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HEAVEN  
&  
LEAVES

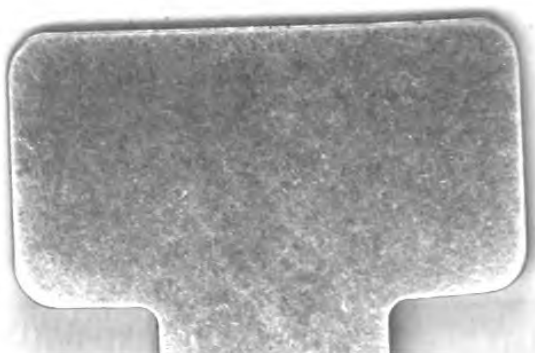
The Sinfulness & Mischief

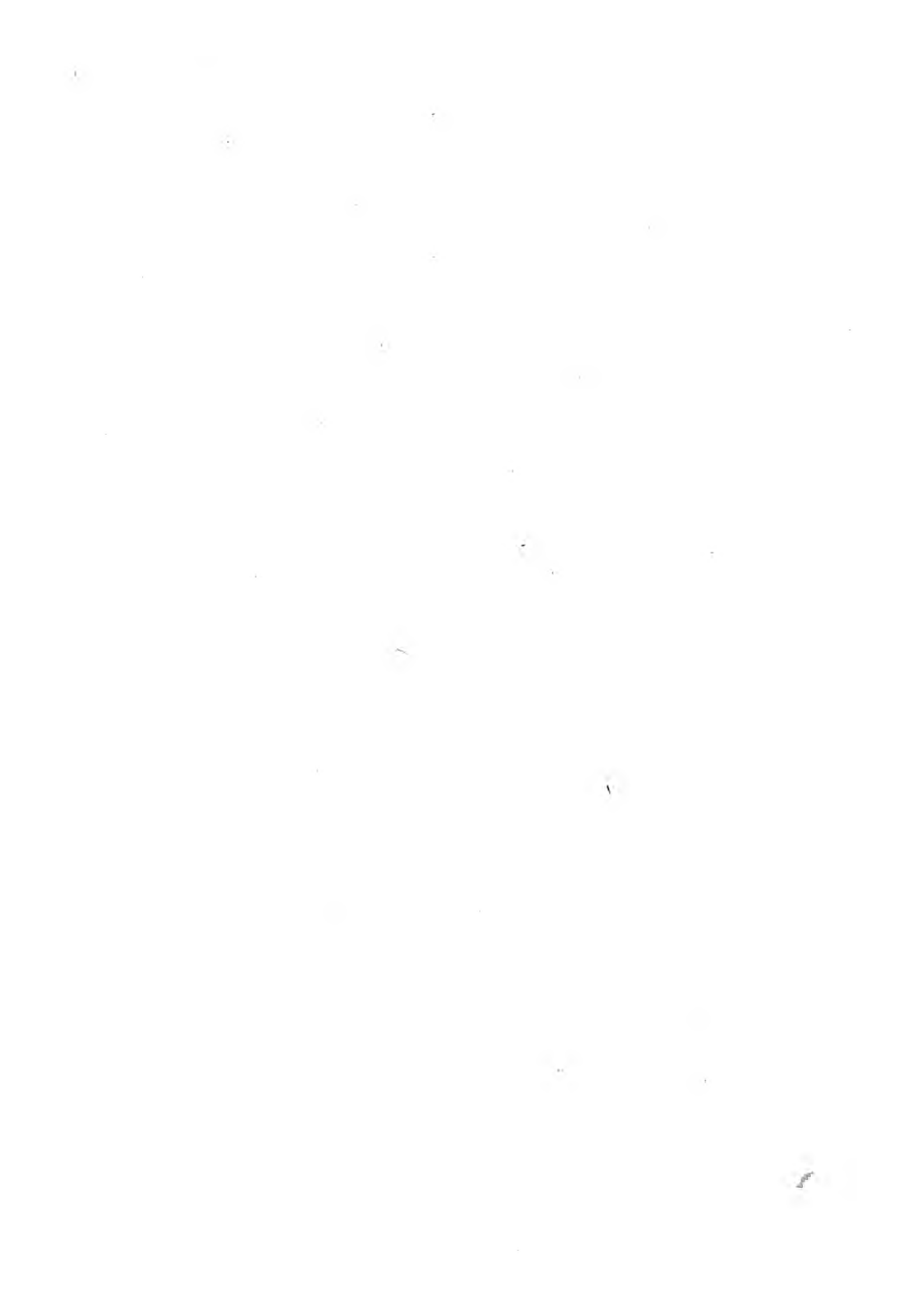
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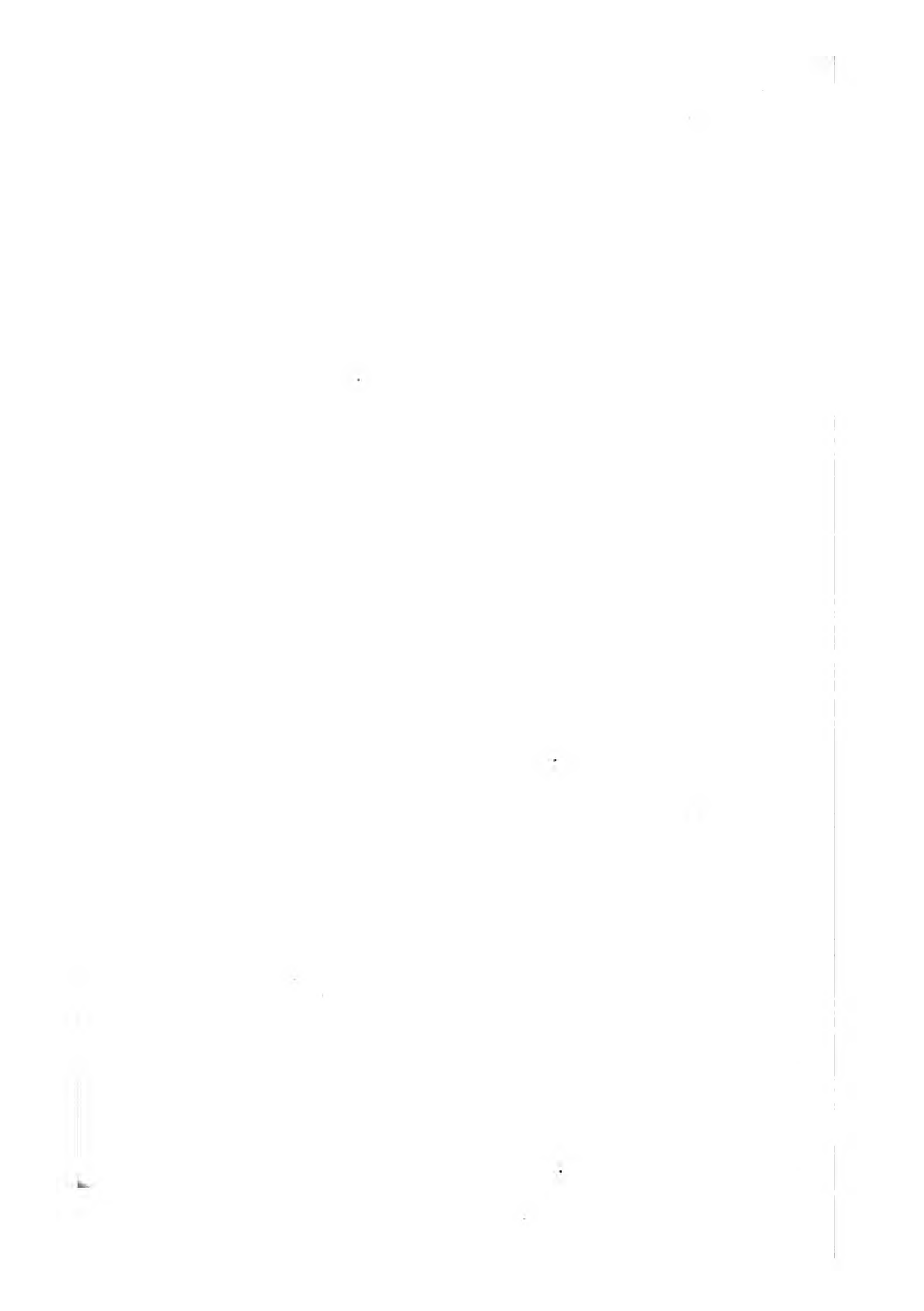
141. d. Worldly Anxiety

504.

Beveridge.









## **Leaven Leaves.**

*“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”*

GALATIANS V. 9.

THE SINFULNESS AND

Mischief

OF

Worldly Anxiety.

BY BISHOP BEVERIDGE.



EDINBURGH: JAMES HOGG AND SONS.  
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141. 6. 504.



“ Be careful for nothing; but in every-  
thing by prayer and supplication with  
thanksgiving let your requests be  
made known unto God.”—PHIL.  
iv. 6.



THE  
SINFULNESS AND MISCHIEF  
OF  
WORLDLY ANXIETY.



ALTHOUGH the commandments of God now seem grievous to us, and very difficult to be observed, yet certainly they were designed at first for our ease and pleasure—they being all so exactly adapted to our nature, so agreeable to the temper we were made of, that every act of obedience to them refresheth and delights our minds, as David long ago observed, calling the “commandments his delights” (Psalm cxix. 143), and saying,

6      *The Sinfulness and Mischief*

that “in keeping of them there is great reward” (Psalm xix. 11). The same might be demonstrated by a particular induction of them, whereby it would be easy to show that nothing is forbidden us but what is some way or other hurtful and prejudicial to us, nothing required of us but what is really for our good, and conduceth to our present comfort, as well as to our future happiness. I shall instance, at present, only in that which is enjoined in my text.

We cannot but be all sensible how great a misery it is to live in continual fears and cares about the things of this life, and how happily they live who are free from them, so as never to be disturbed or disquieted in their minds about

anything here below; especially if this proceeds from such principles, and is grounded upon such a foundation as is firm and lasting: and yet we not only may, but ought always to live thus; for this is that which is here enjoined us by the apostle, saying, “Be careful for nothing,” &c.

The apostle here, in the close of his epistle to them, is directing the Philippians how both to carry and support themselves under the various occurrences of this present life. They were likely to meet with many crosses and troubles in the way to heaven. But, howsoever, he would not have them dejected, but always pleasant and cheerful under them: “Rejoice,” saith he, “in the Lord al-

ways;" and to press it the more home upon them, he repeats it again, saying, "Again I say rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4). And although they should receive many affronts and injuries from others, yet he would have them always of an even and sedate temper; not hot and furious, but candid and ingenuous, meek and patient, peaceable and good to all. "Let your moderation," saith he, "be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand," both to assist you at present, and, ere long, to rescue and deliver you. And because they were to expect to be sometimes brought into great straits and difficulties, not knowing well what to do, in such cases he adviseth them not to be too anxious or solicitous, but to do their duty, and to

leave the issue to God: "Be careful," saith he, "for nothing; but in every-thing give thanks," &c. This is, in general, the sense of the words. But lest we should mistake them, and that we may more clearly and fully understand the mind of the Holy Ghost in them, I shall, by his assistance, show in what sense we are not, and in what sense we are, to understand this precept, "Be careful for nothing;" and then explain the following words, wherein the apostle directs what to do in all such cases as are apt to put us upon too much thoughtfulness and care, saying, "But by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

First, therefore, we may observe, that

the apostle is here speaking, not of spiritual, but temporal things; and therefore, where he saith, "Be careful for nothing," he is to be understood only of the things of this life, not of those things which concern the life to come; for they ought to be our chief and greatest care of all. And in this very place, where the apostle commands the Philippians to be "careful for nothing," he commends them for being careful of him—that is, of performing the duty which they owed him as the minister of Christ. "I rejoiced," saith he, "in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity" (Phil. iv. 10). From whence it appears, that

the apostle himself distinguisheth between the care of doing our duty to God, and the care of this world; and commends the one as much as he condemns the other. The same apostle elsewhere makes the same distinction more plain, saying, “But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife” (1 Cor. vii 32, 33): where he first lays down the general rule, that he would have them ἀμερίμνους, “without carefulness,” the same that is in my text, μηδὲν μερίμνητε, “Be careful for nothing.” But then he explains himself, by distinguish-



ing between “the things that belong unto the Lord,” and the “things of the world.” About the latter he would have them without carefulness; but not about the former—not about the things that belong unto the Lord, how they may please the Lord. The rule is not to be understood of such things; for, as he himself there intimates, we ought to take care of them, and not of the other. For that very reason we may take care of them, they being indeed the great and only things that we ought to be careful of; for, put all together, they are the one thing needful” which our Saviour speaks of in Luke x. 42, and therefore commands us to seek them before all things else: “Seek ye first,” saith he, “the kingdom of God

and his righteousness" (Matt. vi. 33). To the same purpose is that of St Peter, where he requires us to "give all diligence," to use the utmost of our care, to "add to our faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity: and so to make our calling and election sure" (2 Pet. i. 5-7, 10).

And it is very observable, that the same apostle, who here commands us to "be careful for nothing," elsewhere requires all Christians to "be careful to maintain good works" (Titus iii. 8), and that he himself was so: for having reck-

oned up the many troubles he had met with in the world, he adds, "Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. xi. 28). If St Peter had said this, what a stir would the Church of Rome have made about it! How would they have triumphed in it, as a most infallible proof that he was Christ's vicar upon earth, the universal bishop of the whole world, who had the care of all the churches! But it is well that it was not St Peter, but St Paul, that said it; and he said it only to show how careful he was in the discharge of his apostolical office towards the whole Church of Christ; and so hath left us an undeniable argument, that he was at

least as much a universal bishop as St Peter was; and also that we, after his example, ought to be careful to perform our whole duty in our respective places; and by consequence, that when he commands us to “be careful for nothing,” he doth not mean that we should not be careful to avoid whatsoever is offensive to God, and to do what is pleasing in his sight, to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;” but rather, that we be so careful of such things, as to be careful of nothing else.

But here we may observe, that even in such things we may be too careful—that is, as the original word signifies, too “anxious,” too much distracted and di-

vided in our thoughts, about them; as many are who do what they can to live according to the rules of the Gospel, and yet suspect their spiritual estate, and, never thinking they can do enough, run into the contrary extreme, of doing many things which are not required at their hands. Such are they who whip, and scourge, and macerate their bodies, and so make themselves unserviceable to God and the world. And such are they, also, who, out of a groundless care and fear of offending God, scruple the doing of such things as he hath nowhere forbidden, and therefore will not be offended at their doing of them. This is the case, not only of those who dissent from us, but of many good people among our-

felves, who, being of a fearful and melancholy temper, indulge a strange kind of nicety and scrupulosity of conscience about things in themselves indifferent. And this seems to be that which the wise man forbids, where he saith, “Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?” (Eccles. vii. 16). As if he had said, Be not superstitious, or over scrupulous, about such things in religion as thou mayest or mayest not do without sin; nor make thyself over wise, as if thou sawest virtue or vice where nobody else can see it: “Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?” or rather, as the word signifies, Why shouldest thou stupify, astonish, or confound thyself? For so

they all do who trouble their heads about such little things; they do but confound and perplex their own thoughts, and take them off from the more substantial parts of religion. This, therefore, is that which we ought to avoid: we ought not to be too careful and solicitous about doubtful and indifferent things; but apply our minds wholly to the plain and necessary matters of the law, and trouble ourselves no farther; but trust in our blessed Saviour for the pardon of our defects, and for God's acceptance of what we do, upon the account of what he hath done and suffered for us.

But I shall speak no more of that at present, because the apostle speaks not of it in my text; for by saying, "Be careful

for nothing," he means only that we should not be careful about temporal or earthly things; that we should avoid those cares which our Saviour calls, *μερίμνας βιωτικὰς*, "the cares of this life" (Luke xxi. 34), and *μερίμνας τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου*, "the cares of this world" (Matt. xiii. 22).

But here, also, we must take care that we do not mistake his meaning, so as to think that he would not have us take any care at all of anything here below: for so long as we live in this world, it is absolutely necessary that we take some care about our living in it. So long as our souls are united to our bodies, we are bound, by the laws of God and nature, to take care of our bodies, as well as souls. Our souls, indeed, and their



concerns, are to be regarded in the first place; but after them we ought to look to our bodies also, that they may want nothing that is necessary for their subsistence, so long as God shall see good to continue our souls in them. And for that purpose, all who cannot well subsist without it, not only may, but ought to follow some honest trade or calling, whereby to support themselves and their families.

But, because the right understanding of this may be of great use to many here present, I shall briefly give you what instructions and directions I think necessary about it, in these following propositions: —

First, all are bound to follow some

calling or trade, unless they have enough to live upon without it. I add this— unless they have enough to live upon without following any trade; because there are some who have great estates conveyed to them by inheritance, or by gift, from their ancestors or relations; others who, by God's blessing upon their own endeavours, have attained as much as is sufficient to maintain them while they are in the world, and so need not follow any trade, at least for that purpose. But such must not look upon themselves as having nothing to do in the world: for really they have as much to do, if not more, than other people: forasmuch as they who follow a trade always know their business, their work lies before them;

whereas others are forced, or at least ought, to study every day what to do, and how to employ their time and their estates, so as to give a good account of them at the last day. And when they have found it out, they ought to apply their minds as seriously to it, as if their lives depended upon it; for so their eternal life doth, though not their temporal. They may, perhaps, live well enough without doing anything in this world; but they cannot expect to live well in the next world without it. For their welfare there depends not upon what they have, but upon what they do, here: insomuch, that they who do nothing but live upon their estates, will have but little cause to be glad they had

estates to live upon, when they shall hear their great Lord and Master pronounce that dreadful sentence against them which he in the parable did against that idle servant who did not improve, but hid his master's talent in a napkin, saying, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxv. 30):

Wherefore, they whom God hath blessed with considerable estates, or with such a competency whereby they are able to keep themselves and families without the assistance of a trade, they must have a care that they do not live idly and to no purpose in the world, mere cyphers that signify nothing, but, like the tree in

the parable, which only “cumbered the ground,” and therefore was fit for nothing but to be “cut down, and cast into the fire.” But such persons ought rather to look upon themselves as being of a higher calling, and as having more to do than others. They have more time to spare, and therefore should spend more in their public and private devotions; their thoughts are freer from the cares of this world, and therefore ought to be more intent upon the next; they need not trouble their heads about getting an estate, and therefore should be more careful how they use it; they have commonly more than what they have real need of themselves, and therefore should give more to those who want it; in short,

they have more advantages of serving and glorifying God in the world, and therefore are more obliged to do it, as they tender their own eternal welfare.

When I seriously consider these things, I cannot but sometimes wonder with myself, what should make men so eager in getting great estates for their children, when by that means they do but expose their children to greater hardships and temptations than they themselves lay under, and make it more difficult for them ever to get to heaven; our Saviour himself, by whom alone we can come thither, having told us, with his own mouth, that “a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. xix. 23). And even in this life,

all things considered, they who are forced to follow a trade, and do accordingly follow it as they ought, may live every way as comfortably, and much more safely, than they. And how much soever a man hath, it is certainly his best and wisest course to have some trade, or calling, or office, or at least some business, either public or private, always to do, so long as he is able, whereby he may employ his time, his parts, his learning, his strength, his interest, his estate, and whatsoever talents God hath put into his hand; so that he may answer God's end in sending him into the world, and in bestowing such blessings upon him.

For, in plain terms, God did not make man to sit still and do nothing. The

first man he made, he had no sooner made him but he immediately put him into the garden of Eden, “to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. ii. 15). This was the first Adam’s employment, even in the state of innocence and perfection. And the second Adam, too, until he entered upon his office of Mediator, followed a trade that tended to the same end; for Joseph, to whom his mother was espoused, being a carpenter, he himself is said to be of the same trade (Mark vi. 3), and his business was to make “ploughs and yokes for oxen, in order to tilling the ground,” as Justin Martyr informs us, who lived soon after him. And one reason, as the same father observes, wherefore our Lord followed that



trade was, that he might teach us, ἐνεργῆ βίον, “an active life;” to avoid idleness, as the great occasion of vice and wickedness. And as our Lord hath taught us this by his example, so by his precept too: for St Paul, speaking in his name, and by the direction of his Holy Spirit, laid this as a command upon the Thesalonians, and in them upon all Christians, saying, “For when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any man would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat

their own bread" (2 Thes. iii. 10-12). Where we may observe, that he reckons no man's bread his own, but what he gets by his own labour and industry. But by "bread," we are here to understand, as the word usually signifies in Scripture, "all things necessary to the support of human life." Such things every man is obliged to provide for himself; and not only for himself, but likewise for his kindred and relations, which are not able to provide them for themselves. For the same apostle saith in another place, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house," or kindred, "he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. v. 8). "He hath

denied the faith” — that is, he hath renounced that faith which works by love, and in effect hath apostatised from the Christian religion by not observing the precepts of it; and so is as bad, nay “worse than infidels.” For infidels, or heathens, by the very light of nature, used to take care of their parents and children, and others that were nearly related to them. And therefore, he who professes the faith of Christ, and so knows it to be his duty from the Word of God himself, if he notwithstanding will not do it, he is really worse than an infidel, and will be more severely punished for it another day.

And suppose a man really hath, or thinks he hath, enough for himself and

family, he is not therefore discharged from his calling, so long as God gives him opportunity and strength to follow it: for that a man is bound to do, not only for his own sake, and his relations, but likewise that he may be thereby enabled to do good to others also. According to that of the apostle, “ Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth ” (Eph. iv. 28). “ To him that needeth ”—that is, any man that wants the necessaries of this life: such a one every man is bound to relieve, although he is forced to work hard to do it. And one great end which men propose to themselves in carrying on

their trade ought to be this, even that they may be in a capacity of helping and relieving such as are in want, and cannot help or relieve themselves.

But as all men are for these ends bound to follow some trade or calling, so, in the next place, we must observe, that the trade or calling they follow should be lawful and honest—the thing they do should be “good,” as St Paul speaks in the words before quoted. It must not be vicious in itself, nor minister occasion of vice to others; for then it is not a trade or calling, but treason or rebellion against God. But that which a man employs himself in for the purposes before mentioned, must be either commanded, or approved of, or at least al-

lowed, by the Word of God. It must be some way useful either to Church or State, either to men's souls or bodies, to private persons or to the public society in which they dwell. The calling which contributes to any such uses is lawful and good—otherwise not; for otherwise a man spends his time to ill purposes, or, which is almost as bad, to none at all.

Wherefore, as ever you desire to employ yourselves well, as becometh honest good men, you must be sure to follow such a calling as suits with the apostle's rule, where he saith, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good

report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. iv. 8). For these are the things that make a calling good, profitable to a man’s self, useful to the world, and acceptable to Almighty God.

In the last place, whatsoever such trade or calling a man is of, he ought to follow it with care and diligence; not to loiter away his time, and neglect his business upon every slight occasion; but always remember that his calling is the means whereby God hath designed to supply him and his with all things necessary for this life; and, therefore, if he neglect it, he doth not only expose himself to ruin and poverty, but he wrongs, he robs, his family and poor relations of

the maintenance which God hath provided for them by that means. There is no honest and lawful calling that a man is of, but, if it be not his own fault, he may live comfortably upon it, and get as much as God knows to be necessary and proper for him in his place and station; and so be as rich as he need be in this world. But for that purpose it is not enough that he hath a calling, but he must be diligent and industrious in it: for, as the wise man observes, “He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich” (Prov. x. 4);—not of itself, but because the blessing of God attends it, without which, all our care and diligence will come to nothing. But, as we have



no ground to expect God's blessing except we be diligent, if we be so, we have no cause to mistrust it; for he is never wanting to any man that is not first wanting to himself.

Hence, therefore, I would recommend to your serious consideration and daily practice that excellent rule of the apostle, where he commands, "That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing" (1 Thess. iv. 11, 12). He doth not say, that ye may abound in riches, purchase great estates, or advance your families; but, "that ye may have lack of nothing;"

which is enough in all reason; for he who lacks nothing is as rich as he that hath all things: for he hath all things he lacks. But for this purpose ye must “study” first “to be quiet,” to live peaceably with all men; and then you must “study” likewise “to do your own business;” τὰ ἴδια, “those things which are proper to yourselves, and to your own calling,” without meddling with other men’s affairs any further than to do them all the good ye can. So that, in short, whatsoever trade, calling, office, or employment a man is of, it is his duty to mind it; and to mind it, also, with care and diligence, that, by God’s blessing upon it, he may be able to maintain himself and his family by it.

And therefore, when the apostle in my text saith, "Be careful for nothing," he cannot be so understood, as if he forbade us to use all due care and diligence, everyone in his own particular calling; for this would be to forbid that in this place which he himself elsewhere, and the Scriptures all along, command.

But what, then, doth he here forbid? He forbids, in general, that over-carefulness, sollicitude, and anxiety of mind, about the things of this life which many, too many, are subject to; who never thinking they shall have enough, and always fearing that, notwithstanding all their care, they shall come to want, their minds are distracted, their thoughts trouble them, their hearts are divided

and rent, as it were, in pieces, casting this way, and that way, and every way, and yet know not which way to take; like a troubled sea, tossed to and fro with every wind that blows. Whatsoever happens, they have no peace, no rest or quiet in themselves: if they lose never so little, they think presently they are undone: if they get ever so much, unless it be as much as they expected, it is all one: they moil and toil; they rise up early, and sit up late, and eat their bread with carefulness—and all for fear they should have none to eat. How much soever God hath given them at present, they dare not trust him for the future; and therefore are still bustling about to provide for themselves as well as they can. If

they be in any strait, they think of everything how to get out, except Him who alone can help them. If they seem to be in any danger, though it be never so remote, it strikes them to the heart, and puts them into a hurry and confusion. If they have any business more than ordinary upon their hands, they stretch their brains to the highest pitch, till they come to their wit's end how to do it to the best advantage for themselves. By which means they live, as it were, in a maze, or labyrinth, not knowing which way to go, and yet running about as if they did. In short, they live as without God in the world, or at least without any trust or dependence upon him; and therefore, as if they were their own

carvers, they bend their minds wholly to take care of themselves, and of all their concerns in this life, without ever looking up to him to direct and assist them in it.

This is that carefulness which the apostle here forbids; and not only the height of it, as I have now described it, but every degree of it, and every such indisposition or distemper of mind as tends towards it.

And you will not wonder that he should forbid it, when you consider the vanity, the trouble, the sinfulness and the mischiefs of it; which I shall therefore put you in mind of, that ye may more fully understand the nature of it, and also be better armed against it for the future.

The vanity of it appears sufficiently in that our carefulness is all to no purpose about the things of this life; for, after all, they are wholly at God's disposal. He gives and takes, and doth what he will with them. He measures them out to all as he sees good; and it is not in our power either to direct or hinder him. This is the argument which our Lord himself makes use of, to show the vanity of all worldly cares, saying, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature," or age? (Matt. vi. 27.) And as for our thoughtfulness about what we shall eat, or drink, or wear, he there shows that God feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field most gorgeously, without their care or

labour; and therefore men, being much better than they, have no cause to doubt but he will provide all things necessary for them, without their being so careful and solicitous about it; and by consequence, all their carefulness and solicitude must needs be in vain, and to no purpose" (Matt. vi. 25, 26, 28, 30). Neither is this only a great vanity, but, as the wise man speaks, it is "vexation of spirit" too. It is a great trouble and disquietness to our minds to be always upon the rack, distorted and distracted with cares and fears, as the men of this world commonly are, "piercing themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. vi. 10), as the apostle observes, and so making their own lives very uneasy and



troublesome, always tormenting their heads, and their hearts too, with excessive solicitude, either how to get more, or else to keep what they have got. And, as if they had not trouble enough at present, they will trouble themselves, too, about what is future, and grieve to-day, because they may have occasion to do so to-morrow. This is that which our blessed Saviour forewarns us against, saying, "Take therefore no thought," or be not careful, "for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. vi. 34). As if he had said, Every day brings care and trouble enough along with it: and it is sufficient that you bear and manage it

aright as it comes. But do not anticipate troubles, and make yourselves miserable now, because ye may be so anon. Be not thoughtful about what may, or may not, happen hereafter; for this will not prevent or alleviate, but aggravate and hasten, your troubles—as they find by woful experience who concern themselves too much about future events.

And it would be well if there was nothing else but trouble in it. But, alas! this excessive carefulness and anxiety of mind about worldly things is sinful, as well as troublesome. It is expressly forbidden by Almighty God in my text, and in many other places of Scripture; and it is always accompanied with, or rather it proceeds from, one of the greatest sins a

man can be guilty of—even unbelief, or at least want of faith and trust in God: as our Saviour intimates, where, arguing against it, he saith, “Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?” (Matt. vi. 30.) They must needs be of little faith indeed, if any at all, who are solicitous about such things as God hath promised to give them, without their being so, and therefore mistrust his promises, as well as break his laws, and so are guilty of a double sin in every single act of such excessive thoughtfulness about anything in this world.

But who is able to reckon up or describe the many and great mischiefs which

attend this sin? I shall not undertake to do that; but shall only put you in mind of some of them, which, if duly considered, will make you beware of it, and dread the thoughts of ever falling into it, much more of living in it.

First, therefore, it is this carefulness for the world that hinders and keeps you off from performing your duty unto God. So long as your minds are so intent about the things of this life, it is impossible that you should love, fear, or trust in God, or serve and honour him as you ought to do: no, ye have other business to mind than what he hath set you. And therefore, although ye have never so many opportunities of performing your devotions to him, ye can find no time, or,

rather, ye cannot find it in your hearts, to do it, your thoughts being wholly taken up with other affairs, of a different and quite contrary nature.

This our Saviour himself noted in Martha. She and her sister Mary keeping house together, our Lord was pleased to honour them with his company. Martha being mightily pleased, as well she might, with his company, was very careful and busy about providing for his entertainment, or, as the text saith, “was cumbered about much serving;” while Mary, in the meantime, sat at Jesus’ feet, hearing his divine discourses. Upon which Martha, having more upon her hands than she could well do, desired our Lord to bid her sister come and help

her. But, instead of that, our Lord said to her, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke x. 41, 42). If it ever can be lawful to be cumbered with worldly business, it must needs be so upon such an extraordinary occasion, when they had got so divine a guest in their house. Yet we see our Saviour plainly reproveth Martha for her over-carefulness, even upon that occasion, because it hindered her from attending, as her sister did, to his doctrine. And I fear there be many among us who, upon slighter occasions, neglect the service of God, being so “careful and

troubled about many things," that they never think of "the one thing needful," except, perhaps, upon the Lord's-day, when they cannot mind the world, and so have nothing else to do. For we find, by sad experience, that, upon the week-days, when you can follow your worldly business, our churches are empty, and God's service neglected—which is a plain demonstration that your over-carefulness for this life hinders you from taking any care at all of the next.

Neither doth this hinder you only from serving God, but it hinders you also in the doing of it. For so long as your minds are distracted about the world, it is impossible you should serve God without distraction: as Christ himself

faith, “ No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon ” (Matt. vi. 24). Ye cannot possibly be intent upon two things at the same time, and especially upon things so directly opposite to one another as God and the world. And, therefore, so long as your thoughts are wholly taken up with the things of this life, as they commonly are, it is no wonder that ye cannot keep them close to any duty ye perform to God; but in the midst of your most solemn devotions, public or private, worldly thoughts will still be crowding in, and spoil all ye do. From whence ye may see the reason why there are so few in the world that serve God at all, and much fewer that serve him well: most



being such as the prophet speaks of, who “come before God as the people cometh, and sit before him as his people, and with their mouth show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness” (Ezek. xxxiii. 31).

And as this disturbs men in doing their duty, so it deprives them of all the benefit and comfort which they might receive from what they do, and makes the means of grace ineffectual and useless. For this ye have Christ’s own observation and word, who, in the Parable of the Sower, saith, “He that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh un-

fruitful" (Matt. xiii. 22). From whence ye may see the great cause why men in this age hear so much, and practise so little; even because whatsoever you hear, the cares of this world immediately put it out of your thoughts. You never think any more of it; and then it is no wonder that ye are never the wiser or better for it.

And yet this is not all neither; for this excessive carefulness about the things of this life doth not only hinder you from doing or receiving good, but it exposeth you to all manner of sin and wickedness. The wise man tells you, that "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent" (Prov. xxviii. 20); and St Paul, to the same purpose, "They that will

be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. vi. 9). And you cannot but all observe the same of all manner of worldly cares—how they put men upon envy and hatred, upon wrath and fury, strife and contention with one another; upon lying, swearing, and perjury; upon oppression and extortion; upon cheating, stealing, and robbing upon the highway; yea, upon going to the devil himself, and consulting him and his agents about their worldly concerns.

This I rather mention in a more particular manner, because I have heard there are some in this city, as well as elsewhere, who, if they have lost anything, or would

know something of their friends beyond sea, or of their future state in this world, presently go to those which they call astrologers, wizards, conjurers, or the like, to be informed about it—which is plainly going to the devil for it. For whether those kind of people they go to deal with him or no, they who go to them consult them as if they did, and so are copartners with them in their wickedness, whatsoever it is, whether it be real witchcraft and forcery, or only confederacy and cheat. And, therefore, as by the law of Moses a witch was not suffered to live (Exod. xxii. 18), so, in the same law, God hath expressly commanded that none shall seek after, nor so much as regard, wizards, or such as have

familiar spirits” (Lev. xix. 31); and if any do so, he saith that he will set his face against them, and cut them off from his people (Ibid. xx. 6). And, indeed, it is very rare but God inflicts some remarkable judgment upon those who consult such as exercise, or pretend to, that which they call the black art. And if they happen to escape in this life, they will smart more severely for it in the next—it being one of the greatest sins that a man can be guilty of: it is a kind of apostasy, a leaving God to go to the devil; and all from excessive carefulness about something in this world, which is plainly the only cause that puts silly people upon such wicked practices as these are.

I shall add to these only one more of the many mischiefs which arise from the same cause; and that is the same which Christ himself puts you in mind of where he saith, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke xxi. 34). Where ye see how he who will be your Judge, being desirous that you should not be surpris'd or taken unawares, hath forewarned you that the cares of this life will make you as unfit to appear before him as surfeiting and drunkenness itself. Which, when I sometimes consider with myself, I cannot but pity those who go out of this world, as many, I fear,

do, in the midst of worldly cares, and, by consequence, as unfit to die as they who are downright drunk; and therefore must beg of you always to remember your Saviour's words, and take heed that your hearts be not overcharged with the cares of this life, lest ye die too in that condition, and so be miserable for ever.

But you will say, perhaps, what would you have us do? would you not have us to mind our trade? Yes, by all means; you are bound in conscience to do it, as I showed before. It is your duty to mind every one his own calling in this world, while ye live in it. But it is also your duty to mind God, and that world where ye must live for ever.

And although you ought to use all due care and diligence about your trade, as if ye were to live by it; yet you must not be so careful and anxious about it, as if you could live by that without God's blessing upon it; which you can have no ground to expect if your minds be more intent upon that than upon Him in whom you live, and from whom, after all, you must receive it, or else have nothing to live on. And therefore, if you would follow your trades as becometh Christians, you must be diligent and industrious in them; but you must not be fearful and solicitous about the event and success of them, but leave that wholly and solely to God, trusting and depending upon him to give you that success



which he, in his infinite wisdom, knows to be best for you; and trouble your heads no more about it. This you will find to be not only the most easy and comfortable way of living and trading in the world, but likewise the most effectual course you can take never to want anything that is necessary or good for you: for God himself will provide all such things for you, if you trust upon him for it.

This holds good not only as to your trading and trafficking in the world for a livelihood, but likewise as to all the changes and chances of this mortal life. Whatsoever danger you fear, whatsoever strait or difficulty you are in, you must not suffer your minds to be disturbed or

distracted about it; but lift up your hearts to God, and commit yourselves and your affairs all to him, and then he will be sure to take care of you, so as either to bring you out of your straits, or, which is better, turn them to your advantage. For this you have his own word, where he saith, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Pet. v. 6, 7). And again: “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Psalm lv. 22). And elsewhere: “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt

be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm xxxvii. 3-5). There are many such promises in Holy Scripture, whereby we are fully assured that, if we use the means for attaining anything that is truly good for us, and be not over-careful about them, but trust in God for his blessing upon them, we shall certainly attain the thing we aimed at, or something better.

This is the more to be observed here, because it will help us to understand the latter part of my text, where the apostle having said, "Be careful for nothing," adds, "but in everything by prayer and

supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” “Be made known unto God,” may ye say? Doth not God know them before? Yes, certainly: but as a father knows his child wants such and such things, and yet will not give him them till he hath asked them of him; so God knows, as our Saviour saith, “that we have need of these things”—the things of this life; but before he gives them, he will have us make known and acknowledge our want of them to him, and pray to him for them, to signify our dependence upon him, and our obligation to him for what we have. Concerning which there are three things observable in my text.

First, that as we are to “be careful

for nothing," we ought to pray for everything: "in everything," saith the apostle, great or small. Whatsoever it is we want, we must request it of God.

Secondly, to our prayers and supplications we must always add thanksgiving: thankfulness for what we have being the best means whereby to obtain what we want. And then,

Lastly, this is all the apostle would have us do in everything, in every condition, in every circumstance of our whole life—even "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make known our requests unto God;" and when we have done that, he would have us trouble ourselves no more about anything, but leave all to God, with a sure

trust and confidence that he, according to his promise, will grant our requests which we have made known to him, so far as he knows it to be good for us. This is the course he would have us take upon all occasions. And he that takes this course need be careful for nothing, for he will have God himself to take care of all things for him, as we may see in many instances.

When Jehoshaphat was in a great strait, by reason of vast armies that were coming against him, he made known his case to God, saying, "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee" (2 Chron. xx. 12). He prayed and

trusted in God, who therefore fought for him, making his enemies destroy one another.

When Nebuchadnezzar had threatened the three children that they should be thrown into a fiery furnace, unless they would worship the image which he had set up, they were so far from being solicitous, as most people would have been about such a matter as concerned their lives, that they plainly told him, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so" [as thou speakest], "our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king!" (Daniel iii. 16, 17.) They were not careful about it, but

trusted in God, who therefore sent his angel to deliver them. This is the rule which Christ prescribed to his disciples in all the troubles they were likely to meet with, saying, "When they deliver you up, take no thought," be not careful "how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak" (Matt. x. 19). If ever they might be careful, it might be upon such occasions; but, even on such occasions as those, our Lord would have them take no thought about it, but only trust in the promise which he made them.

I cannot omit that remarkable instance of St Paul and Silas, who, being in prison, were so far from being thoughtful how to get out, that, "at midnight they



prayed, and sang praises unto God:" upon which the prison-doors were opened, their bands loosed, and next morning they were both released (Acts xvi. 25, 26).

There are many instances in Scripture of God's particular care of those who trust on him. And though these may seem extraordinary, and ye cannot expect that he should now work miracles for you, yet, if you will but make trial of it, ye will find him still both able and ready to assist and help you upon all occasions by his ordinary providence, as effectually as if it was extraordinary and miraculous.

This, therefore, is that which I would now advise you to. Whatsoever busi-

ness ye have upon your hands, how great and difficult soever it may seem, do not stretch your thoughts, be not careful about it, but do what you think at present to be best; and apply yourselves to God, believing and trusting on him for his direction and assistance; and then ye will find that all will be well, far better than your solicitude and thoughtfulness can make it. For then God himself will take the business into his own hands. As ye depend upon him for it, he will concern himself in it. He will direct your thoughts to the best means, and assist and bless you in the use of them. He will keep off everything that may any way impede or hinder it. He will order all things relating to it, so as to

make them concur to the effecting of it. And if you thus always cast your care upon him, he will always take care of you. He will instruct you by his wisdom, he will guide you by his counsel, he will assist you by his grace, he will sanctify and comfort you by his Holy Spirit, he will strengthen and protect you by his almighty power, and at last receive you to himself in glory, through the merits of his only Son: "To whom," &c.



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