

SERMON XIII.

BY THE REV. ROGER DRAKE, D.D.

WHAT DIFFERENCE IS THERE BETWEEN THE CONFLICT IN NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL PERSONS?

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.—Romans vii. 23.

THE apostle, having showed in the former chapter, that justified persons are not under the law, prosecutes and amplifies that choice privilege in this seventh chapter, which hath four parts.

PARTS OF THE CHAPTER.

1. *An allegory*, which shows there is no matching with Christ, till we be divorced from the law. (Verses 1—6.) Moses may be a good friend; but to fallen man he is ever an ill husband, “a bloody husband,” as he was to Zipporah. (Exod. iv. 25.)

2. *A complaint*, partly of the law, as an occasion of sin’s malignity, (verses 8—10,) and partly of his own estate: (1.) Before conversion, as either secure, or desperate. (Verses 9—11.) (2.) After conversion, as troublesome and vexatious. (Verses 14—24.)

3. *An apology*. (1.) For the law, as spiritual, holy, just, and good. (Verses 12, 14, 16.) (2.) For himself, as under a force, &c. (Verses 15, 17, 20, 22, 25.) The best gospel-apology against sin is, under Christ, a *fore* or *after* descent.* *This*, grace will allow for a good clearing of ourselves. (2 Cor. vii. 11.)

4. *A gratulation*. (Verse 25.) No man, especially no godly man, can, under the gospel, want matter of thanks, be his condition never so sad; since the former is not altogether hopeless, and the latter hath at present a part and interest in Christ.

COHERENCE.—My text falls under the second head. The apostle’s condition was bad before conversion, sad after conversion, truly militant, and no release from this warfare. (Eccles. viii. 8.) Christ endured the contradiction of sinners; (Heb. xii. 3;) Christians, the contradiction

* Such is the correct reading of the first edition, which, by gradual corruption, at length became, in the fourth edition, “*fore* or *after* dissent.” Our old lexicographers describe *descent*, now generally written *descent*, as “a term in Common Law, being an order or means whereby lands or tenements are derived to any man: thus, *to make one’s descent from his ancestors*, is to show how and by what means the land in question came to him from his ancestors; and this descent is either lineal or collateral.” In this view, the words, “a *fore* or *after* descent,” contain an allusion to “the first” and “the second Adam;” under the latter of whom a title to the “inheritance that is undefiled” is claimed collaterally by all believers, as “children of the promise,” in right of their elder Brother, who is himself “not ashamed to call them brethren.”—EDIT.

both of sin and sinners, and that continually. May they not well complain, as [in] Psalm cxx. 5—7, and Gen. xxv. 22?

DIVISION OF THE TEXT.—In the words, note,

I. *An act of observation.*—Godly men are great observers, especially of themselves: “I know;” (verse 18); “I find;” (verse 21); and in the text, “I see.”

II. *The matter observed:* a combat or conflict.—In which, note,

1. The *combatants or champions*,—the law of the mind, and the law of the members. The form of a being, naturalists call “a law,” (*Bacon de Formâ Calidi, Aphor. 7.*) because forms, like laws, and laws, like forms, do ordinate and constitute natural and politic bodies in their being, distinctions, and operations. Vatablus calls it, *aliam vim*, [“another force or power,”] laws, as forms, being principles of action. Grotius distinguisheth of a fourfold law: (1.) *Lex Dei*, [“the law of God,”] recorded in scripture. (2.) *Lex mentis*, [“the law of the mind,”] the judgment between things honest and dishonest. (3.) *Lex membrorum*, [“the law of the members,”] “the carnal or sensual appetite.” *Lex peccati*, [“the law of sin,”] “the custom of sinning.” To complete which heads, we must, with the leave of the learned author, add two other distinctions; namely, (1.) The law of original sin propagated by generation, which is strengthened by custom in evil, and, together with our sensual appetite depraved, makes up the law of sin. (2.) The law of sanctifying grace infused in regeneration, which completes the law of the mind.

2. The *equality of this fight* in a reciprocal opposition; sin indwelling fighting against grace indwelling and *contra Arabes castrametantem*,* there being a pitched battle between grace and corruption; in which some graces and corruptions bear the office of commanders, others, of common soldiers: this is noted in the preposition *avt*. (Compare Heb. xii. 4.)

3. The *disparity of the fight*, managed by way of “rebellion” on the part of sin, by way of loyalty and authority on the part of grace; whence Beza and Piscator render it *rebellantem*.

4. The *dubiousness of the fight*, both parties often fighting, as it were, *æquo Marte*, [“with equal prowess and success,”] sometimes one, sometimes the other, seeming to get the better, as in the battle between Israel and Amalek. (Exod. xvii. 11.)

5. The *sad event too often on the better side which is led captive.*—In which term yet there is a mixture of comfort; sin, when in triumph, acting as a tyrant, not as a lawful sovereign. The law of the mind may be overborne by, but never indents with, the law of the members; as a person enslaved by force, but not by contract; or as school-boys, in a mis-rule, may shut their master for a while out of doors, but at last he gets in, and they pay dearly for that affront. Withal, note in the text a mixture of civil and military terms to illustrate the spiritual conflict; there being a law-suit, as well as a pitched battle, between grace and corruption.

THE SCOPE OF THE TEXT.—The text is limited, by the apostle, to the

* “Pitching his tents against the Arabs.”—EDIT.

regenerate; yet may in a good and true sense be extended to the unregenerate also, in whom there is "a law of the mind;" namely, the law of reason, though not of regeneration. Yea, Porphyrius (*Περὶ Ἀποχής*, lib. i.) uses the apostle's phrase, calling it *τον νομον του νοου*. Taking, therefore, the law of the mind, and the law of the members, in a large sense, may not every one take up this complaint of the apostle? Thence note,

THE DOCTRINE.

In every man, especially in the regenerate, there is a conflict between the law of the mind and the law of the members.

THE *ὅτι*, "that it is so," appears by a threefold evidence:—

1. *By the testimony of nature speaking in [the] Heathen.*—Thus Medea:—

Video meliora, proboque:

*Deteriora sequor.**—OVIDII *Metamor.* lib. vii. 20.

So Simplicius *ad Epictetum*: *Ἀλογος ορέξις τον λογον κινησασα, (τουτ' εστιν ημας τους κατ' αυτον ουσιαμενους,)*† *και αιχμαλωτον λαβουσα.* "The irrational appetite displaces reason, &c.; and leads it captive."

2. *By testimony of scripture*; and that, (1.) As to the godly: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit," &c. (Gal. v. 17.) (2.) As to the unregenerate: instance in Herod, who was troubled by this conflict between lust and conscience; (Mark vi. 26;) yea, in the very Heathen, who, by not hearkening to conscience opposing sin in them, felt conscience accusing them for sin. (Rom. ii. 14, 15.)

3. *By every man's experience.*—Who finds not every day within himself a contest of contrary motions and inclinations? Are we not all in this point Rebekahs, big, though not with twins, yet with an Esau and a Jacob, two contrary nations struggling each with other? (Gen. xxv. 22, 23.) O that we had all her wisdom and success!

THE *διότι*, "why it is so," will appear in the explication and resolution of the special case of conscience assigned; which therefore here I pass.

PREMISALS.—Before I propound the case, let me premise some particulars preparatory, as a key of explication.

1. *As the great, so the little, world (man) is made up of contraries*:—The outward man of contrary elements, humours, health, and sickness; the inward man, of contrary principles, reason and passion, grace and corruption, conscience and sense.

2. *Man is both an actor in, and a theatre of, the greatest action and noblest conflict in the world*, though usually invisible, and therefore not so much observed. He that conquers himself, is a nobler hero than Alexander, who conquered a great part of the world. (Prov. xvi. 32.)

3. *In the state of innocency there was no conflict: in the state of glory*

* "Affection *this*, discretion *that* persuades.

I see the better, I approve it too:

The worse I follow."—SANDYS'S Translation.

† "That is, ourselves, whose very essence consists in this."—DEAN STANHOPE'S Translation.

there will be no conflict, there being no corruption to combat with grace.—In a state of minority, as in infants and fools, there is no conflict till reason begin to dawn, and with it conscience to actuate common principles against the motions of innate corruption. In a state of corruption there is no spiritual conflict, because there is no renewing grace to combat with corruption, that strong man that keeps all in peace till a stronger than he comes. (Luke xi. 21, 22.)

4. *The natural conflict is in every godly man, the spiritual conflict is in no wicked or natural man.*—This I note to allay the fears of drooping saints, who, finding a conflict between conscience and corruption, conclude they are in a state of nature, and search not for the conflict between grace and corruption. This is as if a man should conclude he is a beast, because he hath sense like a beast; not considering that he hath reason superadded, which a beast is not capable of.

5. *There is a vast difference between the natural and the spiritual conflict.*—This will appear in the resolution of the case.

6. *The mistake about these two conflicts.*—(1.) [It] undoes natural men, who, feeling a combat in themselves, fondly apprehend it to be the fight between the flesh and the spirit, and thereupon rest secure in a natural estate. (2.) It troubles regenerate persons, and that in reference both to duty and comfort; making them drive heavily, because they doubt whether they be Israelites or Egyptians.

7. *As the great wisdom of God lies in governing the great world made up of contraries, so the great wisdom of a godly man lies in governing the little world made up of like contraries.*

8. *This government lies principally in discerning these conflicting contraries, and improving their contrariety for the advantage of the outward and inward man.*—He is the wisest physician who can govern the body made up of contraries; and he is the wisest Christian who can rule his soul in the midst of contraries. In this government Christ is principal; (Psalm cx. 2;) a saint instrumental. (Hosca xi. 12.)

9. *This singular wisdom is attainable in the use of ordinary means, and that by the meanest who have grace to follow Christ's conduct:* yet not by the power of free-will or human industry, but by the bounty of free and special grace. (2 Tim. iii. 15; James i. 5; Rom. ix. 16.)

10. *It cannot be expected that any unregenerate person should understand to purpose the difference between these two conflicts; because he hath no experience of this double state, and double principle.*—No wonder, then, if such say of me, as the Jews did of the prophet, "Doth he not speak parables?" (Ezek. xx. 49.) However, for the sake of the unregenerate, (to convince them,) and for the sake of the regenerate, (to comfort them,) I shall endeavour, ploughing with Christ's heifer, to find out this great riddle. And so I come to the case, and a case of the highest concernment.

QUESTION. *Wherein doth the natural and spiritual conflict differ? or, what difference is there between the conflict in the natural and spiritual man?*

ANSWER. They differ principally in seven particulars; and,

1. *In the ground or cause of the fight; which, in the unregenerate, is,*

(1.) *Natural principles*, or the relics of God's image in the understanding. The notion of a Deity, and of loving my neighbour as myself, &c., are principles [which] cannot be razed out of any man's heart, be he never so professed an atheist; nor can these principles lie always idle, but will more or less be in action against corrupt inclinations.

(2.) *Acquired principles*, from common illumination, moral and religious education and custom. This light discovers more of sin's obliquity and danger, thereby laying on a stronger bridle of restraint, through fear, shame, &c., and adding spurs to the exercise of many parts of piety.

(3.) *The natural temper of the body*, which indisposes to some special sins, as well as to some special graces. As all souls, so original corruption in them, may be equal, yet not act equally, because of the indisposedness of bodily organs. Thus some naturally are more chaste, sober, and meek than others; and hence their temper advances the combat against the lusts that oppose the fore-mentioned virtues.

(4.) *The contrariety of one lust to another*.—Grace is uniform, and each virtue linked together in a perfect subordination; but sin is divided, and opposite to itself as well as to grace. Thus ambition says, "Spend;" covetousness says, "Spare;" revenge incites to murder; self-love restrains, for fear of an halter. Here, now, is a combat, but only between flesh and flesh, between flesh more refined, and flesh more corrupted. The best of these may be called "a counter motion," as in dust and clouds agitated by contrary winds; but not properly "a conflict or fight;" because they proceed not from a true vital principle, there being in a natural man no principle of spiritual life.

On the other hand, in the regenerate, the combat ariseth from the antipathy of two contrary natures perfectly hating each other. (Gal. v. 17.) Of all affections, as one notes well, love and hatred are first, and most uncompoundable. A godly man hates sin as God hates it, not so much for its danger as for its loathsomeness; as some creatures hate filth, so that they will rather die than defile themselves. One wolf may snarl at another; but the quarrel is not laid in their natures as it is in the wolf and lamb, which therefore cannot be reconciled. God in Paradise first sounded the trumpet to this alarm,* proclaiming an eternal war between this seed of the woman, and of the serpent. (Gen. iii. 15.) As in persons, so much more in principles, there is a mutual abomination. (Compare Psalm cxxxix. 22; Prov. xxix. 27; Psalm xcvi. 10; cxix. 128; Rom. viii. 7.) Enemies may, but enmity can never be reconciled.

2. *They differ in the object or matter of conflict*; which, in a natural man, is, (1.) Grosser evils that startle the conscience; (2.) Infamous evils that are attended with worldly fear or shame; or, (3.) Some particular evils that cross temper, education, or custom, &c.

But in spiritual persons, the matter of conflict is, (1.) Little sins, as well as great. (2.) Secret sins, as well as open. (3.) The first risings, as well as the gross acts. (4.) Sins which promise worldly safety, credit, profit, contentment, as well as those sins that threaten the contrary. (5.) In a word, all moral evil; hatred and antipathy being of the whole kind; (Psalm cxix. 128;) especially of those evils which most endanger

* Concerning this word, see the note in page 290.—EDIT.

the new man ; (Psalm xviii. 23 ;) and such as are beloved sins ; (Matt. xviii. 8, 9.)

3. *They differ in the subject of the conflict.*—In natural men, the fight is in several faculties ; reason fighting against sense and passion, or the dictate of conscience against the corrupt inclination of the will ; whence the fight is more at a distance by missile arms and velitation. But in the regenerate man, the fight is more close in the same faculty ; the wisdom of flesh and spirit counteracting, in the same understanding, the lustings of the flesh and spirit in the same will : whence the fight is, as it were, *inter triarios*, [“between veterans of approved courage,”] grace and corruption immediately ; which at first, haply, was managed by the *hastati* and *scutati*, [“the spear-men and targetiers,”] reason and interest. The former is like the fight of the soldiers of fortune, more lazy, and by way of siege ; the latter more keen and vigorous, by way of assault and onslaught,* like that of Scanderbeg, who fought with his enemies breast to breast in a box or grate.

4. *They differ in the instruments or weapons wherewith they combat.*—The natural man’s weapons are, like himself, carnal ; to wit, natural or moral reason, worldly fears or hopes, and sometimes spiritual fears or hopes, but carnalized ; namely, slavish fear, and mercenary hopes. But the regenerate man’s weapons are spiritual ; (2 Cor. x. 4 ;) to wit, gracious interest, and all the spiritual armour, especially the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit. (Eph. vi. 11—18.)

5. *They differ in the manner of the fight.*—The natural man’s combat is more mercenary ; admits of more parleys, cessations, correspondencies ; as Saul’s fight with Amalek. (1 Sam. xv. 9.) But the spiritual man, as such, fights it out to the last, and will give no quarter. The former is like the strife between wind and tide, which often come about, and are both of one side ; the latter is like the dam and the tide, that strive till one be borne down ; or like stream and tide meeting and conflicting till one hath overborne the other.

6. *They differ in the extent of the conflict, in relation to its subject and duration.*—(1.) The *extent of the subject* is double : (i.) As to the faculties ; (ii.) As to the acts. (i.) As to the faculties: the seat of war in the regenerate is every faculty, flesh and spirit being ever mixed ; as light and darkness in every point of air in the twilight. (1 Thess. v. 23.) Grace and corruption leaven the whole man ; so that, in the regenerate, there is at the same time both a civil and a foreign war ; *that* in the same faculty, *this* in one faculty against another. Contrariwise, in the unregenerate, there is usually nothing but a foreign war between several faculties, there being nothing of spiritual good in their wills and affections, to set the same faculty against itself.

(ii.) It extends also to every act of piety and charity, especially if more spiritual ; (Rom. vii. 21 ;) for which the natural man hath no conflict, but against them ; unless it be to stop the mouth of conscience enlightened, &c. Nor, indeed, doth he know experimentally what spiritual acts of piety are. But the regenerate find it by constant experience ; faith and unbelief,

* In the early editions this word is printed *onslait* ; but in the fourth it is improperly changed into *onset*.—EDIT.

humility and pride, ever opposing and counter-working each other : whence he is forced to cut his way through his enemies, and to dispute it step by step. Others may *seek*, but he *strives*, (Luke xiii. 24,) and takes the kingdom of heaven by a holy violence, (Matt. xi. 12,) in spite of spiritual enemies that waylay him within and without.

(2.) As to the *extent of duration* of the war, which, being in the regenerate irreconcilable, must needs be interminable ; like the war between the Romans and Carthaginians that was entailed to posterity ; or as fire and water will fight for ever, if together for ever. In the natural man, contrariwise, the quarrel is soon taken up ; as between the Romans and other nations ; there being not that antipathy between reason and corruption, as there is between grace and corruption.

7. *They differ in the concomitants and consequents of the fight.*—
And,

(1.) The fight in natural men may stand with the constant practice of, and living in, sin, against the light of conscience. Godly men sin more with knowledge, but wicked men more against knowledge. “He that is born of God doth not commit sin,” that is, make a trade of living and lying in known sin. (1 John iii. 9.)

(2.) The fight in the unregenerate hinders not the perfection and consummation of sin in the antecedent deliberation and purpose, in the present delight and complacency, and the following pertinacy and impenitency. Instance in Saul, Herod, Judas, and others. But the Spirit, by its conflict, breaks the power of sin in all these in the regenerate, that they can neither do good as they would, nor sin as they otherwise would. (Gal. v. 17.)

(3.) The fight in natural men seeks only the repression, not the suppression, of sin ; to lop the superfluous branches, not stub up the root ; to charm the serpent, not to break its head. But the spiritual fight seeks the full mortification and abolition of sin, (Rom. vi. 6,) (hatred seeks the destruction of its enemy, 1 Sam. xxiv. 19 ; 1 John iii. 15,) and the complete perfection of grace, though not attainable in this life. (Phil. iii. 10—14.) This for the first branch of wisdom, which teaches to discern between the natural and the spiritual conflict.

APPLICATION.

The second branch of heavenly wisdom lies in improving these spiritual contrarieties, by siding with the spirit against the flesh.

This is done,

1. *By watching all the forces, designs, and motions of the enemy.*—We have in us legions of these devils, the meanest of them too strong and too subtle for us ; (Heb. iii. 13 ;) true Gibeonites, that can easily cheat us with their mouldy bread and clouted garments ; sons of Anak, all of one confederacy, and sworn enemies of our salvation. Had we not need have our eyes in our heads, and set watchfulness upon the forlorn hope ? (1 Cor. xvi. 13.)

2. *By making head early against the enemy.*—*Principiis obsta, &c.* “Nip sin in the bud,” crush this cockatrice in the shell, strangle this hellish brat in the birth ; take heed of the first appearances of evil, take its first

alarms;* slight not the smallest sin or occasion of sinning. How much mischief is done by a little wound, a little thief, a small spark! (James iii. v; 2 Sam. xi. 2.)

3. *Oppose especially thy master-lust.*—Fight, in comparison, neither against small nor great, but against the king of these hellish regiments. (1 Kings xxii. 31.) Be sure to pull out that right eye. This is the skirt Satan lays hold of, in wrestling with thee, to thy hazard and his no small advantage; the Goliath and Holofernes, who being once slain, the Philistines and Assyrians will soon be routed. Throw the head of this Sheba over the wall, and the enemy will retreat shamefully.

4. *Never enter the field without thy second.*—Fight under the shield, as well as under the banner, of thy general. In other fights the general flies to the battle upon the wings of his army; but here the army flies upon the wings of their general. This is done by faith and prayer. Thus David conquered Goliath, (1 Sam. xvii. 45.) and the Philistines. (2 Sam. v. 19, 23.) Fight always upon thy knees. Let Moses be praying while Joshua is fighting. (Exod. xvii. 11.) May not Christ take it ill, if thou carry thyself as if thou meanest to steal a victory before he know of it?

5. *Put on, keep on, stand in, and exercise, thy spiritual arms.* (Eph. vi. 10—18.)—That only is armour of proof: never any girds it on but may boast before the victory. (Allude to 1 Kings xx. 11.) Never any fought prosperously without it: it is our metal as well as our weapon. Neither earth nor hell can stand against this artillery of heaven. Let not Satan find thee disarmed, lest he leave thee despoiled. There is no fighting with carnal weapons against a spiritual enemy. You may as well beat the devil with a sword or spear, as conquer sin by the power of free-will, or with moral and worldly arguments. They are but paper-bullets and paper-walls; the scorn, not the terror, of hell, though useful in some cases. Remember, withal, there are no arms for thy back-parts.

6. *With some lusts fight like the Parthians, flying.* (1 Cor. vi. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 22.)—This is but an honourable retreat, and warlike stratagem. (Joshua viii. 15; Judges xx. 32.) Youthful lusts are like the basilisk, or like a burning-glass in the sun, that may not be looked on. (2 Sam. xi. 2.) With other lusts fight like the Romans, charging home.

7. *Entertain no parley with thy enemy.*—This cost all mankind dear at first. (Gen. iii. 1—4.) It is disloyal, looks like a confederacy, and is very dangerous. Come not into Jael's tent; sleep not in Delilah's lap; talk not with Joab, lest he smite thee under the fifth rib. Sin and Satan are too cunning sophisters for us to dispute withal. He in a manner gives up his cause that will plead it with the devil. The best answer to Satan's suit is, a round and churlish denial. (Zech. iii. 2; Matt. iv. 10; Jude 9.) Parleying is a kind of faint denial, and draws on this impudent suitor.

8. *Take advantage by every thing that befalls thee in this spiritual*

* In the first edition this word is printed "*all-arms*," according to its primitive signification of *conclamatio ad arma*, in French, *crier à l'armes*. Old Kersey's definition is very appropriate: "A signal given by loud cries, or the sound of warlike instruments, to cause people to take arms upon the sudden arrival of the enemy. It is figuratively taken for all manner of sudden fear, fright, or trouble."—EDIT.

warfare.—Eye thy reserves. The captain of thy salvation is both thy vanguard and thy rear-ward, and will be thy reward. Thou gainest thy husband, as David did his wife, by conquering these Philistines: and, while thou art fighting for him, he is weaving thy crown. (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.) Eye thy fellow-soldiers, those worthies of the heavenly David, that are both militant and triumphant. (Heb. xii. 1.) Example is very forcible. Yea, take advantage by thy very foils, to be more humble, charitable, dependent, watchful, and courageous. Let not the enemy gain the field, after conquest, by a back-blow of pride. This Antiochus gains often more by flattery than by force. (Dan. xi. 21, 22.) It is honourable for Christ to say, “Well done,” &c., but dangerous for Satan to say, “Well done!” and safe for thee to say, “Poorly done,” when thou hast done thy best. Despise thyself when others admire thee; and be assured, that self-admiration is the most dangerous devil in the world. Especially improve advantages prudently: when thou hast thy enemy on the hip, yea, on the ground, fall with all thy weight upon him, give him no quarter, lest thou meet with the doom of Ahab, (1 Kings xx. 42,) and of the Israelites. (Num. xxxiii. 55, 56.) Here, as one notes well, learn wisdom of the serpent’s brood, who never thought they had Christ sure enough, though they had him in the grave. (Matt. xxvii. 64.) Remember: it is thy highest wisdom, first to discern, next to improve, the spiritual contrarieties that act in thy own bosom. He is the wisest man that knows himself, and he the strongest man that conquers himself. This alone is the true Israelite, who, by conquering himself, doth in a pious sense overcome both heaven, earth, and hell. (Gen. xxxii. 28.)

SERMON XIV.

BY THE REV. THOMAS WHITE, LL.B.

WHAT FAITH IS THAT WHICH EXCEPT WE HAVE IN PRAYER, WE MUST NOT THINK TO OBTAIN ANY THING OF GOD?

But let him ask in faith.—James i. 6.

FOR the connexion of these words with the former, since they will not give much light to the question I am to handle, and the time will hardly permit things more necessary to be spoken, I shall wholly wave or very briefly speak to.

The subject I am to speak to, is to show what is meant here by asking “in faith,” or what faith that is which whoso hath not, must not, or hath no reason to, expect to receive any thing from God. God may bestow his mercies where and on whom he pleaseth; but he is no way engaged by promise to bestow any mercy on such an one that asketh not in faith. It is not said, that such an one should not expect any great matters from God, but not any thing at all; the least mercy is greater than he hath any reason to think he shall receive; not only he shall not