

JAMES ARCHER SERMONS [32]

Luke 3:3

Sermon for the 4th Sunday of Advent.

Et venit in omnem Regionem Jordanis, prædicans Baptismum Pœnitentiæ.

And he came into all the Country about Jordan, preaching the Baptism of penance. ~~unto~~
~~the~~ Words taken out of the third Chap. of St. Luke and 3rd Verse.

Behold a second Baptism, which, like unto the great S^t John Baptist, I am going to announce unto you; but it is a painful and laborious Baptism. I am going to announce it, on the part of God, unto all without distinction: unto great and little, rich and poor, sick as well as those in health, unto the just as well as sinners. It is unto all men of whatever age, sex, or condition ~~the~~
~~be of~~, that these words of Jesus Christ our sovereign Master are addressed. Unless you do penance you shall all perish. Tis^[1] Sin that hath shut the gates of heaven against us, and only a true and sincere penance hath the power to open them. ~~My subject is somewhat sad, being opposed to corrupt nature~~ The subject I am going to treat of appeareth harsh to corrupt nature, The subject I am going to treat of, is somewhat afflicting, ~~it being~~ as it is opposed to

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corrupt nature: ~~But we must necessarily pass these~~ But we must not exempt ourselves therefrom; it is as general a law as is that of death; a law without dispensation, a rule without exception. We must necessarily resolve to do penance or be damned [perish] for all eternity. But how ill is this word penance understood in the World? How grossly do people deceive themselves? They form an Idea of it according to their own fancies and by seeking to make it easy, they entirely destroy it. Let us strive to disabuse ourselves of this error; and after having established that penance is absolutely necessary to salvation, let us examine in what it consistis [consists]. ~~This is the whole~~
The subject of my discourse[.]

Tis an unchangable [unchangeable] decree of Almighty God, in consequence of Original Sin, to conduct man to eternal happiness by no other way than that of penance: Hence all religion tends to render man truely [truly] penitent: Hence the holy Scripture is one continual Lesson of penance. ~~The holy Scripture expre As soon as our first Parent had fallen from Original Justice~~

It^[2] ~~The Holy Scripture~~ expressly remarks, that as soon as our first parent had fallen from Original justice, Almighty God banished him ~~by Almighty God~~ from the terrestrial [terrestrial]

[¹ Marginalia: “Tis” (contract.; “it is”)]

[² Marginalia: “It”]

Paradise, which was a place of delights, and consequently an unjust abode for ~~to do~~

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penance; that he confined him to a land ~~full~~ of [word not stricken] beset^[3] with briars and thorns; that he condemned him to eat his bread at [in] the sweat of his brow. And why all this but to make [give] him to understand, that after his prevarication, he ought no longer to seek for pleasure in this world, but that his life ought to be a continual series of Crosses and Sufferings. We are D^r [Dear] Christians Inheritors of his sin and we ought to be of his penance. All things preach penance ~~unto~~ us. all things give us to understand that we are born to suffer. Our abode is a place of exile, a valley of tears. Our houses are but earth & clay ~~and earth~~. Our body is a prey of [to] all sorts of infirmities [diseases]. Our life is a perpetual combat [conflict] against hunger and thirst, cold and heat infirmities and all sorts of miseries. Even the vilest insects wage war against us and it is with difficulty that we can defend ourselves against them. It seems that all nature hath conspired our death, &^[4] that having discovered in us the offence of our Creator is bent on revenging it. All that we see and all that surrounds us teach us that we are criminals, and therefore of consequence that we ought to do penance.

~~This excuse~~ [excuse] For this reason all the Saints of both the old and new law made this virtue their perpetual study. And by

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this are always known the true Servants of God. Hence also all the Patriarchs and Prophets, all the Apostles and Doctors had no other view in their pressing exhortations, than to establish the necessity of penance and to engage their Auditors to the practice of it. Noah one of the first of these famous preachers of Penance, did not only preach it by word of Mouth, but announced it unto all mankind during a hundred years in which he was building the famous Ark in which he and his family were saved from the universal Deluge. After him all the Prophets of the Jewish nation, continually employed their eloquence to induce their brethren to do true penance; and the whole history of this people is but one continued narration of combats against sin, and of penance. But why do we seek such proofs of the necessity of penance elsewhere than in Jesus Christ, this great penitent, and perfect model of penance. Are not his life and doctrine one continual ~~declaration of predication~~ series of this virtue. His abode for nine months in his mothers womb was a state of perfect annihilation and penance. His birth hapened [happened] [He would be born] in the most severe season, in a stable and in all the

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circumstances that might render it rigid and painful. Eight days after his birth, he made a public

[³ Marginalia (right): “beset”]

[⁴ Marginalia: “&”]

profession of Penance by his bloody Circumcision. During his hidden life he applied [applied] [employed] himself to [in] draw[ing], if I may so express myself a perfect picture [portrait] of penance which he exposed to the view of the whole world in his public life and in his passion and death. He began by causing himself to be announced by the ministry of one of the greatest penitents that had ever existed, I mean S^t John Baptist his illustrious Precursor. Afterwards he employed the three last years of his life in teaching us in what true penance consists. What detachment from the world! What contempt of earth^{ly} things! What poverty in his cloathing, in his nouriture,^[5] and in his whole exterior! Fasting, prayer, and the preaching of his Gospel were his only occupations [his whole employment]. Lastly he died in the highest degree of penance. Ah, let us not deceive ourselves: without penance there is no salvation to be hoped for, our ruin is ~~certain and~~ infallible. You will tell me perhaps that I now propose to you an example which is above your reach [capacity]: No D^r Christians

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Our Saviour hath done nothing for our example but we may do with the assistance of his grace, which he never refuses us when we ask ~~in a proper manner for it~~ it as we ought[.]

He could without injustice, have condemned us to a very austere life, and to the most rigorous penance; it depended on him to have set what price he pleased both on the pardon of our sins and on eternal Glory. But his paternal goodness, his infinite mercy, engaged him to make the burden light and easy which he imposed upon us. But we must also take notice that this will be the subject of our confusion, and our just condemnation if we do not carry [bear] it as we ought. For what proportion is there between the most severe penance and one only mortal sin? What comparison between [between] a fault that comprises an infinite malice, a crime that attacks God himself, the sovereign Lord of all things, and some light mortifications? what propotion [proportion] between the penance that is commanded us and that of the damned. Altho ~~you sho~~ D^r Auditor you should do ~~all the~~ as much penance

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as all the Saints together have done[,] this would be infinitely short of the grievousness of one only mortal offence. But if instead of one mortal sin you have committed a hundred, a thousand; what penance would not be required to destroy this frightful edifice of iniquities[?] Ah, D^r Christians, permit me in this place to testify to you my fear, at the sight of the great number of our Sins, and the little penance that we do. Our faith teaches us that without penance there is neither mercy nor Salvation to be hoped for: Tis moreover certain that penance to be sufficient should have some degree of proportion with the sins committed: now one sees himself loaded with a prodigious number of sins and no penance. And not only hath he done none for the time

[⁵ “nouriture” – (Anglo-Nor., Mid. Fr., Lat.) Nourishment, food, diet.]

past, but neither will he it seems for the time to come. The drunkard ~~will al~~ always leads the same course of life, the lascivious still binds himself to his passion: They will not practice fasting, mortification, or any other penance. The same is to be said of other sinners. What then will become of such unhappy people in Eternity.

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Although a man should have the happiness to conserve his baptismal innocence; yet would he not be dispensed from doing penance, if he doth not stand in need of it to satisfy for sins which he hath not committed, it is absolutely necessary to preserve him in the state of Justice. For what is the life of man upon earth as well of the just as of the sinner but a perpetual warfare? How many temptations to overcome? How many enemies to subdue? How many difficulties daily present themselves in the way of salvation? ~~Penance the~~

Penance then is absolutely necessary to all: to Sinners that the [they] may abandon their crimes; ~~unto~~ to those who have quitted sin in order to satisfy the divine Justice & ~~un to~~ [prefix not stricken] the Just that they persevere in goodness. How senseless then must we not be to refuse to apply to our Souls this Antidote, this Remedy. We know that we cannot find true happiness in this life; and that those that rejoice now with the world will weep with it for all eternity; and on the contrary those who at present shed ~~tears of~~ penitential tears, shall one day rejoice and their joy shall not be taken from them, according to the infalible [infallible] promise of our Blessed Saviour: However we belie by our conduct what we make profession of believing. O prodigious

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blindness! and who can sufficiently bewail it? Let us make a firm and constant resolution to do true penance to the very last moment of our lives, since there is no other resource. But in what does this penance consist? This we shall see in the ensuing part of my discourse.

It is certain that Penance, to be true ought to be according to the rules established by Almighty God: Hence we must have recourse to the Scriptures and holy Fathers. Now I remark in the sacred Text and the holy Doctors who are the faithful interpreters of it, that penance to be true and sincere, must have four principle [principal] qualities which distinguish it from false, and constitute the whole essence of it. First then it ~~must be~~ ought to be proportioned to the sins one [we have] committed and to the wants we have of it in the state ~~he is~~ we are in. 2^{ndly} It must be universal. 3^{rdly} It must be perpetual. Forth^{ly} [Fourth^{ly}] it must be prudent and discrete[.]

I say in the first place that Penance to be sufficient, must be in some manner proportioned to the number and grievousness [grievousness] of the offences of which one hath render'd himself guilty, and to the wants of every state or disposition in which men are in: Consequently it should be accompanied with a just severity. He who says penance, says pain and labour

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penance is destined to purify our Souls from the filth and stains of sin. A soul in the state of mortal sin, is so frightful, that we cannot represent taus [? to us] ~~any thing~~ its likeness [likeness]. The holy Scripture compares it to what is the most horrible in nature, and to [? coalours; “colours”] the most difficult to be effaced. What pains what labour must not be used to restore to it its primitive beauty, and to efface these frightful stains which render it so diffomed [ME var.; deformed] and abominable in the eyes of God? ~~Penance is a furnace where man is proved and purified like gold in the furnace~~ What pains what fatigue doth not one undergo to clear a field entirly; [entirely] from briars and thorns, to pluck up weeds from their very deepest roots which have been there multiplied for a long time. Now penance ought to render [restore] to our souls the innocence that they received in the Sacrament of Baptism; It should destroy all bad habits ~~the most~~ be they ever so inveterate and strong. It ought to render fruitful the earth which is overrun with the briars and thorns of our iniquities. X^[6] Penance hath been substituted, ~~according to the~~ as a holy Doctor of the Ch:C [Church⁷] remarks, to the torments of hell which the Sinner hath merited by his crimes. It is an Abridgment these devouing [devouring] and eternal flames, which are the portion of the Reprobate. ~~Pay now attention~~ Reflect now D^r Aud. [Auditor(s)] on the penance of the unhappy

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victims of the wrath of the Almighty God, who have never any ease or consolation. As many times as you have offended Almighty God mortally, so many times you have deserved the same punishment. What a subject of fear ~~for us~~ D^r Bretheren [Brethren]? And who can think on it without trembling? However our benign Lord hath been pleased to grant us a means of changing this eternal pain into a temporal one which we can Suffer in this life: Tis Contrition and the Sacrament of penance which operate this change; but we must necessarily undergo this temporal pain. We must do penance, and such penance as hath proportion to the multitude and grievousness [grievousness] of our offences; and such hath been ~~the [...]~~ ~~such hath been the~~ penance of all sinners who have been truely [truly] converted. But how shall one dare [we venture] propose to Christians of our days the Examples of penance which the Saints have [X^[8]] What have not the Saints set us[, and which is what penance is not still practiced in many religious houses? Would it not be sufficient to throw [ME var.; throw] them into despair?X These great servants of God, I do not ~~say those~~ speak of those only who had been sinners, but also a great number of those who had always led irreproachable lives, these great servants of

[⁶ “X” – Section demarcated with “x” without explanation. In a corrected sermon, these sections were deleted or modified. In this sermon, also possibly an indication to begin a new paragraph.]

[⁷ Ch:C” – Abbreviation of “Church.” Word truncated at right margin.]

[⁸ “X” – Section demarcated with “x” without explanation. Interlineations have been transcribed as could be determined by context; word order is uncertain. See manuscript.]

God set no bounds to their penance |mortifications|: They consumed themselves by degrees with the rigour of their penance: Like unto the holy King

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David, that great and illustrious penitent, they ate ashes with their bread, and they mingled their drink with tears, their beds were the hard floor, they slept but very little, and their sighs and groans were continual: In a word we read in their lives such extraordinary [? things] on this subject, that one is struck with fear at the recital of them. But what shall I say of the first ages of the Church; of those penances, which, for one only considerable sin, were ~~protracted~~ ~~continued~~ [both words stricken] to five, seven, and ten years, and each year was composed of several forty days fast upon bread and water, and accompanied with circumstance so humiliating and contrary to selfe [self] love, that one cannot read them without astonishment? What to you say to all this Christian Aud. Where shall we now find pretexts to dispense ourselves from doing penance, and a Penance proportionable to our sins as far as our strength will permit.

The second condition of penance is, that it be universal; that is to say, that Penance ought to crucify the whole man according to the Apostle. Take notice now my D^r Aud. of the comparison of the exercise of Penance, with the punishment of Crucifixion: for as the punishment of the Cross causes the petient [patient] to suffer in all the members of his body, so Penance ought to cause the Penitent man to suffer in all the faculties of his soul and in all the members of his Body. It must occupy his mind, in order to make him often think on the means of appeasing the wrath of God; it must occupy his will, in order that he may attach himself entirely |wholly [ME var.; wholly]| to God, that he may have a love for spiritual things, and ~~destroy that~~ ~~he~~ may destroy in himself all inordinate affection to creatures;^[9] it must occupy his memory, ~~in~~ ~~order~~ to put him continually in mind of his crimes, to the end that he may

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detest them above all things, and watch carefully over himself that he doth not fall into them again. In the same manner with regard to the Body, penance ought to make it a victim [ME var.; victim] of mortification. X^[10]

The true Penitent ought to make no more use of his eyes than to cast looks full of modesty, and never more turn them to the vanities of the world. He ought to make no other use of his ears, than to hear the word of God, and pious and edifying discourses, at least never wicked obscene, and dangerous; nor ever more to harken to detractions, oaths, licentious discourse & other criminal speeches. He ought not to make use of his hands and feet but to act and labour with fervour in the affair of his salvation. His tast [ME var.; taste] ought to be mortified. In a word all his

[⁹ “creatures” – Things that are created (in this context, especially by man), material goods.]

[¹⁰ “X” – Section demarcated with “x” without explanation. In a corrected sermon, these sections were deleted or modified. In this sermon, also possibly an indication to begin a new paragraph.]

passions and concupiscences ought to be perfectly submissive to the law of his Lord. He ought to give himself intirely [ME var.; entirely] to God, and to seek to please him alone.

X^[11] The third condition of Penance is its perpetuity; that is, that it must not frnish [furnish^{12]} but with his life: and the reason there of is very clear; for we ought to do penance as long as the motives that engage us last. Now these motives will not cease till death. We ought to do penance because we have sined [sinned] and know not whether we have obtained pardon of them. Ah, this incertitude is terrible |dreadful|! I know that I have offended God mortally; I know therefore that I have merited the torments of hell: But I know not neither shall I know before the day of my judgment whether my offences are remitted.

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It was this incertitude that caused so much fear in the Saints. It was this fear of a future bad state that made holy David to say: Lord enter not into judgment with thy servant. And the same fear made St Paul say that although his conscience did not reproach him with any thing, yet he did not know that he was justified before God. X^[13a] In effect, god is not obliged to pardon the sinner after he has abandoned him by his infidelities. He could leave him in the precipice wither he hath wilfully [ME/Brit. Eng.; willfully] thrown himself. Sin cannot be remitted without Contrition; now contrition is a supernatural gift[,] it comes from the Holy Ghost. ~~Why then do~~ How then should we not continually bewail our sins and do penance till our death? X^[13b] But although we were assured of the pardon of our Sins as a David, a St Peter, a Magdalen were, we should not therefore cease to be obliged to do penance untill [ME var.; until] death, after the example of these illustrious Penitents, because untill [until] the end of our lives, we shall be in danger of falling again into sin, and there is only penance that can guard us |it is by penance that we are to guard ourselves| against this evil. Let us then take up our abode upon the Cross of Jesus Christ our good Master, to the last moment of our life; Let us persevere with courage in the practice of a true and sincere penance.

Finally the fourth condition of Penance is Discretion. Penance ought to be prudent, conformable to the age, state, employments, & strength of each particular. There are penances which are proper for all people, and there are others that are that are only proper for some. Let us enter into a short detail on this subject. There are in the first place penances that are imposed by God himself; and these are the most excellent and assured |secure| of all, because they are according to the order of Providence, and self love hath no part

[¹¹ “X” – Section demarcated with “x” without explanation. In a corrected sermon, these sections were deleted or modified. In this sermon, also possibly an indication to begin a new paragraph.]

[¹² “frnish” – “A miswriting of “furnish”: completed, fulfilled; (Brit. dial.) completely developed.]

[^{13a} “X” – Section demarcated with “x” without explanation. In a corrected sermon, these sections were deleted or modified. In this sermon, also possibly an indication to begin a new paragraph.]

[^{13b} Marginalia: “X”]

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in them. Such are Crosses, afflictions, sickness, long infirmities, the loss of goods, poverty [? ME var. (pou/pouu/pouv); poverty], adversity, the labours and pains attached to every Condition, and in a word all the miseries and necessities of the present life. As the number is almost infinite, and they are continual, ~~one~~ has [word not stricken] |we have| therefore occasions of suffering and consequently of doing penance without ceasing. But we must be perfectly resigned and entirely [entirely] submissive to the will of God, no murmurs |without murmuring or complaining|, no impatience otherwise we shall suffer without merit. In the second rank we place the Penances imposed by the Church; as the fast of Lent and certain other days, the other practices of piety which she ordains, & the Penances which are enjoined us by our Confessors in the Sacred Tribunal of Confession. These are Penances very meritorious when they are performed in the manner that we are obliged. In the third rank we place the Penances of our state and Condition; the labours, the pains, the [word not stricken] ~~sweats~~, the fatigues, the inquietudes |uneasinesses| which everyone experiences in his profession. What painful life doth not the greater part of mankind lead in the world? Poor of our Lord what sufferings! Servants, tradesmen [tradesmen], Labourers, what pain, what fatigues! Fathers and Mothers, masters and mistresses, heads of families [families], what cares, what sollicitudes [ME var.; sollicitudes]! If you suffer all this with holy dispositions, what a treasure of merit for Eternity! But how doth it ordinarily happen? People suffer like brute animals, without reflection without attention, without any intention, without any desire of pleasing God: Or otherwise by force |constraint|; by necessity because they cannot ~~do better~~ |[? avoid¹⁴]| |avoid [word duplicated] ~~help~~ it|, and all that is lost |this, [...]|. Or, what is still worse, they suffer |abandon themselves| in [? sevaring; “severing”] [? of them], in in [word duplicated] being impatient; in murmuring |i[...]x murmurs, and perhaps to [? cursing Jesus, ...]|;^[15] and far from having room to expect a |hopes of a| recompense in Eternity,

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from so many pains and sufferings, they will be punished for |must exp[ect] nothing [? but] punishment on account of| the evil dispositions with which they endured them. What strange blindness! In suffering with patience, your pains would be much lighter, the Testimony of your conscience would comfort you, and you would be supported with the hope of soon seeing eternal happiness succeed some passing |these momentary [momentary]| pains: But in suffering as people commonly do, with bad dispositions, the heart is filled with Bitterness, the

[¹⁴ Word interlined below sentence.]

[¹⁵ Phrase demarcated with “x” without explanation. Preceding section heavily interlineated and illegible. Sentence structure/word order is uncertain and transcribed as could be determined by context. See manuscript.]

Conscience is racked |tortured|, and there is no room to expect other changes than from this miserable life to another whose pains are infinite because eternal.

Behold Christian Bretheren [Brethren], the Principal condition of true Penance[.] You see how easy it is for you to do it with the help of Gods grace. You see how many means you have of doing it. What confusion for you, when at the day of judgment it shall be placed before your eyes what worldlings and libertines shall have done to please the world, to satisfy their passions, and to follow their evil inclinations, whilst you would do nothing, to procure to yourselves an Eternity of happiness, immense riches, the possession of God himself. Enter into yourselves then D^r Aud. and begin from the present time to do true penance, without which your ruin |loss| is certain. To do this penance it is not necessary, as some wrongly imagin [imagine], to do extraordinary things: To go into a Desert, to fast upon bread and water. There is only question of suffering ~~with~~^p the pains of your state with patience, to fulfill well the duties of your charge; to observe faithfully the law of God; to frequent the Sacraments with piety; to lead a Christian & edifying life; carefully to flee the occasions of sin & to refuse yourselves all forbidden pleasures. By this means you will one day have the happiness to tast [taste] the fruits of Penance. Ah how sweet they will appear to you on your death bed, how delicious you will then find them, and you will be well indemnified for the little bitterness you found in penance! But you will find it quite a different thing |what will [? ... your ...¹⁶]|, when you come to be fully satiated & [? as] it were overflowing with the Torrents of delights that the Almighty Lord in his mercy has prepared |reserved| for true Penitents. This is what I heartily wish you[.] In the Name of the Father &c. [etc.]

[¹⁶ Preceding section interlineated and illegible. Sentence structure/word order is uncertain and transcribed as could be determined by context. See manuscript.]