripture, that some of the apostles, and other ministers of the gospel have been married persons. Concerning Peter, the matter is evident, Matt. 8:14; Mark 1:30. And we read that Philip the evangelist had four daughters, all of them prophetesses, Acts 21:9. And does the apostle not say that he had power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas, 1 Cor. 9:5.

Question 2.—*What is the true meaning of that which is recommended by Christ in the Gospel?*

Answer.—The true meaning of what is taught by our Savior, Matt. 19:10–12, and by Paul, is, that the unmarried are exposed to less worldly care than the married; therefore, that in times of persecution and public danger, and with reference to some special kind of service to which God providentially calls a man, it may be both his interest and his duty not to marry, 1 Cor. 7:7,20-27,32,33.

Question 3.—*Is it the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord?*

¹Heb. 13:4; 1 Tim. 4:3; 1 Cor. 7:36-38; Gen. 24:57,58.

²1 Cor. 7:39.

³Gen. 34:14; Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:3,4; 1 Kings 11:4; Neh. 13:25-27; Mal. 2:11,12; 2 Cor. 6:14.

Answer.—Yes. 1 Cor. 7:39. Only of those who marry only in the Lord may it be said that they are heirs together of the grace of life (*i.e.*, eternal life), 1 Pet. 3:7.

Question 4.—*Should they who profess the true Reformed religion, marry with Infidels, Papists, or other Idolaters; or, should such as are godly, be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are notoriously wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresies?*

Answer.—No. Neh. 13:25-27; 2 Cor. 6:14. The principle that professors of the true religion should not intermarry with professors of a false religion, and that true believers should not intermarry with the ungodly, touches not that which is essential to the validity of marriage, but that which belongs to its perfection, and brings in question not the reality of the marriage when formed, but the propriety of forming it. Paul teaches that if one of the parties of a previous marriage becomes a Christian, the other remaining a heathen, the Christian brother or sister remains bound by the marriage-tie as before, unless the heathen party voluntarily abandon them, and so dissolve the relation, when the Christian is no longer bound, 1 Cor. 7:12-15. On the same principle, the marriages at present so common between the converted and the unconverted are unquestionably valid, and to be respected as such. However, those professors greatly err who seek not to marry only in the Lord. They are rebuked by the following considerations: 1.) True Christians owe it both to Christ and to their own souls not to contract such alliances. The Scriptures condemn such both implicitly and explicitly, Gen. 34:14; Ex. 34:16. 2.) The effects of such unions are often spiritually destructive, Deut. 7:3,4; 1 Kings 11:4. For how can one who possesses the mind and the spirit of Christ, whose affections are as a practical fact set upon things above, whose motives, aims and aspirations are heavenly, become one flesh and heart, dwell in the most intimate of all possible communion, with a soul dead in trespasses and sins? 3.) Spiritual apostasy is represented as entering into such unions with unbelievers, Mal. 2:11,12. If such a union is formed, it must follow, either that the sacred ordinance of marriage is desecrated by a union of bodies where there is no union of hearts, or in the intimate fellowship of soul with soul the believer will be greatly depressed in his inward spiritual life, and greatly hindered in his attempts to serve his Master in the world.