

STARCK'S
MOTHERHOOD PRAYERS
for All Occasions

From the German Edition of Dr. F. Pieper

Translated and Edited

by

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PREFACE.

What our faithful and kind God has promised to all believers, *viz.*, that He will protect, aid, and care for them, and hear their prayers, Christian women living in holy matrimony may expect from Him, especially at a time when God has blessed them and made them fruitful mothers. Nobody will ever disprove of the Psalmist's words, who says: "Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is His reward." Godly women accept this statement, as can be seen by the example of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and other holy women, who, when they perceived that God had made them fruitful, praised Him for it with all their heart.

When godly women in their married life become aware of the blessing which God has accorded them, the ardent wish arises in their hearts that their hidden fruit may be ushered into the light of day unharmed and well formed. With their pious mind they turn to the Lord, confidently trusting that the almighty and kind Creator will hear their prayers. As the time of their delivery draws near, they increase the fervor of their prayers to Him who is able to do all things, and await His fatherly help. And when God has heard their prayer of faith, and they behold the healthy child to which they have given birth, they praise the gracious providence of their faithful God with heart and lips.

In this book Christian married women will find sufficient instruction (which, assuredly, they desire!) how they may conduct themselves in a true Christian spirit both during the time of their pregnancy and in childbirth. May the faithful God gladden with His blessing all godly hearts that call upon His all-embracing mercy in humble resignation, by hearing their prayers.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, by Thy holy birth Thou hast sanctified our sinful birth. Aid all those who call upon Thee in their hour of need with Thy mighty grace. Help them, refresh them, comfort them, gladden them. Come to them when human help is too feeble to aid them. Behold, their heart is sighing unto Thee, their lips are quivering, and their eyes are turned to Thy sanctuary. Speak to their heart the comforting assurance: "I am with thee in trouble, to deliver thee; fear not; I am at Thy side." Then they shall sound abroad Thy glory, and say: The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad; the name of the Lord be praised now and forevermore. Amen.

Meditations for Women with Child.

The Woman with Child at Her Morning Devotion.

EXHORTATION.

Every Christian, before going to his work in the morning, ought to commit himself to the gracious protection of God, and ought to pray God to keep his body and his soul under His sheltering mercy. It is certainly a great blessing of God when a person rises in good health in the morning, spends the day in good health with the aid of the most high God, and retires in good health at night. That this is a special blessing of God we realize when we observe that many a one has been well in the morning, but lies sick at eventide, or has met with misfortune during the day so that he had to be put to bed, lame, wounded, or with mangled limbs.

However, if every person ought to commit himself to the guardian care of God, how much more ought women expecting to become mothers do this! Every morning such women should diligently and eagerly call upon God (1) to keep them in holy and good thoughts throughout the day, that they may have their mind upon God, have Him always in their hearts, and hold converse with Him.

(2) They should also commend their life and limbs to God, asking Him to guard their steps and preserve them from a dangerous fall or other injury.

(3) Nor should they weary of commending the fruit of their womb to the holy providence of God, that it may grow, and become strong and well formed.

(4) However, in particular, they should be careful during the day not to become angry or involved in quarrel and strife. They should not be punctilious or easily offended, lest by their self-will and anger they bring misfortune, sickness, or even death upon their unborn child.

If they resign themselves thus to the goodness and mercy of God, they have the consolation that God will give His angel charge over them to keep them in all their ways.

MORNING PRAYER.

Lord God Father, what Thou hast created, Lord God Son, what Thou hast redeemed, Lord God Holy Spirit, what Thou hast sanctified, I commit to Thy hands. Praise, honor, glory, and thanks be to Thy holy name in this morning hour and forevermore. Amen.

O gracious, kind, and merciful God, who art Thyself the Light with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, I thank Thee from my inmost heart that Thou hast graciously kept me during this dark night and hast again permitted me to behold the gladdening light of morning. O Thou Light of my soul, shine into my heart this morning that I may be strengthened in love of Thee and in my confidence and hope. Sanctify my soul, that I may converse with Thee this day, have my mind on Thee, rejoice in Thee, and find comfort in Thy mercy.

Grant that I may not sin intentionally against Thee this day, but serve Thee and walk before Thee in the holiness and righteousness of the children of God. Make me to realize Thy most holy presence, and to be aware that Thou art about me all the time, hearing everything that I say, and seeing everything that I do, in order that by this consciousness I may be the more encouraged to persevere in holiness, and not to offend Thee.

I also commend to Thee my body and life, my walking about, my every step. O God of all goodness and grace, Thou hast now placed me in a peculiar state, in which I need Thy peculiar protection and aid. Therefore I humbly pray and beseech Thee, O Thou Protector of Thy children, to preserve my going out and my coming in. Let Thy mercy guide me; let Thy angel lead me by the hand, that I may not suffer some hurtful slip or fall by which I may injure a limb and at the same time the fruit of my womb. Guard me, strengthen me, preserve me. Drive far from me whatever is harmful to me. Let Thy good Spirit lead me in an even path. Let me live to see the evening under Thy protection, when I shall joyfully thank Thee again for all the benefits which Thou hast graciously shown me in body and soul.

The Lord bless me and keep me; the Lord make His face shine upon me, and be gracious unto me; the Lord lift up His countenance upon me, and give me peace. The mercy of the Father

protect me; the love of Jesus cover me; the succor of the Holy Spirit preserve me now and at all times.

If Thou dwell within me, Evil far must go, And I shall be tasting Bliss that angels know. Always in Thy keeping, Jesus Savior, dear, Whether waking, sleeping, Thine I am fore'er. Amen.

HYMN.

In all my ways, O God,
I would acknowledge Thee;
And seek to keep my heart and house
From all pollution free.

Where'er I have a tent,
An altar will I raise;
And thither my oblations bring
Of humble prayer and praise.

Could I my wish obtain,
My household, Lord, should be
Devoted to Thyself alone,
A nursery for Thee.

The Woman with Child at Her Evening Devotion.

EXHORTATION.

Oh, what a great favor it is when God permits a person to live through an entire day until the evening without a misfortune, and the person can retire to his rest, saying: I lay me down and sleep in perfect peace! What a glorious rest is his who retires at night in peace with God, in peace with his own conscience, in peace and comfort of body! Such a person can say to the praise of the Triune God: The Lord hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad. And when he falls asleep thus, with a grateful heart and the praise of God on his lips, the remainder of his nightly rest will also be blessed by God.

In the same manner, too, women with child should lift up their hearts, their eyes, and their lips to God when they have completed the day without misfortune. They should thank God for having graciously preserved and protected them, and should commend themselves to His love and mercy.

If the saying that night is no man's friend is true, it applies especially to women with child. Accordingly, they should call upon God, (1) to avert from them all manner of frightful accidents, because women with child may be exposed to the gravest dangers by a sudden terror; (2) to preserve them from sickness and pain; (3) to spread His sheltering wings continually over them and the fruit of their womb.

With the dawn of the new day they should (4) appear before God with praises on their lips and say with David: Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.

EVENING PRAYER.

Gracious, loving, and merciful God, with joyful heart I come before Thy most holy countenance. How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. Yes, under the shadow of Thy wings I have gone out and come in to-day: I have been sheltered beneath them; no harm has touched me, and I have now safely reached the evening. Blessed be the love of my heavenly Father, who has borne me on His arms as His child. Blessed be Jesus Christ, my Savior, who has guided me with His hand, so that no misfortune has moved me. Blessed be God the Holy Spirit, who has not departed from me.

O Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, abide with me also this night. Continue Thy loving-kindness unto them that know Thee, and Thy righteousness to the upright in heart. Guard my body and my soul against every accident. Let me continually commune with Thee while sleeping, in order that on awaking I may still be with Thee. Behold, I know of no helper except Thee only, Thou God of Israel. Let Thy angel be at my side and keep watch at my bed, that nothing may harm me, and that which Thou hast graciously entrusted to me. Drive from my heart all unnecessary cares, evil thoughts, and false imaginations. Drive from my bed and my home whatever might bring me misfortune.

Thus I now lay me down in the name of God. I sleep in the arms of my Jesus; His left hand is under my head, and His right hand covers me. O my Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, be and abide with me! O Triune God, Thou art my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear? Thou art the Strength of my life;

of whom shall I be afraid? No; I am not afraid of anything, for God is with me; I fear nothing, because I have Jesus with me. When it is dark around me, Jesus is the Light of my soul. When I am growing afraid, the Holy Spirit is my Consolation and Support.

Let this night pass safely for me under Thy protection, in order that, delivered, gladdened, guarded, and preserved by Thee, I may again behold the cheering sunlight, and my lips shall praise Thee with joy and thank Thee for all Thy benefits. As often as my pulse beats this night, my spirit shall embrace Thee; as often as my heart stirs, this shall be my desire, that I may loudly proclaim everywhere: O Jesus, Jesus, Thou art mine, and I am and remain Thine. Thus I shall now go to sleep, O Jesus, in Thy arms. Thy guardian care shall be my cover, Thy mercy my couch, Thy breast my pillow, and the delights which flow from Thy Word and which Thy Spirit sheds in my heart shall be my dream. Amen.

HYMN.

O Lord, who knowest every need of mine,
 Help me to bear each cross, and not repine;
 Grant me fresh courage every day,
 Help me to do my work alway
 Without complaint!

O Lord, Thou knowest well how dark the way,
 Guide Thou my footsteps, lest they stray;
 Give me fresh faith for every hour,
 Lest I should ever doubt Thy power,
 And make complaint!

Give me a heart, O Lord, strong to endure,
 Help me to keep it simple, pure;
 Make me unselfish, helpful, true
 In every act, whate'er I do,
 And keep content!

Help me to do my woman's share,
 Make me courageous, strong to bear
 Sunshine or shadow in my life;
 Sustain me in the daily strife
 To keep content!

Daily Meditation of a Woman with Child.

When God causes a married woman to become aware that she is to receive the blessing of motherhood, she should rejoice in her heart and thank God for it. But she should reflect at the same time (1) that in her condition she will experience many pains, many discomforts, and many hardships, of which she knew nothing and which she did not experience while she was single. These pains God has laid on womankind after the Fall, as we read Gen. 3, 16: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children."

However, since these pains come from God and are a reminder of sin, Christian wives should reflect (2) that God is gracious for Christ's sake, and soothes every pain; that He is a mighty God, who can remove all pains; yea, that since all things work together for good to them that love God, also the hardships which pregnancy entails must serve in many ways for the edification of women with child and for their training in Christianity: they can learn to understand the holiness, wisdom, goodness, omnipotence, help, and blessing of God, which they could not have learned as well outside of the estate of wedlock.

In an hour of pain, during a sleepless night, or when meeting with a troublesome accident, they should (3) remember that by virtue of their baptismal covenant God is their Father, and will not forsake them, because they are His children; yea, that like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. They should keep their mind on the power of God, who will give them strength to complete the good work and usher into the light of day the good work which He has begun in them. If at times their burden seems so great that they imagine they cannot bear up under it, they should remember that with God nothing is impossible, and that if He speaks but a word, the proud waves of our affliction and misery must subside. (4) However, if the pains continue a long time, they should not lose heart on that account, nor permit their hope to quail, but should remind themselves that God has already appointed the hour when He will help them. Frequently He says to us, as He did to His mother Mary: "Mine hour is not yet come." Therefore we must believingly and patiently bear the delay of the divine help, and trust in the divine promise: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Do you say: Many have lost their lives during pregnancy and in labor? I answer: God has appointed every one the hour when he shall die. While women with child may recall instances of wives who died during pregnancy and in labor, they may also behold many instances of women being safely delivered and becoming happy mothers; yea, the number of those whom the Lord has delivered and helped as they wished to be is far greater than the number of those who died in this state. But if out of a hundred scarcely one has died, and ninety-nine have had a safe delivery, it is contrary to faith and to the love of God always to anticipate the worst. It is distrust of God and a grievous sin to despair of God's help and to say: Although God has helped many hundreds, yea, thousands, still He will not help me. Who has put this distrust into your minds? Is it possible that you do not know the goodness and almighty power of God at all? Therefore, invert your argument and say: God, who has helped so many thousands, will help and aid me also. On this place your reliance with all your heart; contradict your doubting thoughts, and look rather to the mighty and strong hand of God.

Let us suppose, however, that God has appointed for a woman with child that she is to die during her pregnancy or labor; still she would die saved because she would die in her calling. Just as it is a blessed death for a pious Christian to die during prayer, for a preacher to die in the pulpit, for a person to die while dispensing alms, for a king to die on his throne while rendering a righteous decision in behalf of a poor man, so it is a blessed death for a wife to breathe her last during pregnancy and labor, for she dies in her calling, in a God-pleasing state. The death of such pious wives is precious in the sight of the Lord, and after their suffering and pains He will satisfy and refresh them with bliss in the eternal joy of heaven. However, how to die saved, and when to die saved, is a matter that we must commit to the wisdom of God. A believing soul should say: "If only I die saved and go to heaven, the Lord may do as He pleases, and ordain any manner and any hour for my death."

However, women with child should also control themselves, so as not to cause their own death by their anger and stubbornness. For, since anything may prove hurtful to them in their condition, they should exercise the greater caution. It is not to be praised at all in many women with child, but rather to be reproved, that during the time of their pregnancy they are too hot-tempered,

malicious, and sensitive. They are pleased with nothing that the members of their family do; they fret over everything; no food that is brought them, not a word that is spoken to them, not a chair in which they sit down is to their liking. In these things they must practise moderation and pray God for help to overcome their ill temper. For if they stir up their gall by such angry and bitter feelings, dangerous weaknesses, violent fevers, and other things may ensue, and they will not be able to say: These ills God has sent me, but will have to say: I have inflicted this on myself! and it is not their pregnancy, but their evil disposition, their temper and self-will that causes their death.

Yea, I would ask all Christian wives to consider if the fruit of their womb must grow and increase in such embittered blood, and finally be born from such an embittered mother, whether they are not to blame for the fact that the children which they have born are ill-disposed, spiteful, stubborn, manifesting the same stubborn mind which their mothers manifested during pregnancy. Accordingly, a Christian wife must conquer herself in this respect and resign herself to God, lest by her own fault she bring upon herself death and unfortunate birth. If they call upon God for grace, He from whom every good gift cometh down will not deny them this grace; yea, then they can take comfort in God whether they live or die. And since Christian wives while in this state love to go to Communion, they have the greater reason to commit themselves and the fruit of their womb to the Lord Jesus and in His strength to abide in faith, in love, in sanctification, and in self-discipline.

PRAYER.

Holy, kind, and merciful God, I come before Thee bringing my petitions, prayers, supplications, and thanksgiving. O great God, Thou hast bestowed on me the blessing of motherhood, for which I thank Thee from my inmost heart. I pray Thee, grant me in due time the gladdening sight of my child. However, O just God, since Thou hast laid upon this state many pains and discomforts, I willingly assume them with Thy help. If, therefore, hours of sadness, days of pain, sleepless nights are in store for me, O Lord, my God, do not leave me.

I know that by Thy almighty power Thou canst mitigate all my sufferings. In the midst of my sufferings and pain Thou art

still my Father, my Support, my Helper in need, my only Refuge, and my gracious God. Thou who hast ordained and laid upon me these pains hast also the might and power to assuage them. If my discomforts and worries should become too great and numerous, yea, almost unendurable, still I shall not grow faint-hearted, but remember, O faithful God, that Thou wilt not suffer me to be tempted above that I am able, but wilt with the temptation also make a way of escape that I may be able to bear it. When I am sighing: Oh, how long, how long must my heart be in anguish, yearning for Thee? remember the hour when Thou hast decided to help me, and according to Thy gracious will let it come soon.

Place before my eyes, O God, Thy almighty power; yea, write it into my heart, that I may not become frightened when I see other women in the same state with me suffering grievous illness, yea, even losing their lives during labor. In such moments let the fact be firmly graven upon my mind that every year so many hundreds of wives are safely delivered, and that only the smallest number of them are asked by Thee to surrender their lives during labor. Therefore I shall trust in Thy almighty power and grace, and humbly beseech Thee to make me a happy mother. Help me in the hours of labor, and gladden my heart with the sight of a healthy and well-formed child. But if Thou hast decreed the end of my life in this state, Lord, let Thy will be done! I know that in that case I shall die in my calling; I shall die in Thy grace, acquired for me by Christ; I shall die in Thy arms; I shall die as Thy child; I shall die in peace, and Thou wilt usher me into the joy and bliss everlasting.

Meanwhile, O my God, grant me Thy Holy Spirit that He may keep me in good thoughts. Give me a quiet and meek spirit, lest by anger and spite I cause death to myself and the fruit of my womb: Grant that I may moderate my ill temper and not lose my life by my own fault. Let the fruit of my womb be endowed with good powers of body and mind; let it grow sheltered by Thy grace until Thou wilt usher it into the light of day, and thus turn all my pains into bliss and all my sadness into joy.

O Lord, my God, I have poured out my heart before Thee; hear me according to Thy goodness; deliver me according to Thy promise; have mercy on me according to Thy faithfulness; help me according to Thy love; gladden me according to Thy grace.

I know that Thou hast never yet forgotten me, and I have no reason to let grief devour my heart. In the midst of trouble I remember God; He will apportion my pain according to my strength. By Thy Spirit I shall overcome, visit again Thy sanctuary, to praise, thank, and magnify Thee, who wilt bind myself to Thee with bonds of everlasting love. Amen.

HYMN.

In the secret of His presence how my soul delights to hide!
Oh, how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesus' side!
Earthly cares can never vex me, neither trials lay me low,
For when Satan comes to tempt me, to the secret place I go.

When my soul is faint and thirsty, 'neath the shadow of His wing,
There is cool and pleasant shelter and a fresh and crystal spring;
And my Savior sits beside me as we hold communion sweet;
If I tried, I could not utter what He says when we thus meet.

Only this I know; I tell Him all my doubt and griefs and fears;
Oh, how patiently He listens, and my drooping soul He cheers!
Do you think He ne'er reproves me? What a false friend He
would be,
If He never, never told me of the sins which He must see.

Do you think that I could love Him half so well, or as I ought,
If He did not plainly tell me of my sinful deed and thought?
No, He is so very faithful, and that makes me trust Him more,
For I know that He does love me, though He wounds me very sore.

Would you like to know the sweetness of the secret of the Lord?
Go and hide beneath His shadow, and this shall be your reward.
And when you leave the silence of the special meeting-place,
You must mind and bear the image of your Master in your face.

You will surely lose the blessing and the fulness of your joy
If you let dark clouds distress you and your inward peace destroy.
You may always be abiding, if you will, at Jesus' side,
In the secret of His presence you may every moment hide.

The Woman with Child Reflects on Her God-pleasing State.

EXHORTATION.

God Himself has instituted wedlock and by means of it wishes to propagate the human race. Accordingly, He said to our first parents in Paradise: "Be fruitful and multiply." This being so, a godly wife must rejoice in God when she becomes aware of her fruitfulness. She should reflect (1) that children are a gift of God which He bestows on some and withholds from others, lest men should ascribe anything in this matter to their own power.

As soon as a wife becomes aware of this blessing of God, she should (2) consider that God has remembered her in mercy, as it is written concerning Sarah and Rachel: "And the Lord visited Sarah," and: "The Lord remembered Rachel." Next, she should (3) be content, thank God, and believe that her present condition is in accordance with God's will, who has bestowed this blessing upon her. In all her going out and coming in she should remember that she is in God's company and under His protection, and that God's holy angels exercise special care over her.

But if she is visited with pains and discomforts, she should (4) consider that God has ordained her for this state and for that reason will not forsake her, and that hence she must place her trust in Him all the more, because then she will realize the glorious working of the Lord. To that end she should (5) persevere in prayer, be careful not to grow angry or wrathful, persevere in faith, in the love of Jesus, and true godliness, and be assured that she is in a blessed and God-pleasing state, in which she may comfort herself with the aid and help of God, and that whatever she asks in this state in accordance with God's will God will graciously give her according to His mercy.

PRAYER.

O loving God and Father, how can I sufficiently acknowledge, praise, and extol Thy fatherly faithfulness that Thou hast called and placed me into my present state? Lord, Thou hast remembered me in mercy, and hast made me to obtain this gift and fruit of wedlock. If my present state is irksome, I know nevertheless that I am in Thy grace and that my state is well pleasing to Thee and

ordained by Thee. Thou knowest, Lord, that I have not desired any man from frivolous thoughts, that I endeavored to keep my soul unspotted from all evil lust, and that I have not kept company with unchaste and frivolous persons. I have, however, consented to take a husband in Thy fear, in chaste love, and for Thy glory.

Now that Thou hast mercifully remembered me also, and hast bestowed on me the fruit of the womb, I accept it as a gift from Thy hand. Let Thy mercy be accorded me in this state, and be a gracious God to me in this state, who hears my prayers and supplications, and permit my sighing to reach Thy throne of grace. Be in this state my Companion, to protect, accompany, and guard me. Be in this state my Consolation, when I am visited with sadness, and give me Thy joyful Spirit that He may witness to me at all times that I am Thy child. Be in this state my Refuge, and let me pour out my heart to Thee; cheer me when I am despondent, and refresh me when I am faint. Be in this state my Helper, and assure me, saying: I am with thee in trouble to deliver thee. Be in this state my Succor when I am in pain, suffering, and discomfort. Be in this state my Deliverer, who loosens the bonds in due time, gives me a safe delivery, and rejoices my heart.

O Heavenly Father, be my Strength in this state; support, preserve, strengthen, and refresh me. O Jesus, be in this state my Advocate, who intercedes for me with God and carries my feeble prayer, often breathed amid much pain, to God. O God Holy Spirit, be in this state my Comforter, who assures me that God's favor is resting upon me, that I am a child of God, and certifies to me gracious help and a safe delivery. Yes, be with me, O Triune God, in this state, and I shall be richly blessed, well protected, guarded, and delivered. Lord Jesus, guide me wherever I go, that I may walk in accordance with Thy will to the end of my life. Preserve my body and soul; grave me upon Thy hands; do not let me fall. Give me a holy impulse to meditate upon Thy wounds every hour, and to regard the world as naught. Amen.

HYMN.

How sweet the joy that fills the soul,
 When, after silent waiting long
 For answer to the pleading prayer,
 The sigh becomes triumphant song!

All darkened hours of trial time,
 When we had thought our prayers unheard,
 Our God was listening to our cry,
 And answering still our pleading word.

In His own time, in His own way,
 He comes with blessing, surest, best,
 Drawing the soul that on Him waits,
 In sacred nearness to His rest.

Prayers which we thought unanswered may,
 Like incense, still ascend to heav'n,
 And to the patient, waiting soul
 The sweetest blessing may be giv'n.

The Woman with Child Thanks God for Her Fruitfulness.

EXHORTATION.

Although most men think children a product of nature, Holy Scripture teaches us to regard them differently when it says: "Behold, the fruit of the womb is His reward." Accordingly, believing spouses must pray God for this gift as well as for other gifts. As regards whores and other unbelieving persons, it is true that they obtain this gift because God allows nature to take its course, and permits them to beget children, not for the glory of God, but in a gratification of their sinful lust. But the case is different as regards believing and godly spouses: they receive their children gratefully as a gift of God.

Accordingly, when a pious wife becomes aware of her fruitfulness, she should (1) thank God for it, and call to mind that God bestowed also upon her the blessing which He has promised to bestow on wedlock. Next, she should (2) be careful in her conduct, keeping herself within the bounds of moderation, decency, meekness, and Christian modesty, lest by her own fault she destroy her fruitfulness by excessive work, thoughtless movements, reckless lifting and carrying of burdens, malicious anger, and other wanton acts.

(3) When she observes that her fruitfulness is increasing, she

should daily commit herself and the fruit of her womb to God, and call upon Him that He would Himself form, preserve, strengthen, keep, and in due time safely usher it into the light of day. (4) She should not only forbear grumbling over the discomforts of her state, but also avoid outbursts of a hot temper, anger, and revengefulness towards her husband, her servants, and other persons, for that would be a sign of impatience at her fruitfulness, and consequently an act of ingratitude, which God surely sees and notes and can visit upon persons.

PRAYER.

Lord, almighty God, who art a God of life and givest life and breath to all of us, Thou hast blessed the state of wedlock with fruits of the body. I thank Thee that Thou hast remembered me also and hast made me share the blessing of my married state. Thou almighty Lord hast shown to me a greater favor than to others, who are sighing for this gift and do not obtain it; therefore I pray Thee, let me consider well how greatly Thou hast favored me.

I commit myself entirely to Thee. Guard me against fear and terror, against falling and dangers, against mishaps and anything that might deprive me of the pledge Thou hast placed in my keeping. Train me to exercise Christian caution in walking and at my work, in order that I may not destroy what Thy hand has bestowed upon me. O Lord, how great is Thy wisdom in forming men so wonderfully! How great is Thy almighty power in bringing them forth into the light of day! How great is Thy goodness in thus preserving and increasing the human race! I thank Thee, my God, that Thou hast appointed me also to be an instrument for this glorious work of Thine, and by Thy divine blessing hast made me fruitful.

Oh, finish gloriously by Thy grace the work which Thou hast begun; preserve what Thou hast given me; strengthen what Thou hast entrusted to me, guard what Thou hast bestowed on me. Let me safely pass my appointed time under Thy protection. Let no deformity come within my sight, and no awful message to my ears; and if this should happen nevertheless according to Thy counsel, guard my fruit by Thine almighty hand. Let me in due time become a happy mother and look with joy upon what is still hidden. Lord, let Thy goodness and faithfulness accompany me in all my ways: keep my foot from stumbling, my limbs from being

broken, and my body from being injured. Preserve the gift with which Thou hast blessed me, and let it be committed unto Thee.

Meanwhile I will look for Thy help; I lift up mine eyes unto the hills whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. I will praise the Lord at all times; His praise shall be continually in my mouth. In the morning, at noon, and at night I will thank the Lord for all His benefits.

Praise to the Lord, who doth visibly bless and defend thee; Who, from the heavens, the streams of His mercy doth send thee; Ponder anew What the Almighty can do, If with His love He befriend thee. Amen.

HYMN.

Thou Maker of our mortal frame —
Of all Thy works the noblest far,
We bow before Thy righteous claim
To all we have, and all we are.

Our tongues were fashioned for Thy Word,
Our hands, to do Thy will divine;
Our bodies are Thy temple, Lord,
The mind's immortal powers are Thine.

Its highest thought — to trace Thy skill,
Its purest love on Thee to rest,
Its noblest action of the will
To choose Thy service, and be blest.

Our ransomed spirits rise to Thee —
Unfailing source of light and joy!
Thy love has made Thy children free,
Thy praise shall life and strength employ.

Give grace and mercy to the end —
For we are Thine and not our own:
So shall we to Thy courts ascend,
And cast our crowns before Thy throne.

The Woman with Child Commends Herself and the Fruit of Her Womb to God.

EXHORTATION.

When a godly wife becomes aware of the blessing of her fruitfulness, she has the following things to do, aside from her ordinary work:

(1) She should diligently commend herself to God every day and hour, asking Him to accompany, strengthen, and guard her. (2) She should diligently commend to God and constantly offer up in her prayer to Him the fruit of her womb. For this is the difference between Christian wives and unbelievers, between godly wives and frivolous whores: unbelievers and whores curse their pregnancy, do not esteem the fruit of their womb, do not thank God for it, harm it if they can, and are not well disposed towards it. But godly wives are minded differently: They never pray without offering up their child to God. They call upon Him to give it a well-formed body, as well as healthy and fair limbs, to preserve its life, and let it be safely born. They love the fruit of their womb before they see it, they are careful to have it well preserved, and prepare clothes for swaddling it after its birth. Yea, they do not only provide for its physical well-being, but they also call upon God to let their fruit after its physical birth obtain the new birth through Holy Baptism.

PRAYER.

O holy Father and Creator of all men, behold, I come before Thy most holy countenance and humbly beseech Thee for a favor. O great God, according to Thy goodness Thou hast blessed me with a fruit of the womb; but who am I that I should bring it into this world? How many mothers have conceived children, but not given birth to them! How many were joyfully anticipating beholding a living fruit, but did not obtain their wish!

Therefore, O Lord, Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my groaning is not hid from Thee. Lord, Lord, what Thou hast graciously given me be pleased to preserve according to Thy mercy. I commit myself entirely to the fatherly protection of Thy mercy. Lord, guard me by day and by night, that I may not meet with harm. Accompany me when I go abroad, guard me when I am in the street, and bring me home in safety and without injury. Let

my soul be at rest and peace. Let it be in constant communion with Thee, and find its joy and delight in Thee. Let my heart be a dwelling for Jesus Christ and a temple of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus may live and move in me, govern and sanctify me. Avert from me every vexation, anger, and fright. Let not deformed persons come before my eyes, and if this should happen nevertheless, guard my fruit. Let Thy visitation preserve my breath, my life, my going and coming. The Lord preserve my going out and my coming in from this time forth and even forevermore. In the name of the Triune God I now take up my work. O Triune God, preserve, guard, and protect me by Thy power; bear me up in Thine hands; keep me in all my ways, that no evil may befall me, and I will return thanks to Thee and praise Thee as long as I live.

But I commend to Thee, O Triune God, also the fruit which I am bearing. Lord, I pray for it; I present it before Thee; oh, hear my prayer for Thy goodness' sake, yea, for Jesus' sake. Oh, give to my child healthy and well-formed limbs, a sound body, and good gifts of body and mind. And when Thou hast graciously endowed it in secret with such glorious gifts of body and mind, let it be born anew by Holy Baptism soon after its natural birth. O Jesus, Thou hast said: Suffer little children to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of God. Thou didst take children up in Thy arms and bless them. Receive also my child, when it has arrived, into Thy holy arms, and bless it! Give to it the earnest of its adoption as a child of God, Thy Holy Spirit. Sanctify and renew my child unto life everlasting that I may share eternal salvation with it. My hope is firmly established upon the Lord, my God. He is my greatest Good and my Support in every need. To Him alone I dedicate the affections of my heart.

HYMN.

I know not what shall befall me, —
 God hangs a mist o'er my eyes, —
 And on each step of my onward path
 He makes new scenes to arise,
 And every joy He sends me comes
 As a strange and sweet surprise.

I see not a step before me
 As I tread on another year,
 But the past is still in God's keeping,
 The future His mercy shall clear,
 And that which looks dark in the distance
 May brighten as I draw near.

For perhaps the dreaded future
 Is less bitter far than I think;
 The Lord may sweeten the waters
 Before I stoop to drink,
 Or if Marah must be Marah,
 He will stand beside the brink.

It may be that He keeps waiting
 For the coming of my feet
 Some gift of such rare blessedness,
 Some joy so strangely sweet,
 That my lips can only tremble
 With the thanks they cannot speak.

O restful, blissful ignorance!
 'Tis blessed not to know,
 It keeps me in those Mighty Arms
 Which will not let me go,
 And hushes my soul to rest
 On the Bosom which loves me so.

And so I go on, not knowing, —
 I would not if I might;
 I'd rather walk in the dark with God
 Than go alone in the light,
 I would rather walk with Him by faith
 Than walk alone by sight.

My heart shrinks back from trials,
 Which the future may disclose,
 Yet I never had a sorrow
 But what the dear Lord chose, —
 So I wait and bow submissive
 To the will of Him who knows.

The Woman with Child Remembers the Divine Promises.

EXHORTATION.

Sad and painful though the condition of woman with child is at times, there are comforting and glorious promises for them in which God assures them of His help in their trouble, and promises that He will not leave them nor forsake them, that He will aid them, deliver them, bear them up in His hands, and similar invigorating and strengthening sayings. Now a godly wife during pregnancy should (1) become very familiar with these promises, and derive comfort from them. She should (2) bear in mind that the promises of God concern all men, hence that she can confidently rely on them. And though the desired help, the promised deliverance and help, does not make its appearance at the time or hour when she is longing for it and is in need of it, she should (3) not become despondent on that account and imagine that the promise has failed and will never be fulfilled; but she should (4) firmly trust in the promise of God, who will faithfully keep what He has promised, when His hour for helping has arrived. Meanwhile, she should (5) persevere in prayer, trust, and hope, until at last the hour has arrived when the afflicted soul can joyfully say to the glory of the Most High: Hitherto has the Lord helped me; the Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad.

PRAYER.

My God, when Thou saidst, Seek ye My face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Thou knowest, my God, that without Thee I am nothing, and can do nothing. Who but Thyself can loose my bonds? Who can help me except Thou alone?

Therefore I come to Thee, holding fast Thy word of promise. Thou hast said that Thou wilt not forsake Thine own: oh, do not forsake me! Thou hast promised to be with them in the day of trouble: oh, my day of trouble is approaching; abide with me! Thou hast promised to help Thine own: oh, help me! Thou hast promised to deliver them: oh, deliver me! Lord, in my condition I know not whither to turn except to Thee alone. Many are the cares, worries, and anxieties of my heart, but Thy consolations refresh my soul, and Thy word of promise raises me up. Since I know that Thou art the Protector of Thy believers, the Friend of the forsaken, the Refuge of the grief-stricken, the Help of the

helpless, I am of good cheer and cling to Thee. I will hold Thee fast and Thy Word. When my pain and the anguish of my heart is great, I will sigh to Thee: Lord, I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me. If my help is delayed, it will nevertheless come at last for a comfort to those in misery, and Thou wilt help them gloriously. Thou, O Lord, layest an affliction upon men, but also helpest them bear it; therefore my affliction will not be grievous if Thou wilt help me bear it. I was cast upon Thee from the womb; Thou hast been my confidence from the days that my mother nursed me; therefore Thou shalt remain my trust to the end of my life, come what may. God is my Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble; therefore will not I fear. And why should I be afraid? Is not the Lord with me. The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the Strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? With God I shall confidently enter upon the labor before me; with His aid I will labor and conquer.

O gracious God, strengthen my faith, confirm my trust in Thy promise. Guard me against every mishap, and let me cheerfully reach my appointed time. Meanwhile I will pray and sing, trusting in Thee, until I have been safely delivered, and with my heart shall offer Thee praise and glory for Thy benefits at church as long as I live. Amen; yes, this I will believe; for here is God's Word of which no mishap shall rob me. Forever and ever I shall rest upon this foundation and with the strong hand of faith grasp the anchor of faith, also in my present state. Amen.

HYMN.

Lo! what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!
What parchèd ground refreshed as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all the distant and the near
Stand forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong;
Or others—that we are not always strong;
That we are ever overborne with care;
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled; when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee?

The Woman with Child Rejoices in the Almighty Power of God.

EXHORTATION.

When reflecting upon the conception, preservation, growth, and birth of a child, we cannot sufficiently praise the almighty power of God. Without this power no child can be brought into this world, and the birth of every child is in the eyes of all believers a miracle.

Knowing this, a godly wife should (1) trust in this almighty power of her God. She should regard every child that is born into this world as a work of the omnipotence of God. (2) She can comfort herself with the reflection that, as the omnipotent hand of God has helped others, God will also help her. (3) When she is becoming downhearted, she should remember the declaration of the angel who says: "With God nothing shall be impossible." Luke 1, 37. If nothing is impossible with God, a woman with child can derive comfort from reflecting on the almighty power of God. (4) If circumstances should occur to her that have not occurred to other women, she should not on that account cast away her confidence in the almighty power of God; because just for this reason, that He is the Almighty, God can heal every dangerous wound, remove every heavy burden, avert every fatal accident. Men may assist at the birth of a child, but the almighty hand of God is also present, governing everything, and by His power everything will pass off safely.

PRAYER.

My God, my spirit rejoices when I reflect upon Thy omnipotence, on Thy almighty hands which support everything, bear up everything, and deliver from every evil. When I consider my present condition, I say to myself that Thy omnipotence alone must do everything: Thy almighty power must bear me up in Thy hands, if I am not to fall; Thy almighty power must alleviate my discomforts; yea, in the ordeal that is before me Thy almighty hand alone must accomplish everything. If I think of the fruit of my womb, I say to myself again that Thy omnipotence must preserve, strengthen, guard, and bring it forth into the light of day.

My chief comfort now and for the rest of my life is this, that Thou art an almighty God. I am weak, but Thou art strong; I am

wretched, but Thou art almighty; I am powerless, but Thou canst do all things. No one shall rob me of this comfort: God can help me, and God will help me. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. Since God is almighty, I cannot be harmed in any way; since He is almighty I shall be gloriously delivered.

Therefore, O almighty God, I commit myself entirely to Thee; watch over me, preserve me, strengthen me. Let Thy almighty power preserve me during my pregnancy till my appointed time has arrived. Let Thy almighty power make me strong when the hour of delivery arrives, assist me during labor, in the beginning, middle, and end of it, until I shall have become a happy mother, and shall be gladdened with the sight of a healthy child. I shall not be afraid, no matter what course my affairs may take, for I have an almighty God; I will not lose heart when my distress becomes great, for I have an almighty God; I will be of good cheer when my labor commences, for I have an almighty God. In my anguish I shall sigh and call to Thee: O almighty God, help me: I trust in Thee; I hope in Thee, my child waits for the hour when Thou wilt help me. O merciful Father, hasten to manifest Thy almighty power to me. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice. Let Thy almighty power avert from me all danger, preserve the fruit of my womb, give me strength, and gladden me by a safe delivery, and I shall praise and glorify Thy omnipotence as long as I live, and say: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.

I cried to God in my distress, His mercy heard me calling;
My Savior saw my helplessness, And kept my feet from falling:
For this, Lord, praise and thanks to Thee! Praise God most high,
praise God with me! To God all praise and glory!

HYMN.

Be not disheartened, sister,
Though weary the task you try;
Strength will come with the toiling;
You will finish it by and by.
Then sweet in your ear at sunset,
When the day's long course is run,
Will sound the voice of the Master,
And His word of praise, "Well done!"

Be not disheartened, sister,
Though you lose your precious things;
Though the gold you gained so slowly
Fly on the swiftest wings.
There are better than earthly riches,
And loss is sometimes gain;
Wait for the Lord's good hour,
When He'll make His meaning plain.

Be not disheartened, sister,
In the dark and lonesome day,
When the dearest and the truest
From your arms is caught away.
The earth may be bare and silent;
But heaven is just before,
And your path leads up to the splendor
And the love in its open door.

Be not disheartened, sister,
However you may fare;
For here 'tis the pilgrim's portion,
But the song and feast are there;
There, in the dear Lord's presence,
There, in the halls of home,
You will one day hear Him call you,
And cry with joy, "I come!"

Be not disheartened, sister,
For every step of the road
Is under the eye of the Father,
Who measures the weight of the load.
He cares for the tiny sparrows,
And how much more for you!
Look up, and never doubt Him,
His promises all are true.

The Woman with Child Takes Comfort in the Thought that God will Help Her.

EXHORTATION.

When persons in need of help see before them great dangers, manifold suffering, heavy burdens, and hard labor, they are nevertheless of good cheer if they have somebody with them who can aid them in their dangers, help them in their suffering, lighten their burden, and assist them in their work. Now, all these helps have been provided for women with child, hence they may take comfort. (1) When they hear that labor is attended by many dangers, they say: The Lord is with me; therefore I am not afraid. (2) When they suffer much distress, they say to God: Thou art my Helper and Deliverer; O my God, delay not! (3) If their distress increases from day to day, they remind themselves of the fact that whatever affliction the Lord lays on men He helps them bear. (4) If they begin to grow afraid in view of their impending labor, they call to mind that the Lord will bless their labor and see them safely through it to the end.

Ought not these reflections cheer women with child, especially since God in the Holy Scriptures calls Himself a Helper? If God helps a person, his safety is assured. Men oftentimes would be glad to help, but cannot; God, however, is both willing and able to help. Therefore, although the prospect is gloomy and looks critical, still let this thought be graven on her heart: The Lord is my Helper.

PRAYER.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God. Yes, my God, that is my consolation in my present state, that Thou wilt be the health of my countenance. If my countenance is pale from fear, Thou canst drive away all fear by Thy glorious help. If my countenance is wet with tears, Thou canst wipe them away when Thou appearest with Thy gracious help. Therefore, I shall trust in Thee, and to everything that might cause me fear, anguish, and terror, I shall oppose this assurance: God is my Helper, and will remain my Helper.

O almighty God, hasten to me with Thine almighty help when I shall need help. Lord, I hope for Thy salvation and Thy help;

I trust in Thy help. If Thou dost not help me, I perish. When my suffering increases, O Lord, do not depart from me with Thy gracious help. Thou art my only Refuge, my God and my Succorer; I know of no other. If Thou wilt not help me, who can? Help me, O God of my salvation, when I call upon Thee, and hear me. Help me when my condition begins to look critical; help me when my hour arrives. Then I shall in joyful confidence sigh with my Jesus: Father, save me from this hour. If I have Thee with me, I shall conquer, and my weeping shall be turned into rejoicing.

O how gloriously Thou hast helped others! Help me also! Thou art still the same strong, almighty, and gracious God that Thou hast been in older times. Lord, I keep on praying like the Canaanite woman: Lord, help me! Yea, I do not go away, I do not quit until Thou hast gladdened me with Thy help. O Father of all grace and mercy, come and help Thy child whom nobody else can help. O Jesus, Thou Savior of all men, come and help me, and abide with me until I am safely delivered. O precious Holy Spirit, come and seal to me the comforting assurance that the hour of Thy help will soon arrive. O Triune God, I flee to Thee; do not forsake me. Help me whenever Thou chooseth, but, while delaying Thy help, sustain me with Thy grace. Help me in my trouble and deliver me, and I shall thank Thee with joyful lips.

Meanwhile I leave all things to God's direction, He loveth me in weal and woe. His will is good, true His affection, With tender love His heart doth glow. My Fortress and my Rock is He: What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me. My God hath all things in His keeping, He is the ever faithful Friend, He grants me laughter after weeping, And all His ways in blessings end. His love endures eternally: What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me. Amen.

HYMN.

Zion, gird thyself with gladness;
 God is in the midst of thee;
 Not cast off, forsake thy sadness;
 Tender-hearted still is He.
 By His scourgings He hath shown
 That He loved thee as His own.
 Zion, when His ways are heeded,
 Doleful tears are never needed.

Though by surging billows beaten,
 Driven on an angry sea,
 Till destruction seem to threaten,
 Need thy voice so cheerless be?
 If thy Savior silent keep,
 Must He therefore be asleep?
 Zion, all untroubled, waiting,
 Thou shalt see the storm abating.

What though rocks and hills be shaken
 And from their foundations start,
 Yea, by dreadful doom o'ertaken,
 Sun and moon and earth depart, —
 Yet shall all be well with thee
 Here or in eternity.
 Zion, all thy bounds are set thee;
 Naught on earth beyond can fret thee,

Though thy lot be tribulation,
 Tears thy fairest ornaments,
 Groans thy song and salutation,
 Sighs thy only eloquence,
 Though thy blood empurple thee,
 All thou hast be penury,
 Zion, yet away with grieving;
 Be not faithless, but believing.

Stripes and bonds and persecution,
 Death and hell may all combine.
 Naught can bring thee to confusion,
 All eternity is thine.
 Bear with joy and fearlessly
 What thy Lord permits to thee.
 Zion, know that God hath heard thee,
 And with needed strength will gird thee.

Soon these sorrows will be quitted;
 Soon the promised end will be.
 All thy ways to God committed,
 He will soon deliver thee.

After insult, scorn, and care
 Thou a crown of joy shalt wear.
 Zion, come what may, hereafter
 God will fill thy mouth with laughter.

Hallelujah! Hail, blest city!
 Yea, beyond all measure blest;
 For the Lord of love and pity
 Will receive thee to His breast,
 Bid thee welcome to His bliss,
 Seal thee with His nuptial kiss.
 Zion, then thy woes surmounted
 Will as naught by thee be counted.

Sing, ye angel choirs, with Zion,
 For her warfare soon is o'er,
 She who deemed herself as dying
 Liveth now and evermore.
 She mid countless joys shall rest
 In the mansions of the blest.
 Zion, naught can separate thee
 From the Lamb and joys that wait Thee.

Meditations for Women in Labor.

When the Hour of Delivery is Approaching.

EXHORTATION.

When Paul assures Christian wives that they shall be saved in child-bearing, he does not mean that they can acquire salvation by the birth of children; for salvation has been acquired by the suffering and death of Christ alone. But he wishes to convey to them this comforting thought that, although they must bear children with much sorrow on account of Adam's transgression, they have nevertheless a gracious God, who is reconciled with them; and if they should even have to die in childbirth, they can still be saved, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with sobriety.

Accordingly, it is required of them (1) that they continue in faith, that, when the hour of delivery arrives, they do not cast away

their confidence, do not grumble against God, but continue in faith, hope, and trust, even though they should be in sore distress, and that they remember the glorious promises of God and His almighty power. (2) They should abide in the love of God, loving God with all their heart, and saying: O Lord, I love Thee from my heart; I pray Thee, ne'er from me depart, with tender mercy cheer me. They should also continue in love of their neighbor: they should seek reconciliation with God and their fellow-men before their delivery. Accordingly, it has been a custom of godly wives to receive the Lord's Supper during their pregnancy, in order thereby to be assured of the grace of God. They should also continue in love to the fruit of their womb, lest through their carelessness it might be injured, or die through their headstrongness, but should willingly obey the good advice and counsel of the persons attending them. But when unloving mothers act headstrong towards their poor infants at their birth and will not submit to what God has laid upon them, what they are in duty bound to do, and from which even empresses, queens, and princesses are not immune, — in a word, if they will not conduct themselves like other women, they become murderesses of their own children, and their infants will be their accusers before God, because through their indolence they have deprived their infants of life and killed them before their birth. Finally, they should (3) also continue in sanctification with sobriety, so as to lead a holy, decent, and Christian life; they should diligently pray for their infants, shun sin, and thus in a state of sanctification await the hour of their delivery.

PRAYER.

Lord, almighty God, faithful and loving Father, the hour of my delivery is coming closer and closer; therefore do Thou come to me with Thy gracious help. I come to Thee with my prayer, my sincere trust, firm confidence, and living faith, in Thy gracious help. Come to me with Thy most holy presence, goodness, and mercy. Come and abide with me at my delivery, during and after the same. If Thou art with me, I have at my side the strongest Deliverer, the mightiest Helper, and the most faithful Friend. Give me a cheerful heart in that critical hour, that I may dismiss all anxiety, stand up, sit down, and lie down fearlessly, and comfort myself with the reflection that all will come to a good issue because Thou art with me. Make my limbs strong, that I may not grow

faint, but perform my labor in Thy power and strength and happily finish it. Through Thy power everything will become easy for me. If the Lord is with me and about me, I am already restored.

To those who are attending me, dear Father, give wisdom and understanding that they may wisely arrange everything and do neither too little nor too much. Bless what they do, and prosper their devices, that they may praise Thee with me, and I with them, for their success. Grant me willingness to accept their advice, and to avoid obstinacy, whereby I might cause injury to myself and harm, or even death, to my child, and thus incur a grievous responsibility. O gracious God, hear my sighs and prayers and those of the persons attending me. If it be Thy will, help me speedily, and grant me a safe delivery. Let me live to behold my child with rejoicing, and thus become a happy mother.

Behold, Lord; here I am; do with me according to Thy good pleasure. Do not forsake me, and do not withdraw Thine hand from me, O God of my salvation. Abide with me in my extreme need, and strengthen my endurance lest I grow weary; my hope, lest I let it slip from me. I can do all things through Him that strengtheneth me, which is Christ. Heavenly Father, bless, guard, and preserve me. Jesus Christ, be with me, strengthen, and refresh me. Holy Spirit, plead for me with God with groanings that cannot be uttered, and witness to my spirit that I am verily God's child. The love of the Father cover me; the grace of the Son refresh me; the succor of the Holy Spirit make me glad.

God knows what must be done to save me, His love for me will never cease, For He upon His palms did grave me With purest gold of loving grace. Avaunt, my own will, off with thee! What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me. My God desires the soul's salvation, Me also He desires to save; Therefore, with Christian resignation All earthly troubles I will brave. His will be done eternally: What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me. Amen.

HYMN.

When bitter winds of trouble blow,
 And thou art tossing to and fro,
 When waves are rolling mountain high,
 And clouds obscure the steadfast sky,—
 Fear not, my soul, thy Lord is there,
 Betake thyself, my soul, to prayer.

When in the dull routine of life
 Thou yearnest half for pain and strife,
 So weary of the commonplace,
 Of days that wear the selfsame face, —
 Think softly, soul, thy Lord is there,
 And then betake thyself to prayer.

When brims thy cup with sparkling joy,
 When happy tasks the hours employ,
 When men with praise and sweet acclaim
 Upon the highways speak thy name, —
 Then, soul, I bid thee have a care,
 Seek oft thy Lord in fervent prayer.

If standing where two pathways meet,
 Each beckoning thy pilgrim feet,
 Thou art in doubt which road to take,
 Look up and say, "For Thy dear sake," —
 O Master! show Thy footprints fair, —
 "I'd follow Thee." Christ answers prayer.

The tempter oft, with wily toil,
 Seeks thee, my soul, as precious spoil;
 His weapons never lose their edge,
 But thou art Heaven's peculiar pledge.
 Though Satan rage, thy Lord is there, —
 Dear soul, betake thyself to prayer.

Comforting Reflections when Delivery is Approaching.

EXHORTATION.

Frequently godly wives, when the time of their delivery is at hand, become frightened, and alarm inexperienced persons. But why should you be afraid? Is not God with you? God, who has ordained these pains for you, will also help you bear and overcome them. Remember, therefore, at the time of your delivery, (1) that God is a good and gracious God; He does not intend evil to you; for all things must work together for good to them that love God. Since He is a gracious God, He will show you favor and look upon

your misery and affliction. (2) He is faithful; He knows the limit of your strength and ability far better than you do yourselves. He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (3) God is merciful; as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord also will have compassion on you. (4) God is mighty; He can accomplish what you cannot; for His strength is made manifest in weakness. Do not look upon your feeble strength and ability, but upon God's might. It is not you who are to achieve success in this matter, but God will do it: He will strengthen your hands, arms, and limbs, and you will have to ascribe all glory to God as David did, saying: "Thou art He that took me out of the womb: Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts."

(5) Remember that your pains do not last long, not years and days, like David's affliction or like the sickness of the sufferer at the pool of Bethesda, but only an hour; and even if it should be drawn out longer, say nevertheless with childlike confidence: And though it tarry till the night And till the morn appeareth, My heart still trusteth in His might, It doubteth not, nor feareth. Let this be comfort when your hour approaches.

SIGHINGS UTTERED BEFORE DELIVERY.

1.

Lord, almighty God, I perceive that my hour will soon be at hand when I am to prepare for my delivery. Therefore I come to Thee and pray Thee: Do not depart from me. Oh, abide with me; give me strength for my labor, and graciously deliver me. Alleviate the pains of labor which Thou hast laid on our sex. But Thou didst lay these pains on Eve and her daughters at the time when Thou again didst extend Thy favor to them and didst promise them Jesus, the Woman's Seed and the Reconciler of men with God. Therefore I do not regard the impending pains as the punishment which an angry judge, but as a chastisement which a loving and reconciled father inflicts; they are to remind me of the fall into sin of our first parents, but also of the fact that by Jesus Christ I am reconciled with God.

Oh, therefore, Thou strong and almighty God, help me effectually. My help is from Thee alone; unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift

up my soul. O my God, I trust in Thee; let me not be ashamed. O my Strength, haste Thee to help me. O Jesus, who wast born man, for the sake of Thy holy birth and incarnation, have mercy upon me; save me from this hour, and preserve me. O precious Holy Spirit, abide in my heart, crying, "Abba, Father," and witness to my spirit that amidst my pangs I am still a child of God. O Holy Trinity, have mercy on me, and help me. Amen.

2.

O loving God, Thou lovest men sincerely and hast promised especially to sustain us in our sufferings and infirmities. Thou knowest the condition in which I am, and seest for what I am preparing and what is before me. All my hope, O God, is in Thee. O mighty God, who without human aid providest for the lonely deer in the wild forest when they cast their young amid ice and snow, oh, let the fruit of my womb be commended to Thee, and bless the helping hands which are ready to aid at this birth. Do Thou give me the best aid and graciously deliver me.

Thou hast said: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." Upon this gracious promise I rely, and cheerfully take up this labor to which Thou hast appointed me in my calling and condition. I will be confident and wait for Thine help. According to Thy providence and will I will gladly endure what Thou layest upon me; only be not far from me, Lord, Lord, my Refuge in need. Be and remain to my unborn child a gracious God; preserve what Thy hands have fashioned. Graciously dissolve at the proper time the bonds of nature, and when all men are about to despair, manifest in me Thy power and marvelous goodness. Let Thy strength be made perfect in my weakness; strengthen me in spirit and in body; alleviate and diminish my pains, and let my fruit, safe and sound, behold the light of this world. Place it living into my arms, and I shall adoringly and reverently sing praises to Thee, and what Thou hast given me I shall give back to Thee as an offering and as Thy child in Holy Baptism.

But if it be decreed in Thy holy counsel that I shall give up my life in this labor, let Thy will be done. Thou art my God, my Lord, my Father; I am Thy creature, Thy handmaid, Thy

child. Do with me as seemeth best to Thee: I am ready for life or death, and though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee. Grant me a patient and submissive heart, constant faith, and firm trust.

Help me, for I am weak; I fight, Yet scarce can battle longer; I cling but to Thy grace and might, 'Tis Thou canst make me stronger; When sore temptations are my lot, And tempests round me lower, Break the power: So, through deliverance wrought, I know that Thou forsak'st me not.

SIGHINGS DURING LABOR.

1.

Lord, Lord! great in counsel and mighty in work, behold, here I am, and sigh only for Thy help. In this work no man can help me except Thou alone. To Thy glory I acknowledge that the birth of a human being is a miracle which only Thou canst bring about; it is in no man's power to bring a child into this world. Therefore I humbly beseech Thee, O almighty Helper in need, to manifest Thy almighty power now. Thou knowest my pains, for Thou hast laid them upon me; Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, my going about and my lying down; for Thou, Lord, art near me. Thou beholdest my tears, and my sighing is not hid from Thee.

I call to mind now Thy infinite omnipotence: Thou canst do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think; no trouble is so great that Thou couldst not deliver from it. Behold, Thy mighty hands have fashioned my child, clothed it with flesh and skin; Thou hast all this time granted it life and favor, and Thy visitation has preserved its spirit. Therefore, according to Thy mercy usher it now into the light of day. Lord, Lord, Thou hast helped so many thousands in all places of the world; according to Thy goodness Thou wilt help me also. I trust in Thy loving-kindness and Thy trust; let them continually preserve me. If affairs should take a critical turn, speak comfort to my soul, as Thou hast said: I am with thee in trouble to deliver thee; I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee. Let me faithfully do my part in this work, in order that I may keep a good conscience; but do Thou strengthen me in my weakness.

God liveth still; Soul, despair not, fear no ill! God is good; from His compassion Earthly help and comfort flow; Strong is

His right hand to fashion All things well for man below: Trial, oft the most distressing, In the end has proved a blessing. Wherefore, then, my soul, despair? God still lives, who heareth prayer.

2.

O gracious and merciful God, Thou hast said: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." Upon this gracious summons I, too, come before Thee in this hour and call upon Thee, crying, "Abba, Father!" I am crying to Thee in my trouble; oh, hear my voice, and hide not Thyself from my supplication! Remember that I am Thy child; oh, let me not suffer pain above that I am able. Lord, when I am in distress, send me alleviation. Jesus, Thou Son of David, for the sake of Thy holy birth and incarnation, have mercy upon me. O Lord God, help me and support me; help me and bring me joy. O Holy Spirit, Thou Comforter in every need, comfort my soul with the assurance that I shall soon be a happy mother. Bring my anxious prayer before the throne of God, and if in my distress I am not able to pray, O Jesus, do Thou pray for me; O Holy Spirit make intercession with God for me with groanings that cannot be uttered. O Triune God, extend Thy hand to me and my child. Let us not perish, nor suffer injury. Reveal Thy power in us, and we shall praise and magnify Thy might; not only here in this world of mortality shall we publish Thy glory, but also in endless eternity it shall be the burden of our songs. Let the fruit of my womb, which is Thy creature, not perish in this ordeal, but graciously preserve it by Thy power. Help me that I omit nothing that I ought to do now, and that by Thy grace I may rejoice to behold my child. Lord God Father in heaven, have mercy upon me; Lord God Son, the Savior of the world, have mercy upon me; Lord God Holy Ghost, have mercy upon me. Amen.

3.

Gracious and mighty God, the hour has arrived which Thou hast appointed for my delivery. Therefore I now turn to Thee and cry: Father, save me from this hour. In Thy name I begin my work; in Thy name I shall finish it. Lord, my Creator, be with me and strengthen me. Jesus, Thou Son of God, who wast made man, be with me and refresh me. Embrace me with Thine arms and hold me. O precious Holy Spirit, give me patience and cheerfulness for this work: have compassion on me and cheer me.

O Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, haste Thee to help me. Arise, O Lord, for my help, or I perish. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon me! O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, give me Thy peace. Amen.

Scripture-Passages, Sighings, and Prayers during Labor.

The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them.

Ps. 145, 18, 19.

I leave Thee not; Thou art my Jesus ever, Though earth rebel,
And death and hell Would from its steadfast hold my faith dis sever.
Ah, no! I ever will Cling to my Helper still. Hear what my love
is taught: Thou art my Jesus ever, I leave Thee not, I leave Thee
not! — I leave Thee not, O Thou who sweetly cheerest! Whose
fresh supplies Cause strength to rise, Just in the hour when faith's
decay is nearest. If sickness chill the soul, and nights of languor
roll, My heart one hope has caught; O Thou who sweetly cheerest,
I leave Thee not, I leave Thee not!

O my Jesus, be near me now, and abide with me until Thou
hast helped me. Oh, do what I desire; however, I desire nothing
but what Thou hast promised in Thy Word, namely, Thy help.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou dis-
quieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him,
who is the health of my countenance and my God. *Ps. 43, 5.*

Let us suffer here with Jesus, To His image e'er conform;
Heaven's glory soon will please us, Sunshine follow after storm.
Having sown in tears, in gladness We shall reap. With patient
cheer, Let us hope, and, void of fear, Bide the turning of our
sadness. Christ, I suffer here with Thee; There, oh, share Thy
joy with me!

O my Jesus, I hope for Thy salvation; I am waiting for Thy
help. Let it come soon. Thou only art my Hope. Hear me;
make me to rejoice; deliver me, and I shall thank Thee forever.

The Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit. . . . For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. *Is. 54, 6—8.*

God liveth still; Soul, despair not, fear no ill! He who gives the clouds their measure, Stretching out the heavens alone; He who stores the earth with treasure Is not far from every one. God in every need defendeth Him whose heart in love ascendeth. Wherefore, then, my soul, despair? God still lives, who heareth prayer.

O my God, have compassion on me; forsake me not; for Thou art my God. O merciful God, my eyes are raised towards heaven, and are longing for Thy help. Do not hide Thy face from me. Let Thy grace strengthen, and Thine hand sustain me. O Lord, how long, oh, how long shall my anguished heart yearn for Thee?

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save.

Is. 59, 1.

Let not sorrow dim your eye, Soon shall every tear be dry;
Let not woe your course impede, Great your help, if great your need.

I know, my God, that with Thee nothing is impossible; therefore I trust in Thee. Extend Thine hand to me as Thou didst to sinking Peter. Thy hand can help in every need and deliver from every trouble. Lord, I look up to Thee, I am longing for Thy mercy.

Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation. *Ps. 91, 14—16.*

In Thee have I, how'er distressed, Found ever counsel, aid, and rest. I cannot all forsaken be, While still my heart can trust in Thee. Thine office and Thy person show, That Thou great miracles canst do; Miraculous was, Lord, Thy birth, When Thou wast born a child on earth.

O my Jesus, since no one can help me except Thou alone, hasten to me with Thy gracious help. Behold, I am now in dis-

tress; oh, deliver me according to Thy promise: I have set my love upon Thee; deliver me. Since Thou hast said: Seek ye My face, my heart says: Thy face, Lord, will I seek.

The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

Is. 54, 10.

I can rest in thoughts of Him, When all courage else grows dim, For I know my soul shall prove His is more than father's love. — Would the powers of ill affright, I can smile at all their might; Or the cross be pressing sore, God, my God, lives evermore!

O Jesus, take not Thy grace and Thy Holy Spirit from me; oh, do not leave me; strengthen me for my labor and during the labor in which I am now engaged. Remember the covenant which Thou hast made with me in Holy Baptism. By virtue of this covenant Thou art my Father, and I am Thy child. O my Father, remember Thy child, help Thy child, have compassion on Thy child.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. *Ps. 103, 13.*

Lord God, who art my Father dear, I pray in Jesus' name: O hear What, trusting in His promised Word, I humbly ask of Thee, good Lord. — Lord, at Thy word Amen I say Increase my feeble faith, I pray. Thou lead'st me with a Father's care, O let me be Thy child and heir.

O my gracious God and Father, I know not where to seek comfort and help except with Thee alone, where I shall surely find it. Therefore, I cry to Thee: O help me, my Father; have mercy on me, my Father; let Thy tender fatherly heart be revealed to me, that my heart may soon be rejoiced. Thou art able to do this; therefore grant me my prayer for Thy mercy's sake.

In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in Thy righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline Thine ear unto me, and save me. Be Thou my strong Habitation, whereunto I may continually resort; Thou hast

given commandment to save me; for Thou art my Rock and my Fortress. *Ps. 71, 1—3.*

God of my life, to Thee I call; Afflicted at Thy feet I fall;
When the great water floods prevail, Leave not my trembling
heart to fail.

O Lord, my misery and distress is well known to Thee. Lord,
Lord, as my need becomes more urgent, I shall more eagerly cry
for help. I shall do in my anguish like my Jesus, who in His agony
prayed more fervently.

My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for
the morning. *Ps. 130, 6.*

And though it tarry till the night And till the morn appeareth,
My heart still trusteth in His might, It doubteth not, nor feareth.

O my God, this is and shall remain my firm resolve: I will
not doubt God's help, though it be delayed ever so long. Even if
the Lord should hide Himself from me a little while, He will
nevertheless arise soon for my help, and be gracious to me.

Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as
a dove; mine eyes fail with looking upward. O Lord, I am
oppressed; undertake for me. What shall I say? He hath both
spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it. *Is. 38, 14. 15.*

Out of the depths I cry to Thee, Lord, hear my lamentation;
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me, And grant my supplication.

The Answer of Jesus.

Hold fast by Me, I am Thy rock and castle; I wholly give
Myself for thee, For thee I strive and wrestle; For I am thine,
and thou art mine, Henceforth my place is also thine; The foe
shall never part us.

O my Jesus, all my hope is in Thee, my strong and mighty
Helper. Do as Thou hast promised me. With Thee I have begun
this work; oh, add Thy blessing to it! Help me and my child,
and grant us that we may behold one another with joy, and live
before Thee. Lord, have mercy upon us!

Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net. Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: Oh, bring Thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins.

Ps. 25, 15—18.

In every trouble, sharp and strong, My soul to Jesus flies; My anchor-hold is firm in Him, When swelling billows rise. — His comforts bear my spirit up, I trust a faithful God; The sure foundation of my hope Is in a Savior's blood.

Lord Jesus, I turn to Thee in faith; oh, come to me! Behold how I suffer; strengthen my faith, support my trust, that I may not waver and fall away from Thee. Come to my side, Lord; hear my prayer; do not forsake me. Oh, has the time arrived that I may be gladdened with Thine help?

Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Rev. 22, 20.

O Thou who in the olive-shade, When the dark hour came on, Didst with a breath of heavenly aid, Strengthen Thy suffering Son: Oh, by the anguish of that night, Send us now blest relief; Or to the chastened, let thy might Hallow this whelming grief.

O my Jesus, this is the wish and desire of my heart, that Thou wouldst come soon. Oh, come and deliver me; come and make me to rejoice; come, and let me behold what I long to behold!

And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not Thy peace at my tears. *Ps. 39, 7. 12.*

When overwhelmed with grief, My heart within me dies, Helpless, and far from all relief, To heaven I lift mine eyes. — O lead me to the Rock That's high above my head, And make the covert of Thy wings My shelter and my shade.

Lord Jesus, hasten to me; help me, O God, my Helper, and I shall be helped. I know of no other escape from this anguish and distress; therefore I beseech Thee: Oh, come; oh, come; oh, help me!

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Is. 40, 29, 31.

Full of trembling expectation, Feeling much and fearing more, Mighty God of my salvation, I Thy timely help implore. Suffering Son of Man, be near me All my sufferings to sustain; By Thy sorer griefs to cheer me, By Thy more than mortal pain.

O Lord, my God, give me new strength; grant me the courage, power, and strength of Thy Holy Spirit. I am too feeble to accomplish this work, but in the strength of God I can do all things. Lord, Lord, strengthen me also in this endeavor. My God, help me to overcome with rejoicing. The name of the Lord be praised!

Unless the Lord had been my Help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul. *Ps. 94, 17, 19.*

I will extol Thee, Lord on high: At Thy command afflictions fly; Who but a God can speak and save From the dark borders of the grave?—Thine anger but a moment stays, Thy love is life and length of days: Though grief and tears the night employ, The morning star restores our joy.

Lord, almighty God, from whom cometh all help to the children of men on earth, Thou hast said: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble." Upon Thy command I am now calling and say: Lord, have mercy upon me. Remove the grievances and anxieties of my soul. Grant me what I hope for; give me what I pray for. Lord, it is in Thy power to do so.

We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed. *Rom. 5, 3—5.*

Oh, let my trembling soul be still While darkness veils the mortal eye, And wait Thy wise, Thy holy will, Wrapped yet in fears and mystery. I cannot, Lord, Thy purpose see; Yet all is well, since ruled by Thee.

O Lord, help me according to Thy great goodness and mercy. I am waiting for Thy help; I hope for a safe delivery, which it is in Thy power to grant me. Look upon me, a woman in sadness, and make me to rejoice again. Let my hour arrive, in order that I may praise Thee with joyful lips.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Jas. 5, 16.

I look to Thee in every need, And never look in vain; I feel Thy strong and tender love, And all is well again. The thought of Thee is mightier far Than sin and pain and sorrow are. — Discouraged in the work of life, Disheartened by its load, Shamed by its failure or its fears, I sink beside the road; But let me only think of Thee, And then new heart springs up in me.

Lord, almighty God, who dost not refuse the sighing of the afflicted, and dost not despise the desire of an aggrieved heart, hear our prayer which we offer to Thee in our trouble, and graciously hear us.

Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not Thyself from my supplication. Attend unto me, and hear me. I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. *Ps. 55, 1. 2. 5.*

Hope on, thou heart, grief-riven, Hope, and courageous be, Where anguish thee had driven, Thou shalt deliverance see. God from thy pit of sadness Shall raise thee graciously. Wait, and the sun of gladness Thine eyes shall early see.

O Lord God, Thou canst help me, for Thou art an almighty God; Thou wilt help me, for Thou art my loving God and Father. Oh, therefore, hear me; let Thy face shine upon me, and I shall be revived.

He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. *2 Cor. 6, 2.*

Thy calmness bends serene above My restlessness to still; Around me flows Thy quickening life To nerve my faltering will. Thy presence fills my solitude; Thy providence turns all to good. — Embosomed in Thy covenant love, Held in Thy Word, I stand;

Thy hand in all things I behold, And all things in Thy hand.
Thou ledest me by unsought ways, And turn'st my mourning
into praise.

O Lord, has not my hour arrived yet? O Lord, how long wilt
Thou forget me thus? Yet I know my God does not forget me:
His love is too great, His heart too compassionate. Oh, deliver me
for Thy goodness' sake! Oh, how long, how long shall my heart
be in anguish, longing for Thee?

Let my supplication come before Thee; deliver me according
to Thy word. I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord; and Thy
Law is my delight. Let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee;
and let Thy judgments help me. *Ps. 119, 170. 174. 175.*

O Love divine, that stooped to share Our sharpest pang, our
bitterest tear, On Thee is cast each earth-born care; We smile at
pain when Thou art near. — On Thee we fling our burdening woe,
O Love divine, forever dear, Content to suffer while we know,
Living and dying, Thou art near!

O Lord, my God, through the mist of my affliction and anguish
I shall look to Thee alone. I shall not look about me, for there
I see only feeble men, but I shall look upward, heavenward, to
Thee, O almighty God. Let Thy grace succor me, and Thine arm
rescue me. Help me, O God of my salvation, and I shall be helped.

I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them,
and make them rejoice from their sorrow. *Jer. 31, 13.*

He may, awhile still staying, His comforts keep from thee, And,
on His part delaying, Seem to have utterly Forgotten and forsaken
And put thee out of mind, Though thou'rt by grief o'ertaken, No
time for thee to find. — But if thou never shrinkest, And true dost
still remain, He'll come when least thou thinkest, And set thee free
again, Thee from the load deliver, That burdeneth thy heart. That
thou hast carried never For any evil part.

O my God, deliver me from my burden; do not delay Thy
help any longer; turn my mourning into rejoicing, and after my
sadness gladden me with a safe delivery. With God is my salvation,
my honor; my confidence is in God.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. *Ps. 121, 1. 2.*

No strength of my own, or goodness, I claim, But since I have known the Savior's great name, In this my strong tower for safety I hide — The Lord is my power — the Lord will provide.

O Lord, Triune God, I have placed all my hope in Thee, and long for Thee. Lord God Father, have mercy upon me and my child; Lord Jesus, strengthen me and succor me; O Holy Spirit, refresh me with Thy consolation, that I may soon be gladdened, delivered, and restored. Let me obtain help speedily. O Triune God, have compassion on me.

The vision [the promise of the divine help] is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

Hab. 2, 3.

From God shall naught divide me, For He is true for aye, And on my path will guide me, Who else should often stray; His ever-bounteous hand By night and day is heedful, And gives me what is needful, Where'er I go or stand.

O yes, my God, I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me and help me. After the delay of Thy help let the happy hour of my deliverance now arrive. Meanwhile I shall persevere in my sighing and prayers, and say: Lord Jesus, help me overcome! Lord Jesus, help me wrestle! My deliverance, my life, my help are in Thy hands.

How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? Forever? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? Consider and hear me, O Lord, my God. *Ps. 13, 1—3.*

O God, my days are dark indeed How oft this aching heart must bleed; The narrow way, how filled with pain, That I must pass ere heaven I gain! — How hard to teach this flesh and blood To seek alone th' eternal God! Ah, whither now for comfort turn? For Thee, my Jesus, do I yearn.

O my gracious and merciful God, now that Thy help is delayed, I am in anxiety, but I will not despair. Thou art my Father,

and I am Thy child. Oh, do not hide Thy face from me any longer. Speak the word only, and I shall be restored; for when Thou speakest, it is done; when Thou commandest, it stands fast. Lord, graciously hear me.

O Lord, the Hope of Israel, heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for Thou art my praise. Be not a terror unto me: Thou art my Hope in the day of evil.

Jer. 17, 13. 14. 17.

Hast Thou not bid me seek Thy face? And shall I seek in vain? And can the ear of sovereign grace Be deaf when I complain?—No, still the ear of sovereign grace Attends the sufferer's prayer. Oh, may I ever find access To breathe my sorrows there!

O my Jesus, all my hope is now in Thee and in Thy almighty power. Help me, O my Savior, speedily, if it be Thy holy will. Help me that I may rejoice over Thy help. Oh, how I shall glorify Thy name, and sing praises unto Thee when Thou hast gloriously delivered me! My trust is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

I have trusted in Thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord because He hath dealt bountifully with me. *Ps. 13, 5. 6.*

No grief can ever be so sore But Thy sweet name can cheer me more; So keen no sorrow's rankling dart But Thy sweet name can heal my heart.—Although my flesh and heart may fail, I'll heed it not, I shall not quail; My Savior, if I have but Thee, I shall be blest eternally.

O faithful Savior, Thou kind Lover of men, when Thou saidst, Seek ye My face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. I am now seeking Thy face, Lord. I know Thou canst help me and art glad to help. Therefore I hope in Thee; I am now waiting from moment to moment. O God, let my hour arrive. Lord, help me according to Thy mercy. Meanwhile my trust in Thee remains firm.

My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord: remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. *Lam. 3, 18—21.*

With heart and soul I'm Thine fore'er; Sin, death, and hell
I need not fear, The world can show no truth like Thine, And
therefore will I not repine.—I know Thou wilt forsake me not,
Thy truth is fixed, though dark my lot, Thou art my Shepherd,
and Thy sheep From harm forever Thou wilt keep.

O yes, my God, I am thinking of Thee; therefore I say: The
Lord remembers me and blesses me; He lets His face shine
upon me. Though my ability is not great, though there is with
me no strength for this birth, I still have power and strength in
God. I shall yet behold with delight His deliverance.

Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt
quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depth
of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me
on every side. *Ps. 71, 20, 21.*

They only all its power shall prove Whose hearts have learned
Thy faith and love; How many a time I've sadly said, Far better
were it I were dead; Far better ne'er the light to see If I had not
this joy in Thee; For he who hath not Thee in faith, His very life
is merely death.

O God, if it is Thy will that I shall have to pass through great
anguish and pain, do not lay hold of me too violently. Thou
knowest my ability; my strength is not hid from Thee. Oh, there-
fore, refresh me! When I am sinking, support me; when I faint,
restore me; when I am weary, make me strong. Lord God of my
life, preserve my life and that of my child, and I shall praise and
glorify Thy name forevermore.

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid;
for the Lord *JEHOVAH* is my Strength and my Song; He also is
become my Salvation. Sing unto the Lord; for He hath done
excellent things; this is known in all the earth. *Is. 12, 2. 5.*

Where'er in grief I pray and sing, I feel new courage in me
spring; Thy Spirit witnesseth that this Is foretaste of th' eternal
bliss.—Therefore, while life remains in me, I'll bear Thy cross
and follow Thee. Grant me a patient, willing mood; I know that
it shall work my good.—Help me to do my task aright That it
may stand before Thy sight; Let me this flesh and blood control,
From sin and shame preserve my soul.

O yes, my God, that is my consolation, that my life will at last have a good and happy ending, because Thou art my Strength, my Helper in need, and my Deliverer. If I have God with me, I have a sure deliverance. Therefore, I shall be still and hope. Being still and hoping in the Lord, I shall be strong. I can do all things through Him that strengtheneth me, Christ.

Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws. *Ps. 22, 11. 15.*

If sorrow comes, He sent it, In Him I put my trust; I never shall repent it, For He is true and just, And endeth every ill; My life and soul I render To God, my strong Defender, Let Him do as He will. — Whate'er shall be His pleasure Is surely best for me; He gave His dearest Treasure, That our weak hearts may see How good His will is toward us; And in His Son He gave us Whate'er could bless and save us. Praise Him who loveth thus!

Yes, Thy love and faithfulness, my Jesus, is the foundation of my hope and confidence. Thou hast loved me with an everlasting love, and because of Thy love Thou hast often helped and saved me. Therefore, I hope that Thou wilt restore me also this time. Although my distress is great, my help still seems afar off, and from great weariness my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth, my heart is still directed toward Thee: Thou wilt yet bring me happily through all this distress. That I believe; that I know. O Lord, strengthen my faith and confidence.

It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my Portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. *Lam. 3, 22—24.*

Seems it in my anguish lone As if God forsook His own, Yet I hold the knowledge fast, God will surely help at last. — Though awhile it be delayed, He denieth not His aid; Though it come not off with speed, It will surely come at need.

O my gracious God, Thy mercies are renewed unto me, not only very morning, but every moment. Thou dost strengthen and support me every minute. How could I accomplish all this without

Thee? Thy visitation has preserved my spirit. Thou strengthenest my head and my hands. Hence I am not forsaken; God does not leave me, and I do not leave Him. Therefore, the hour of my deliverance will soon arrive, because I have with me Him from whom cometh all help.

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness. Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress. Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer. But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself; the Lord will hear when I call unto Him.

Ps. 4, 1. 3.

God liveth still. Soul, despair not, fear no ill! Is thy cross too great and pond'rous Cast on Him thy grievous load; God is great, His love is wondrous, He will speed thee on the road. For His truth endureth ever, And His mercy ceaseth never. Wherefore, then, my soul despair? God still lives, who heareth prayer.

O my God, I know that Thou hearest me at all times; therefore, I shall trust in Thee in my critical hour. I shall faithfully hold to Thee when violent tempests descend upon me. If Thou leadest me strange paths, let them only be blessed paths. I know that Thou art with me, that Thou art standing at my side, although Thou hast not yet made Thy help manifest. Meanwhile I say believingly: Hasten to help me, O God, my Deliverer!

The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. *Lam. 3, 25. 26.*

God liveth still. Soul, despair not, fear no ill! When the world would let thee perish, Pathless all thy tangled way, God the nearer draws, to cherish Him who makes the Lord his stay. Children oft that most He loveth Thus with strictest rod He proveth. Wherefore, then, my soul despair? God still lives, who answers prayer.

Yes, my God, my soul waiteth for Thee, and my confidence is not shaken. O kind Jesus, refresh me with Thy loving-kindness in my distress. Stablish my tottering limbs, strengthen my feeble arms. I hope in Thy goodness; I am waiting for Thy salvation; I comfort myself with Thy mercy. O God of all grace, who comfortest us in anguish, let Thy mercy be vouchsafed to me.

I have called upon Thee, for Thou wilt hear me, O God; incline Thine ear unto me, and hear my speech. Show Thy marvellous loving-kindness, O Thou that savest by Thy right hand them which put their trust in Thee. . . . Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings. *Ps. 17, 6*—

My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine! Now hear me while I pray: Take all my guilt away; O let me from this day Be wholly Thine!— May Thy rich grace impart Strength to my fainting heart, My zeal inspire; As Thou hast died for me, O may my love to Thee Pure, warm, and changeless be, A living fire. — While life's dark maze I tread, And griefs around me spread, Be Thou my Guide; Bid darkness turn to day, Wipe sorrow's tear away, Nor let me ever stray From Thee aside. — When ends life's transient dream, When death's cold, sullen stream Shall o'er me roll, Blest Savior, then in love Fear and distrust remove O bear me safe above, A ransomed soul!

O Lord, preserve me and my child from misfortune. Cover us both with the wings of Thy mercy. Hear my sighing and help me. If my distress is to increase, let Thy help become more powerful. Even though it should seem as if Thou wouldst slay me, I shall nevertheless trust in Thee. Thy hand is not waxed short; I am not looking at my feebleness, but to Thee, O gracious, strong, and merciful God.

He maketh sore and bindeth up; He woundeth, and His hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. *Job 5, 18, 19.*

To heaven I lift mine eye, To heaven, Jehovah's throne, For there my Savior sits on high, And thence shall strength and aid supply To all He calls His own. — For He, my God and Friend, Shall keep my soul from harm, In each sad scene of doubt attend, And guide my life, and bless mine end, With His almighty arm.

O God, the help which Thou hast often sent me in former times encourages me to hope that Thou wilt be my Succor and Deliverer also this time. Thou hast helped so many; manifest Thy goodness also to me, and after my deliverance my lips shall abundantly praise Thee and say, This is the Lord's doing! Blessed be the name of the Lord!

The Lord, thy God, is a merciful God; He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which He swore unto them. *Deut. 4, 31.*

'Tis not a lonely night-watch Which by the couch I spend
Jesus is close beside me: My Savior and my Friend. — Often
I strive all vainly To ease the aching head, Then silently and gently
Himself He makes my bed. — Do we not hear Him saying, “Your
guilt on Me was laid, Ye are My blood-bought jewels; Fear not,
be not dismayed”?

O my Father, remember the covenant which in Holy Baptism
Thou hast made with me: remember that Thou art my Father and
I am Thy child. Jesus, remember that Thou hast washed and
cleansed me with Thy holy blood. I flee to Thee, and implore Thy
help in my distress. Oh, deliver me, refresh me, gladden me!

The Lord will not cast off forever; but though He cause grief,
yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His
mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children
of men. *Lam. 3, 31—33.*

Do not I trust in Thee, O Lord? Do not I rest in Thee alone?
Is not the comfort of Thy Word The sweetest cordial I have
known? When vexed with care, bowed down with grief, Where
else could I obtain relief? — O yes, these things are ever true; Thy
promise is forever sure; And all I now am passing through, And
all that I may still endure, Will but endear Thy Word to me, And
draw me nearer, Lord, to Thee.

O yes, my Shepherd will not forsake His sheep, nor my Father
His child: As Thou hast sent me grief, O my God, send me also
joy. Since Thou hast put Thy blessing upon me, let me now
realize it. O Jesus, place my child living into my arms; I shall
in turn place it into the arms of Thy love in Holy Baptism, and
thus return the gift Thou hast bestowed on me. While it is mine
by nature and its physical birth, it shall be Thine by the new birth.

Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even
the God of our salvation. He that is our God is the God of
salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.

Ps. 68, 19, 20.

Though a heavy cross I'm bearing, And my heart Feels the
smart, Shall I be despairing? God can help me who doth send it,
He doth know All my woe And how best to end it.

Lord, Thou hast put this burden upon me; remove it again; for Thou art the Helper and Refuge of all who believe in Thee. How easy it is for Thee to deliver me, to loosen my bonds, to open the door of life! Nothing is impossible with Thee. In this confidence let me firmly abide the hour of my deliverance.

Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me. *Ps. 50, 15.*

How richly God consoleth those Whom no one else befriendeth! The door of grace does never close; Sense cannot comprehend it, How this may be, and deems all lost, When through this very cross a host Of champions God is raising.

O my God, I am waiting for Thy help! Without Thee I am utterly forsaken; therefore, I call upon Thee in my trouble: deliver me, hear me, have compassion on me, comfort me with Thine help, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit.

I cried to Thee, O Lord; and unto the Lord I made supplication. Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me. Lord, be Thou my Helper. *Ps. 30, 8, 10.*

He knows the time for joy, and truly Will send it when He sees it meet; When He has tried and purged thee duly And finds thee free from all deceit, He comes to thee all unaware, And makes thee own His loving care.

O yes, Lord Jesus, let the hour of Thy help come soon; I am waiting for Thee with longing. Meanwhile I shall sigh and implore Thee; Thou wilt hear me, and help me according to Thy promise.

Do Thou for me, O God the Lord, for Thy name's sake. Because Thy mercy is good, deliver Thou me. Help me, O Lord, my God! O save me according to Thy mercy! *Ps. 109, 21, 26.*

In God, my faithful God, I trust when dark my road; Though many woes o'ertake me, Yet He will not forsake me; His love it is doth send them, And when 'tis best will end them.

This is my comfort in all my sufferings, that God is with me, the mighty Protector of His children. To Him I commit myself; He will do all things well.

(If death seems to be approaching, the "Passages and Prayers for the Dying" in the Daily Handbook may be read.)

Meditations for Women in Confinement.

The Woman in Confinement Thanks God for Safe Delivery.

EXHORTATION.

“A woman, as soon as she is delivered, remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world,” thus speaks the mouth of Truth, Christ, John 16, 21. God lets godly wives realize this, and they dismiss all sadness after their safe delivery, and greatly praise God.

They should praise God (1) for His almighty power, which sustained them, and for the help which He afforded them; for they are bound to confess that without God’s special aid all their efforts would have been in vain. They should (2) praise God’s mercy in shortening and alleviating their labor-pains. They should (3) thank God that He has permitted them to behold their child with joy, or, if the child is dead, that He has received it into His everlasting joy and glory, and according to His mercy has given to their child the eternal life of bliss in the place of this earthly life.

(4) They ought not to interrupt the repose which God has given them by precocious acts or from avarice, through unnecessary walking and other efforts, but should gratefully accept and enjoy it. For some women in confinement wish to display their vigor by moving about during the days of rest which God has appointed them, and thereby frequently contract serious sicknesses and grievous permanent ailments, and incur unfortunate mishaps. These they will have to attribute to their wantonness, and will have to suffer injury for wanting to be wiser than God, who considered this period of rest necessary for them and ordained it for them, while they regarded it as unnecessary and despised it. Accordingly, husbands should not disturb their wives during this period of their rest, but should faithfully obey the ordinance of God, who commanded women in childbed to remain at home for six weeks and to recuperate, Lev. 12, and should not strain them by work or compel them to leave their childbed before the proper time.

(5) Women in confinement should also call upon God daily to

preserve them and their child from every harm and mishap, and should thus commit themselves and the child to God by diligent prayer. Finally, they should (6) pray God for health and new strength, in order that, after they have regained these, they may go abroad again and celebrate their first attendance at church.

PRAYER.

All-powerful, strong, and mighty God! I appear with joy before Thy most holy countenance and praise Thee for the great and glorious blessing which Thou hast vouchsafed to me. I praise Thee for alleviating my pains during labor, for my safe delivery, and for holding Thy protecting hand over me during the delivery. O Lord, how great is Thy almighty power, how glorious Thy strength! When I was about to sink, Thou didst sustain me; when I was weak and about to faint, Thou didst refresh me; when all my strength was nearly gone, Thou didst give me new vigor. Yes, Thou hast done all things gloriously: Thou hast given me my child, preserved my life, averted all harm, and made me glad by fulfilling my wish. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. The Lord hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad. Blessed be the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplications. The Lord is my Strength and my Shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise Him. Oh, give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so; for His mercy endureth forever; whom He delivered out of trouble, and who cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful work to the children of men! O that they would offer thanks and tell of His acts with rejoicing! Yes, my God; I am telling of Thy work to-day with joy and say: What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?

O my God, continue Thy mercy upon me, and let it be enlarged. Protect, strengthen, and preserve me also in my childbed. Guard me and my child against every harm, against sickness and dangerous accidents. Restore my lost strength to me speedily, and let me grow stronger from day to day. O Thou God of all grace

and mercy, spread Thy gracious wings over my house, and guard it against fire and flood; over my childbed, and let me safely pass my time in it in prayer and in Thy fear. Be pleased to preserve my child for Thy praise and glory, and give me grace that I may in due time with renewed strength of body and in good health attend to my churching, appear in Thy temple, and render before Thy countenance my joyful offering of praise and thanksgiving.

Now thank we all our God With heart, and hands, and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done In whom His world rejoices; Who
from our mother's arms Hath blessed us on our way With countless
gifts of love, And still is ours to-day. Amen.

HYMN.

I will sing my Maker's praises
And in Him most joyful be,
For in all things I see traces
Of His tender love to me.
Nothing else but love could move Him
With such sweet and tender care
Evermore to raise and bear
All who try to serve and love Him.
All things else have but their day,
God's great love abides for aye.

As an eagle spreadeth over
Her young brood her sheltering wings,
So the arm of God did cover
Me against affliction's stings.
He who life and being gave me,
Even in my mother's womb,
From the cradle to the tomb,
He shall ever guard and save me.
All things else have but their day,
God's great love abides for aye.

Yea, so dear He did esteem me
That His Son He loved so well
He hath given to redeem me
From the quenchless flames of hell.

O Thou Spring of boundless blessing,
 How could e'er my feeble mind
 Of Thy depth the bottom find,
 Though my efforts were unceasing?
 All things else have but their day,
 God's great love abides for aye.

God His Spirit to instruct me
 In His holy Word hath giv'n
 That He safely may conduct me
 Through this weary world to heav'n.
 He my heart's dark chamber filleth
 With the clear, pure light of faith,
 Which destroys the power of death,
 Yea, e'en hell itself it stilleth.
 All things else have but their day,
 God's great love abides for aye.

All that for my soul is needful
 He doth carefully provide,
 Nor of that is He unheedful
 Which my body needs beside.
 When my strength cannot avail me,
 When my powers can do no more,
 Doth my God His strength outpour,
 In my need He doth not fail me.
 All things else have but their day,
 God's great love abides for aye.

When I sleep, He still is near me,
 O'er me rests His guardian eye;
 And new gifts and blessings cheer me
 When the morning streaks the sky.
 Were it not for God's protection,
 Had His countenance not been
 Here my Guide, I had not seen
 E'er the end of my affliction.
 All things else have but their day,
 God's great love abides for aye.

Since, then, neither change nor coldness
 In my Father's love can be,
 Lo, I lift my hands with boldness,
 As Thy child I come to Thee.
 Grant me grace, O God, I pray Thee,
 That I may with all my might,
 All my lifetime, day and night,
 Love and trust Thee, and obey Thee.
 And when this brief life is o'er,
 Praise and love Thee evermore.

The Woman in Confinement at Her Morning Devotion.

EXHORTATION.

If prayer, calling upon God, is to be the daily occupation of every godly Christian, how much more ought a woman in confinement begin and end every day with prayer, all the more since she and her child are exposed to many mishaps during this period. But when she has committed herself and her child to God's keeping, she can the more confidently trust in God's help.

Accordingly, during the six weeks of her retirement a woman should (1) thank God in the morning for her night's rest. If she has passed the night free from pain, she should (2) commend herself and her child to God, that He may guard, bless, and keep them. (3) She should pass the day in happy reflections, and by all means enjoy the rest appointed her with a grateful heart. And if she should still be subject to discomforts, which sometimes occur after child-birth, she should (4) bear them patiently, and believe that God, who has gloriously plucked her out of her distress, will graciously turn aside whatever trouble there is still remaining.

PRAYER.

O God, plenteous in mercy, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I lift up my heart, my lips, and my hands to Thee in this morning hour and thank Thee for the gracious protection which Thou hast afforded me during the night. Thy angel has kept watch at my bed that no harm could touch me. Thou hast guarded me and my child, and hast permitted us this morning to behold with joy the

gladdening light of day. Lord, Lord, how great is Thy mercy, which is renewed every morning! Thy grace has sheltered me; Thy protection has been thrown around me that I have been preserved unharmed. All this is God's doing: it is a work of His love and faithfulness.

Up, therefore, my spirit and my soul, and bless the Lord for all His benefits! Lord, Lord, as at all times, Thou hast been my Defense also during this night. Thou hast kept Thy protecting hand over me; I have learned how gracious, how strong, how almighty, how kind and good Thou art. Lord, Lord, I shall nevermore forget all Thy benefits. I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord, the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. This poor woman cried, and the Lord heard her, and saved her out of all her troubles. Therefore my tongue shall be filled with singing, and my heart shall thank the Lord; yea, with reverent hands I will praise His mercy.

But oh, Lord, Lord, let me be commended to the fatherly protection of Thy grace also this day. I commit to Thee my body and my soul; preserve my soul and my mind from melancholy thoughts, anxiety, and grief. Let Thy Holy Spirit dwell in my heart, sanctify it, and fill it with heavenly consolation and joy, that I may pass this day in Thy fear, in spiritual delights of the soul, in the love of Jesus, and in filial trust. Restore also to my body its lost powers, increase them every day, and let me soon regain my complete health. Avert from me all pains, accidents, sicknesses, and ill fortune, and alleviate the suffering which according to Thy wisdom Thou art still to lay upon me. Graciously preserve my child, and let it grow and thrive to Thy glory.

O Triune God, I commit myself to Thee altogether. Lord God Father in heaven, have mercy upon me; be gracious to me and my child; forgive me my sins, bless me, and preserve me from all evil. Lord God Son, the Savior of the world, have mercy upon me; be my Advocate, and plead my cause. Be my Jesus, my Savior, and let Thy grace refresh me this day like dew from heaven; support me, strengthen me, and preserve me. Lord God Holy Spirit, have mercy upon me; pray within me, and witness to my spirit that I am verily a child of God. The Lord bless me

and keep me; the Lord make His face shine upon me and be gracious unto me; the Lord lift up His countenance upon me and give me peace. And the peace of God which passes all understanding may keep my heart, soul, and mind in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

HYMN.

Here's a new day, blessed Jesus,
Wilt Thou take it for Thine own?
In its hours, oh, may I serve Thee,
Looking ever to the throne!

Keep me in the strong temptation
That I may not fall away,
Be Thy love my full salvation
From satanic wiles to-day.

Hold me safe in sudden trial,
Let me know Thy presence near;
Give me grace for self-denial,
Present blessing, Savior dear.

If this day an earthly friendship
Fail me like the smoking flax,
Let my hold on Thee be firmer,
Nor my grasp of heav'n relax.

Wholly Thine, my blessed Master,
Wholly Thine in work or rest;
This day, all days, till the last one
When I lean me on Thy breast.

The Woman in Confinement at Her Evening Devotion.

EXHORTATION.

The two disciples who had had Jesus with them during the day did not like to let Him part from them in the evening, but said: "Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Luke 24, 29. Thus a woman in confinement, too, should begin and conclude the day with prayer, and for her protection

during the night should ask God for His special gracious presence. (1) She should thank God for having preserved her during the day from pains and mishaps and her child from unrest. But if God in His counsel did send her some suffering, she should nevertheless (2) praise Him that by His help she was able to endure it and has safely reached the evening. (3) Next, she should commit herself and her child to God's protection for the night. To be sure, all mishaps are dangerous and grievous to us human beings, and cause us terrors; how much more to women in confinement, who are not able to escape from danger, and too weak to undergo many hardships. (4) After praying, she should finally fall asleep in the arms and lap of her kind God, without entertaining any thoughts of a bad night, cares, worries, fears, or terrors, and on awaking she should think of God, rejoice in Him, and consecrate herself to Him.

PRAYER.

O Lord, almighty God, how am I to praise Thee sufficiently for Thy love and faithfulness manifested towards me this day? This day, too, I have safely passed under Thy protection and have reached the evening with a contented heart. Thou hast helped me bear and overcome the pains and discomforts of my condition. Thou hast been to me and my child a gracious Father, a protecting God and Defender. O Lord, I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast healed me. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing praises to Thee, and not be silent. O Lord, my God, I will give thanks unto Thee forever.

However, after covering me mercifully with the wings of Thy grace during this day, spread Thy loving-kindness over me also during this night; guard me, my house, and all my dear ones against calamity, danger, and harm. Mercifully forgive all that I have done this day in thoughts, words, and deeds contrary to Thee. I will now lay me down in Thy arms, O Thou God of all grace and mercy, and will say: I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety. Command Thy angel that he come and keep watch over Thine own. Place us under the care of all Thy ministering spirits, that we may be secure against the wiles of Satan. Yes, in Thy name, O great God, I will now close my eyes and go to sleep: do Thou watch over my slumbers and drive from me whatever might disturb my rest.

But while my body sleeps, my spirit shall be ever wakeful as in Thy presence, and delight itself in Thee. Lord God Father, let Thy fatherly heart be open to me this night, that even in my sleep I may rejoice in Thy almighty power, goodness, love, and mercy. Lord Jesus, Thou Light of my soul, illumine me also this night with the heavenly light of Thy mercy, that I may find comfort in Thy wounds and blood, may cherish in my heart the precious image of my Savior, and thus fall asleep. O precious Holy Spirit, quicken in me holy desires; sing and pray in my heart, and seal to me the comfort that I am a child of God. O Triune God, let me thus go to sleep in Thy love, rest peacefully in Thy mercy, and on awaking find myself still with Thee. Let me behold the light of the morning in health and good cheer, and return thanks to Thee, and praise and extol Thee for all the benefits Thou hast shown to me and my beloved ones in body and soul. May the grace of the Father protect me, the love of Jesus cover me, the succor of the Holy Spirit strengthen and sustain me!

The happy sunshine now is gone, The gloomy night comes swiftly on; But shine Thou still, O Christ, our Light, Nor let us lose ourselves in night. Amen.

HYMN.

Night's shadows falling men to rest are calling;
Rest we, possessing heav'nly peace and blessing;
This we implore Thee, falling down before Thee,
Great King of Glory.

O Savior, hear us! Son of God, be near us!
Thine angels send us; let Thy love attend us;
He nothing feareth whom Thy presence cheereth,
Light his path cleareth.

Be near, relieving all who now are grieving;
Thy visitation be our consolation:
Oh, hear the sighing of the faint and dying;
Lord, hear our crying!

Thou ever livest; endless life Thou givest;
Thou watch art keeping o'er Thy faithful sleeping;
In Thy clear shining they are now reclining,
All care resigning.

O Lord of Glory, praise we and adore Thee —
Thee for us given, one true Rest from heaven!
Rest, peace, and blessing, we are now possessing,
Thy name confessing.

The Woman in Confinement Presents Her Child to God in Prayer.

EXHORTATION.

When God has given parents children, not only cares for them begin, but there is also found in parents a love for their children's salvation here and hereafter and a desire for their well-being. But all these blessings must be obtained from God by prayer, because they are among the good gifts which come down from above, from the Father of lights.

Accordingly, (1) a godly mother should humbly commend her new-born babe to God, and pray Him to let it obtain Holy Baptism, and through this Sacrament be received into His arms as His child, and into His nurture, care, love, and grace. If God lets the child grow in years, she must (2) remember it in her evening and morning prayers, yea, in her sighings to God during the day, that God may rule it by His Holy Spirit, give the child a godly heart, good health, proper growth and development, preserve its sound limbs, and guard it against misfortune and harm. (3) With the increasing years the prayers and cares of godly parents are also increasing, namely, that their children may be trained and thoroughly established in the Christian doctrine, and brought to a knowledge of Jesus Christ, and they should spare no expense, effort, and labor to secure for their children this treasure. If in later years their children go abroad, or come into contact with the children of the world, the cares of the parents increase again; however, they should (4) pray also more diligently for their children during this period. Godly parents do like Job, who offered sacrifice for his children every evening, and called upon God to be merciful to his children and forgive their sins. Godly parents call upon God to guard their children against being misled, not to let them fall into grievous sins and vices, to lead them by His good Spirit in an even path, and to prosper them here in time and hereafter in eternity. (5) They also have this confidence in God, that, if they have

omitted nothing as regards the good training of their children, their admonition in the Lord, and their Christian education, God will hear their prayers, and that, even if their children should go astray for a time, He will bring them back to the truth by His wisdom. (6) Meanwhile they must patiently bear the cross which God in His wonderful counsel has laid on them through their wayward children, hoping in His mercy until He mitigates its burden or in mercy removes it entirely.

PRAYER AT THE CHILD'S BAPTISM.

O gracious and merciful God, who art the true Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named, behold, I come to Thee in true humility of my heart and present to Thee my new-born child. Merciful God, receive this blessing which Thou hast bestowed on me as Thy child through Holy Baptism. Oh, let it become and remain Thy child; guard and preserve it.

O Jesus, Thou hast said: Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; behold, to-day I bring my child to Thee. Bestow on it Thy Holy Spirit, that He may regenerate it by water and the Spirit; sanctify it, rule it, and fill its heart with faith and heavenly light. Let it grow up to Thy honor; and give me grace that I may bring it up in Thy fear and for Thy glory.

O my God, herewith I give back to Thee my child that it may be Thine own. O heavenly Father, I place it into the arms of Thy mercy; oh, provide for it and protect it. O Jesus, I give my child to Thee; wash it with Thy holy blood and hide it in Thy holy wounds against all the raging of Satan. O God Holy Spirit, I commend my child to Thy nurture; oh, sanctify it thoroughly, that its soul and body and spirit may be kept blameless until the day of Jesus Christ. Let this day be for my child the day of its covenant with Thee, the day of blessing, the day of its new birth. Grant that it may always be mindful, and that I may often remind my child, of this day. Let my child never break this covenant and forsake its regenerate state, but persevere in faith and holiness until the end, when Thou wilt receive it into everlasting joy as Thy child and heir.

At Jesus' feet my infant sweet I lay with all its stain, That renders it for heaven unmeet Until 'tis born again: I here embrace His proffered grace In this baptismal wave, Nor shall the world my trust efface — The bath its soul will save. Amen.

PRAYER OF GODLY PARENTS FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

O Lord, almighty God, Father of all grace and mercy! Behold, among other gifts of Thy grace Thou hast also given me children, for which I praise and bless Thee with all my heart. But oh, my God, when I look upon my children as precious pledges which Thou hast placed in my keeping, which Jesus has redeemed with His holy blood and Thou hast received as Thy children in Holy Baptism, oh, I am filled with anxiety lest through my fault one of them should be lost. Thou sayest to me and all parents: Keep this child; if by any means it be missing, then shall thy life be for its life. Therefore, O Father of all grace, I come to Thee, and present before Thee my children. I shall do for them what I can, but the best part must be done by Thee. Oh, bless my children; be their companion in all their ways; keep them in Thy holy fear, that they may never offend and grieve Thee by gross sins, or bring injury and shame upon themselves. Grave upon my children's heart the name Jesus; let Jesus dwell in them and sanctify their hearts, that they may never lose their gracious God and a good conscience. Guard them against being misled by evil company; remind them at all times by Thy Holy Spirit of Thy most holy presence, that they may bear in mind that Thou art with them at home and abroad, by day and by night, in society and in solitude. Let Thy angel go with them in all their walks, and guard them when they are traveling in foreign parts in the business of their calling. Give them at all times Thy angels for companions as Thou didst to young Tobit; rescue them from danger by Thy angels, as Thou didst Lot; let them, like Jacob, enjoy the angels' protection.

If it should please Thee to put upon me a cross through the death, sickness, or misfortune of my children, give me patience in such an affliction, and let me bear in mind that nothing can happen without Thee. Thou hast the right to take from me the children which Thou hast given me. If Thou wilt take my children to Thyself by death, in order that I may be roused to love Thee alone, oh, keep me, while walking this thorny path, trusting and hoping in Thy almighty power, being assured that, as Thou canst do all things, Thou art able also to end or mend my children's cross.

Bestow upon my children also Thy temporal blessing; provide for them, nourish and cherish them, give them food and clothing, and deal with them as a faithful Father. Be their Helper in

danger, their Succor in affliction, their Physician in sickness. Give them a good heart, a good intellect, and a sound body, that they may live before Thee and honor and praise Thee. Give them also an obedient and humble heart; let them grow up under Thy blessing, that I may have comfort and joy in them.

O God, hear my prayer, and remember that they are Thy children as well as mine; therefore let my sighings in behalf of my children ascend to Thy throne of grace, and hear them. On the last day let me with all my children stand at Thy right side, and say to Thy praise: Behold, here I am, my God, and the children which Thou gavest me; I have lost none of them. Yes, my God, grant that none of my children may perish, but that they may enter into Thy glory with me, and I with them,

Never from Thy pastures roving, Let them be the Lion's prey;
Let Thy tenderness, so loving, Keep them through life's dangerous way.
Then within Thy fold eternal Let them find a resting-place:
Feed in pastures ever vernal, Drink the rivers of Thy grace. Amen.

HYMN.

Gracious Savior, gentle Shepherd,
Children all are dear to Thee;
Gathered with Thine arms, and carried
In Thy bosom, may they be;
Sweetly, fondly, safely tended,
From all want and danger free.

Tender Shepherd, never leave them
From Thy fold to go astray;
By Thy warning love directed,
May they walk the narrow way;
Thus direct them, thus defend them,
Lest they fall an easy prey.

Cleanse their hearts from sinful folly
In the stream Thy love supplied.
Mingled stream of love and water
Flowing from Thy wounded side;
And to heavenly pastures lead them,
Where Thine own still waters glide.

Let Thy holy Word instruct them ;
 Fill their minds with heavenly light ;
 Let Thy powerful grace constrain them
 To approve whate'er is right ;
 Let them feel Thy yoke is easy,
 Let them prove Thy burden light.

Taught to lisp Thy holy praises
 Which on earth Thy children sing,
 Both with lips and hearts unfeignèd,
 Glad thank-offerings may they bring ;
 Then with all the saints in glory
 Join to praise their Lord and King.

The Woman in Confinement Prepares for Her Churching.

EXHORTATION.

When God has graciously preserved a mother during the six weeks of her confinement, has restored her vigor, strengthened her, and guarded her and her child against mishap, so that she may again go to church, her tongue should, indeed, be filled with singing, and she should praise and bless God with a grateful heart. She should (1) reflect how weak and feeble she was lying in her bed, and that God has renewed her strength, so that she can go abroad again in good health. She should (2) consider that other women during their confinement have had to endure grievous sicknesses, have had a period of pain to pass through, have met with mishaps, or have even died. Hence she should with special songs of praise and thanksgiving exalt and bless the Lord, who has preserved her from all these misfortunes. When she beholds her bright and healthy child, she has (3) reason humbly to acknowledge the great favor of God.

Accordingly, she should go to church (4) with a devout mind, a thankful heart, and with lips full of praise. She should rejoice when she enters the courts of the Lord and approaches His altar. Thereupon she should (5) offer up her prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving, praising God and committing her child to Him, and should then receive the benediction and ever after remain mindful of the goodness of God vouchsafed her.

PRAYER.

What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me? Yes, the Lord hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad. O gracious and mighty God, I am about to go to church again for the first time, to thank Thee in Thy temple for Thy gracious help and powerful aid which Thou hast afforded me. Lord God, Thou hast safely delivered me, preserved my life, and permitted me happily to see my child. O God, plentiful in mercy, Thou hast preserved me these six weeks, guarded me against misfortune, and restored to me my lost strength, so that I may now approach Thy temple in good health. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place. The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.

Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast preserved my life at this birth; I thank Thee that Thou hast restored my strength; I thank Thee that by Thy strength I can leave my house to thank Thee in Thy temple for all Thy benefits towards me. O Lord, accept the feeble praise-offering of my lips. I am glad that it hath been said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. My feet shall stand within the gates of the spiritual Jerusalem. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. O my God, let this going-out of mine be blessed; give me more strength with each day; let my child grow up to Thy praise. I bring to Thee this day a pair of turtle-doves: my grateful heart and my lips singing praise; oh, do not despise my offering. I am offering to Thee in true faith the perfect sacrifice of atonement, the blood and death of Jesus: cleanse and wash me with it. I also offer Thee once more my child, as I have already done at its holy baptism: oh, be henceforth its Father, Sustainer, Protector, Preserver, and gracious God.

However, let the wings of Thy mercy also in the future be spread over me and my child; let us live before Thee and praise Thy name. Grant that I may ever be and remain mindful of this blessing, in order that I may persevere in faith, godliness, and the fear of God, and bring up my children in these virtues. Give to

me and my children Thy Holy Spirit, that He may enlighten, sanctify, govern, and lead us in an even path, until I and my children will enter into Thy glory, into the new Jerusalem, of which Thou art Thyself the sun and the light.

O joy! my hope and trust are founded On His sure Word, and witness in the heart; I know Thy mercies are unbounded, And all good gifts Thou freely wilt impart; Nay, more is lavished by Thy bounteous hand Than I can ask, or seek, or understand. Amen.

HYMN.

O Lord, I would delight in Thee,
And on Thy care depend;
To Thee in every trouble flee,
My best, my only Friend.

When all created streams are dried,
Thy fulness is the same;
May I with this be satisfied,
And glory in Thy name!

No good in creatures can be found
But what is found in Thee:
I must have all things and abound
While God is God to me.

O that I had a stronger faith,
To look within the veil—
To credit what my Savior saith,
Whose Word can never fail.

He who has made my heaven secure
Will here all good provide:
While Christ is rich, can I be poor?
What can I want beside?

O Lord, I cast my care on Thee;
I triumph and adore:
Henceforth my great concern shall be
To love and please Thee more.

A Godly Mother Thanks God when Weaning Her Child.

EXHORTATION.

Having prayed for her child every day, a godly mother renews her supplication when the child is about to be weaned. For it is a great mercy that God has blessed the mother's milk, so that the tender infant could thrive, and that it has grown and become so strong as to be able to take food, and sustain itself without its mother's milk.

Accordingly, a godly mother should (1) thank God that He has let her child attain strength by her milk so that it now can preserve its life by common food. (2) She should especially thank God, if she has herself nursed the child, that God gave her nourishing milk, and added His blessing to it, so that the child could thrive by it. She should (3) call upon God to bless the new food to her child, to let it grow up for His glory, and as it increases in years, to fill its heart with the gifts of the Holy Ghost. And since children about the time when they have been weaned become accustomed to go about alone, a godly mother should (4) pray God to guide her child, to guard it by His holy angels, to preserve it from hurt by falling, to preserve it sound in limbs, and to let it pass under His gracious protection from one stage of its life to the next.

PRAYER.

Merciful and gracious God, my heart rejoices that I have lived to see my child weaned from its mother's breasts. O loving God, Thou hast given me this child according to Thy goodness; Thou hast preserved it amid so many accidents, sustained its tender life, and permitted it to grow, so that it now requires stronger food for its support. Praise be to Thy mercy that Thou hast hitherto blessed to my child its mother's breasts, so that it has gathered strength and has thriven by Thy goodness. Thanks be to Thee for Thy blessing, thanks for Thy protection, thanks for Thy faithfulness and mercy. O Lord, Thou art still performing the greatest miracle every day, when Thou turnest the food and drink in a mother's breast into milk, and givest it nourishing power, that children may be fed, refreshed, and strengthened by it.

O God, now that Thou hast blessed to my child its mother's breasts, bless also the new food and drink to which I wish to accus-

tom it. Grant that it may willingly acquire the new mode of living, and that it may continue to grow and increase in strength from day to day, from week to week, and from year to year. Be with my child when it begins to walk; send Thy angels to be its companions; hold it when it is falling, guard it whenever it is in danger. Oh, let this child be commended to Thee body and soul; make it strong also in the inner man; sanctify it by Thy Holy Spirit, in order that it may willingly submit to training in obedience and in the fear of God, that it may not prove refractory, but, as a godly child, readily listen to its parents and obey them, in order that I may be delighted with it here, and finally take it with me into the eternal joy of heaven, and with it enter into Thy glory.

I'll praise my Maker whilst I've breath; And when my voice is lost in death, Praise shall employ my nobler powers: My days of praise shall ne'er be past, While life and thought and being last, Or immortality endures. Amen.

HYMN.

When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.

Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ;
Nor is the least a cheerful heart
That tastes those gifts with joy.

Through every period of my life
Thy goodness I'll pursue;
And after death, in distant worlds,
The glorious theme renew.

When nature fails, and day and night
Divide Thy works no more,
My ever grateful heart, O Lord,
Thy mercies shall adore.

Through all eternity to Thee
A joyful song I'll raise;
But oh! eternity's too short
To utter all Thy praise.

Admonition and Comfort for the Barren.

When God withholdeth children from married people, so that they say with Abraham: "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless?" Gen. 15, 2, they should

(1) Reflect that in either spouse there may be natural causes of barrenness; for God does not bestow on all men the same qualities nor the same fruitfulness. If God has not placed this gift in them, they should be content with their condition, and believe that He is nevertheless their gracious God who loves them and is well-disposed towards them. Though a tulip has not as many flowers as a rose-bush, it is nevertheless a pleasant plant to the gardener and the proprietor of the garden. How many shrubs adorn a garden, without bearing fruit, and yet we are glad to have them in our gardens. Thus barren spouses are also dear children of God, though He has not made them equal to others as regards fruitfulness.

(2) They should remember that children are a gift of the Lord. If He withholdeth this gift from any one, that person should not on that account murmur against God, nor grow envious when he sees that God gives to some more than to others. God is the Lord in His house: He dispenses His gifts according to His good pleasure. God has reserved for Himself three keys: the key to the grave, for nobody except God can raise the dead; the key that unlocks the rain in the clouds, for no false god can give rain, and no human being can cause rain; and the key to the womb, which nobody can open when the Lord has locked it, nor lock when the Lord opens it. However, if it is God's gracious will to withhold from married persons the blessing of children, such spouses must give proof of their patience, resignation, and hope in their childless state.

(3) Barrenness is not a sign of God's wrath; for that God is not angry with them the barren may gather from the fact that God does not suffer them to lack other blessings: He bestows on them temporal gifts, such as health, daily bread, prosperity, and other blessings, which He does not give so lavishly to others who have children and whom He frequently visits with much sickness, sorrow over their children, and other afflictions. Moreover, God gives to the childless heavenly blessings, such as joy in God, peace with God, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, comfort, and spiritual

delights. By all of these blessings He proves to them again that He is not angry with them; for a person who is in a state of wrath and disfavor with God must certainly go without these heavenly blessings.

(4) Barren spouses should also consider that God is showing them a special favor by their very barrenness, because He knows the condition of their body and mind better than they do themselves. For although many married wives love children, God may know that they would be too feeble to give birth to a child, or to raise children, or to endure the cross of seeing their children go astray. The child might cause to the husband and to the wife much vexation and worry that might hinder them in their private and public devotions; yea, if God in His counsel should let the child die, that might cause the parents much grief. Therefore, since God knows the strength and weakness of men better than they do themselves, He shows them a special favor by leaving them go childless, although in their ignorance they may not regard it as a favor.

(5) In particular, married persons should beware of trying to force God to give them children by their murmuring, dissatisfaction, and their importunate prayers; for in that case God may give them children in His anger. Either the mother who had murmured will lose her life or health through giving birth to a child, or if this does not happen, the child given her may turn out so ill that it causes its parents innumerable alarms, sorrows, and griefs, and puts them for the rest of their lives in a state of perpetual fear, sadness, and melancholy, all of which would be the results of their unreasonable petitions. Many a son who had been obtained thus from God by unreasonable prayer afterwards became the cause of the father's death and a scourge to his mother.

(6) Godly wives should not misapply the saying of Paul in 1 Tim. 2, 15, where we read: "The woman shall be saved in child-bearing, if she continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." For in this passage Paul does not say that wives shall be saved on account of child-bearing. For we are made righteous before God and saved by the merit of Jesus Christ and for the sake of the blood which He shed for us, Rom. 3, 28; 5, 1, and not by child-bearing. For, if the latter were true, no maiden could be saved, which is contrary to God and His holy Word. But Paul has made this statement to comfort married women, telling them, namely, that although God has laid on them great pains in child-

bearing, because the woman suffered herself to be led astray in Paradise, and thus brought into the world transgression and sin, nevertheless God will aid and help them in child-bearing; they are to be saved despite the fact that in the pangs of labor they feel God's anger, provided in their condition they continue in faith in the Lord Jesus, in love towards God and men, in sanctification of life, self-discipline, and a Christian conversation. Accordingly, this passage speaks comfort to women in labor, and conveys to those who die during child-bearing the assurance that notwithstanding the pains which have been laid upon them on account of sin they shall be saved. But this passage does not declare any cause for the salvation of women.

(7) Married persons, moreover, should abide God's time and persevere in prayer. Some trees bear fruit the very first year, others after several years. Accordingly, godly spouses should not abandon all hope. "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." Heb. 10, 35. Now, as God does not bestow temporal blessings on all men at the same time, so also with regard to this blessing.

(8) In this connection married people should diligently beware of conceiving a dislike of their spouses, the wife blaming the husband, or the husband the wife; but they should reflect that it is God who withholds from them the fruit of the womb. Gen. 30, 1. Accordingly, they should nevertheless love each other cordially and be content in God, because neither of them can alter matters without the favor, blessing, and will of God. Particularly they should beware of suspicion, jealousy, and disfavor, for instance, when friends, brothers, and sisters are beginning to make inquiries concerning the disposition of the property of childless spouses. But they should continue sincerely loving each other, and whenever this has to be done, dispose of their earthly possessions according to equity and charity.

(9) If God withholds children from godly spouses, they should increase the more in the love of Jesus. While those who have children are often hindered by their children in their devotions, church-attendance, and their spiritual edification, the childless can attend to the service of God unhindered and undisturbed.

(10) Christians whose marriage God does not bless with children should regard the poor as committed to their especial care: they should do good to godly children, clothe them, send them to

school, and aid in their education. Such children will on the last day bless them as their fathers and mothers, and praise them before God, saying: These have clothed us, and given us food and drink. Matt. 25.

(11) Sometimes God, out of love and mercy, does not bless the marriage of Christians with children because He foreknows terrible national calamities and visitations which are to overwhelm a city or country. He removes the godly before such calamities come, and puts His dear children to rest before the storms of affliction begin to blow, as He promised to do for Hezekiah, and as He did for St. Augustine. Now, if this is indeed a great mercy of God, it is also a merciful providence, if God does not give married people any children, in order that they may not behold the misery that is to come upon the world, as happened in the Flood.

(12) Finally, married people may reflect whether they regard children as a natural gift or as a gift of God, which children, in fact, are. If they think that children are a natural gift which they can produce themselves, they are very much mistaken; and by withholding the blessing of wedlock from them, God wants to show to such married persons that it is not left to their choice whether they will have children, but that children are a gift of God, for which He wants us to pray. If Christian husbands and wives should here raise the objection that whoremongers and whores do not ask for children, and yet beget them, I answer: In that case God lets nature take its course to reveal the depravity of men, because such people do not unite for the purpose of begetting children for the glory of God, but to gratify their evil lust. Accordingly, godly wives should follow the example of Isaac, of whom it is written: "And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren." Hence Isaac understood quite well that children are not in every case a product of nature, but a gracious gift of God. Accordingly, the text continues: "And the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah, his wife, conceived." Gen. 25, 21.

On all these facts Christian spouses should diligently reflect, and thus guard against impatience and disquietude of mind. They should consider that, though their home is lonely and childless, they will, after their happy departure from this life, be received into the company of many thousands of holy angels, with whom they will rejoice forever at the throne of the Triune God.

PRAYER.

Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless? O my God, I see that Thou bestowest on others the blessing of wedlock in abundant measure, but from me Thou hast hitherto withheld it. Lord, Lord, let me bear this with Christian resignation; let me accept it in patience as Thy gracious will. I know that Thou art an almighty God; Thou canst, if Thou wilt, easily give me children, and make me fruitful. I also know that Thou art gracious to me, that Thou lovest me, and hast never yet denied me Thy grace. Therefore I shall patiently submit to Thy will in this matter: Thou knowest best why Thou hast not yet bestowed this blessing on me. If I am too feeble for child-bearing, too negligent in the training of children, or too readily cast down by afflictions caused by children, I acknowledge Thy goodness, which wishes to spare me and not suffer me to be tempted above that I am able.

But if Thou dost not give me the joy which children bring, let me rejoice the more in Thee, loving Thee from the heart, and finding my pleasure and delight in Thee. Meanwhile, O Triune God, let me continue in faith toward Thee, in love toward my neighbor, and in the sanctification of life; yea, let me walk before all men in decency and uprightness. Let Thy Holy Spirit convince my heart more and more that this is Thy gracious will concerning me, and I shall submit to it with all my heart.

Meanwhile guard my heart against envy, suspicion, impatience, and dislike of my spouse. Let me love him nevertheless, cherish him as I would my child, and love him more than I would ten sons and daughters. If it be Thy will that I should wait a while, and that Thou wilt yet make me a fruitful mother, and remember me as Thou didst Hannah, convince my heart of this Thy gracious good pleasure concerning me. If Thou wilt not give me an heir, Lord, this shall be my heritage, that I observe Thy ways. Jesus shall be the Strength of my heart and my Portion forever. Lord, Lord, Thou canst do all things: Thou didst make Sarah and Elizabeth to conceive beyond their natural time, and it is a little thing for Thee to bless my wedded estate that has hitherto been barren. Lord, let Thyself be entreated by me, and I shall thank Thee for Thy gift to the end of my life, and will raise my child for Thy honor and glory; by Holy Baptism I will give it back to

Thee. Let me not grow envious when I see that Thou fillest other homes with children, but let me show the more love, grace, and mercy to poor and abandoned children, clothe them, provide for them, and take care of them.

O Lord, let Thy mercy be upon us, according as we hope in Thee. Cause us to rejoice; comfort us, help us, and, if it please Thee, give us children; however, not in Thine anger, not for our punishment, not for our humiliation. If it is for my benefit, grant me my prayer according to Thy mercy. But if such is not Thy good pleasure, I shall not wrest the gift of a child from Thee; yea, I will do nothing contrary to Thy holy will; I will not have any children either. Lord, I have poured out my heart before Thee; oh, choose for me what is salutary for me and pleasing to Thee. Grant that I may possess my soul in patience until Thou wilt reveal Thy help to me. The will of God shall be my pleasure While here on earth is mine abode; My will is wrong beyond all measure, It doth not will what pleaseth God. The Christian's maxim e'er must be: What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me. Amen.

HYMN.

Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish,
 Come to the mercy-seat, fervently kneel;
 Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your
 anguish;
 Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.

Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,
 Hope of the penitent, fadeless and pure,
 Here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,
 Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot cure.

Here see the Bread of Life, see water flowing
 Forth from the throne of God, pure from above;
 Come to the feast of love, come, ever knowing
 Earth has no sorrow but Heaven can remove.

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 The happy sunshine now is gone, 595.
 The will of God shall be my pleasure,
 610.
 They only all its power shall prove,
 581.
 Though a heavy cross I'm bearing,
 585.
 Thou Maker of our mortal frame,
 551.
 Thy calmness bends serene above,
 577.
 'Tis not a lonely night-watch, 585.
 To heaven I lift mine eye, 584.
- When all Thy mercies, O my God,
 604.
 When bitter winds of trouble blow,
 565.
 When overwhelmed with grief, 575.
 Where'er in grief I pray and sing,
 581.
 With heart and soul I'm Thine for-
 e'er, 581.
 Zion, gird thyself with gladness, 561.