A discourse for New year's Day


That renouncing impiety, and worldly desires: we should live, soberly, and justly, and piously in this world. Words taken out of this day's epistle which is that of St Paul to Titus 2 Chap. and 12 Verse.

I think D' Breth. [Brethren] that I cannot better begin this [the new] year than by exhorting you to employ it well. Let us hearken unto time which speaks itself to us, and altho' it be in a mute language, yet it makes itself heard in our Souls [the bottom of our hearts], to engage us to make a right use of it. I am going it says, and you will one day seek me and shall not find me; I pass like lightning, I begin and I finish every moment. Let us attend to so salutary a language, and so important an instruction, and let us begin to| this| day to profit of it. We are obliged under pain of eternal death to make a good use of time; this I shall shew you in [the] first part of my discours. How it ought to be employed and how it is lost I shall speak of in the second. This is a subject of the greatest consequence and requires your most serious attention.

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I find four principal motives that engage us to employ our time well. The first is the will of God; the second, the value and price of time; the third the rapidity with which it passes; the fourth the difficulty of repairing that which is lost. The first reason that engages us to employ our time holily is the express Command of the Lord [God]. He [?] wills] that all creatures should act according to the end for which they were created: The greater part are in perpetual action and motion. The Heavens incessantly roam |move| over our heads. The air is in continual agitation, and although we do not see it, it doth nevertheless incessantly circulate from one place to another. Fire is in perpetual motion. The rivers hasten to arrive at the sea. This is scarcely ever in perfect tranquility. The earth is the theatre of the generation and corruption of all animals and plants. All nature is in a continual action. The Blessed in Heaven which is the place of their eternal repose, do not live there idle; they are perpetually occupied in praising and glorifying the Author of their sanctity[.]

If then all creatures even the most insensible and irrational are destined to act and to serve for some end, with how much greater reason ought not man to labour according to his destination? For this reason, as soon as God had created Adam, he assigned him occupations as well for his body as for his mind. He commanded him to cultivate the garden of delights wherein he placed him; and he let him know that he had given him a reasonable soul to the end that he might occupy himself in loving and praising him. Now man, in the state of innocence
could not, without betraying his duty, lead an idle life; what then must we judge that he is obliged to do after sin? Moreover, Almighty God, after our first Parent had sinned, Almighty God order’d him still more strictly to labour. He gave him a formal precept, and in his person, all his posterity to lead a laborious life; to eat his bread at the sweat of his brow; to cultivate the earth; and continually to apply his mind and body to honest employments, that he might merit the pardon of his infidelity. This conduct of God caused the holy Doctors to conclude that occupation and labour are inseparable from salvation, and to pretend to go to Heaven in leading an idle and commodious life is to pretend to overturn the designs of God and to propose to arrive at the end without making use of the necessary means.

We are therefore obliged with indefatigable care to employ ourselves to labour and vigilance all the days of our life according to the double precept that we have received in the person of our first Father, of which the one regards us as men and the other as sinners. In quality of men, we have a reasonable soul, we have a mind capable of thinking and reflecting, we have a body entirely disposed for labour. What are these eyes for, these ears, these hands and these feet if not to be employed in action? In quality of men, we stand in need of food to support us; of clothing to cover us, of habitations to defend us from the injuries of the seasons, and a great number of succours, which

[1 “in quality of” – (rare) Distinguishing attribute, nature, or characteristic; title, role, capacity.]

the Creator by a most wise and adorable Providence, would have almost entirely depend on our labour and industry. And what greater proof can there be that he placed us on earth to labour? In quality of sinners, we are still more strictly obliged to occupy ourselves in the performance of penance that God hath imposed on us as satisfaction for our offences. Hence on whether side man views himself he beholds himself engaged to labour, and he ought to understand that, according to the language of the holy scriptures that man was made to labour as the bird to fly.

But a second very pressing reason to engage us to employ well our time is its price and value. We shall be easily persuaded thereof, if we do but take notice, that it is by the means of Time that we render ourselves worthy of enjoying a happy Eternity. Time is like unto money which the great Master of the house hath put into our hands to traffic with during this life for the life to come and to purchase there by eternal goods. Time consequently is a treasure, the least part of which is worth more than all the riches of the earth. For what indeed are all earthly riches which people labour so earnestly to treasure up? What are these houses that are built with so much pain? What are these fortunes that are raised with such great

[1 Demarcated with “x” without explanation.]
[2 Marginalia: “Job. 5.”]
costs? All this is nothing in comparison of time which God hath given us to merit Heaven. All that amuses you in this life will pass away, and will be as if it never had been, but the merits that you may acquire by means of time, will never end, they will last eternally.

The third motive that ought to engage us to employ our time well is the rapidity with which it runs. You All D' Auditors, perceive this astonishing rapidity; you often complain thereof. How often have you not been heard to say that you know not how the time goes, and that a day is no sooner begun than it is ended? In effect scarcely is one got a person out of his infancy, but he finds himself in advanced age at manhood. Then, the hurry and bustle of temporal affairs so occupy his mind, that he hath scarcely an instant to reflect upon the great affair of salvation; and the last hour comes when his thoughts are upon quite other things. Let us examine a little what time is in itself. It is a concatenation of moments, which incessantly pass and continually succeed one another. They appear and disappear like lightning: that in which I have the honour of speaking to you at present, steals way before I have finished the word that I have begun and will never more return. This gave occasion to caused the holy Fathers of the Church to say that whole ages are but as instants, or rather as nothing in comparison with eternity they have taken this thought from the Apostle [? Ep2] to the Corrint: [Corinthians] Chap: 4. who assures us that the longest life upon earth might be looked upon as but a moment. But it will be particularly at the hour of our death, as St Augustine remarks that we shall perceive the inevitable rapidity of time. At that time he shall will. Then we shall be prodigious amazed, to see with what

Demarced with “x” without explanation.
Perhaps an abbreviated reference to the second epistle to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 4).

hast thirty, forty or sixty ears of our life shall have passed away. At that time we shall perfectly know the price of time, and shall bitterly deplore the loss of it. At that time we shall seek and ask for some moments to repair those that we shall have lost or ill employed. But shall we find this time? But Shall we able to obtain them? Will it not be said to us in this in this terrible conjuncture awful moment, that there is no more time for us, that we ought to have profited of that which was given us? Then we shall say to ourselves: what are become of so many years, days, and moments that I was upon earth have been upon the earth, where hath my flourishing youth pass’d, which I might have employed in doing so many good works, and which I have filled up with crimes and infidelities? What use have I made of that health, of that strength I enjoyed for so long a time? Alas I employed them to the service of the world, to satisfy my passions to damn myself. Unhappy wretch that I am, I have had in my hands the key of Heaven during my life; it depended upon me to have opened it: and on the contrary I have
shut it against me by my wicked conduct! I have tired myself in the ways of iniquity, and it would have cost me less to have acquired eternal glory, than it hath cost me to merit the torments of Hell; I only needed to have had other motives and other intentions. I have laboured and wrought without intermission; and I have done nothing: I find myself void of good works and loaded with sins. Unhappy me, wretch that I am. Such will be the language of a sinner at the hour of death, when he shall consider the loss, that he shall have made of the time that God had given for him to work out his salvation.

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Finally the fourth motive that ought to engage us to employ our time well, is the difficulty of repairing it when lost. There is not question of making the time past to return; this is a thing impossible. But there is question of making a true satisfaction to Almighty God for the offences committed against him by the ill employment of our time, and of filling up the empty spaces, as I may say, of our life [lives]; this is call’d redeeming in some manner lost time. For one may by a penitential and fervent life, not only destroy and blot out our iniquities, but heap up a treasure of merits. This truth is no less certain than comfortable. The Apostle St Paul teaches us this in express terms. Take heed See therefore Brethren, saith he, how you walk circumspectly, not as unwise, Ephes 5.[5] But as wise; redeeming time. Jesus Christ, in his Gospel, teaches us the same thing, under the figure of a parable. The Kingdom of Heaven, he assures us, is like to the Master of a Family who went forth early in the morning to hire Workmen into his Vineyard. And having agreed with the workmen about the price he sent them into his Vineyard[] He doth the same at several different hours of the day: Lastly at a late hour, he found others who had remained idle all the day long, and he sent them also into his Vineyard. The last that came worked but a very short time; but with so much zeal and fervour, that they repaired their lost time and received the same wages as those that had been at work from early in the morning. You easily conceive D’ Breth: what is meant hereby; the meaning is that when a person shall have begun but late to labour for his salvation, provided

[5 Marginalia: “Ephes 5.” (Ephesians 5)]

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that he work with great courage and fervor, he doth not fail to merit eternal glory & even a very great degree of glory. It is certain therefore that lost time may be repair’d in this manner that we have been explaining: But it is extremely difficult; and it is rare to find Christians who have the happiness to do it. For commonly, people end their lives as they began them; and when they have ill employed their earlier years, they make equally bad use of their latter. What renders this holy enterprise difficult, is of repairing lost time difficult, is that there must be an entire change of conduct; one must root out the bad habits he hath contracted; he must overcome an infinity of obstacles; he must form unto himself a new mind and head; he must embrace a penitent and mortified life, a life of fervor [fervor]; in a word, he must do a great deal in a little time, and advance in some a few years as much as he would have done in the course of a long life. He must imitate a person on a journey, who having lost time [loitered on the way] and having in amusing himself a part of the day, doubles his pace that he may arrive at his journey’s end before
night overtake him, and advance as far on his journey in one hour, as he would have done in walking softly in two or three; which must cost him much labour and fatigue.

The word to redeem which St Paul makes use of, clearly expresses to us the difficulty of repairing lost time. To redeem a thing one must give back the price that he hath received. You have sold, Dr Aud [Auditors]: your time, your youth, the best days of your life, to the Devil and to your passions; you have sold your Soul, your conscience, your God, your happy Eternity; and this you have done for pleasures, honours, and worldly riches: you must then now make restitution of all that you have received; that is to say, you must, in place of pleasures, embrace a sincere pence, in place of honours, enter into the sentiments of a profound humility; in place of the false goods of the world, practice christian poverty, in living frugally and in giving alms. Doth this appear to you very easy? undoubtedly it is not easy to be done. It is necessary in order to arrive hereunto at this point, to use much violence, and to renounce ones self, which is the greatest sacrifice that man can make to his God. Since then time is so precious, that it so rapidly runs away and when once pass’d it never returns, and its loss so difficult to repair, the loss of it, what is the brindness of those who so easily lose and so ill employed it? You have seen Dr Breth. the indispensable obligation of employing our time holily & and the motives that engages us thereunto. It now remains for me to shew you how it is lost, how great the number of them is that make bad use of it, and how it ought to be employed: The subject of my second part.

Three sorts of people miserably lose their time. The first are they that do nothing, living in a criminal laziness. The second are they that labour tis true, but either do not what they ought to do or do it not in the manner they ought to do it. They [The] third still more culpable, employ their time in doing evil, and in filling up their life with crimes and iniquities.

[6 ‡ “brindness” – Perhaps a miswriting of “blindness,” or, as “brindness”: (brin, ME or Scots) ardent, fervent, eager. (See the note on etymology at the end of the sermon for a full discussion of this term.])

The first that lose their time, are they that do nothing and pass away their time in idleness. Their life consists in eating, drinking, sleeping, unprofitable conversations, walks, play and the like. They have a great disgust for all sorts of occupation; they will not put themselves to the least pain or trouble; all that regards the service of God and the salvation of their souls is insupportable to them; they are altogether terrestrial and carnal sensual, and understand nothing that is not spiritual things according to the remark of the Apostle as the Apostle remarkes 1 ad Corinth: 2. [7] This is the vice of Sloth, one of the seven capital sins and perhaps the most dangerous of them. Ah! how many of these unhappy mortals are there to be seen in the world.

[7 Archer has used the Latin term “ad ” in his citation of the first epistle “to the” Corinthians.]
who seem to have been born but for no other end than to devour the labour of others? After having spent the inheritance of their Fathers, they seek from all parts wherewith to satisfy their desires, but like unto the seven lean cows of Genesis 41. Egypt are equally unsatisfied. They begin by borrowing, afterwards they venture by little and little to steal; at length they become professed thieves. Tis this that hath brought so many to a fatal and tragical end. It is true that they do not always go to this extremity; but they at least become burdensome to the public, and are constrained to end their lives in a poorhouse or perhaps still more miserably. For finally the oracle of the holy Ghost which cannot be false truth, assures us that poverty shall come on the slothful Proverbs 24. as a runner, that is with a surprising hast, and beggary as an armed man. And on the contrary it teaches us that the laborious and diligent man shall have abundant harvest and want shall flee far from him.  

But if sloth and idleness are join’d with abundance, to what extremities do they not lead people? Behold the greater part of the rich ones of the world; they think of nothing but enjoying the pleasures of the world. What is their life? From bed to the table, from table to play; from play to taking their walks. Feasting, dancing, drinking, Parties of recreation & galiantry. Behold the continual circle in which they mark of their lives. They know not what crosses, sufferings, and miseries are. Fatigues, pains and trials are not for them. All their occupation is to refine upon voluptuousness. O miserable state, O deplorable situation of these unhappy mortals! Their conscience is like unto marshy ground full of stagnant & muddy water. This companion is very natural: For as a standing stagnant & muddy water, a water replenished with dregs and mud, can produce nothing but grubs and other filthy insects; so the conscience of a slothful and voluptuous man is full of the ouldurs of Sin. His heart generates nothing but impurities, drunkenness, revenge, impieties, indevotions, curiosities, detraction, in a word all sorts of vices and abominations.

There are other people that occupy themselves tis true; but nevertheless do nor cease to lose their time, either because their occupations are useless, or because they do not occupy themselves according to the rules of piety and their duties. Let us begin by the first, you perhaps D’ Aud [Auditors]: have sometime heard of two famous antient Philosophers of whom the one Democ. continually laughed and the other wept: The one Herac. that was in continual affliction was one day asked the reason of his sadness; he answered that it was impossible for him to see the blindness of men and their unreasonable eagerness for the trifles of the Earth, without being seized with profound grief. The other being urged by his friends to tell them the reason why he laughed, he told them that it was nothing else than the

[3] Marginalia with “x” without explanation.}

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follies and ridiculous occupations of worldlings. Could the Sentiments of these wise Pagans be more reasonable? For truly [in reality] who can consider what passed among the greater part of men without being seized with astonishment? What is the employment of a great number of them? Consider if you please the Drunkards, who pass whole days and part of the nights in drinking in an Ale house and in talking idle and ridiculous talk. Behold the deplorable conduct of so many others whose occupation is in silly and trifling things, in play pastimes unprofitable conversations and walks. O children, crieth out the wise man in the book of Proverbs, how long will you love childishness? If you have a little reason and judgment, will you pass away the best of your of the days of your life such amusements?

But although one should occupy himself in useful, honest and necessary works, he still loses his time and merits nothing for eternity, if he doth not act according to the rules of christian prudence. Tis for this reason that the greater part of men, after having spent their life in continual and very painful labours, find themselves at the hour of their death void of good works and merits. What life is harder and more laborious than that of all those who strive to establish themselves on earth and to make their fortune? They give themselves no rest, they are in a perpetual [continual] agitation; scarcely do they allow themselves a few hours for absolutely necessary sleep, & to take their food. They do not ordinarily observe the Sundays and Holidays. The frequenting the Sacraments, prayer, the practice of virtues, the exercise of works of mercy find no place with them are totally neglected [neglected] by them. They are not satisfied with tormenting themselves, they give no relaxation to those that are under them. Behold this master of a house a family; what eagerness to occupy his children and Servants! Consider this man that works to succeed in a marriage that strives to improve his trade or commerce, or to place his children; what troubles, what sollicitudes! What continual [movements]. And what is the end of all this? The Prophet Isaiah teaches us Chap. 59. when he says that worldlings have woven the webs of Spiders. An avaricious man exhausts himself to scrape up a few grains of dust which will presently be scattered by the wind. An Ambitious man puts himself to the rack to bring about his designs, to acquire as employment or dignity, and when he shall have obtained it death will oblige him to leave it to another. This man that is so eager to advance his affairs and increase his fortune, after many years of labour and fatigue, will have the trouble to see all his work reduced into smoke[.]

But what shall I say of those unhappy mortals who fill up their life with crimes and abominations? What an employment of this Time! Oh my God! What a strange occupation continually to offend the supreme Majesty; to heap up a treasure of wrath in the against the day of wrath; to forge without intermission; chains of their eternal captivity, and to increase at every moment the prodigious burthen which the impius man they will have to [drag] along with them into the abyss of his eternal misery! Cast up Sum up if you can, Christian Auds: the
prodigious number of crimes of which a libertine renders himself guilty of during a disorderly life of fifty or sixty years; how many thoughts, desires, looks, words, actions, and omissions against the Law of God! How many abuses of graces, of the Sacraments, and of the other means of Salvation! Who can think of this without trembling? There are wicked people that commit ten, perhaps, twenty mortal sins every day. Unto how many thousands will this amount in a long space of time? And as one mortal sin is sufficient to merit hell incur the eternal torments of hell, many wicked people at the hour of death, instead of one will find a great number of Hells, that is to say, the pains of Hell as many times doubled and multiplied as they shall have committed crimes. What therefore are you doing, D' Auditor when you thus heap sin upon sin! X You bring forth dragons and serpents that will tear your entrails for all eternity. X You sow in the flesh, and you shall reap corruption from your flesh according Galat. 5[13] to the great Apostle; and after having raised the dreadful edifice of your reprobation, you will go in a short time to take possession of it for all Eternity.

[13 Marginalia: “Galat. 5” (Galatians 5)]
[1 Demarcated with “x” without explanation.]

In fine, there are Christians, who are not content with losing their time, or with ill employing it, but insolently contemn it, and seem to affect to make this contempt appear on every occasion. How often have they not been heard to say let us go and pass away time? How many others complain of the length of time? Ah, say they foolishly how long the time appears to me! Days seem to me as weeks. What, unhappy mortals, cries out S' Bernard, time then is a burden burdensome to you; that time so precious, which God through his goodness granteth you, to do penance, to acquire grace, to merit glory; that time which is the price of the blood of Jesus Christ; that time on which depends your eternal happiness or eternal misery; that time which so rapidly slips away, and which cannot be stoped, nor made to return when it is pass’d! Ah! a day will come when you will regret this time that you despise at present; you will seek it, you will bewail it, you will ask for some moment of it, and it will be said to you that there is no more for you; and that the measure that was destined for you is absolutely now fill’d up.

Let us enter into ourselves, Christian Aud. and seriously examine ourselves upon the employments that we have made of the time that God hath given us unto the present time. How many years we have been on earth, and what we have done? Where are our merits and good works? But how shall we be able to sum up our infidelities. What a frightful cahos [chaos] is that of our life which has perhaps has been a continued course of prevarications of every kind? Those Sacraments profaned, those graces contemned, those inspirations rejected, so many means of Salvation render’d unprofitable, those scandals, that drunkenness, those secret and shameful sins, all those disorders the remembrance of which fills us with horror; are not these so many frightful stains [horrible defilements] with which our life hath been soiled Sullyed. But have
we not added to all these faults, a horrible |dreadful| presumption, which perhaps hath almost entirely shut the gate of the Divine mercy against us? have we not said in our youth that it was then time to divert ourselves, and that we should have time enough to do penance? What shall we now give to our sovereign Master? We have exhausted our strength in the service of the world; we have nothing but the sad remains of a body worn out either with voluptuousness or unprofitable labours. This is dreadful.

Nevertheless there is still a remedy. The mercy of our God is so great, that although there remain but a short time to life, we may in this short time return to him, and entirely repair all the losses that we have made. But how is this to be accomplished[?]?

Two things are necessary. The first is to sincerely repent of the bad use we that we have made of our time and to remedy our past disorders by a general Confession if it be necessary. The second is to strive to the utmost of our power to make a holy use of the remainder of our time We ought to offer to God in the Spirit of penance all that we shall have to suffer, all our labours, sickness & infirmities, all our pains of Body and mind. We must always keep ourselves in the state of grace; for all our good works, all our sufferings, will be lost without resource if we have the unhappiness to be in the state of mortal sin. The practice of all the virtues suitable to our state ought to accompany our labours & sufferings. How astonishing is the blindness of men!

They labour, they toil, they suffer; and at the same time abandon themselves to |give themselves up to| impatience, to murmuring, to utter obscene words, curses, imprecations, and perhaps Blasphemies, detraction, and other |such like| excesses; and thus far from meriting in |by| their pains and afflictions, they treasure up to themselves

maledictions against the day of vengeance wrath against the day of wrath. Poor senseless |unthinking| mortals, what pains and sufferings are lost through your own fault! You descend into Hell, by the road that ought to lead you to Heaven. Do you not daily see this D' Breth?: During the most painful labours, during the harvest, in time of the most painful works, what is seen and heard amongst the work folks |labourers|? Unchast words and songs, loose and idle talk, familiarities between persons of a different sex, oaths, backbiting and calumny. On the other hand they work without any good intention, or even with wicked intentions; the one through the principle of avarice, others that they may have wherewith to satisfy their passions, some through vanity, almost all without losing the earth from their sight, that is with our ever raising up their hearts to God. Ah! D' Breth. let us take another road |a different method|; let us not live in sloth; it is according to the remark of S' Bernard, the source of temptations and the most dangerous thoughts, the fruitful mother of all crimes, the school of malice, the sink of all abominations. But at the same time let us be careful to occupy ourselves holily and profitably, to the end that as faithful servants, after having fulfilld our duties, we may receive the recompense of our labours, which is eternal glory. This is what I sincerely |end of sermon|
We are faced with two divergent considerations regarding Archer’s use of this curious word. The first—and least complex—is that he simply miswrote his intended terms, possibly either “blindness” or “kindness,” as “brindness.” The second, is that he wrote the word as he intended. We examine each consideration in turn below:

Was “brindness” a miswriting?

It is possible that Archer miswrote “brindness,” intending “blindness” or “kindness.” However, we have not noticed such a significant error as miswriting the letters “r” or “k” for the letter “l.” Archer’s errors were usually of omission or transposition of letters, not the insertion of incorrect ones. A highly magnified, comparative analysis of handwriting samples of words with a similar letter order were taken from this sermon, and a reference sample from a previous sermon (see handwriting samples below). Archer used the word “blindness” on two occasions (pp.11, 15), and the word “kind” once (p.14). We also included samples of the words “bring” (p.12), “bread” (p.3), and “brow” (p.3). Lastly, we reexamined previous sermons for Archer’s use of any words that contained “blind” and “kind.”

All words that began with the consonant cluster “br” exhibited a high degree of homogeneity, bearing an almost exact letter structure as the initial letters of “brindness.” More importantly, a marked dissimilarity with the words “blindness” and “kindness” was unquestionably apparent. Archer’s letter “k” is drawn uniquely and in contrast with the letters “br.” Furthermore, Archer frequently made additions, deletions, and corrections to his writing, as he did on the page where the word is located. The sentence composed with the word “brindness” contains twelve words that were stricken and two interlineations, yet the word in question is without modification and very legible. While this analysis cannot reveal Archer’s thoughts, it does confirm that the word was written as “brindness,” which leads to the second consideration, that it was possibly what Archer intended.

Was “brindness” a real, communicative unit of language?

An extensive, web-based search of printed works and dictionaries, indicates that the term was unknown in common English usage from the early modern period (~1500). However, is the corollary of that null finding the negation of the possibility of the existence of the word? Could it have been coined, adapted, or modernized by Archer, who appears to have been a student of medieval and Renaissance period philosophical writings? Could it have been an argot, colloquial, or vernacular expression? The questions are debatable.

If, however, we consider such a possibility, it may have been formed from the root verb “brennen” or “brin(n)en” [O.E., var.: brend(e), bryn(e); p.t., brent, brint], and in view of the context, unrelated to the much more common terms “brinded” or “brindled”; that is, streaked, tabby, spotted, or variegated in color. “Brin,” or one of its many variants, meant to consume or destroy by fire, to burn, or to brand. However, in figurative use, it takes the meaning “to be inflamed,” ardent, fervent, or eager; both senses fitting well with the context of Archer’s admonition against wasting time. Its earliest origin is Germanic, and extends from Old English to
Middle English (~1150-1500), perhaps the period of its most frequent use. Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* from the 1380s:

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Thynkyng how she, for whom desir hym brende,
A thousand fold was worth more than he wende.¹
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Research also revealed “brin” as a variant (“bryne”) of an older (before 1700) Scots term. Meanings were almost identical in both Middle English and Older Scots.

**Miswriting, Middle English, Scots, or ?**

To those inexperienced with early chirography, and in particular the handwriting of James Archer, the letters and words in question can appear similar. However, while it is certainly possible that Archer simply miswrote the word that he intended, this would seem to be of low probability and inconsistent with Archer’s previous work. The letters “r,” “l,” and “k” are formed very differently, and the word “blindness” was used twice in this sermon and written in the expected and conventional manner. Moreover, the occurrences of the root words “blind” or “kind” in other transcribed sermons are also unremarkable in their clarity, nor have we had difficulty in distinguishing between these letters or the words thus formed. (See handwriting samples below.)

Arguably, similarities between the Middle English and Scots terms “brind” or “brin” and “blindness” seem more than merely coincidental. Although several academic reviewers felt that the words “blindness” or “kindness” were more germane, “brindness,” as a figurative synonym for eagerness, would perhaps be the best contextual fit. Whether in Archer’s day, or the present day, we would more likely say that people are “eager” to waste time while pursuing their occupations, or even at personal activities requiring work, than they are unkind or blind to it.

If we are correct in our research of historical usage, and if we ask why Archer would use what appears to have been such an anachronistic and esoteric term, the Middle English option appears possible, but also questionable. Although we have noted Archer’s fondness for such usage, at this early point of our work, temporal proximity and intimations from previous sermons suggest that the Scottish etymological derivation may provide the most viable answer. The only statement that can be made with certainty however, is that Archer intended his words to be clearly understood by his audience. Yet, we do not know who or where that audience was. The questions are now perhaps unanswerable.

blindness

blindness (previous sermon)

brind = (ness)

kind

bread

brow

bring