

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 24.-Of Marriage, and Divorce.

VI. Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments, unduely to put asunder those whom God hath joyned together in marriage: yet, nothing but Adultery, or such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied, by the Church, or Civil Magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage¹: Wherein, a publique, and orderly course of Proceeding, is to be observed; And, the persons concerned in it, not left to their own wills and discretion, in their own case².

Question 1.—*Is nothing but adultery, or such willful desertion, as can no way be remedied by the church, or civil magistrate, a sufficient cause of dissolving the bond of marriage?*

Answer.—Yes. Matt. 19:8, 9; 1 Cor. 7:15; Matt. 19:6. Therefore do they err, who maintain that a man is free to put away his wife whenever it pleases him. Such are confuted by the following reasons: 1.) Because the God of Israel hates putting away, Mal. 2:16. 2.) Because, whosoever puts away his wife, except in case of fornication, he causes her to commit adultery, Matt. 5:32. 3.) Because the apostle says that if you are bound to a wife that you ought not seek to be loosed, 1 Cor. 7:27.

Likewise, the Papists do err, maintaining that there are other causes of divorce, than adultery and willful desertion.

They first tell us, that marriage contracted, and not consummated, may be dissolved by a monastic vow of a perpetual single life.

They tell us, secondly, that infidelity, and heresy are just causes of divorce. Which the Anabaptists maintain as well.

Also, that coldness, perpetual impotency, and such like fancies are causes.

They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because Christ says, that man is not to seek to put asunder that which God has joined together, Matt. 19:6. But marriage contracted, and ratified, though not consummated, is made by God, therefore it cannot be dissolved by man, Gen. 2:18. Neither ought a man once married, to turn a monk, for a single life is only fit for those that have the gift of continency, for God commands them that have it not, to marry, 1 Cor. 7:9. 2.) Neither can infidelity, or heresy be a ground for divorce, as is clear from 1 Cor. 7:12, 13.

The only causes upon which it is lawful to grant a divorce are: 1.) adultery; this is explicitly allowed by Christ, Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:9; and 2.) willful, causeless, and incurable desertion. This is allowed by Paul to the Christian husband or wife deserted by their heathen partner, 1 Cor. 7:15, 16. The reason in the case is also self-evident, since such desertion, being total and incurable, makes the marriage an empty name, void of all reality, 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; and, being causeless, leaves the deserting party without remaining rights to be defended, Mark 10:11, 12.

The civil law has no authority to grant divorces upon any other grounds than those above defined as allowed by the law of God, Ps. 94:20. Whenever they do so, as is

¹ Matt. 19:8, 9; 1 Cor. 7:15; Matt. 19:6.

² Deut. 24:1-4.

constantly done in fact, the civil authorities put themselves into direct conflict with the law of God in the case, 1 Cor. 7:39. Hence all Christians and church courts are bound in such cases to disregard the judgment of the civil authority, and to regard and treat such unlawful divorces as null and void. And if the parties to a marriage unrighteously dissolved marry again, they are to be regarded and treated by those who fear God as living in those new marriages in the sin of adultery, Matt. 19:8, 9; Acts 4:19; 5:29.

Question 2.—*In the dissolving of the marriage bond, is a public, and orderly course of proceeding, to be observed; and, the persons concerned in it, not left to their own wills and discretion, in their own case?*

Answer.—Yes. Deut. 24:1-4. If the innocent party does demand the dissolution, it is not left to their own discretion in the case, but vindication of their rights must be sought at the hands of public competent authorities and, if applicable, according to the law of the land, Rom. 13:4.