

## Second London Baptist Confession of Faith Chapter 23: Of Lawful Oaths and Vows

### I. Their Definition

1. A lawful oath is an element of religious worship in which a person swearing in truth, righteousness, and judgement, solemnly calls God to witness what is sworn<sup>1</sup> and to judge the one swearing according to the truth or falsity of it.<sup>2</sup>

#### Review:

- A. What is the difference between an oath and a vow?
- B. Are oaths and vows biblical?

### II. Their Sanctity & Propriety

2. People should swear by the name of God alone and only with the utmost holy fear and reverence. Therefore to swear an empty or ill-advised oath by that glorious and awe-inspiring name, or to swear at all by anything else, is sinful and to be abhorred.<sup>3</sup> Yet in weighty and significant matters, an oath is authorized by the Word of God to confirm truth and end all conflict.<sup>4</sup> So a lawful oath should be taken when it is required by legitimate authority in such circumstances.<sup>5</sup>

- C. Why should we only swear by God's name (rather than e.g. mom's grave)?
- D. What would some examples be of oaths required by legitimate authority?

#### New Material

3. Whosoever takes an oath warranted by the Word of God, ought duly to consider the **weightiness of so solemn an act**, and therein to avouch<sup>6</sup> nothing but what he knows to be truth; for that by **rash, false, and vain oaths**, the Lord is provoked, and for them this land mourns.<sup>7</sup>

- E. What is it about oaths that make them a “weighty” and “solemn act”?
- F. Why should we only take oaths regarding what we know to be true?
- G. What is the difference between a Rash, False, or Vain oath?
- H. What is the relationship between provoking the Lord and the land mourning?

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 10:20; Jeremiah 4:2.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chronicles 6:22, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 5:34, 37; James 5:12.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 6:16; 2 Corinthians 1:23

<sup>5</sup> Nehemiah 13:25.

<sup>6</sup> Avouch: to affirm or assert.

<sup>7</sup> **Leviticus 19:12**; Jeremiah 23:10 For the land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land mourns;



# I Sunday School

4. An oath is to be taken in the **plain and common sense of the words**, without **equivocation**<sup>8</sup> or **mental reservation**.<sup>9</sup>

I. What is it about oaths that requires the plain and common sense use of words?

J. Why is all equivocation (or prevarication) forbidden?

K. What does the Confession mean by “without mental reservation” and why do you think is this important?

**Psa. 24:4** He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false **and does not swear deceitfully**.

5. A **vow**, which is not **to be made** to any creature, but **to God alone**, is to be made and performed with all religious care and faithfulness; but popish monastical vows of perpetual single life, professed poverty, and regular obedience, are so far from being degrees of higher perfection, that they are superstitious and sinful snares, in which no Christian may entangle himself.<sup>10</sup>

**Waldron:** Vows are solemn promises made to the Lord. Oaths are solemn promises made before the Lord, but to men. The purpose of the **oath** is confirmation.

The problem purpose of the **vow** is commitment.

L. Why is God ALONE the One to whom we should make vows?

It wouldn't be a chapter in the LBC without taking a swipe at Catholics.

M. What is meant by: perpetual single life, professed poverty, & regular obedience?

N. What is the alleged goal of such vow (hint: answer is stated in the paragraph)?

O. What is the LBC's estimation of such vows and what is the fruit of them?

**The half paragraph that the Baptists ought to have kept from the WC:**

**WC 22.7a:** No man may vow to do anything forbidden in the Word of God, or what would hinder any duty therein commanded, or which is not in his own power, and for the performance of which he has no promise or ability from God.

P. What do we do with sinful vows made?

We often wrongly interpret **Ps. 15:4** who swears **to his own hurt** & does not change;

**Wilhelmus A Brakel:** He must humble himself about such a vow, and the Lord is so good that He will not cause that judgment to come upon such an upright person.

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<sup>8</sup> Equivocation: the use of ambiguous language to conceal the truth or to avoid committing oneself; prevarication

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 24:4

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 76:11; Genesis 28:20-22

