Pastores loquebantur ad invicem: transeamus usque Bethlehem & et videamus hoc verbum qd [quod] factum est, & et quod Dominus ostendit nobis.

The Shepherds said to one another: let us go as far as Bethlehem & let us see this word, that is made, which the Lord hath shew’d us[.] Words taken out of the 2nd Chap. of S’ Luke & 15th Verse.

X[1] Come D’ Christians, let us also see this word, whom love hath brought down from his eternal Throne, into a vile Stable and which the Lord here shews us. And the better to comprehend this love we will inform ourselves upon whom it hath made this entire conquest. X

Man framed by the hand of God, to his own image and likeness, free from all blemish of sin, was placed on earth to merit by his obedience the Glory for which he was destined by his great Creator; But Alas! instead of glory, his disobedience drew upon him & his posterity an Eternal Banishment from the face of God, & subjected him to most dire torments. No sooner had guilt insinuated itself into the heart of man, than the powers of Heaven were moved with Compassion & the Son of God mediates our Redemption,

[1 Paragraph demarcated with “x” without explanation.]

[2]

which was only to be effected by taking upon him and suffering in our human nature, which was found delinquent. The self same power, that very God that framed the universe, that formed the Globe, that fixed the Sun, moon and stars in their respective orbits, whose voice all nature obeys, before the whole Consistory of Heaven and in the Council of his own knowledge, decrees himself the Victim of the divine vengeance, and Sacrifice to his own love, to become incarnate, taking upon him our human nature, and in mortal flesh & to die for man. O forcible love! thus to plead for us in the breast of a God, to bring him from his Imperial Throne to place him into the womb of a poor Virgin! We will pass over his nine months tedious imprisonment, confinement, and since his Blessed Nativity is at hand, we will go as far as Bethlehem & see this new Miracle; we will see this word made flesh, which the Lord hath Shewed us.

In order to succeed in this our visit and reap from thence the graces we stand in need of to nourish our faith and piety, to you we humbly address ourselves[.] Most sacred Virgin, beging your powerful intercession with that amiable Son you this day brought forth to the World & who changes into inexpressible joy, your great surprise when the Angels announcing your Conception of this Divine infant saluted you with an Hail Mary[.]
An Edict being given out by cæsar Augustus that all should be enroll’d |A decree was issued by Augustus and published all over the Roman Empire that all persons with their Estates and conditions should be registered at certain places according to their respective provinces, cities & families. Joseph with his espoused wife in compliance thereof repaired to Bethlem and though her time of delivery was at hand, she would not excuse herself from a three days tedious journey, well knowing that he whom she bore in her sacred womb came to be obedient, and to teach the world how pleasing this virtue is in the Sight of God. No sooner had they arrived at Bethlehem than they found themselves destitute of House and were compelled to the necessity of taking up their lodgings in a cold stable company with brute beasts. Cruel Jews, do you begin this early to persecute your Messias? Must he be refused admittance and Hospitality? Could not the condition of his pregnant Mother at least move you to compassion? This is he whom your Prophets have so long foretold, whom they so earnestly desired and ardently sighed after: He comes not to rob you of your temporal possessions, but to bestow upon you eternal blessings: But since you refuse him admittance to your stony hearts, he dispatcheth his Angels to the poor Shepherds to inform them of his Birth, and invite them to the glories of his Nativity. Wonderful are the ways of divine Providence, the Son of God chose to be born of a poor Virgin; to be poorly accommodated and to receive

His first visit from poor and needy Shepherds, to sanctify, in his own person, and by his own example, this state, so much despised and contemned by the great ones of the world. Stulta & contemptabilia hujus mundi elect Deus, ut confundat sapientes; he hath chosen the contemptible & little ones of this world to confound the wise. Had these poor Shepherds been rich and affluent they had not been favored with this joyful news: their hearts would probably been too closely attached to their riches to listen to these Heavenly calls, and instead of adoring might have been of the number of those who Herod-like persecuted this infant God, reviled his Doctrine, or have made part of the Rabble who thirsted after his Blood & compelled Pilate to pronounce his Condemnation. Happy then, thrice happy is that blessed state, which is attended with inconveniences in this life, for no other end than to prepare for the happiness of the next. But let us not mistake, there are those, who possessed of riches, have their hearts disengaged from them and as becomes faithful Stewards, conformably to their masters will, relieve the necessities of the distressed, and thus may be accounted poor; whilst others in indigence may truly be called rich, when dissatisfied with their poor but holy state in which God has placed

[Illegible: 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.]

[Archer has synthesized the Latin Vulgate scripture for this quotation, derived from 1 Corinthians 1:27–28. The word “stulta” is translated as “foolish,” “stupid,” or “simple.” He erred or perhaps intended it very loosely as the “little ones,” correctly translated as “pusillis.”]
them, they incessantly grasp at riches, & their minds, are ever upon the rack how to better their fortunes, leaves them little or no rest obtain them.

It is our lives and morals therefore then a detachment from the things of this world that must make us truely poor; vigilance and punctual care in our Christian duties of a Christian that must animate and put a lustre on our poverty so as to make it pleasing in the sight of God. St Luke informs us that these poor shepherds were keeping the night watch over their flocks when the happy tydings were brought them. Every man is a Shepherd and has at least one Sheep, his own soul to take care of; over this sheep which God hath committed to his charge, he must keep a vigilant |watchful| eye lest it fall a prey to the wolf; he must not only keep the day but the night watch, that is he must never quit the office of a Shepherd, but carefully conduct his sheep to good pasture, nourishing his Soul with the food of good works till God shall think proper to free him from his charge & call to himself the sheep he entrusted to return to his care.

But lest we should wander |not to stray| to far from our Subject, let us enquire of the Shepherds the success of their journey to Bethlehem; Et venerunt festinantes; & they came speedily, and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant laid in a manger. What accommodations for the Son of God! The great ones of the earth Earthly Princes are no sooner brought forth into the world than they are cloathed with purple and rich attire but the King of Heaven hath scarcely wherewith to cover his tender Body, exposed to the bitter inclemencies of the weather. His feeble voice breaks forth into bitter sighs and sobs, not so much at his own hardships as at the sight of mans numberless sins and ingratitude, for it is here he begins to suffer for man in quality

[1 See Luke 2:16.]

of Redeemer; and here he beholds the little benefit that Millions will reap from his love. Here he cries for the Unbeliever & Blasphemer, for the miser and Drunkard, for the lewed & debauched, and unchast miscreants for the many and repeated oaths; for those that are disobedient to the laws of God and his Church; finally he weeps on, because he sees he cannot soften our hearts. Blessed Babe, adorable infant, appease that swelling breast of yours, calm the furious Tempest that is raised in your Soul; dry up those tears and grieve no more: man’s loss is his own; your goodness to him has been has been more than he deserved; nor will your glory be lessen’d, through his loss. Alas! replies this tender lamb, man deserves to suffer for his ingratitude; but Love which has brought me from the bosom of my Father to court his affection |friendship| and to loosen his bonds, pleads too lively in my breast, to see him perish without a tear. he may perhaps at last cast an eye upon my sorrows and be moved to weep for himself. O unparalleled love! Thou infant Parent and best of friends. Thou are no sooner born than miserable |afflicted|, no sooner brought to light |forth in to the world|, than thou beginest to bear us to grace with moreX bitter pangs than our Carnal Mothers bore us in the world.X We will east

[5 “in quality of” – (rare) Distinguishing attribute, nature, or characteristic; title, role, capacity.]
[6 Sentence/phrase demarcated with “x” without explanation.]
regard thy tears and compassionate [—] thy sufferings: we will weep that we have offended thee, and from this day’s Mystery we will learn to love thee. We will learn from the Pulpit of the Crib, from whence thou declamiest to us in so pathetic a manner, to be humble and meek, obedient and mortified. What words can express so clearly unto us the inestimable value of the virtue of humility as does the example of the Son of God in the form of an helpless infant, poorly clad, vilely attended, and laid in a manger. Ah! vain mortals, you who seek to be great and court applause; who would be admired, & are greater in your own eyes that in those of others; who are easily enflamed with resentment, but not easily moved to forgive an affront; if the experience of so many ages cannot disabuse you of the false notion of worldly honour; regulate at least your judgment by that which the incarnate wisdom has made, and reason thus with yourselves. Either Christ or the World is deceived, since the maxims they teach are Contradictory and quite opposite: The one lays before us its honours, riches, pride & vanity, the other poverty, meekness & humility; & which of these two is in the wrong? Ah! if you reason well you will say, it is as impossible that the Divine Veracity & external Wisdom can be deceived in the choice he makes, as that he should deceive us in what in what he says. We will therefore conclude that it is the world that deceived us; & so long as we follow its maxims we are in the thick mist of error. Præterit [enim] figura hujus mundi; the vanity & false representations of this world shall quickly pass away[7] & vanish from our sight, leaving us nothing of reality, but the sad thought of our once having been deceived.

It is the Stable at Bethlehem in that distressed despicable and uncouth forlorn mansion, where the Master of the Universe holds his first schol[en] where we are all invited, to learn true humility, and the little value we are to set on the World. Learn ye proud and ambitious to humble yourselves from the example of a humble God, who though unable to speak, instructs you by his poor apparel everything about him. Do your Cloaths, Ribbons, or your pompous dress nourish your pride? Cast your eyes on the poor swaddling cloaths in which he is wraped. Do you pride yourselves glory in your houses and furniture? & because here you excel your Neighbours, you expect some distinction should be shewn you? Reflect on the Behold the Stable and Mang[er] where in the Lord of glory is laid.

Can we imag[i]n that he is come to teach us to enjoy an undisturbed rest on a bed of Down when he is laid in a ha[y] manger on a little hay? Can we suppose that he is com[e] to teach us to give ourselves up blindly to the base pleasures of a sinful life, when we see him even to refuse the souccours given to other infants? Can we persuade ourse[lves] that he is come to teach us to indulge ourselves in ease [?] &

[7 See 1 Corinthians 7:31.]

[8]

luxury? Whilst we see him tremble with excessive cold betwixt an Ox & an Ass, receiving no other warmth than from their breath?
X[8] Let us again instruct ourselves, D' Christians in our duty, & represent to us, that when there is question of taking some diversion, or recreation, tho’ harmless in itself, it would more become us to make a voluntary sacrifice of our inclinations, and now and then, deprive ourselves of them, for the sake of him who on the first day of his life bore so much for us. X

O Bountiful God! who hast instructed us in such sublime virtues, give us grace to practice them. You have marked out to us the straights road; give us strength, courage & Resolution to walk therein. As you are our Redemption, be also our wisdom and justice.

Penetrated with these sentiments & assisted by your holy Grace, behold our Breasts & hearts ready to receive you, in lieu of the unhospitable Jews, who shut their Doors against you. What joy and consolation for us if you vouchsafe to visit us, & find in us nothing that may render us unworthy of your presence. We will tenderly watch over and nourish you with the food of our prayers, alms deeds & good works, & for the remainder of our lives, will study to please you in all our actions.

Come then Divine Infant, fly to our arms, as thou didst to the devout Simeon, who with raptures of joy beheld the accomplishment of his most ardent wishes.

Holy Virgin, happy Mother; bestow upon us this pledge of love: or if your sacred arms cannot be disunited from your treasure, we will at least kneel down and adore him: we will make him an offering of our hearts, & in quality of his Disciples accompany him through all the different stages of his painful life; nor will we [...] him at his death, but only to rejoin him in the full fruition of his Glory in his Heavenly Kingdom. A Happiness &c. and with the assistance of his grace, will will [word duplicated] always seek the accomplishment of his blessed will till we come to the happy fruition of him in his glory[.] A happiness I sincerely wish[.] Amen.

____________________ [flourish]

[8 Paragraph demarcated with “x” without explanation.]