

The Christian in Complete Armour - Part 14

by William Gurnall

The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, is a powerful weapon for the Christian to use in spiritual warfare, both for defence and offence.

Scripture: Luke 2:52, Romans 13:12, Galatians 1:14, 2 Timothy 2:16, 2 Timothy 3:9, 2 Timothy 3:13

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Perseverance"

Description

The preacher delves into the meaning of 'prokopto,' emphasizing the concept of cutting forward to remove obstacles for uninterrupted progress. This term signifies conscious advancement through personal effort, contrasting with 'auxano,' which denotes growth caused by external factors or God's intervention. Through examples from Paul's life, the sermon highlights how individuals can blaze a trail in their faith journey, advancing in godliness despite obstacles and distractions.

Transcript

Direction Tenth.

The Several Pieces of the Whole Armour of God.

Sixth Piece--The Christian's Sword.

'And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Eph. 6:17).

Here we have the sixth and last piece in the Christian's panoply brought to our hand--a sword; and that of the right make--'the sword of the Spirit.' The sword was ever esteemed a most necessary part of the soldier's furniture, and therefore hath obtained a more general use in all ages, and among all nations, than any other weapon. Most nations have some particular weapons or arms proper to themselves; but few or none come into the field without a sword. A pilot without his chart, a scholar without his book, and a soldier without his sword, are alike ridiculous. But, above all these, is it absurd to think of being a Christian, without knowledge of the word of God and some skill to use this weapon. The usual name in Scripture for war is 'the sword.' 'I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth,' Jer. 25:29; that is, I will send war. And this because the sword is the weapon of most universal use in war, and also that whereby the greatest execution is done in the battle. Now such a weapon is the word of God in the Christian's hand. By the edge of this his enemies fall, and all his great exploits are done. 'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony,' Rev. 12:11. There are two observables we may take notice

of, before we fall to the closer discussion of the words. The first from the kind or sort of arms here presented for the Christian's use. The other from the place or order it stands in.

two observables drawn from the words.

First Observable. Mark the kind or sort of arms here appointed for the Christian's use. It is a weapon that is both defensive and offensive. Such is the sword. All the rest in the apostle's armoury are set out by defensive arms, girdle, breastplate, shield, and helmet--such as are of use to defend and save the soldier from his enemy's stroke. But the sword doth both defend him and serves to wound his enemy also. Of like use is the word of God to the Christian.

First. It is for defence. Easily might the soldier be disarmed of all his other furniture, how glistening and glorious soever, had he not a sword in his hand to lift up against his enemies' assaults. And with as little ado would the Christian be stripped of all his graces, had he not this sword to defend them and himself too from Satan's fury. 'Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction,' Ps. 119:92. This is like the flaming sword with which God kept Adam out of paradise. The saint is oft compared to Christ's garden and orchard. With the sword of the word he keeps this his orchard from robbing. There would not long hang any of their sweet fruit--either graces or comforts--upon their souls, were not this great robber Satan kept off with the point of this sword. O, this word of God is a terror to him; he cannot for his life overcome the dread of it. Let Christ but say, 'It is written,' and the foul fiend runs away with more confusion and terror than Caligula at a crack of thunder. And that which was of such force coming from Christ's blessed lips to drive him away, the saints have always found the most successful instrument to defend them against his fiercest and most impetuous temptations. Ask David what was the weapon with which he warded off the blows this enemy made at him, and he will tell you it was the word of God. 'Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer,' Ps. 17:4. That is, by the help of thy word I have been enabled to preserve myself from those wicked works and outrageous practices, to which others, for want of this weapon to defend them, have been harried.

Second. It is for offence. The sword, as it defends the soldier, so it offends his enemy. Thus the word of God is, as a keeping, so a killing sword. It doth not only keep and restrain him from yielding to the force of temptations without, but also by he kills and mortifies his lusts within, and this makes the victory complete. A man may escape his enemy one day, and be overcome by him at another time. We read of some that for a while escaped the pollutions of the world, yet because their lusts were never put to the sword, and mortified in them by the power of the word applied to their hearts, were at last themselves overcome and slain by this secret enemy that lay skulking within their bosoms, II Peter 2:20, compared with ver. 22. Absalom, notwithstanding his being hanged by the hair of his head, might have lived to have taken revenge afterwards on them by whom he was then beaten, had not Joab come in timely and sped him, by sending his darts with a message of death to his heart. We have daily sad experiences of many that wriggle themselves out of their troubles of conscience--by which for a time they are restrained, and their sins, as it were, held by the hair--to rush afterwards into more abominable courses than they did before; and all for want of skill to use, or courage and faithfulness to thrust this sword by faith into the heart of their lusts.

Second Observable. Observe the order and place wherein this piece of armour stands. The apostle first gives the Christian all the former pieces, and when these are put on, he then girds this sword about him. The Spirit of God, in holy writ, I confess, is not always curious to observe method; yet, methinks, it should not be unpardonable if I venture to give a hint of a double significancy in this very place and order that it

stands in.

First. It may be brought in after all the rest, to let us know how necessary the graces of God's Spirit are to our right using of the word. Nothing more abused than the word. And why? but because men come to it with unsound and unsanctified hearts. The heretic quotes it to prove his false doctrine, and dares be so impudent as to cite it to appear for him. But how is it possible they should father their monstrous births on the pure chaste word of God? Surely it is because they come to the word and converse with it, but bring not the girdle of sincerity with them, and being ungirt, they are unblest. God leaves them justly to miss of truth, because they are not sincere in their inquiry after it. The brat is got upon their own hearts by the father of lies, and they come to the word only to stand as witness to it. Another reads the word and is worse after it, more hardened in his lusts than he was before. He sees some there canonized for saints by the Spirit of God, the history of whose lives is notwithstanding blotted with some foul falls, possibly into those very sins in which he lies wallowing, and therefore is bold to put himself into the saints' calendar. And why so impudent to do this? Truly because he comes to the word with an unholy heart, and wants the breastplate of righteousness to defend him from the dint of so dangerous a temptation. Another, for want of faith to give existence to the truth of the threatening in his conscience, runs boldly upon the point of this sword, and dares the God of heaven to strike him with it. Thus we find those wretches mentioned by the prophet playing with this edge‑tool: 'Where is the word of the Lord? let it come now,' Jer. 17:15. As if they had said mockingly, 'Thou scarest us with strange bugbears--judgments that in the name of God thou threatenest are coming on us. When will they come? we would fain see them. Is God's sword rusty that he is so long getting it out of the scabbard?' And the despairing soul, for want of a helmet of hope, deals little better with the promise than the presumptuous sinner with the threatening. Instead of lifting it up to defend himself against the fears of his guilty conscience, he falls upon the point of it, and destroys his own soul with that weapon which is given him to slay his enemy with. Well, therefore, may the apostle first put on the other pieces, and then deliver this sword to them to use for their good. A sword in a madman's hand, and the word of God in some wicked man's mouth, are used much alike--to hurt only themselves and their best friends with.

Second. It may be commended after all the rest, to let us know [that] the Christian, when advanced to the highest attainments of grace possible in this life, is not above the use of the word; nay, cannot be safe without it. When girded with sincerity--his plate of righteousness on his breast, the shield of faith in his hand, and the helmet of hope covering his head, that his salvation is out of doubt to him at present; yet even then he must take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. This is not a book to be read by the lowest form in Christ's school only, but beseeming the highest scholar that seems most fit for a remove to heaven's academy. It is not only of use to make a Christian by conversion, but to make him perfect also, II Tim. 3:15. It is like the architect's rule and line--as necessary to lay the top-stone of the building at the end of his life as the foundation at his conversion. They therefore are like to prove foolish builders that throw away their line before the house be finished.

I come now to take up the weapon laid before us in the text, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' In which words these three parts. **FIRST.** The weapon itself; that is, 'the word of God.' **SECONDLY.** The metaphor in which it is sheathed--'the sword,' with he person whose it is--'the sword of the Spirit.' **THIRDLY.** An exhortation to make use of this weapon, and directions how--'and the sword,' &c. That is, take this with all the other before-named pieces. So that to whom he directs the former pieces, to these he gives the sword of the word to use. Now those you shall find are persons of all ranks and relations; husbands and wives, parents and children masters and servants. He would have none be

without this sword any more than without the girdle, helmet, and the rest, &c., though this I know will not please the Papists, who would have this sword of the word, like that of Goliath, laid up out of their reach, and that in the priest's keeping also.

DIRECTION X.--FIRST GENERAL PART.

[What is here meant by the Word of God.]

'The Word of God' (Eph. 6:17).

I begin with the weapon itself--'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' I shall first hold forth the sword naked, and then put it again into its sheath, to handle it under the metaphor of a sword. There is a twofold word of God. First. A substantial or subsisting word, and that is the eternal Son of God. Second. There is a declarative word of God, differing according to the sundry times and diverse manners in which he hath been pleased to reveal his will to man.

[Twofold reference of the

expression 'the word of God.']

First. There is a substantial or subsisting word, and that is the eternal Son of God. 'The Word was with God, and the Word was God,' John 1:1. 'And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God,' Rev. 19:13. This is spoken of a person, and he is no other than Christ the Son of God. But he is not the word of God in the text. The Spirit is rather Christ's sword, than Christ the sword of the Spirit; in the 15th verse of the forenamed chapter, 'Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations.'

Second. There is a declarative word of God, and this is manifold, according to the divers ways and manners whereby the Lord hath been pleased to declare his mind to the sons of men. At first, while the earth was thin sown with people, and the age of man so voluminous as to contain many centuries of years, God delivered his mind by dreams and visions, with such like immediate revelations unto faithful witnesses, who might instruct others of their present generation therein, and transmit the knowledge of the same to after ages. They lived so long that three holy men were able, from the death of Adam, to preserve the purity of religion by certain tradition, till within a few years of the Israelites' going down to Egypt. For, as a reverend and learned pen calculates the chronology, Methuselah lived above two hundred years with Adam, and from him might receive the will of God revealed to him. Shem lived almost a hundred years with Methuselah, and Shem was alive to the fiftieth year of Isaac's age, who died but a few years before Israel's going into Egypt. Thus long did God forbear to commit his will to writing, because it, passing through so few, and those trusty hands, it might safely be preserved.

But when the age of man's life was so contracted, that from eight and nine hundred years--the then ordinary duration of it--it shrank into but so many tens, as it was in Moses time, Ps. 90; and when the people of God grew from a few persons to a multitude in Egypt--and those corrupted with idolatry --God now intending at their deliverance thence, to form them into a polity and commonwealth, thought it fit, for the preventing of corruption in his worship, and degeneracy in their lives, that they should have a written law to be as a public standard to direct them in both. And accordingly he wrote the ten commandments with his own finger on tables of stone; and commanded Moses to write the other words he had heard from him on the mount, Ex. 34:27; yet so, that he still continued to signify his will by extraordinary revelations to

his church, and also to enlarge this first edition of his written word, according to the necessity of the times; reserving the canon of the sacred writ to be finished by Christ the great doctor [teacher] of the church, who completed the same, and by the apostles, his public notaries, consigned it to the use of his church to the end of the world. Yea, a curse from Christ's mouth cleaves to him that shall add to or take from the same, Rev. 22:18, 19. So that now all those ways whereby God directly made known his mind to this people, are resolved into this one of the Scriptures, which we are to receive as the undoubted word of God, containing in a perfect rule of faith and life, and to expect no other revelation of his mind to us. Such is the meaning of Heb. 1:1: 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.' Therefore called the 'last days,' because that we are to look for no other revelation of God's will. And therefore for ever let us abhor that blasphemy of Joachim, Abbas, Wigelians, and others that have fallen into the same frenzy with them, who dream of a threefold doctrine flowing from the three Persons of the sacred Trinity --the law from the Father, the gospel from the Son, which we have in the New Testament, and a third from the Spirit, which they call evangelium eternum --the everlasting gospel. Whereas, the Spirit of God himself, by whom the Scriptures were indited, calls the doctrine in them 'the everlasting gospel,' Rev. 14:6. Thus much to show what is here meant by the word of God. From whence the doctrine follows.

[The divinity of the Scriptures, and the

sufficiency of their own testimony

in proof of the same.]

Doctrine. That the holy Scriptures are the undoubted word of God. By the Scripture I mean the Old and New Testaments contained in the Bible; both {of} which are that one foundation whereupon our faith is built: 'Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,' Eph. 2:20. That is the doctrine which God by them hath delivered unto his church, for they were under the unerring guidance of the Spirit: 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God,' II Tim. 3:16, 2, @BÎH, obliquus; propter obliqua et tortuosa responsa ejus--because he mocked them that consulted his oracle with such ambiguous answers, that sent them as wise home as they came to him. Indeed, the devil found it necessary thus to do. Had he not with this patch of policy eked out the scantiness of his own understanding, the nakedness thereof would have been seen by every vulgar eye, to his shame and to the contempt of his oracles. Or, if his predictions were more plainly delivered, they were,

First. Of such things as he spelled out by the help of nature's alphabet, and came to the knowledge of by diving into the secrets of natural causes, before they discovered themselves unto the observation of man's duller understanding; and this made them cried up for wonderful predictions, and supernatural, by those who could not see this clue in Satan's hand that guided him. If a man should meet you in the street, and tell you such a friend of yours will die within a few months, whom you left well, to your thinking, but a few minutes before, and the event should seal to the truth of what he said, you might possibly begin to think this a wonderful prophecy. But, when you afterwards know that he who told you this was a physician rarely accomplished, and had upon much study and strict observation of your friend's bodily state, found a dangerous disease growing insensibly upon him, you would alter your opinion, and not think him a prophet, but admire him for a skilful physician. Thus, did we but consider the vastness of Satan's natural parts--though limited, because created--and the improvement he hath made of them, by the study and experience of so many thousand years, we shall not count his predictions for prophecies, but rather as comments and explications of the short and dark text of natural causes, and acknowledge him a learned

naturalist, but not deserving the name of a true prophet.

Second. If he hath not his hint from natural causes, then he gathers his inferences from moral and political causes, which, compared together by so deep a pate as his, give him great help and advantage to infer many times what in very great probability, and all likelihood of reason, will come to pass. Thus what the devil told Saul would become of him, his army, and kingdom, was nothing but what he might rationally conclude from those premises which lay before him, in his being rejected of God, and another anointed by God's own command to be king in his stead, together with the just height, and full measure, to which Saul's sins might now be thought to have arrived--by his going to a witch for counsel--and a puissant army of the Philistines preparing against him, whose wonted courage now so failed him, that he went rather like a malefactor pinioned and bound with the terrors of his accusing conscience, to meet an executioner that should give the fatal stroke to him, than like a valiant captain, to adorn and enrich himself with the spoils of his enemies. All these laid together make it appear the devil, without a gift of prophecy, might tell him his doom.

Third. God may, and doth, sometimes reveal future events to Satan, as when god intends him to be his instrument to execute some of his purposes, he may, and doth, acquaint him with the same some time before. And you will not say the hangman is a prophet, that can tell such a man shall, on such a day, be beheaded or hanged, when hath a warrant from the king that appoints him to do that office. Thus Satan could have told Job beforehand what sad afflictions would certainly befall him in his estate, servants, children, and his own body; because God had granted him a commission to be the instrument that should bring all these upon him.

But neither Satan nor any creatures else are able of themselves to foretell such events as neither arise from natural causes, nor may be rationally concluded to follow from moral and political probabilities; but are locked up in the cabinet of the divine will, how they shall fall out. And such are the prophecies which we find in the holy Scriptures, by which they plainly prove their heavenly extraction. They must needs come from God that tell us what God only knew, and depended on his will to be disposed of.

Who but God could tell Abraham where his posterity should be, and what should particularly befall them, four hundred years after his death? --for so long before was he acquainted with their deliverance out of Egypt, Gen. 15, which accordingly came to pass punctually on the very day foretold, Ex. 12:41. How admirable are the prophecies of Christ the Messiah, in which his person, birth, life, and death, even to the minute, and circumstances of them, are as exactly and particularly set down, many ages before his coming upon the stage, as by the evangelists themselves, who were upon the place with him, and saw all that was done with their own eyes.

And though some things foretold of him may be thought, because small and inconsiderable in themselves, not to deserve a mention in so high and sacred a prophecy--as our Saviour's riding on an ass, Zech. 9:9; the thirty pieces given for him, and the purchase of the potter's field afterwards with them, Zech. 11:12, 13; and the preserving his bones whole, when they that had suffered with him had theirs broken--these, I say, and such like, though they may seem inconsiderable passages in themselves, yet upon due weighing the end for which they are mentioned, we shall find that our weak faiths could not well have spared their help to strengthen it in the belief of the prophecy.

Indeed, a great weight of the argument to prove the truth and divinity of the prophecy, moves upon these little hinges; because, the less these are in themselves, the more admirably piercing and strong must that

eye be that could see such small things at so great a distance. None but an infinite understanding could do this! And now I hope none will dare ask 'But how may we be sure that such prophecies were extant so long before their fulfilling, and not foisted in after these things were done?'--seeing they were upon public record in the church of the Jews, and not denied by those that denied Christ himself.

And truly this one consideration cast into the scale after all the former, doth give an overweight to the argument we are now upon--I mean, that these prophecies were so long, and that so openly, read and known. And consequently [it were] impossible that Satan should be ignorant of them, and not take the alarm from them to do his utmost to impede their accomplishment, seeing his whole kingdom lay at stake, so as either he must hinder them, or they would ruin it; and that notwithstanding all this, together with his restless endeavour against them, they should be all so fairly delivered in their full time; yea, many of them by the midwifery of those very persons that would, if possible, have destroyed them in the womb, as we see, Acts 4:27. Here breaks out the wisdom and power of a God, with such a strong beam of light and evidence, that none of the Scriptures' enemies can wishly look against it.

[The doctrinal part of Scripture

bears the impress of Deity.]

Third Part. The doctrinal part of the Scriptures; by which, in this place, I mean only those grounds and principles of faith that are laid down in Scripture, and proposed to be believed and embraced of all that desire eternal life. There is a divine glory that is to be seen on the very face of them, being so sublime, that no creature can be the inventor of them. To instance but in a few for all. First, God himself, who is the prime object of our faith. Who but God could tell us who and what his nature is? That there is a God, we confess is a notion that natural reason hath found the way to search out. Yea, his Godhead and power are a lesson taught in the school of nature, and to be read in the book of the creatures. But how long men who have no higher teaching are learning the true knowledge of God, and how little progress they make therein, we see in the poor heathen, among whom the wisest philosophers have been such dunces, groping about this one principle one age after another, and yet not able to find the door; as the apostle tells us when he saith that 'the world by wisdom knew not God,' I Cor. 1. But, as for the trinity of persons in the Godhead, this is such a height as the heart of man never could take aim at, so much as to dream or start a thought of it; so that, if God had not revealed it, the world of necessity must have for ever continued in the ignorance thereof. And the same must be said of all gospel truths, Jesus Christ, God's man, justification by faith in his blood, and the whole method of grace and salvation through him. They are all such notions as never came into the heart of the wisest sophists in the world to conceive of; and therefore it is no wonder that a little child, under the preaching of the gospel, believes these mysteries which Plato and Aristotle were ignorant of, because they are not attained by our parts and industry, but communicated by divine and supernatural revelation. Yea, now they are revealed, how does our reason gaze at them as notions that are foreign, and mere strangers to its own natural conceptions, yea, too big to be grasped and comprehended with its short span, which makes it so malapert--where grace is not master to keep it in subjection--as to object against the possibility of their being true, because itself cannot measure them? As if the owl should say the sun had no light, because her weak eyes cannot bear to look on it. These are truths to be believed on the credit of him that relates them, and not to be entertained or rejected as they correspond to, or differ from, the mould of our reason. He that will handle these with his reason, and not his faith, is like to be served as the smith--it is Chrysostom's comparison--that takes up the red-hot iron with his hand, and not with his tongs, what can he expect but to burn his fingers with them?

[The preceptive part of Scripture bears

the impress of Deity.]

Fourth Part. The fourth and last part in our division is the preceptive part of the Scriptures, or that which contains commands and precepts. And this will be found to carry the superscription of its divinity on its forehead, and that with as legible and fair characters as any of the former, if we do but consider, First. The vast extent of Scripture commands; and Second. Their spotless purity.

First. The vast extent of Scripture commands. This is such as never any human laws, though of the greatest monarch that ever swayed a scepter, could pretend unto. Where is the prince, among the sons of men, that ever went about to give laws to all mankind, and did not rather, in his royal edicts and laws, respect that particular people, and those nations, whose lot fell within the circle of their empire? Of all the empires the world ever had, the Roman was without compare the greatest; and yet when the Roman eagle's wings were best grown, they could not overspread more than the third part of this lower world. And how vain and ridiculous had it been for the emperor to have attempted to make a law for those nations which neither knew him, nor he them? But in the Scripture we find such laws as concern all mankind, wherever they live, and which have been promulgated, where the Bible was never seen. Their sound has gone into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. Many of the laws in sacred writ, they are but a second, and that fairer, edition of what was found written in the consciences of men and women before the Scripture came forth. So that, if those laws that are cut with so indelible a character in the consciences of all the sons of Adam, be of God, then the Scripture must be confessed to proceed from God also.

Yet further. As the Scripture takes all mankind to task, and lays its bonds on all, high and low, rich and poor; so its laws bind the whole man. The heart with its most inward thoughts is laid in these chains, as well as the outward man. Indeed, the heart is the principle subject, whose loyalty is most provided for in the precepts of Scripture. Those commands that contain our duty to God, require that all be done with the heart and soul. If we pray, it must be 'in the spirit,' John 4:23, or else we had as good do nothing, for we transgress the law of prayer. If it be a law that respects our carriage to man, still the heart is chiefly intended: 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart,' Lev. 19:17; 'Curse not the king, no not in thy thought,' Ecc. 10:20. And accordingly the promises and threatenings, which attend the commands of Scripture--as the arteries do the veins in man's body--to inspirit and enforce them, are suitable to the spiritual nature of those commands; the rewards of the one, and punishments of the other, being such as respect the spiritual performance or neglect of them. 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,' Matt. 5:8. Not blessed are they whose hands are clean, though their hearts are foul and filthy. So, 'But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing,' Mal. 1:14. The deceiver there is the hypocrite, that gives God the skin of the sacrifice, the shape of the duty for the substance, the lean of an outside obedience instead of the fat of the inward man, viz. the obedience of the heart. And as the principle object that these are levelled to and against, is the obedience or disobedience of the heart; so the subject or vessel into which the one emptieth its blessings, and the other its curses, is chiefly the soul and spirit: 'They shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever,' Ps. 22:26. 'I comfort you...and your heart shall rejoice,' Isa. 66:13, 14. 'Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse O God!' Lam. 3:65.

Now I would fain know the man that ever went about to form such laws as should bind the hearts of men, or prepare such rewards as should reach the souls and consciences of men. Truly, if any mortal man--be

he the greatest of the world's monarchs --should make a law that his subjects should love him with all their hearts and souls, and not dare, upon peril of his greatest indignation, to bid a traitorous thought against his royal person welcome in their souls, but presently confess it to him, or else he would be avenged on him; he would deserve to be more laughed at for his pride and folly, than Xerxes for casting his fetters into the Hellespont to chain the surly waves with them into his obedience, or Caligula, that threatened the air, if it durst rain when he was at his pastimes, who yet, poor sneak, durst not himself so much as look into the air when it thundered. Certainly a bedlam would be fitter for such a madman than a king's throne and palace, that should so far forfeit his reason, as to think that the thoughts and hearts of men were within his territories and jurisdiction. Who need fear such a law, when none but the offender himself can bring in evidence of the fact? There have been indeed some that, intending to take away the life of their prince by a bloody murderous knife, have been attached by their own conscience, and forced by it to blab and confess their own wicked thoughts, before any other could be their accuser, so sacred are the persons of God's anointed ones; but not from the power of man or his law making them do so, but the dread of God arresting their conscience for violating his law, which indeed not only binds up subjects' hands from killing, but hearts also from cursing, kings in our very thought. This, this the law which rules in the consciences of the worst of men; a bit that God rides the fiercest sinners with, and so curbs them, that they can never shake it out of their mouths. Enough to prove the divinity thereof.

Second. The spotless purity of Scripture commands do no less evince their divine extraction. God is 'the holy One,' Isa. 43. He alone is perfectly holy: 'The heavens are not clean in his sight,' Job 15:15. He can charge the angels themselves--who may be the heavens in the forementioned place--'with folly,' Job 4:18, because, though they never sinned, yet they are sinable. It is possible they might sin, as some of their order have done, if not kept from it by confirming grace.

And as God is the only holy person, so the Scripture is the only holy book. All besides this have their errata, which are corrected by this, 'The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever,' Ps. 19:9. That is, the word of the Lord is 'clean'--called 'the fear of the Lord,' because it teacheth it; as God is called the fear of Isaac, because the object of his fear. The word is clean, and mark, it 'endureth for ever;' that is, it ever continues, and shall be found so. There are dregs and sediment that will appear in the holiest writings of the best men, when they have stood awhile under the observation of a critical eye; but the Scripture hath been exposed to the view and censure of all sorts of men, yet could never have the least impurity charged justly upon it.

It is so clean and pure, that it makes filthy souls clean: 'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth,' John 17:17. That which is itself filthy may make our clothes and bodies clean, but that which makes our souls pure and clean must be itself without all defilement. And such is the Scripture. Nothing there that gratifies the flesh or affords fuel to any lust. No, it puts every sin to the sword, and strikes through the loins of all sinners great or small: 'To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace,' Rom. 8:6.

So that, as Athenagoras well said, 'No man can be wicked that is a Christian, unless he be a hypocrite.' For the Scripture which he professeth to be his rule of faith and life, will not allow him to embrace any doctrine that is false, or practice that is filthy and unholy. This is that which Christianity can alone glory in. The heathen were led into many abominations by their religion and gods whom they worshipped. No wonder they were so beastly and sensual in their lives, when they served drunken and filthy gods; and the very mysteries of their religion were so horribly unclean that they durst not let them be commonly known, as having a scent too strong and stinking to be endured by any that had not their senses quite stopped,

and their foolish minds, by the judgment of God upon them, wholly darkened.

But the Christian can charge none of his sins upon his God--who tempteth none to evil, but hateth perfectly both the work and also worker of iniquity; nor upon his Bible, which damns every sin to the pit of hell, and all that liveth therein: 'Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile,' Rom. 2:9, 10. O who could be author of this blessed book but the blessed God? If any creature made it, he was either a wicked creature or one that was holy.

1. No wicked creature could do it, neither angel nor man. Surely they would never have taken so much pains to pull down their own kingdom of darkness--the great plot which runs through the Bible from one end of it to the other. And if it were the birth of their brain, no doubt, as every one loves his own child, so would they have shown more love to it than yet they have done. The implacable wrath which the devil and his party of wicked ones in the world have shown in all ages to the Scripture, declare sufficiently that it never came from them. No, no, it cannot stand with the interest of unclean spirits or wicked men to advance holiness in the world. The devil, though bold enough, durst never be so impudent as to lay claim to this holy, heavenly piece. But, if he should, the glorious beauty of holiness which shines on the face of it, would forbid any man in his wits to believe that black fiend to be the father of it. *Naturalissimum est opis omnis viventis generare sibi simile*--it is natural for every creature to beget his like. And what likeness there is betwixt light and darkness, it is easy to judge.

2. Neither can any holy creature be the author of it, be he angel or man. Can we think that any having the least spark of love to God, or fear of his majesty dwelling their breast, durst counterfeit his dreadful name by setting it to their work, and abuse the world with such a blasphemy and prodigious lie, as to say, 'Thus saith the Lord,' and prefix his name all along, when, not God but themselves are the authors? Could this impudence and audacious wickedness proceed from any holy angel or man? Doubtless it could not. Nay further, durst any holy creature put such a cheat upon the world, and then denounce the wrath and vengeance of God against those who shall speak in God's name, but were never sent of him, as the Scripture mentions? Certainly, that earth which swallowed up Korah and his ungodly rout, for pretending to an authority from God as good as the priests', to offer incense, would not have spared Moses himself if he had spoke that in God's name which he had not from him, but which was the invention of his own private brain. Thus we see that no creature, good or bad, angel or man, can be the author of Scripture. So that none remains but God to own it; which he hath done with miracles enough to convince a very atheist of their divinity.

SECOND GENERAL HEAD.

[Proof of the divinity of the Scriptures

from their supernatural effects.]

The second argument I shall choose to demonstrate the divine extraction of the Scriptures, shall be taken from the supernatural effects they produce. Nothing can be the cause of an effect higher or greater than itself. If therefore we can find such effects to be the product of the Scriptures, as are above the sphere of any creature's activity, it will then be evident that the Scripture itself is supernatural, not the word of a mere creature, but of God himself. What the psalmist saith of thunder, that loud voice of nature from the clouds, we may apply to the voice of God speaking from heaven in the Scripture, 'It is a mighty voice and full of majesty; it breaketh cedars'--kings and kingdoms; 'it divideth the flames of fire.' The holy martyrs have with

one bucket of this spiritual water quenched the scorching flames of that furious element into which their persecuting enemies have thrown them. 'It shaketh the wilderness' of the wild wicked world, making the stout hearts of the proudest sinners to tremble like the leaves of the trees with the wind; and bringeth the pangs of the new-birth upon them whose hearts before never quailed for the most prodigious crimes. 'It discovereth the forests,' and hunts sinners out of their thickets and refuges of lies, whither they run to hide themselves from the hue and cry of divine vengeance. But, to speak more particularly and distinctly, there are four powerful and strange effects, which the word puts forth upon the hearts of men; all which will evince its divine original. First. It hath a heart-searching power, whereby it ransacks and rifles the consciences of men. Second. It exercises a power on the conscience to convince and terrify it. Third. It has power to comfort and raise a dejected spirit. Fourth. It hath the power of conversion, which none but God can effect.

[The heart-searching power of the word

attests to its divine origin.]

First Effect. The word of God hath a heart-searching power, whereby it ransacks and rifles the consciences of men. It looks into the most secret transactions of the heart and tells us what we do in our bed-chamber--as Elisha did by the king of Syria, II Kings 6:12. It cometh where no prince's warrant can empower his officer to search, I mean the heart. We read that Christ came to his disciples 'when the doors were shut, and stood in the midst of them,' John 20:19. Thus the word--when all doors are shut, that men have no intelligence what passeth within the breasts of men--comes in upon the sinner without asking him leave, and stands in the midst of his most secret plots and counsels, there presenting itself to his view, and saith to him as Elisha to Gehazi, 'Went not my eye with thee when thou didst this and that?' How often doth the sinner find his heart discovered and laid out of all its folds by the word preached, as if the minister had stood at his window, and seen him what he did within doors, or some had come and told tales of him to the preacher? Such I have known, that would not believe to the contrary, but that the minister had been informed of their pranks, and so leveled his discourse particularly at their breasts, when he hath been as ignorant of their doings as of theirs that live in America, and only shot his reproofs like him that smote Ahab, who drew his bow at a venture, without taking aim at the person of any. From whence can this property come but [from] God, who claims it as his own incommunicable attribute, 'I the Lord search the heart?' Jer. 17:10. God is in the word, and therefore it findeth the way to get between the joints of the harness, though sent at random out of man's bow. If any creature could have free ingress into this retiring room of the heart, the devil, being a spirit, and of such a piercing, prying eye, were the most likely to be he; yet even he is locked out of this room, though indeed he can peep into the next.

Now if God can only search the heart, then the word which doth the same can come from no other but God himself. Who indeed can make a key to this lock of the heart, but he that knoweth all the wards of it? Suppose you did lock up a sum of money in a cabinet, and none but one in all the world besides yourself besides yourself were privy to the secret place where you lay this key. If you then should find the key taken away, and the cabinet opened and rifled, you would soon conclude whose doing it was. Why thus, when you find your heart disclosed, and the secret thoughts therein laid open unto you in the word, you may easily conclude that God is in it. The key that doth this is of his making who is the only one besides yourselves that is privy to the counsels of your hearts, that seeth all the secret traverses of your inward man. Who but he can send a spy so directly to your hiding-place, where you have laid up your treasures of darkness out of the world's sight? There are two secrets that the word discloseth:--

First. What a man's own heart knoweth, and no creature besides. Thus Christ told the woman of Samaria what her neighbours could not charge her with; from which she concluded him to be a prophet--a man of God. And may we not conclude the Scripture to be the word of God, that doth the same?

Second. Those things which a man's own heart is not privy to. God is said to be 'greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things,' I John 3:20. He knows more by us than we by ourselves. And doth not the word dive to the bottom of the heart, and fetch up that filth thence, which the eye of the conscience never had the sight of before, nor ever could without the help of the word? 'I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet,' Rom. 7:7. And if the word findeth that out which escapeth the scrutiny of man's own heart, doth it not prove a Deity to be in it? So argueth the apostle, I Cor. 14:25, speaking of the power the word preached hath to lay open the heart: 'Thus are the secrets,' saith he, 'of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.'

[The conscience's touching power of the word

attests its divine origin.]

Second Effect. The second effect the Scripture hath upon the spirits of men, by which its divine pedigree may be proved, is the power it exerciseth on the conscience to convince and terrify it. Conscience is a castle that no batteries but what God raiseth against it can shake. No power can command it to stoop but that which heaven and earth obey. He that disarms the strong man must be stronger than he. He that masters the conscience must be greater than it, and so God only is, I John 3:20[1]. Now the word being able to shake and shatter this power of the soul, which disdaineth to stoop to any but God, must needs be from him. And that the word exerts such a power upon the conscience who will doubt? Do we not see it daily chastising the proudest sinners, even to make them cry and whine under its convictions, like a child under the rod? Yea, doth it not slay them outright, that they fall down dispirited at one thunder-clap of the law let off by God upon them? 'When sin revived, I died,' saith Paul. He who before was a jolly man--as well provided in his own opinion for his spiritual estate, as Job was for his outward, when he had his flocks and herds, sons and daughters, health and prosperity, all as yet untouched by the hand of God--upon him, it stripped his conscience as naked as Job afterward was in his outward condition. The man's eyes are opened now to see how naked and void of all holiness he is. Yea his fair skin of pharisaical strictness, with the beauty of which he was formerly so far in love as if he had been another Absalom, without mole or wart, he now judgeth to be but odious deformity, and himself a most loathsome creature, by reason of those plague-sores and ulcers that he sees running on him. Yea, such power the word hath upon him, that it laid him trembling over the bottomless pit, in a despair of himself and his own righteousness.

Hath any creature an arm like this of the word? or can any book penned by the wit of man command the heart to tremble at the rehearsal thereof, as this can do? Even a Felix on the bench, when a poor prisoner preacheth this word at the bar to him, is put into a shaking fit. Who but a God could make those monsters of men, that had paddled in the blood of Christ, and who had scorned his doctrine so as to count the professors of it fools and idiots, yet come affrighted in their own thoughts, at a secret prick given them in Peter's sermon, and cry out in the open assembly, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?' Doth not this carry as visible a print of Deity, as when Moses clave the rock with a little rod in his hand?

Question. But haply you will say, If there be such a conscience-shaking power in the word, how comes it to pass, that many notorious sinners sit so peaceably and sleep so soundly under it? They read it at home, and hear it preached powerfully in the public, yet are so far from feeling any such earthquake in their

consciences, that they remain senseless and stupid; yea, can laugh at the preacher for his pains, and shake off all the threatenings denounced, when sermon is done, as easily as the spaniel doth the water when he comes out of the river.

Answer First. I answer, many sinner

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