

Richard Challoner



*Think
Well On't*

EXECUTION OF TOMKINS AND CHALLONER (1749/50)

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goodpress@okpublishing.info

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REFLECTIONS ON THE GREAT TRUTHS OF CHRISTIAN
RELIGION,

FOR EVERY DAY IN THE MONTH. By bishop CHALLONER,
INSTRUCTIONS

HOW TO PROFIT OF THE FOLLOWING
CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Make choice of a proper time and place for recollection; and shut the door of thy heart as much as possible against the world, and its distracting cares and affections.

2. Place thyself in the presence of God, representing him to thyself by a lively faith, as filling heaven and earth with his incomprehensible Majesty; or as residing, with all his attributes, in the very centre of thy own soul. Prostrate thyself in spirit before him, to adore this sovereign Lord; make an offering of thy whole self unto him, and humbly beg pardon for all thy past treasons against him

3. Implore, with fervour and humility, his light and grace, that the great truths of the Gospel may make a due impression upon thy soul, that-thou mayest effectually learn to fear him, and to love him.

4. Read leisurely, and with serious attention, the chapter for the day. Give the soul time to digest what thou art reading; and pause more particularly on those points which affect thee most.

5. That thy reading may partake the more of the nature of mental prayer, strive to draw from thy considerations such affections as are suitable to the subject; by stirring up, for example, in, the sou!, the fear and love of God, a confidence in his goodness, a sense of gratitude for his

benefits, the horror of sin, and such like: Open thy heart as much as thou canst to these affections, that so these great and necessary virtues may take the deeper root there.

6. Conclude thy considerations with holy resolutions of amendment of life, insisting in particular, on the failings to which thou art most subject, and firmly determining with thyself, to begin to put these resolutions* into execution, on such occasions as may occur that very day,

7. Often reflect in the day time on the chief points of thy consideration; lest the enemy rob thy soul of this divine seed, by making thee quickly forget what thou hast been reading-and considering.

THE FIRST DAY. On the Necessity of Consideration

Consider, first, those words of the prophet Jeremias: "With desolation is the whole earth laid desolate, because there is no one who thinks in his heart." Jer. 12. v. 11. And reflect how true it is, that the want of Consideration on the great truths of Christianity, is the chief source of all our evils. Alas! the greater part of men, seldom or never think either of their first beginning, or last end: they neither consider who brought them into the world, nor for what; nor reflect on the eternity into which they are just about to step. Hence all their pursuits are earthly and temporal, as if they were only made for this life, or were to be always here, Death, judgment, heaven, and hell, make but little impression upon them, because they don't give them time to sink deep into their souls by the means of serious Consideration. They run on, with their eyes shut, to the precipice of a miserable eternity, and only, then begin to

think, when they find themselves lodged in that place of woe, where "their worm shall never die, and their fire shall never be quenched." Ah! my poor soul, take care that this be not thy case.

Consider, 2dly, That we cannot be saved without knowing God, and loving him above all things. Now, we can neither know him, nor love him as we ought, without the help of Consideration. It is this which discovers to us the infinite perfections of this sovereign Being, his heavenly beauty, his eternal love for us, and all the benefits which he has bestowed upon us, his most undeserving and ungrateful creatures: all which, alas! make no impression on us without serious Consideration. All things that are about us, the heavens, the earth, and every creature therein, cease not to preach God unto us, and invite us to love him. But without Consideration, we are deaf to this voice of the whole creation; we are like those that have eyes and see not, that have ears and hear not. Ah! the great and dreadful mischiefs that follow from the want of the true knowledge of God, which is the fruit of frequent Consideration! Is it not upon this account that the whole world is overrun with wickedness; and that hell opens wide its jaws, devouring without end or number, the unhappy children of Adam, because God is forgotten, because there is no knowledge of God upon earth?" Osee, 4. v. 1,

Consider, 3rdly, That, to save our souls, we must also know ourselves; we must know our misery and corruption, that we may be humble and diffident in ourselves; we must know our irregular inclinations and passions, that we may fight against them, and overcome them; we must study and

watch the motions of our own hearts, that we may not be surprised by sin, and sleep in death. And how can this all-necessary knowledge of ourselves, this science of the saints, be acquired without the help of daily Consideration? Ah! how unhappy are they who know all things else, and are strangers to themselves! Let us then daily pray with St. Augustin, *Noverim te, Noverim me*; Lord, give me grace to know thee, Lord give me grace to know myself: and let us labour for these two most necessary sciences, by frequent Consideration.

4. Consider, that in order to nourish in our souls the wholesome fear of God, which is the beginning of true wisdom, and spur ourselves on in the way of virtue, we must also seriously reflect on the enormity of sin, and the hatred God bears unto it; on the dreadful effect of sin in the soul, and on the multitude of our own sins in particular; on the vanity, misery and deceitfulness of the world; on the comfort and happiness that attend a virtuous life; on the shortness of time, and the dreadful length of a miserable eternity; on the certainty and uncertainty of death, and the sentiments we shall have when we come to die; on the small number of the elect, &c. Ah! Christians, let us not neglect this great means of salvation! It was the consideration of these truths that made so many saints; that has so often reclaimed even the most abandoned sinners. Oh! what a profound lethargy must that soul be in, which is not roused at the thunder of those dreadful truths, death, judgment, hell, eternity!

5. Consider the bitter but fruitless repentance of the damned, condemning their past folly, in having thought so little on those things on which they shall now think for all eternity. Senseless wretches as we were! we had once our time, when, by thinking upon this miserable eternity, we might have escaped it. Those endless joys of heaven were offered us at a cheap rate, when a little reflection on them might have put us in the way of securing to ourselves the everlasting possession of them. But alas! we would not think then; and now it is too late. O my soul, learn thou to be wise by their misfortune; reflect in this thy day on the things that appertain to thy eternal peace; think well on thy last end; meditate on the great truths of the gospel. Thou must either think of them now, or hereafter, when the thought of them will only serve to aggravate thy misery for all eternity.

THE SECOND DAY. On the end of our creation.

CONSIDER, Christian soul, that so many years ago thou wast not yet come into the world, and that thy being was a mere nothing. The world had lasted near upon six thousand years, with innumerable transactions and revolutions in every nation; and where wast thou all that while? Alas! thou wast ingulphed in the deep abyss of nothing, infinitely beneath the condition of the meanest creature upon the earth; and what couldst thou do remaining there? Learn then to humble thyself, whatever advantages thou mayst enjoy of nature or grace, since of thyself thou art nothing; and all that thou hast above nothing has been given or lent thee by thy maker. Ah! poor wretch, what hast thou to be proud of? Or what canst thou call thy own, but nothing and sin, which is worse than nothing?

2. Consider, that the almighty hand of God, descending into that deep abyss of nothing, has drawn thee forth from thence, and given thee this being which thou now enjoyest, the most accomplished and perfect of any in this visible world, capable of knowing and loving God in this life, and designed for everlasting happiness with him in the next. Admire and adore the bounty of thy God, who from all eternity has designed this being for thee, preferably to so many millions of others which he has left behind, that had as fair a title to a being as thou hadst. Look forward into that immense eternity for which thou hast been created, and thankfully acknowledge, that the love thy God bears thee has neither beginning nor end, but reaches from eternity to eternity.

3. Consider, that being created by Almighty God, and having received thy whole being from him, by the justest of all titles thou belongest to him; and art obliged to consecrate to his service all thy powers, faculties and senses; and art guilty of a most crying injustice, as often as thou abusest any part of thy being, by employing it in the pursuit of vanity and sin. Ah! my poor soul, how little have we hitherto thought of this? How small a part of our thoughts, words and deeds, has been referred to him who is our first beginning, and therefore ought to be the last end of all our actions? Be confounded at so great an abuse; repent and amend.

4. Consider, that God, who gave thee thy being, and who created all things else in this visible world for thy service, has created thee for himself alone. Not that he stood in need of thee, or can receive from thee any increase or

addition to his happiness; but that he might give thee his grace in this life, and the endless joys of his kingdom in the next. Stand astonished, Christian soul, at the bounty of thy Creator, in making thee for so noble an end; and since thou wast made for God, be ashamed to content thyself with any thing less than God: learn then to contemn all that is earthly and temporal, as things beneath thee, and unworthy of thy affection. Lament thy past folly, and that of the far greater part of mankind, who spend their days in vain amusements, in restless cares about painted toys and mere trifles; and seldom or never think of that great end, for which alone they came into this world.

5. Consider that all the powers and faculties of thy soul, thy will, thy memory, thy understanding, and all the senses and parts of thy body, were all given by thy Creator, as so many means to attain to this end of thy creation, to be employed during thy short abode in this transitory life, in the service of thy God, and so to bring thee to the eternal enjoyment of him in the sweet repose of his blessed kingdom. Alas! my soul, have we not perverted all these gifts of our maker, in turning them all against the giver? Have mercy on us, O Lord; have mercy on us; pardon our past treasons, and give us grace now to begin to be wise for eternity.

THE THIRD DAY. On the benefits of God.

CONSIDER, my soul, how many and how great are thy obligations to the bounty of thy God. He has thought of thee from all eternity:

he has loved thee from all eternity: all the blessings and favours which he has bestowed upon thee in time, he

designed for thee from all eternity; they are all the consequences of his eternal love for thee. Is it possible that so great a God, the most high and the most holy, who dwells in eternity, should set his affections upon such a poor sinful worm of the earth? Is it possible, my soul, that thou shouldst have had a place from all eternity in the heart of thy God; and that his eternal mind should never have been one moment without thinking on thee! Ah! poor wretch, what return hast thou made for this ancient love? How late hast thou loved him, who has loved thee from all eternity? How little hast thou thought of him, who always thinks of thee?

2. Consider that thy God has not only given thee by creation thy soul and body, with all their powers and faculties, and, in a word, whatever thou hast, and whatever thou art; but also preserves them each moment by the benefit of conservation, which may be called a continual creation . For as nothing but his Almighty hand could give thee this being, so none but he could preserve thee from falling back into thy former nothing: which must infallibly have happened to thee, if thy God had but for one moment withdrawn his supporting hand. Poor sinner! why didst thou not think of this when, by thy repeated crimes, thou wast waging war with thy God; and he with incomparable love was night and day watching over thee? How didst thou dare presume so often and for so long a time to provoke him, who held the thread of thy life in his hand, and who every moment could have crushed thee into nothing, or send thee headlong into hell! Oh! blessed by all creatures be his mercy for ever, for having borne with thee so long.