JAMES ARCHER SERMONS [52]

Psalm 83:2–3

A Discourse for a Religious[1] Profession

Quam dilecta tabernacula tua, Domine virtutum! concupiscit & [*et* [2]] *deficit anima mea in atria Domini*.

How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. Ps 83. V. 1. & 2.[3]

Behold Dr Sister what were the only desires of a holy King whom Almighty God had raised to the sumit [summit] of Glory prosperity and abundance. It was not the splendour of the throne, the number of his victories nor the magnificence of his reign that affected him with such a lively joy. But the holy ark the tabernacle of the living God which he saw himself at a distance from by the rebellion of his Son; the consolation of repairing thither to pour forth his Soul before the Lord, to ring in his presence Canticles of thanksgiving; to mix his tears with the blood of Victims;

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to celebrate in the midst of the Sons of Aaron the memory of the benefits, with which God had heretofore favourd [favoured] his people; to meditate on the wonders of his law and the promises made to his fore fathers; behold all that appeared to him worthy of regret in the dignity and power which a rebellious son had devested [var.; divested] him of.

Such likewise Dr [Dear] Sister are the holy dispositions which grace has put in your heart. The holy consolations of a religious retirement the happiness of coming to lead a hidden life with your God hath appeared to you more worthy of your desiree [desire] |choice| than all the glory of the world and its vain promises. <u>my Soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord</u>.

Blessed o my God! have you not repeatedly said |cried out| with the holy Prophet, blessed are they that dwell in [thy/this] house, and Who secure from the danges [dangers] and seduction of the World are continually

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occupied in singing thy praises and proclaiming thy eternal mercies. Happy the soul O my God! who seeing, in this Vale of tears,[4] nothing but vanity and affliction of Spirit, forms the

[1 Archer uses the term “Religious” in this sermon as both adjective and noun. In the latter, meaning those who are bound by monastic vows or devoted to a spiritual life.]
[2 Archer has used the ampersand, the symbol for “and.”]
[3 Archer omitted the introductory verse to this Psalm in his citation; see verses 2–3.]
[4 See Psalm 83:5–7.]

generous resolution of adhering to you |thee| alone; and of ~~advancing by~~ assending [ME var.; ascending] by degrees |gradually| to that sublime state of a total disengagement from all creatures,[5.] unto that religious perfection, that the world and all its glory appeare [ME var.; appear] to her but a vain attom [ME var.; atom] |as unworthy of her notice|.

I do not mean D^r^ Sister that in the House of God wherein you are about to make your solemn engagement to him that there is nothing but consolations[.]

These are snares on the Thabor [var.; Tabor] according to the Prophet Ozee [Lat.; Hosea] as well as in the plains of Samaria: There are temptations in the religious state as well as in the World. It will not therefore be sufficient for me to entertain you at present only with the consolations of this state but I must

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also speak to you of its temptations. For although it is proper to encourage your faith, to display to you the consolations which J. C. [Jesus Christ] has prepared you in this holy retirement and that my feeble discourse will be far short of exposing to you the abundance of his gifts and the riches of his mercy yet it is not less essential to put you on your gard [ME var.; guard] against the snares that you may meet will therein. The subject then of my discourse is to expose to you the temptations and consolations of the Religious state, that is, to fortify you against its temptations in order that you may [be] the better enabled to enjoy its consolations but before we proceed Let us &c. [etc.] Ave.[6]

Son when thou comest to the service of God, prepare thy soul for temptation. Ecclus. 2.1.[7] This advice is ~~so much~~ the more essential to the souls that consecrate themselves to J. C. in the religious life as they may think that all is |their work is| done when they have renounced the world and embraced

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this religious |holy| state. However the religious state D^r^ Sister unto which God Almighty has called you, divine as it is, and which renders you on earth what like unto the Angels are |in| in [interlined word duplicated] Heaven is not exempt from temptations X[8] ~~and many unfaithful Religious have yielded to them~~./[9] Now there are three that I particularly notice and exhort you to gaurd [guard] against. The Temptation of time; the temptation of disgust, and the temptation of example.

First the temptation of time[.]

[5 "creatures" – Things that are created (in this context, especially by man), material goods. Also, those who are under the influence of, dependent on, or subservient to someone or something.]
[6 "Ave." – (Lat. *aveo*, *avere*: be well, welcome, hail, farewell) (1) An abbreviation of "Ave Maria"; (2) an expression of greeting or valediction.]
[7 Archer has omitted a portion of the scripture. See Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 2:1.]
[8 Marginalia: "X"]
[9 Demarcated with "/" without explanation. In some corrected sermons, rewritten as a separate paragraph or modified.]

Yes Dr Sister the commencements of a religious life are ordinarily faithful and fervent, the first foundations of ~~a religious life~~ the spiritual edifice are laid with great zeal and alacrity this is manifested in you during the year of your probation nothing has appeared difficult to you, you have flown to whatever duty and example has called you. The same fervour I have no doubt will will [word duplicated] continue for some time[.] But the danger which I exhort

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you to beware of is that after a few years spent in fervor you may be tempted to repose yourself, to admit of relaxation, to think that that [word duplicated] rigorous observance of your holy rule and constitutions is only necessary for Beginnres [Beginners].

To preserve the grace of your vocation you must remember Dr[10] Sister, that the Spirit of the religious life which you are about to engage in, is the same for all ages, that the wise and pious rules which your holy founder has instituted are the same for all the spouses of J.C here assembled, the same for those who first embrace them as for those who have a long time borne the yoke of the Lord. Hence as the sanctity of your state is always the same, your fidelity must be always the same. In a word the last hour of your happy course ought to resemble in zeal and & fervor, this in which you now enter upon it.

But what do I say my Dr Sister? It

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will not be sufficient for the last hour to be equal to the first. The more you advance in the time of your religious profession, the more you ought to increase in[11] the grace of your state, in the disire [ME var.; desire] of your perfection, in the love of your duties and of your rule. The longer you have been in Religion, the more those who embrace your holy state of Life will look up to you and regulate their conduct by yours; they will explain their duties by your fidelity or negligence. And thus Almighty God will require of you a greater fidelity in your duties and a greater perfection in your example. He that doth not advance in the ways of God goeth back. And the Holy Ghost pronounces a curse against those who do the work of God negligently. J. Christ Also says that no one, putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God. Luke 9. 62.

Remember then Dr Sister that all the time of this life as holy Job says is a perpetual warfare[12] and therefore repose is not to be sought for till the end; the more we advance in years the nearer we approach this happy term. The nearer our happy |blessed|

[10 A miswriting giving the appearance of a lowercase letter "f" instead of an uppercase letter "D" in the abbreviation "Dr" (Dear)." In Archer's handwriting, the lowercase "f" is differentiated by extension below the sentence baseline. For other examples, see manuscript, same page, first line of last paragraph; see also similar (although stricken), page 14, second line of last paragraph.]
[11 Marginalia: "in"]
[12 See Job 7:1; 14:14.]

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country[13] appears to our view, the more our desires ought to be enflamed to arrive at it, the more ought all creatures to appear unworthy of our attachment, and the more zealous and fervent ought we to be in every duty of religion.

The second temptation in a religious life is disgust.

The beginning of a Christian and religious life is accomplished with a certain tenderness |tender affection| of heart which renders all religious exercises sweet and easy; but this generally wears off; and then our inclinations which are at first so docile, begin to rebel against the yoke; ~~from thence~~ discouragement follows, and the duties of the religious life become irksome and disgusting.

To guard yourself against this danger, hearken D^r^ sister to the following advice and imprint it deeply in your memory[.]

The first advice is that the disgust that we experience in the ways of God for the most part proceeds from a want of fidelity in our duties. It is not until we seek mitigations that our duties become painful and disagreable [ME var.; disagreeable]. It is thought that by admitting a thousand relaxation[s], that the yoke will be rendered more supportable

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whereas it becomes more heavy and disgusting. In those Religious Houses where the primitive fervor is preserved, where the spirit of silence, of prayer, of holy Poverty of mortification is not abated a holy joy manifests itself in the countenances of the Religious, all the spouses of Jesus C. carry his Yoke with such[14] pleasure and alacrity, as surprises the world and they themselves are surprised that the world should be amazed at their contentment and happiness in the state of retirement, privation and austerity. Whereas, disgusts and murmurs reign in those unhappy houses where primitive fervor is no more, where their ancient regularity is no longer observed, where all the religious observances are changed, it is there that are found many unfaithful virgins, discontented and unhappy in their state carrying the sad remains of the Yoke of the Lord with restraint and disgust.

Thus D^r^ S. [Dear Sister(s)] if you should ever experience these disgusts in the holy life in which you are about to engage yourself; examine well your heart and see if there be not there some secret principle of infidelity to your God which infests all your religious duties, and causes him to withdraw himself from you;

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see if these disgusts are not in punishment of your relaxations; if you have not degenerated from your first fervor, if you do not ~~nourish selfwill~~ adhere to your own will; if you do not nourish some secret dislikes or too much of human predilections; see if you have not rejected a thousand

[13 Marginalia: “country”]
[14 Marginalia: “such”]

inspirations of Grace; if ~~y have~~ you have not yielded too much to humour, sloth, and a thousand little attachments; Sound your heart and you will find that these disgusts proceed not from your duties but from yourself.

Not D^r S^r [Dear Sister(s)] which is a 2^nd^ advice; not that disgusts are not sometimes experienced by the most fervent and faithful Souls; and you must not expect to be exempt from tasting some bitterness in the service of Jesus C. These are trials he makes use of to purify our hearts, and to perfect our actions[.] When we first enter his service he supports us by sensible consolations; it is a milk with which he nourshes [nourishes] our weakness; as we are as yet infants of grace, & weak in faith, he conducts us by sweet and easy paths. But when we have made progress in his divine Service, he treats us as as [word duplicated] strong men: he nourishes us with the bread of truth, the bread of the perfect and which is often times the bread of tribulation and bitterness |affliction|. But what ought

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to comfort you in this state is, to reflect that your Lord does not require of you sensible devotion but fidelity. That this state appears the most proper for a Soul that has taken the Cross of J. C. for her portion; that the less our Lord supports us by spiritual sweetness, the more he supports us by strengthening ~~us by fortifying~~ our faith and encreasing [ME var.; increasing] our courage; that he does not permit this time of darkness and desolation to last |be lasting| and that more abundant lights and consolations always succeed; finally if he sometimes prolongs the time, it is that he is jealous of our Whole heart, and that he would have us serve him for himself alone.

The last temptation is that of example; This is one of the most dangerous in the religious life.)[15] Yes my D^r Sister however holy this house be to which divine Providence has called you[,] you cannot expect that no one should be found in it in whom faith appears more weak, piety more languishing, and the grace of vocation more doubtful.

Now nothing is more to be feared than the contagion of this Example.) For if D^r Sister there was question of examples) |I do not speak of| of [word duplicated] manifest ~~irregularities~~ |great & glaring faults|[16] hithertofore unheard of in this holy house) |~~Commnunity~~| you would easily guard yourself against them |such|: they would find in you that horror and indignation which they merit. But they are examples represented to us under the specious colour of innocence, some light comforts and alleviations that seem almost necessary to human weakness, which insinuate themselves agreeably to our

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propensity, which wants no other apology, than the single example of one of our sisters to justify them. (Moreover as these unfaithful virgins are for the most part those whose society is the most

[15 ")" – Demarcated with close (right) parenthesis without explanation. Note also, similar usage following.]
[16 Archer's intention here is unclear. The initial sentence and interlineations have been transcribed as could be determined by context. Word order/sentence structure is uncertain; see manuscript.]

agreeable and engaging, ~~it is therefore~~ it is the more difficult to withstand their example, & thus) connexions [var.; connections] are formed that destroy regularity |and to form a connexion destructive of regularity|.

But what remedy is there, D^r S^r [Dear Sister] against a contagion so much to be feared even in the holy place?

The first is to reflect that God permits these examples of relaxations even in the most fervent houses for a trial of faithful Souls; that it is necessary that there should be temptations in the ways of God; if all piously performed all their duties, we should have the merit tis true of fidelity but we should not have that of fortitude and resistance. 2^ndly often to call to mind the example of those holy Virgins who first walked in the ways of this fervent institute who spread so great an odour of sanctity throughout the Church that the world itself was constrained |forced| to admire the gifts of God in them. To ~~cast your eyes on~~ |~~fix our~~ behold| their pictures and represent them to you as still living to reproach you of your infidelities and to animate you with their spirits and by the extreme difference that that you will find between them and you excite yourself to walk in their footstepts [footsteps] at least at a distance. The third is, without seeking examples from those who have preceeded [ME var.; preceded] us, always to propose to yourself that of your fervent sisters who prodeed [proceed] with fidelity in the ways of the Lord, and who labour courageously to attain to the perfection of their state; to study their conducts, to love their society, & to seek their confidence. It is now time to lay before you the advantages & consolations of the Religious life to which the mercy of J. C. has called you.

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The religious state D^r S. [Dear Sister] in which you are about to engage yourself, has these three advantages over the world. 1^st the temptations therein are lighter, 2^nly the helps are greater, and 3^ly the consolations are more pure & more abundant.

1^st Temptations are less, because the three great causes of the destruction of innocence exercise but a part of their malice and dominion over us. The first temptation of the human life is that of riches: now religious Poverty secures us from this temptation, i.e.[17] from attachment to them, from the unjust use which is made of them, and from the cares which always accompany the acquisition as well as the preservation of them.

What |How| great is the happiness D^r S^r ~~is that~~ of a Spouse of J. C. who devesting [var.; divesting] herself of every |all terrene|[18] things deprives the enemy of every hold he could have on her! what a happiness to have J. C. for her only treasure, to renounce futile & insignificant goods, the use of which tho it appears |apparently| innocent is seldom without sin, to enjoy true peace of mind! What a happiness to possess only the riches of grace, which no one can rob us of, and which alone will accompany us to Heaven! O my God! from hence forth my only inheritance

[17 "i.e." – (Lat. *id est*) "that is"]
[18 "terrene" – (Lat./ME) Terrestrial, of the earth, worldly, secular.]

|portion| shall be the observance of your holy law! *Portio mea Domine, dixi custodire legem tuam*.[19] Thrice happy am I[,] O my Lord, that you should be pleased to give yourself to me in exchange for a miserable and frivolous world which I sacrifice to thee!

The sacrifice which you are about to make to J. C. of your Body in consecrating it to

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perpetual continency, renders you victorious over the flesh, which is the second temptation of the human life. By the temptations of the flesh I do not mean D^r S^r those ignominious passions only which it is so difficult to guard ourselves against in the world; from which the first morals are seldom exempt, and which oftentimes defile the whole career of life, I mean also assemblies, and public pleasures from whence I do not see how innocence can come off unblemished there are so many snares for the eyes, so many licentious discourses for the ears, and so many scandals for modesty, I mean likewise the dangers in Matrimony. How many unhappy Mariages [ME var.; Marriages] how many scandalous devorces [ME var.; divorces]. O my God stretch forth the hand of thy mercy and draw me out of this filthy region, this land of death, corruption and sin, and conduct me into a land of peace and innocence where I may forever bless and praise your holy name and proclaim the wonders of your grace to my Soul. *Educ de custodia animam meam ad confitendum nomini tuo*[.] Ps 141.8[20]

What disquiets! what dangers! What temptations do you not secure yourself from this day by the sacrifice of your Body to your celestial Spouse. But the sacrifice of your will which you are about to make to him by the solemn vow of obedience, preserves you from ~~no less troub~~ much confusion and disorder. For D^r S^r

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that liberty which ~~the world~~ Worldlings so much boast of, as their [words unstricken] ~~sovereign happiness~~, is the source of that disquiet |& disorder|[21] which embitters all their pleasures and is the cause of the little regularity that is found in their lives-|so much irregularity in their lives|. But in the religious life, everything is in order. Every hour hath its fixed employment. t~~hus the Our~~ This natural inconstancy is ~~kept with bounded~~ restrained by the uniformity of rules. Temptation to sloth and inaction which is so often seen in the world is not to be feared here. The whole life of a religious person is regulated. All her days are full, all her moments occupied. Besides when we have renonced [MF/ME var.; renounced] our own wills ~~we shall be under the guidance of~~ God himself will be our Guide. We shall joyfully comply with whatever our rule prescribes because we carry with us the order of God who conducts us to it and if sometimes our inclinations should revolt against the rule, the order of God will animate us to the performance of it and will immediately requite us by an interior joy and consolation for the little ~~joy and can so~~ violence we have offered to ourselves.

[19 "*Portio mea Domine...*" – "O Lord, my portion, I have said, I would keep thy law." See Psalm 118:57.]
[20 "*Educ de custodia animam...*" – "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name."]
[21 Marginalia: "& disorder"]

In the second place the helps we meet |find| with in a religious life are much more abundant that[22] in the world. ~~The exercises of Religion~~ Our religious exercises mortify the passions, regulate the senses[,] nourish fervor, ~~and perfect all virtues~~ annihilate by degrees all selflove, and perfect all virtues. In the world all occupations are crimes or dangers. Here all ~~the occupations~~ are virtues or conducive thereunto. Every step

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is an advancement towards heaven. Works even the most indifferent have their merit by obedience which regulates them.

You have the aids of example. What a happiness D^r^ S^r^ to live amongst faithful virgins, who inspire you with the love of your duty, who render it amiable to you, who support you in our discouragements; who carrying the yoke with you render it easy to you. In the world we must be perpetually upon our gard [ME/Scot. var.; guard] against all about |around| us. Here ~~all that~~ every thing is instructive to us: And whatever progress we make in the way of God, we find others before us.

You have the aids of Charity, and attention of your Sisters. What a happiness to pass the remainder of your life amongst persons who love you, who compassionate[23] you in your affictions [afflictions], are attentive to your wants, and ready to afford you in the sincerity of their tenderness & Charity every assistance and comfort of life. In vain D^r^ S^r^ will you look for the like happiness in the world. Alas! people live there in the midst of anemies [ME var.; enemies], those who are united in friendship with us, are for the most part thus united ~~to us~~ through interest or some human motive; hence we incessantly hear people say that it is a rare thing to find a true friend, because it is very rare that Charity unites their hearts. But here all hearts are our own because all belong to the same Master; the same interest; the same hope unites them.

To all these exterior helps, add D^r^ Sister the interior graces which Almighty God will shower down abundantly upon you according to his promise; which will not only render his yoke & the apparent rigours of this holy solitude easy, but even amiable and delightful. He will give you that peace of mind which the world is ignorant of, and cannot give you. That joy which proceeds from a pure conscience[,] that happy tranquility which a Soul enjoys that is dead to all sublunary[24] things; relishing God alone, desiring God alone, and destined for God alone. What quiet, what repose my D^r^ Sister. all desires extinguished excepting that of going to enjoy your spouse and Saviour J. C. a happiness I sincerely wish you In the Name &c. [etc.]

[22 "that" – Archer frequently uses "that" for "then," accepted usage in the early to late modern periods, and perhaps derived from a shortening of the phrase "than/then that."]
[23 "compassionate" – *v.* To show compassion, to pity.]
[24 "sublunary" – (Lat. *sublunaris*; under the moon) Worldly, terrestrial, material, temporal, mundane; of minor importance.]