

Transcription Note for James Archer Sermons 62 and 72

Sermons 62 and 72 comprise a related pair. The chronological order of these sermons is unknown, although Sermon 62 appears to be the original draft; Sermon 72 the revised and corrected copy, apparently written in Archer's own hand at some later date. Sermon 72 is a closely related and condensed version of Sermon 62. Textual alterations consisted of synonymic changes in selected words and phrases, the deletion or addition of words, sentences, and paragraphs, and significant rephrasing. Stylistic modifications involved changes in abbreviation, punctuation, and capitalization. Both sermons have been transcribed and annotated in their entirety.

JAMES ARCHER SERMONS [62]

Luke 9:23

A Profession Discourse

Dicebat autem ad omnes: si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsem, & [et] tollat crucem suam quotidie.

And he said to all. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily. Words taken out of the 9th C. of S^t Luke and 23rd V.

Tis not only to those who aspire to religious perfection that the Saviour of the world here addressees [addresses] him self but to all mankind, he said to all remarks the Evangelist: He excepts neither age, sex, nor condition; he requires of all that, from the moment they become Christians, they deny themselves and take up their Cross daily in order to be of the number of his disciples[.] At the time our Blessed Saviour spoke these words there were neither Cloisters nor Monasteries. It is true, he declared that Celebacy [var.; Celibacy] and the renunciation of the goods of fortune did not regard all persons.

[2]

All men receive not this word, but they to whom it is given[.] S^t Matth: 19th V. 11th But as to mortification and self denial he exempts no one *dicebat ad omnes*.)^[1] If the World thinks that it hath ~~derogated from~~ abrogated this law by its contrary practice, let it know that there is no prescription against the Gospel and that the word of J.C. [Jesus Christ] yields neither to the power of the Great, nor to the Pride of the wise, nor to the authority of the Rich nor to the softness of the voluptuous: *dicebat autem ad omnes*.)

It is ~~on account of being~~ because you D^r C S^r [Dear Christian Sister(s)] are thoroughly convinced of the importance and necessity of this christian abnegation,^[2] that you D^r Sister have determined to embrace |enter into| this state of life. You have applied to yourself personally these words which J.C. spoke to all mankind, but you have applied them ~~to yourself~~ in a manner very different from that which people in the world do; tis not in seeking modifications to this truth which it will not permit, but you embrace it with all its force.) You have not only taken up the Cross but a very heavy one: this

[¹ Sections demarcated with right (close) parenthesis without explanation. Perhaps intended to be used as a virgule (/); in some corrected sermons rewritten as a separate paragraph. See passim and in comparison with Sermon 72.]

[² “abnegation” – In this sense: Self-denial, renunciation, sacrifice.]

[3]

humble and penitent habit, this Rule which is so repugnant to nature;^[3] this retirement |by|^[4] which you deprive yourself, not only of all intercourse with the the [word duplicated] world but even of the sight of it; this crucified life, which caused you, as I may say, |) you are desirous of engaging on a state of life in which you may| die daily and to be reborn daily to new sufferings, to immolate yourself incessantly and every hour to renew your sacrifice.

Tis ~~not therefore~~ not therefore retirement into a Convent that will be a security of a person's virtue. Tis not even the sanctity of the habit and profession that will secure a religious^[5] person from the enemies of his Salvation. These are helps tis true but there must be added thereunto the continual practice of self denial whether by this term be understood the interior mortification of the passions or or [word duplicated] by it be comprised the mortification of the senses, which ought |are| only to be considered as the means of attaining to the other: As long has [ME var.; as] he adheres to this practice, which is as it were |I may say| the Soul of Religious orders he need not fear all the attacks of the enemies of his salvation

[4]

the Devil, the World and the flesh. And why so? Because 1st a continual practice of selfdenial is a preservative against great sins, which are exposed to who follow their natural inclination. 2^{ndly} the same self abnegation is a remedy that wipes off the daily faults which are committed through human frailty. the Subject of my discourse.

I acknowledge, my friends that that the wise according to the flesh |world|, who behold with a profane eye the ordinary practices of religious Communities hold them in contempt, and think it astonishing that man should reduce himself to such state of slavery as to debar himself the most innocent satisfactions. They say ~~to themselves~~ that the yoke of the law is heavy enough without burthening oneself with so many works of supererogation,^[6] and that after all a person may be saved by more easy ways. Thus speak |say they| those who are insensible of the extreme frailty of man and of the difficulty of the Law. But whoever ~~hath seriously reflected~~ is sensible of

[5]

one the one and the other and shall have entered into the spirit of the Gospel, will admire the wisdom of ~~so many holy Founders, and~~ the Founders of so many religious Orders and will

[³ "this Rule" – A reference to a rule or guide for the conduct of monastic life. See also below, page 13 and f.n. 19.]

[⁴ Marginalia: "by"]

[⁵ "religious" – Archer uses the term "religious" in its noun form, meaning those who are bound by monastic vows or devoted to a spiritual life.]

[⁶ "supererogation" – (Lat.: *super*; in addition, beyond + *erogare*; to pay out, expend, distribute, give) In Roman Catholic theology, morally good deeds and acts that exceed those required for salvation (e.g., charity, beneficence, chastity, obedience). See also, related scriptural allusions: Matthew 5:39–42, 19:16–30; Luke 10:30–37, 17:9–10; 1 Corinthians 7:7–8; James 4:17.]

acknowledge that they could not require less to conduct us ~~to the by a secure way~~ with safety to the end which we aspire to.

In fact, my friends, they well foresaw that whatever means they should take to conduct men to the sovereign degree of perfection, that but a small number of Religious would be distinguished ~~in Religious Houses~~ by consummate virtue. However they well knew that it was necessary to provide for the Salvation of others, and that in order to bring them to the perfect observance of the Law, it would be necessary for them to aspire to some thing higher. Having every thing to fear from the frailty of man, they required of him the observance of evangelical perfection, that he might not be wanting ~~[fail]~~ in that which is necessary for Salvation. Convinced by a long and fatal experience of his extreme weekness [ME var.; weakness] which always causes him to fall short of what he

[6]

proposes, they judged very properly that if he did not aim at something more sublime than the simple observance of the Law, he would not attain to that which is essential.

Hence in order to preserve him from great vices, they have used their endeavours to root out even the least imperfections. Thus in order to prevent ambition, so natural to man, they would have him stifle this monster in its very birth, that he be formed to the continual exercise of humility; that he live in silence and in hidden retirement; that care be taken to ~~form him to a constant~~ familiarise him to a contempt of himself by ~~[constantly]~~ placing ~~[exposing]~~ his defects to his view before his eyes ~~[him]~~. Thus in order to prevent the disorders of selfwill, they have used so much pains to overcome it, by causing him to do things the most contrary to sense and reason. Thus to prevent the vices of the body ~~[flesh]~~ and to render it subservient to the spirit and the Law, they judged it expedient to mortify it by all those austerities which their zeal inspired them to ordain. And not only to refuse

[7]

him the pleasures which the Law forbids but even those which it permits in order to bring him to subjection and obedience.

Thus in order to root out covetousness, which causes us to love the things of the earth, they would have the religious person divested of every thing, not even to have the propriety of those things that are permitted for his use, that all things about him bear the mark of poverty, that he may thereby be constantly reminded of the State he has embraced. In a word, it was to inspire into religious persons a blind submission to the Divine will, that they have obliged them to renounce their own, and that they have placed this at the head of their Constitutions viz that they apply themselves to the continual practice of selfdenial and the mortification of their senses and passions, persuaded ~~[convinced]~~ that the security of the Religious State depends thereon; and that ~~they they~~ ~~[word duplicated]~~ ~~will find themselves~~ ~~that neglect to~~ overcome ~~[word not stricken]~~ by

~~the enemies of their Salvation~~ the moment they cease to labour to overcome themselves, they will fall a pray^[7] |expose themselves| to their spiritual enimies [ME var.; enemies].

[8]

Religion by the multiplicity of its observances seems to insinuate to all its professors this salutary advice of S^t Paul to the Ephesians: Take unto you the Armour of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day. C. 6. he then gives a detail thereof: the shield of Faith says he, the Sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, the helmet of salvation, all the celestial armour with which the Gospel furnishes a Christian to resist the Enemy.^[8] And why so much preparation? |The Apostle tells you| That you may be able to resist in the evil day. ~~when your salvation is in danger.~~ As though ~~the Apostle~~ he had said to us. Judge not of yourselves by the present disposition of your hearts perhaps you are now in a very composed |peaceable| and happy state; but rely not upon this Calm; a certain day Awaits you when you will stand in need of the most perfect selfdenial and of the purest virtue. Prepare yourselves to stand your ground |firm| in those days of trouble and confusion, wherein it is difficut [difficult] to discern whether J.C. or the world reigns in us; in those critical days |circumstances| wherein Columns of the Church have ~~been seen to~~ fall, Stars of Heaven have been eclipsed, the

[9]

Solitary in the ~~midst of the~~ desert, has perished[.] Those ~~terrible days in fine~~ circumstances in a word so terrible, that all the sanctity of a David, all the wisdom of a Soloman [Solomon], and all the strength of a Samson does not suffice to secure frail man from deplorable falls which are become celebrated examples in history of human frailty.

Remember D^r Sister that your combat is not only against flesh and Blood, but against the most watchful, subtle and cruel Enemy. If he is so artful as to strive to cause you to be neglectful in small things |matters| in order to dispose you to be guilty |the commission| of great faults, make use of the same |like| art against him; deny yourself in [? ~~these~~] little observances, of little moment that you may be able to ~~bear support what is difficult in important occasions.~~ bear up against greater difficulties. You may well find yourself in certain critical occasions in which you will^[9] learn by experience |will teach| that all the combats in which you have been engaged against your passions during the course of many years in Religion were necessary for you to gain the victory in this fatal ~~day moment~~ trial in which the Temptor [Tempter] was laying in wait for you. Moreover it must be acknowledged that the religious person who has been brought up

[⁷ “fall a pray” (ME var.; prey) – To be deceived, influenced, controlled, negatively affected, or harmed by others.]

[⁸ See Ephesians 6:11–17.]

[⁹ Marginalia: “will”]

[10]

in these maxims of selfdenial & abnegation grows daily in Virtue, and becomes^[10] enabled to repel the most violent attacks. She thus becomes that house I may say, of which J.C. speaks, which the fury of the winds and waves in vain attempt [ME/Scot. var.; attempt] to overthrow; it braves the storm because it is founded upon a rock,^[11] whereas those virtuous persons who have not the fundation [ME var.; foundation] of selfdenial are easily caried [ME var.; carried] away because their building was erected on sand [a sand foundation]. The Religious person is not like unto that weak King in the gospel who at the time he ought to engage in Battle is obliged to send an Emassy [Embassy^{12]} to treat for peace and to make a disgraceful avowal of his weakness:^[13] No, he is enabled to withstand the most formidable enemies, of his salvation, because he raised sufficient forces to resist them; he has a long time exercised and prepared himself by light trials to sustain the most arduous conflicts. He does not [~~? plot/plat¹⁴~~] to expose himself to the confusion ~~like unto~~ of the imprudent improvident Architect, who ~~on account of not reeoning~~ [ME var.; reckoning] ~~the charges necessary for~~ But [...] is obliged to [~~? lessen~~] it ~~abandon his undertaking~~ It incompl[...] ~~and to suffer |sustain| the mockery of those who reproach~~ neglecting to reckon his costs becomes a butt of ridicule & derision by y^e[15] consequent abandonment of his enterprize[. ^{16]}

[11]

~~him for not being able to finish the work that he had begun.~~ No he is a wise & prudent workman, who carefully examines himself according to the follows the counsel of the Gospel and seriously reflects in retirement on the means of bringing to perfection this evangelical Tower which he undertakes to erect. In a word he is not unlike to the foolish Virgins, who ~~on account of~~ not having oil in their lamps were not ready when the Spouse arrived: No he is ~~always watching~~ in continual vigilance, after the Eample [Example] of the prudent Virgins^[17] ~~watching every~~ awaiting the moment ~~that he may not fail in that of Eternity~~ desicive [decisive] of his Eternity. You have seen, D^r S^{rs} [Dear Sisters] that the practice of selfdenial is a preservative against great

[¹⁰ Marginalia: “becomes”]

[¹¹ See Matthew 7:24–29.]

[¹² “Emassy” (Embassy) – In this sense: (1) A person or delegation sent on a formal political or diplomatic mission or negotiation; (2) a message sent or delivered by an ambassador.]

[¹³ See Luke 14:28–32.]

[¹⁴ “plot/plat” – (Illegible) Both terms in this sense and context: To plan or devise.]

[¹⁵ Marginalia: “by y^e” – Thorn symbol (y) with superscript “e”; “by the”]

[¹⁶ Section heavily stricken and interlineated. The initial sentence and interlineations have been transcribed as could be determined by context. Word order/sentence structure is uncertain; see manuscript. The sentence without corrections and perhaps as intended:

“He does not expose himself to the confusion of the improvident Architect, who neglecting to reckon his costs becomes a butt of ridicule & derision by y^e consequent abandonment of his enterprize[.]”

[¹⁷ On the parable of the ten virgins, see Matthew 25:1–13.]

faults; it now remains for me to shew you that it effaces the daily faults that are committed through human frailty.

It is an incontestable truth in Christian Morality that God will leave no sin unpunished; either man must efface it by his tears or God will reserve it to his Judgment. I feared all my works said Holy Job, knowing that thou didst not spare the offender.^[18] He does not here speak of the guilt of sin which is remitted

[12]

when a sinner is truly [ME var.; truly] converted to God but of the punishment due to it, which God has been pleased to change from eternal into temporal but does not entirely remit it without atonement.

One of the principal advantages of the Religious State is that the penitent [penitential] and crucified life that is there led in the constant practice of selfdenial prevents in man the severity of Gods Judgments and for this reason the Fathers of the Church regard it as a state of penance. If a fault escape a Religious person from which human frailty is not exempt, it is soon expiated. If there should be some defect in one Religious observance it is immediately satisfied [repaired] by ~~by the a fulfilling~~ the fulfillment [of] another. If it happen that he utter an indiscreet [ME/Scot. var.; indiscrete] word it is forthwith punished by long silence. If some sensuality should take place at a table so frugal as that of Community; it is soon repaired and effaced by fasting and abstinence.

[13]

If [word not stricken] ~~one should withdraw himself in something from obedience,~~ [If in ~~some thing~~ there should be some deficiency in obedience] it is abundantly repayed [ME var.; repaid] by a continual submission in all the actions of life. If ~~there should~~ some negligence should happen in the service of God it is compensated [atoned] for by long and assiduous prayers.) If there still remain some attachment to the World, and a pleasure in conversing with persons of the World[,] this attachment and this pleasure are opposed by the Rule which prescribes limits to interviews and fixes the time and places for them.)^[19] If the mind be occasionally [ME var.; occasionally] somewhat dissipated,^[20] this is avenged by perpetual retirement. this penance is so austere, that people in the World who have made eight days retreat, persuade themselves that they have made a very great and painful satisfaction to Almighty God.

[¹⁸ See Job 9:28.]

[¹⁹ the Rule” – A reference to a rule or guide for the conduct of monastic life. Archer’s mention of the specificity of the rule may indicate the Rule of St. Benedict (*Regula Sancti Benedicti*), promulgated in 516. See the last paragraph of chapters 42 and 53 at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50040/50040-h/50040-h.html>. See also above, page 3 and f.n. 3.]

[²⁰ “dissipated” – In this sense: Wasting one’s moral and physical being through excessive indulgence in pleasure and frivolity; dissolute.]

In a word the lightest sins are therein condemned and more severely punished than the most enormous crimes are in the World.

For which reason S^t Thomas in a book which he wrote on this subject, shews

[14]

that there is no penance in the Church comparable to that of a Religious Life, not even the public penances which where [ME var.; were] the most rigorous the Church ever enjoined, because these were but for a certain [limited] time whereas those of a Religious Life last till death.^[21]

Behold D^r Sister the consolation of a Religious person who lives according to the spirit of his vocation. I know, my God my great weakness, and am grieved, that notwithstanding the Sanctity of my Profession ~~the state State of life which I am about to embrace~~, I cannot live with all that purity of Soul that I could wish: however I live in a state in which I may easily and daily expiate my faults: if I have still^[22] the displeasure of seeing myself guilty of some offence of your adorable Majesty, I have the happiness however of offering you daily satisfaction for it, without waiting till you require it of me. Although your Justice should yield so far as to spare an ungrateful, and rebellious creature, my heart would never consent to it. It is but too just O my God that one who could offend so good a Father should feel [experience] the bitterness of his [her] fault. I am willing O my

[15]

God that this should be the only consolation of my state. It suffices me that I can hope that the penitential life that I have ~~which I am about to~~ embraced for the love of you will be acceptable to you, and that at the great day of ~~vengeance~~ [retribution] ~~||revenge||~~ you will not punish in me what I have already punished in myself. Tis with joy that I will take up my Cross and bear my sufferings, lest I should depart out of this world indebted to your divine Justice: I desire as much as possible to fall into the Hands of your pure mercy and to render myself worthy to possess you as soon as you shall have broken asunder the bonds that keep me here that then my soul may take its flight to the bosom of her divine Spouse there to enjoy his Chast [ME var.; Chaste] embraces. I do not only esteem my state ~~of life~~ because it preserves me from from [word duplicated] great falls but also because it affords me the opportunity of making an immediate satisfaction for my

[²¹ Archer's mention of "a book which he wrote" is perhaps an indication he has conflated Aquinas with Augustine, and is referring to *Liber de Vera et Falsa Pœnitentia* (The Book of True and False Penitence), whose authenticity was attacked by Luther and now widely considered to have been written by pseudo-Augustine (see Lea, H. *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church*, 1896, Vol. 1, p209, second paragraph and footnote 3, <https://books.google.com/books?id=eb0ZAAAAMAJ&vq=vera%20et%20falsa&pg=PA209#v=onepage&q=%22vera%20et%20falsa%22&f=false>). Aquinas refers to this text on several occasions in the *Summa Theologica* (see <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.III.Q84.A10.SC> and passim). No English translation could be located, however a Latin version is available at http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0354-0430._Augustinus._De_Vera_Et_Falsa_Pœnitentia_Ad_Christum_Devotam_MLT.pdf.]

[²² Marginalia: "~~yet~~" corrected to "still"]

daily faults. O happy necessity for me to purify my Soul by a ~~penitential life~~ a life of penance
that at its departure

[16]

hence it may go to the eternal enjoyment of my God. Which may he in his infinite mercy Grant
us all[.] In the Name &c. [et cetera]