29 Arms (*Arma*)

According to Isidore, book 8, chapter 41,[[1]](#endnote-1) arms are said generally of instruments of all kinds. Wherefore also we say armaments of ships, that is, instruments. But properly arms are said to be those things by which we are defended in danger.

Therefore, in Sacred Scriptures by arms are virtues understood according to that [2] Cor. 6[:4, 7]: “But in all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God … by the armor of justice on the right hand and on the left.” It is not sufficient for a minister of any lord to have his arms in a basket during times of war, but he ought to put them on them for the honor of his lord and for the protection of his own. And this is to demonstrate we are as if the ministers of God, that is, to demonstrate we are inducted to his arms, Rom. 13[:12]: “Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” “The children of Israel went up armed out of Egypt,” Exod. 13[:18]. Thus, it is necessary that we do so for the darkness of sins. Where it is to be noted that arms shown to a soldier at first sight seem unable to be borne which however put on are easily carried. Thus, often the aforesaid virtue, as chastity, abstinence, etc., seem to have difficulty before they are exercised and put into operation, but afterwards however are easy through use.

Wherefore, also David because of lack of experience did not know how to proceed armed, 1 Reg. 17[:39]. Therefore, the Apostle says in Eph. 6[:10]: “Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil.” Wherefore note here that nothing is in want of clothing except only man, and this is because he is too cold through sin. Wherefore Chrysostom, *Homilia* 18,[[2]](#endnote-2) God had made every creature armed and fortified to the senses. However, he has disposed man so that his virtue is himself and in himself, because he has made him inferior to the others in this, he wished him to be stronger. And Jerome, *Epistola,* 72,[[3]](#endnote-3) says concerning God and man, whom he made outwardly unarmed, he has armed better on the inside with reason, namely, and prudence.

The Philosopher, book 8, *De animalibus,* c. 3,[[4]](#endnote-4) says that the stag does not want to appear until his horns have grown out, and then he goes forth because it seems to him that he has now armed himself, and hardly fears. Thus, man cannot appear to be secure unless he has the arms of virtues. Therefore, Num. 32[:17], the sons of Ruben spoke to Gad “we ourselves will go armed and ready for battle.” Note here according to Solinus[[5]](#endnote-5) and Isidore, *Etymologiae*, book 2,[[6]](#endnote-6) Alexander the Great had a horse, which, if one were naked, allowed anyone to mount on his back, but when armed he would not allow anyone except his lord, but when he was armed. Thus, a naked person and without virtue easily allows the malevolent spirit but armed with virtues he allows no one to be seated except Christ.

¶ While one is strongly armed he guards his house in peace; these are all the things which he possesses, Luke 11[:21]: “When a strong man armed keeps his court, those things are in peace which he possesses.” Seneca, book 4, *De Clementia*, 4,[[7]](#endnote-7) puts the case, When there was a war in a certain city, a strong man on the battle line, having lost his own arms, took from a tomb the arms of a strong man. And he fought well. Accused of the violation of a tomb, which should be avoided, etc. Concerning the violated tomb, that is, he responds to the first, If I take them, they are arms; if I leave them, they are spoils. Both of us, the dead man and I, we have supplied what was lacking to the other: that one arms to a man, I a man to the arms. Thus when he was first rushed upon by the enemies he went to the tomb of the strong man, that is, Christ, and there he found the arms of virtues and he furnished them freely, but then he sees a person because he has furnished him a man, [1] Pet. 4[:1]: “Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought.” Cant. 4[:4]: “A thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armor of valiant men.” A man without arms is not secure to fight.

Wherefore, an old man was asked, in *Vitiae Patrum*,[[8]](#endnote-8) why one was followed so much by demons. He responded, Because we throw away our arms from us which are abuses for Christ, true humility, voluntary poverty, and perfect patience. Wherefore Boethius, *De consolation*, book one, prose two,[[9]](#endnote-9) in the person of Philosophy says, We gave you weapons which would have protected you with invincible power, if you had not thrown them away. Gen. 27[:3], Isaac did not want that his son Esau go out, even to hunt, without arms. Wherefore he said, “Take your arms, and go abroad.”

Therefore, because according to the Philosopher, 7, *Politics*, c. 7,[[10]](#endnote-10) arms are necessary for the citizens of a city. Therefore, the Philistines brought it about that there would not be a forger of iron in Israel who could make arms or repair them, [1 Kings 13:19]. Thus, the devil looks after things continually. Salomon also, although he reigned peacefully, however he made arms for himself for safety sake, and so with us, 3 [Kings 10:25]. We have enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil for which we need the arms of virtues, namely, arms of wisdom against the deception of the devil, because that one is shrewd; the arms of patience against the disturbances of the world, because he is unfit; arms of continence against the desire of the flesh.

¶ Therefore, the armed devil besieges with lie and deception saying that justice would be to take a formal claim, he says mercy would be given to the one in need for use, he says foresight to amass money, Prov. 22[:5]: “Arms” for capturing “and swords” for killing, and Luke 11[:21]: “When a strong man armed,” that is, the strong devil, armed through nature, through shrewdness, “keeps,” through diligence, “his court,” that is, the soul of the sinner, “those things are in peace which he possesses,” lest, namely, they would flee from their lord. But against this are the necessary arms of wisdom through which they are caught, and evil suggestions are cast out, Rom. 13[:12]: “Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.”

Wherefore it is said in the *Philosophia* of Boethius,[[11]](#endnote-11) “We gave you weapons,” etc., as was said above. 2 Mach. 15[:11]: “So Judas armed every one of them, not with defense of shield and spear, but with very good speeches.” It is the good sermon which puts evil to flight. It is the better which teaches one to do the good. It is the best which teaches perseverance up to when one arrives at the reward. Therefore, it is said in Eccle. 9[:18]: “Better is wisdom, than weapons of war.” The second enemy besieges, that is, the world armed with falsities, thus Saul besieged David, Psal. [56:5]: “The sons of men, whose teeth are weapons and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.” Arms prepared in contention like dogs, and arrows in hidden detraction like wolves. The sharp sword quickly enters false flattery like scorpions. In these things contention generates rancor; detraction, disgrace; flattery, vain glory, James 3 as if throughout the whole. Against this enemy the arms of patience are necessary, 1 Pet. 4[:1].

¶ Christ having suffered in the flesh, and you armed with the same thought, but there are many like the bishop who with a cleric disturbing him, but exhorting him to patience, according to that of Rom. 5[:3]: “Tribulation works patience.” He responded, It is true, but not without a way of solving (the matter). Therefore, it is a foolish man who throws away his arms while he is at war, who throws away the stick while the dogs tear at him, Rom. 12[:12]: “Patient in tribulation.” It is good certainly according as it is in acquisition of the more difficult, to such a degree as it is in operation of the more commendable, such as continence also in youth, abstinence in feasting, humility in dignity, patience in adversity, thus wine is better which grows in difficult conditions. And this is “the armor of valiant men,” Can. 4[:4].

The third enemy besieges, the flesh armed with the pleasures of the senses and members, just as the wife of Potiphar besieged Joseph, Gen. 39[:7]. Therefore, the Apostle says, Rom. 6[:13]: “Neither yield your members as instruments of iniquity unto sin.” He would be foolish who handed over his arms to the attacker himself which they do, who expose themselves to dangerous occasions. Against this enemy the arms of justice are necessary. Wherefore it follows, Rom. 6[:13]: “But present your members as instruments of justice unto God.” For it is just that the flesh serves the spirit and the spirit, God, 2 Cor. 6[:4-7]: “But in all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God … by the armor of justice on the right hand,” by following right reason, “and on the left,” by putting to flight evil delight. 2 Cor. 10[:4]: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God.”

1. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 18.5.1-2 (PL 82.644): Arma generaliter omnium rerum instrumenta sunt, unde et ubi reponuntur armaria dicta sunt. Item arma et tela omnium generum, sed arma sunt quibus ipsi tuemur tela quae emittimus. Nam arma duplicia sunt, id est, vel quibus percutimus, vel quibus tegimur. Arma autem proprie dicta sunt eo quod armos tegunt. Nam arma, vel ab armis dicuntur, id est, humeris, ut: Latos huic hasta per armos acta tremit; vel ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄρεος, id est, a Marte. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum,* Homilia18 ex cap. 7:7 (PG 56:730): Quoniam creaturam sensibilem Deus armatam et munitam creavit. Alios enim munivit velocitate pedum, alios unguibus, alios pennis, alios dentibus, alios cornibus, hominem autem solum sic disponit ut virtus illius sit ipse. Et in eo quod infirmiorem eum fecit omnibus, eo ipso fortiorem voluit eum esse in se. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Jerome, *Pelagius I: Epistola* 1.2 (PL 30.17): Sed quem inermem extrinsecus fecerat, melius intus armavit: ratione scilicet atque prudentia, ut per intellectum vigoremque mentis, quo caeteris praestabat animalibus, factorem omnium solus agnosceret: et inde serviret Deo, unde aliis dominabatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Aristotle, *History of Animals,* 9.5, 611a25-30 (Barnes, 1:953): They shed their horns in places difficult of access or discovery, whence the proverbial expression of 'the place where the stag sheds his horns'; the fact being that, as having parted with their weapons, they take care not to be seen. The saying is that no man has ever seen the animal's left horn; that the creature keeps it out of sight because it possesses some medicinal property. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Solinus, *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* 45.8 (Mommsen, pp. 174-175): Alexandri Magni equus Bucephalus dictus sive de aspectus torvitate seu ab insigni, quod taurinum caput armo inustum habebat, seu quod de fronte eius quaedam corniculorum minae protuberabant, cum ab equario suo alias etiam molliter sederetur, accepto regio stratu neminem umquam alium praeter dominum vehere dignatus est.

   Cf. Hugo de Foliot, *De bestiis et aliis rebus* 3.23 (PL 177.91): Unde exemplum dabimus Alexandri Magni, cujus equus Bucephalus dictus, sive ab aspectus torvitate, sive ab insigni nobilitate, eo quod taurinum caput habebat, seu quod a fronte ejus quaedam exstantium corniculorum minae protuberabant. Cum ab equario suo alio tempore molliter insideretur, accepto regio stratu, neminem unquam praeter dominum vehere dignatus est. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 1.1.43 (PL 82:430): Aliqui etiam proprios dominos recognoscunt, obliti mansuetudinis, si mutentur; aliqui praeter dominum nullum dorso recipiunt. Interfectis, vel morientibus dominis multi lacrymas effundunt. Solius equi est propter hominem lacrymari, et doloris affectum sentire. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae* 4.4 (LCL 463:446-447): Bellum cum esset in quadam civitate, vir fortis in acie armis amissis de sepulchro viri fortis arma sustulit. fortiter pugnavit et reposuit. praemio accepto accusatur sepulchri violati. Arma vix contigeram; secuta sunt. Haec si sumo, arma sunt; si relinquo, spolia. Vidisses vere violari sepulchrum, si illo venisset hostis. Uterque quod alteri deerat commodavimus: ille viro arma, ego armis virum. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. *Vitae Patrum, Verba Seniorum* 25.1 (PL 73.1048-1049): Quidam frater requisivit a sene, dicens: Cur, abba, a daemonibus impugnamur? Respondit senex: Quoniam arma nostra abjecimus, id est, poenitentiam, humilitatem, obedientiam, et penuriam (Ruff., lib. III, n. 173; Pelag., lib. XV, num. 58). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Boethius, *De consolatione Philosophica,* lib. 1, prosa 2 (PL 63.599): Atqui talia contuleramus arma, quae nisi prius abjecisses, invicta te firmitate tuerentur. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Aristotle, *Politics* 7.8, 1328b6-10 (Barnes 2:2108): First, there must be food; secondly, arts, for life requires many instruments; thirdly, there must be arms, for the members of a community have need of them, and in their own hands, too, in order to maintain authority both against disobedient subjects and against external assailants. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Boethius, *De consolatione Philosophica,* lib. 1, prosa 2 (PL 63.599): Atqui talia contuleramus arma, quae nisi prius abjecisses, invicta te firmitate tuerentur. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)