

## CONFESSION OF FAITH.

### CHAPTER 22.-Of lawfull Oathes and Vowes.

V. A Vow is of the like nature with a Promissory Oath, and ought to be made with the like Religious care, and to be performed with the like faithfulness<sup>1</sup>.

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Question 1.—*Is a vow of the like nature with a promissory oath?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Isa. 19:21. The vow is a promise made to God alone, Ps. 132:2; Num. 21:2; Gen. 28:20-22. In the oath, the parties are both men, and God is invoked as a witness, *cf.* Gen. 26:28. In the vow, God is the party to whom the promise is made, Deut. 23:23. It is of like nature with an oath, because we are bound to observe them on the same grounds, Ex. 20:7—because of our obligation to truth, and because of our obligation to reverence God, Num. 30:2. This also appears in the fact that vows, by sacrifice and thanksgiving and otherwise, were paid to the Lord, Nah. 1:15.

As in the case of the oath, we have abundant Scriptural sanction for the vow, Eccl. 5:4; Ps. 76:11; and the case of Paul, Acts 18:18. Reception of either of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper involves very sacred and binding vows to God; and the same is repeated whenever in prayer, orally or in writing, we formally or informally renew our covenant promises to God. Thus a vow, as any other promise, may bind generally to loyal obedience or specially to some particular action, 1Sam. 1:11.

In only one passage of Scripture are any represented as vowing to another than God himself, Jer. 44:25,26; but there the judgments of God are threatened on them—vowing vows to the queen of heaven, as guilty of idolatry. And even some who had been idolaters, so soon as they were taught the claims of the Lord God upon their obedience, made vows unto him, Jonah 1:16.

Question 2.—*What is a promissory oath?*

*Answer.*—A promissory oath is when one swears that he will perform a certain deed or deeds in time to come. Scripture also gives numerous examples of this type of oath, *e.g.* Gen. 26:28; Jos. 2:17,20.

Question 3.—*Ought a vow to be made with like religious care as a promissory oath?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Eccl. 5:4-6. Lightly to vow on a trifling occasion is an act of profanity to God. A vow is to be made voluntarily—as the Hebrew word for *vow* denotes. The vow is sometimes made in a spontaneous effusion of gratitude; as in the case of David, when he swore unto the Lord, and vowed, after the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies, *cf.* Ps. 132:2,3 *with* 2 Sam. 7:1-3. Often it is made in order to obtain some benefit, Ps. 66:13,14. Most importantly, a vow is never made but in the exercise of covenanting. Thus, Jacob's vow made at Bethel was upon his reception of God's gracious covenant promises there tendered to him, Gen. 28:20-22. Likewise, in the case of Israel's vowing, Num. 21:2. In this manner at Hormah, they testified that they agreed to that promise of the Covenant that had been made at Sinai, and thus they made a covenant, *cf.* Ex. 34:10-12. Additionally, the words used in Scripture demonstrate that a vow or promissory oath

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<sup>1</sup>Isa. 19:21; Eccl. 5:4-6; Ps. 61:8; Ps. 66:13,14.

binds the soul, Num. 30:2. That a vow binds the soul is most manifest even in the cases of widows and divorced women, Num. 30:9. The bond is a covenant bond, Ezek. 20:37.

Question 4.—*Ought a vow to be performed with like faithfulness as a promissory oath?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Ps. 61:8; 66:13,14. Scripture commands the same faithfulness in performing a vow as it does in commanding a vow, Ps. 76:11. Because a vow is a solemn promise, made voluntarily unto God, there should be no hesitating in the performing of the vow, Deut. 23:23. In fact, there is an urgency in the commands to perform, Num. 30:2; Mal. 1:14.