

only fear be, lest we should not finish our sacrifice on the same altar whereon his was consummated. Alas! all our endeavours here tend to be more at ease, and thereby to withdraw ourselves from the true way to heaven. We know not what we do. We do not comprehend the mystery of grace, which joins a benediction with tears, pronouncing the mourners happy. The way which leads to a throne is delightful, although it should be overgrown with thorns. The way which leads to a precipice is dreadful, although it should be covered with roses. We suffer, but we see heaven open; we suffer, but with a willing mind; we love God, and are beloved of him.

## THIRD DAY.

*Of true devotion.*—1. How frequently do men deceive themselves by that vain religion which St. James warns us of, chapter i. 26. Some think it consists in saying over many prayers; others, in doing many outward works to the glory of God and service of our neighbour. Some place it in continual desires of salvation, and others in great mortifications. These things are all good, and even necessary to a certain degree, but none of these is the principal thing, or essence of true piety. That piety by which we are sanctified, and entirely devoted to God, consists in doing his will precisely in all circumstances of life. Take what steps you please, do what good works you will, yet shall you not be rewarded, but for having done the will of your sovereign Master. Although your servant should do wonders, yet if he did not that very business which you would have done, you would not value his performances, and might justly complain of him as a bad servant.

2. That perfect devoting ourselves to God, from which devotion has its name, requires that we should not only do the will of God, but also that we should do it with love. "He loveth a cheerful giver," and without the heart, no obedience is acceptable to him. We ought to think it a happiness to serve such a Master. Let me add, that this devoting ourselves to God, must be habitual; we must be alike resigned to him in all circumstances, even those that are most opposite to our views, our inclinations, and our projects; and it must keep us in a constant readiness to part with our estate, our time, our liberty, our life, and our reputation. To be effectually in this disposition is to have true devotion. But as the will of God is often hid from us, there is still one step farther to take in this renouncing ourselves; it is to do the divine will with a blind obedience,—I say a blind, but judicious obedience. This is what all men are obliged to: even those who are most enlightened, and capable to lead others to God, must themselves submit to be led by him.

## FOURTH DAY.

*Concerning imperfect conversions.*—Some persons, who have been long estranged from God, and are, as it were, at a great distance from him, think their return to him perfect, as soon as they have taken a few steps toward it. The most ingenious and sensible of men are upon this occasion, as ignorant and absurd, as some country clown, who should think himself in

favour at court, because he had seen the king. They have forsaken the more heinous kind of vices, their way of living is less criminal than it used to be. And then they judge of themselves, not by the Gospel, (the only sure rule,) but by comparing their present life with their former. By these means they persuade themselves that they are in a safe condition; and take no farther care for their salvation. This state, perhaps, is more dangerous than that of notorious sinners; for the condition of the latter may some time or other trouble their consciences, and put them upon endeavours of amendment; but the imperfect conversion of the former serves only to stifle the remorse of conscience, to give them only a false security, and render their malady incurable. I have examined my past life, with one, and remarked the faults of it; I read good books: I go to church constantly; and I say my prayers, as I think, heartily enough. I now refrain from all great sins at least, but I cannot say that I am so far affected as to live as if I did not belong to the world, and kept no measures with it. Religion would be too rigorous, if it left no room for some mollifying expedients. The refinements in devotion which some propose to us, are carried too far, and serve rather to discourage than inspire a love of what is good. Such are the sentiments of a lukewarm Christian, who would purchase heaven at a cheap rate; who considers not what is due to God, nor what it has cost those who have attained the enjoyment of him. A man of his character is far from a true conversion; he knows neither the extent of God's law, nor the duties of repentance. If he had been engaged in composing the Gospel, it would have been a different kind of institution, and more indulgent to self-love. But the Gospel is unchangeable, and by it we shall be judged at the last day. Let us then embrace it as a certain guide; and fear nothing so much as flattery and deception.

## FIFTH DAY.

*Of renouncing the world.*—1. "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world," 1 John, ii. 15. How comprehensive are these words! The world is that blind and depraved multitude which Jesus Christ condemns in his Gospel, and for which, on one occasion, he refused to pray, John xvii. 9. The world, in one word, is all those who love themselves, or the creatures, without regard to God. We are then that world ourselves, as long as we so love ourselves, and seek that in the creatures which can be found only in God. Happy that apostle, to whom the world was crucified, and he crucified to the world, Gal. vi. 4.

2. What a happiness is it to be convinced how truly contemptible the honour of the world is! He that parts with the world for God, parts but with a trifle; and they are lamentably weak who think they have done some great matter in forsaking it. Every Christian has already renounced it in his baptism; those who live in the strictest retirement only keep to that engagement with more precaution than others. To seek the haven is to fly the storm.

## SIXTH DAY.

*Of patience in sufferings.*—1. "In your patience

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