

SERMON XXII.

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HOW MAY CHILD-BEARING WOMEN BE MOST ENCOURAGED AND SUPPORTED AGAINST, IN, AND UNDER THE HAZARD OF THEIR TRAVAIL?

Notwithstanding she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.—
1 Timothy ii. 15.

THAT I may, with all Christian tenderness, give a satisfactory answer to that practical case, of concernment to be resolved, for the sake of fruitful pious wives, whose manifold sorrows call for the best aids, namely, "How may child-bearing women be most encouraged and supported against, in, and under the hazard of their travail?"—I shall, by God's assistance, according as I am able, with some respect to the time allotted for this exercise, open and apply this notable text [which] I have read to you.

To find out the true importance of which words, it will be requisite to cast an eye upon the foregoing part of the chapter; wherein the apostle exhorteth all Christians to pray for persons of all ranks; (verses 1, 2, 8;) and particularly Christian women to practise answerable to their profession of godliness, instructing them about their deportment in church-assemblies, and at home; (verses 9, 10;) both in reference to *their habits*, that they be modest, without excess in their apparel and dress; and to *their actions*, which they are, 1. Enjoined; namely, to hear with silence and subjection: (verse 11;) 2. Forbidden; namely, to teach, because that were "to usurp authority over the man," which the woman's posteriority in the creation, and priority in the transgression, do not allow of, (verses 12—14,) but, on the contrary, bring her, by whom her husband was deceived, into subjection and child-bearing sorrow with the fruit of her womb. For though Adam was first formed, Eve first sinned, and so infested all with original sin. However, as one notes,* the opposition is not to be considered of the thing, but in respect of the order, that the sense might be, "Adam was not *first* seduced, but the woman," agreeing with the scope foregoing. Yet that the female sex at home may not despond under the sense of that suffering which Eve's forwardness to sin had more especially brought upon them, the apostle here, in these heartening words, prepares a most sweet and strengthening spiritual cordial, for the cheering up of all good women; and the clearing

* TESTARDUS *De Naturâ et Gratiâ*. Theſ. 20.

of their eyes from fumes in fainting-fits. And therein it eminently concerns child-bearing ones to copy out the most approved receipt in the comfortable expressions of the Gentile Doctor: That though they breed and bear children with much trouble, which may argue God's displeasure in his sentence, and is indeed a consequent of the first sin,—which they are very sensible of in the antecedents, concomitants, and consequents of their sore labour, that may (as it sometimes hath done in Rachel, and Phinehas's wife, &c.) bring their bodies or their babes (if not both) to the grave,—yet the pains shall be sanctified, and be no obstacle to their welfare; their souls shall be safely delivered.

The “notwithstanding,” in the front of the text, doth, methinks, rhetorically usher-in a comfortable answer to a tacit objection which might arise in the minds of those women who were, without sufficient reason, but too much addicted to a single life, or over-fearful of a married state, partly from the sorrow upon conception and in child-bearing, and partly from that kind of subjection in conversation which, with more reluctancy, the apostasy of the woman, and there-upon the sentence denounced against her, did introduce. For “the wisdom from above,” according to the tenor of the new covenant, thus sweetly and graciously resolves the doubt: That if a woman's subjection in conversation be sanctified, her sorrow upon conception shall be sweetened; if her life be holy, though her throes and pangs be grievous, yet she shall have surpassing “joy that a child is born;” and if she dies in child-bearing, her soul will be eternally happy. So that, in the doleful state and hard condition of child-bearing pain, whereinto the apostasy of Eve hath brought her, (whose sex the Levitical law supposeth to be under greater weakness and uncleanness, Lev. xii. 5, 8,) which makes even Christian married wives more suspicious and fearful upon their conception, here is a ground of good hope, [that] all shall go well with them, who may hence take encouragement as to their temporal safe deliverance, (even as to any other temporal good thing,) in the due exercise of Christian graces. Yea, and here is matter of great support and strong consolation,* which may alleviate those pinching sorrows, considering that their eternally-safe deliverance cannot be hindered, but rather promoted, thereby.

It is plain, then, we have, in these excellent words, implied and expressed, these two things: as,

I. *A woman's weakness by the fall*, implied to be a more uneasy subjection, and child-bearing: so,

II. *Her support and strength*, as to the ground of it, by grace expressed, both *in respect to the end*, by removing the impediment; (she shall be preserved and saved notwithstanding;) *and way or means*, by continuance in grace, or keeping her ornament, to evidence her title; and that shines with the four jewels of “Faith, Charity, Holiness, and Sobriety.”

I. *That the woman's weakness by the fall, is here implied to be a more uneasy subjection, and painful child-bearing*, may be apparent

* DANÆUS, JUNIUS et TREMELLIUS *in loc.*

from the precedent verses.—For it should seem, before the fall, when there was an admirable harmony in the whole frame of nature, woman should have bred and brought forth with easiness; and her subjection to the authority of her husband should have been more liberal, without any remittency or discomfort. Whereas now, since that saddest accident, by reason of the imperfection which ariseth from sin, the woman is, as it were, untuned and inclined to account this inflicted subjection to her husband grievous to her, who had given the worst counsel; and doth find the many illnesses which occur in breeding very troublesome; as also the pangs of the approaching birth very terrible, yea, and sometimes, from the fearful apprehensions she hath of the curse, next to intolerable.* Yet,

II. The apostle expressly mentions *the woman's support and strength by grace*, in that condition, both *with reference to the end*, preservation and salvation; (“She shall be saved in child-bearing;”) and *the way or means to attain it*: “If they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.” Here,

(I.) *As to the end*.—Lest any Christian woman should conceit that those notes of the divine sentence, legible in the pains which fruitful wives underwent in breeding and bearing of children, made the state of marriage less acceptable to God; the apostle, who elsewhere determines it to be “honourable in all, and the bed undefiled,” (Heb. xiii. 4,) doth here labour to prevent such a misconceit, by showing, that child-bearing was so far from being any obstacle to the safety and salvation of good women, that, instead of sustaining loss, they should reap great benefit, if they did demean themselves Christian-like, with patience in bearing those sorrows, and prudence in discharging the duties of their relation, and abiding in their “conversation, only as it becometh the gospel.” (Phil. i. 27.)

The words are, *Σωθησεται δε δια της τεκνογονιας*: “Notwithstanding she shall be saved by child-bearing.” Wherein, for explication, somewhat is to be said of the term “salvation,” the particle “in,” and the compound word “child-bearing.”

1. *Somewhat is to be said of “salvation.”*—“She shall be saved:” which is variously expounded of temporal and eternal salvation; and if I take it in the latitude most comprehensively, as including *both* in due circumstances, yet the former in subordination to the latter, I hope I shall be less obnoxious to an over-hasty censure.

(1.) *There is salvation temporal.*—We find the original word *σωθησεται*, signifying “shall be saved,” so taken in scripture, as connoting temporal preservation, keeping alive in safety, and deliverance from sickness, trouble, and danger; as the woman of the bloody issue, (Luke viii. 43—50,) and Lazarus, (John xi. 12,) the disciples and Peter in a storm, (Matt. viii. 25; xiv. 30, 31,) and the passengers in the ship with Paul, (Acts xxvii. 31,) were saved.

(2.) *There is salvation eternal.*—Which is the most famous signification of the word in the New Testament, being most frequently so

* *Miserima miseria quod maximo periculo et tantum non moribunda enititur factum.* —LUTHERUS in Gen. iii. 16. “A most deplorable misery, when a woman, at the greatest peril of her life, and in an almost dying condition, is delivered of her offspring.” —EDIT.

used in the future passive, (as here,) connoting deliverance from sin and misery, and an estating in everlasting felicity. (Matt. x. 22; xxiv. 13; Mark xiii. 13; xvi. 16; John x. 9; Acts ii. 21; Rom. ix. 27; x. 13; 1 Cor. iii. 15.) So the believing woman shall obtain the same salvation and heavenly glory that her believing husband shall. Yet, that I may more clearly determine the import of the woman's being saved here in the text, it will be necessary to find out the meaning of,

2. *The particle, or preposition, δια.*—Which we do well translate “in;” since, upon searching into authority, I meet with it, by some or other rendered four ways; namely, “by,” “for,” “from,” and the most as we do, “in.”

(1.) There be who would construe it “by,” as I find amongst some of the Papists, (though Bellarmine* thinks fit to render it as we do,) and that as noting the cause and merit of saving married women,† while they strain to have matrimony accounted a sacrament conferring grace: ‡ as if the meaning were, “She shall be eternally saved *by* child-bearing,” reckoning this good work as causal of salvation. But how can child-bearing, which is a natural thing, either affect or deserve eternal salvation? Then every strumpet by child-bearing, though she remained impenitent and unmortified all her days, would put in her claim; which were most absurd to conceit. And, as some of the Papists would carry it to advance the merit of good works; if the bearing, yea, and religious bringing up, of children, were the cause and means by which women should be saved, what would become of those pious virgins, yea, wives and widows, who have either proved barren, or, through some other defect, have brought forth no children? It would follow, according to this supposition, that they would be excluded [from] salvation; which yet could not be consistent with what their great Schoolman asserts in celebrating the praises of virginity, “which he extols above matrimony;” § though elsewhere he concludes “matrimony to be meritorious;” || and in his comment on the text, saith, “The woman shall be saved, although she go by generation:” that is, if she marry, and be not a virgin. Whereupon he adds: “This *BY*, implying a repugnancy, imports the augmentation of salvation; as if he had said, *By* the generation of children; for the word of God she shall *rather* or *be more* saved.” But, [to] be sure, however it be difficult to reconcile the Popish authors with themselves, all that come to heaven are truly of God's mere grace meritoriously saved by Christ, in whom there is no distinction of sex or condition; but all believers, “male or female, are one in him,” through whom there is no difference of married or unmarried as to justification and salvation. (Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11.) Some indeed learned Protestants ¶ do interpret “by” with relation

* *De Matrimonio*, tom. ii. † *Significat hic causam et meritum; scilicet, laborum quos patitur mulier in partu.*—A LAPIDE. “The preposition in this passage signifies the cause and the merit of the labours which the wife endures in parturition.”—EDIT.
 ‡ *Catechismus Romanus*, p. 368. § *Virginitas est excellentior matrimonio.*—
 AQUINAS, *Sum. Theolog. Secunda Secunda*, quest. clix. 4. || *Actus matrimonialis semper meritorius.*—Idem, *Suppl. Quest. xli. A. 4.* ¶ D. N. KNATCHBULL followed by DR. HAMMOND.

to child-bearing; as if the apostle did mean by "the bearing or generation of a son," *the Child born*; that is, "the Seed of the woman," namely, Jesus, (Luke i. 31; Gen. iii. 15,) who should bruise the serpent's head, by whom alone Adam and Eve and their posterity should "be saved, if they continue in faith," &c. And so (to pass-by what some of the ancients* have written allegorically, and less solidly upon the word) Theophylact reports some to have understood it of the Virgin Mary; whom he would not have it restrained to, but rejects that exposition. However, some Papists † would have it understood of her, whom they worship as sinless, ‡ contrary to scripture and right reason. For then the comfort from this scripture would have been appropriated to the Virgin Mary, and to no other woman. But the apostle speaks in this verse of that which is future, and not past, as he had constantly done in the foregoing verses; which will evince also, that the above-said Protestants do not fully reach the sense of Paul here, when they interpret it of the woman's bearing the Seed that had been promised, and which was the mean foretold and fulfilled for bruising the serpent's head, and so for rescuing the woman from that eternal punishment which was justly deserved by her sin. However, they imagine they have a colour for their opinion, from the context; namely, verse 14, "the woman," that is, Eve, "being deceived," was first guilty of eating the forbidden fruit, but was rescued from the punishment by the promised seed, that is, by the Messiah born of her, to redeem that nature [which] he assumed; yet not absolutely, but on condition of "faith," &c., and *continuing* in all these: so the advantage should not only accrue to Eve herself, but to all her posterity. It must be granted as an undoubted truth, that Christ is the Seed of the woman meant in the first promise; the Son (though not immediately) of Eve, "the mother of all men;" (Gen. iii. 16, 20;) he is "the Saviour," by whom alone salvation to eternal glory is attainable. Yet, to restrain this child-bearing in my text only to the bearing of Christ, as it is more novel, so it seems too narrow to reach the apostle's meaning; since, as one notes, § this state is best accommodated to every faithful woman, (as well as Eve, and the blessed Virgin,) continuing constant in the exercise of faith and love of Christ, to promote her own salvation; as anon we shall see the plural in the next clause doth import. And that we may clearly understand the apostle doth here speak of conjugal conversation, he doth expressly name "child-bearing;" not signifying "the child born," but "the act of bearing children," as it is used elsewhere in this very epistle, (1 Tim. v. 14,) and also in profane authors.||

(2.) There be who render this particle ¶ "for," as noting "the final cause wherefore she shall be saved;" ** unto this end, namely, that she may procreate, and bear children, and, consequently, if she

* ORIGEN. in *Matt. et Rom.*; AUGUSTINUS *De Trinitate*, lib. xii. cap. 7, &c.
 † TIRINUS, &c. ‡ CLARUS BONARSCIUS, *al. SCRIBANIUS*. § ZANCHIUS, tom. iii. lib. 4, p. 727. || HIPPOCRATES in *Epist. ad Demag.*; XENOPHON. ¶ ΔΙΑ, "propter."—EPISCOPIUS. ** *Finis servatæ mulieris.*—SCHARPIUS.

continue in the holy exercises following in my text, she shall be eternally saved. But this conceit, so far as I apprehend, wants a sufficient ground for the use of this particle elsewhere in the New Testament, in such a contexture, with a genitive case. And the apostle cannot here be easily understood of *the end wherefore* the woman is saved, since he makes salvation itself the end, and speaks here of the graces with which Christian women are qualified, and their exercises to which they are engaged, as incumbent on them to the attaining of that great end, which is, with a *non obstante*, or "notwithstanding," opposed to the sad consequent of that deception which the woman was first guilty of, and so brought herself and posterity to be obnoxious to. As for Heinsius's* conjecture, that "child-bearing here notes marriage, which," he saith, "for the scarcity of the Greek, he would have so called from *the principal end of it*, child-bearing," it is a mere fancy, without probable ground, being [seeing] the apostle useth the same compound word in this epistle verbally, as diverse from marriage, though no doubt bearing and bringing-up of children is a very proper and signal office of a married woman.

(3.) Some would have it rendered "from," as noting "the term from which," "out of or through which," the escape or deliverance is made: as it is said of those in the ark, they were saved from the deluge, δι' ὑδάτος, "out of or through the water;" (1 Peter iii. 20;) we in our translation read, "by water;" and elsewhere, "He shall be saved ὡς δια πυρός, so as by fire;" (1 Cor. iii. 15;) that is, as those "from or out of the fire," connoting the difficulty of escaping, and not being consumed. As if the apostle had said, "She shall pass safe 'from or out of child-bearing,' and be delivered 'as a fire-brand out of the burnings.'" (Amos iv. 11.) Yet, as a learned man† thinks, this doth not fully reach the apostle's meaning here, because that which follows in the text doth not seem to be a condition of freedom from the sharp and hazardous pain of child-birth, wherein the visible accidents are common to believing and pagan women; and because, since God's sentence of the woman's bringing forth in sorrow, (Gen. iii. 16,) there hath been no promise, upon any condition, that the pain should be abated. But experience hath taught us, that choice holy women, who have been the Lord's most dear servants, have tasted of the denounced sorrow, as deep as any others; and some of them, as Rachel and Phinehas's wife, expired with their pangs. Another learned critic,‡ mighty in the scriptures, thinks, that to say, "'The woman shall be saved,' although she be compelled to bring forth and bring up children with sorrow, (which thing seems to be an argument of the divine wrath,) is an unusual construction, and more forced resolution." But if by "being saved from or out of" that hazardous condition of "child-bearing," though it otherwise carry the signatures of God's displeasure upon it, import only, that it shall be no impediment to pious women's either temporal or eternal salvation, however difficult that office of breeding and bearing may

* *In locum.*

† DR. HAMMOND.

‡ GATAKERI *Cinnus*, c. xv. p. 330.

seem to be ; (as the faithful ministers not stopped in their hard province "by honour or dishonour," 2 Cor. vi. 8 ;) but she shall be delivered with God's favour for the best : then it agrees, upon the matter, with,

(4.) Our translating of it "in,"* consonant to the most orthodox expositors, as not signifying *the cause* or *means* here, but only *the bare order* or *way to the end*, or wherein the issue is attainable. So it is frequently used in the New Testament ; as of going *in* that way ; (Matt. ii. 12 ; vii. 13 ;) believers continuing faithful *in* many afflictions antecedent to their entering into the kingdom of God ; (Acts xiv. 22 ;) "*in* the letter and circumcision," and "*in* uncircumcision ;" (Rom. ii. 27, 29 ; iv. 11 ;) "*in* the body of Christ ;" (Rom. vii. 4 ;) "*in* a parable ;" (Luke viii. 4 ;) "building the temple *in* three days," &c. (Matt. xxvi. 61 ; Rom. xiv. 14, &c.) I might also produce many testimonies from ethnic authors, to the frequent use of this particle in them, (as well as scripture,) to signify *in*.† It is plain here in my text, the apostle doth not discourse of *the cause* of woman's salvation, but suggests that bearing and (taking the word *τεκνογονειν* more largely, 1 Tim. v. 14) bringing up of children, is *the ordinary way* ‡ wherein pious wives, apt to be suspicious and fearful, should meet with saving help from God, who would lead them on therein to salvation, which of his free grace through Christ he had designed them to, and prepared for them, who, sensible of the signal marks of the divine sentence, in their child-bed sorrows, are appalled under the dreadful apprehensions of the first woman's guilt, and the sad consequent thereof to all of the same sex, ready to swoon away in despair. For as Abraham was, of God's good pleasure, father of the faithful, δι' ακροβυστίας, "*in* uncircumcision," (Rom. iv. 11,) which could be no cause of begetting faith, or any obstruction to justification ; so any, yea, every godly wife whatever, though not permitted to teach in the church, (as, a little before my text, 1 Tim. ii. 12,) yet in her honest function, employment, and good work of child-bearing travail, allotted to her by the righteous Governor of the world, (Mark xiii. 34,) should in due circumstances be either *temporally saved* ; that is, comfortably delivered from those pains, so that she should "no more remember the anguish, for joy that a man," or one of mankind, "was born into the world," (John xvi. 21,) if God, in his all-wise disposal of persons and things, sees this to be best for her : or else *eternally saved* by God in Christ, ("who commandeth light to shine out of darkness," 2 Cor. iv. 6.) being found in her journey heaven-ward, wherein she goes on with submission to God's disposal, in her proper vocation, office, and duty, for the propagation of mankind. "It is strange, then, that any should take this *causally*, as if here the apostle were opening the cause by which women should be saved ; when rather the cause should have been explained why he chiefly

* Δία pro εν. † Δι' ἀβυστίας. ["In weakness."]—PLUTARCHUS in *Cesare*. Sic, Δία μεθης. ["In a drunken fit."]—PLATO. Δία φοβου. ["In fear."] Δία πενθους. ["In sadness."]—XENOPHON. ‡ Non αιτιολογικως, sed ενυπαρκτικως. "Not descriptively of the cause, but of the way or order in which."—EDIT.

mentioned this condition or state, not *by* which, but *in* which, the woman might be saved. For he had touched on the special punishment wherein the woman was amerced for deceiving the man; and now he would subjoin a cordial to the imposed penalty, or give support under it," * lest tremulous wives should faint in their child-bearing pangs; which, however they might have the signature of divine wrath upon them, did not exclude them from happiness. But as other Christians, in a way of trial, do pass into glory, so religious wives should not fall from the hope of salvation; because through Christ, in their feminine state and function of child-bearing, though they be not free from all spot of sin, they have a blessed cordial in their sanctified sufferings, and shall, by a comfortable separation of mother and babe, be *safely delivered* of their burden, in their appointed time, if that be best for them; and, at the end of their peregrination in this life, shall be *eternally saved*, supposing they have sustained those troubles "in faith, charity, holiness, and modesty."

Having thus, as well as I could, (making my passage clear through some difficulties,) weighed the import of the particle *δια*, in these four respects, it will be convenient to say a little for the explaining of the compound word [which] it relates to; namely,

3. *Τεκνογονίας*, "child-bearing."—Or "bringing-forth children," as expressing the most proper act of a good woman's parturition, rather than "the child brought forth." Yet some do not only take it more strictly, as noting the very act of a woman's being in labour or travail, wherein are sharp throes and pains, antecedent, concomitant, and subsequent; but also more largely,—from the apostle's use of the word afterward in this epistle, (1 Tim. v. 14,) as hath been hinted,†—as comprehending also the nursing and educating of children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" (Eph. vi. 4;) which is also very painful; as Augustine's mother Monica experienced, when solicitous for his conversion, till Christ was formed in him. These burdens will then be borne in a Christian, acceptable manner, if the woman be, out of the rich grace and bountiful gift of God, so qualified that she is endowed with saving grace; which is,

(II.) *The support and strength expressed, as the way and means, by keeping her ornament, to evidence her title*, or observing the duties required, abiding in the exercise of Christian and conjugal graces, wherein they continue to be employed.—Here, to speak distinctly, we are to look upon the persons and their exercises.

1. *The persons*.—Some,‡ following the Vulgar, [Latin Vulgate,] would have the word rendered singularly, "if *she* continue or remain:" as conceiving there is nothing antecedent to agree with a plural verb. But it is certain that the original word is in the plural number, by the full consent of all copies, as Beza notes; so that there can indeed be no ground for that conceit. The generality, therefore, render it plurally, according to truth, as we do, *Εαν μείνωσιν*, "If they continue, abide, remain, persist, or persevere;" noting the

* BEZA.

† DANÆUS *in loc.*

‡ GAGNEIUS, ESTIUS.

necessity of being constant in holy duties. But then of those who render the word thus:—

(1.) Some (as the ancients, &c.)* refer it *to the children brought forth*.—Expounding it of their abiding in the exercise of the following graces. But this doth no way please the most judicious modern expositors,† any more than some of the ancients, as not so consonant to the context, wherein we have nothing of children. And therefore a learned Protestant ‡ doth justly wonder it could come into the mind of any who understand Greek. Be-like they took it to respect the generation of children, if they, by the mother's care, did continue in the faith, &c. But these did not well consider, that the compound word, *τεκνογονια*, “child-bearing,” is of the singular number. When, therefore, this verb plural hath two nouns going before it, that is, the woman, and child-bearing, we should look to which of the two “*continue*” may be best accommodated.§ If to the word “child-bearing,” what more uncouth? Then the paraphrase would thus trip: “The woman shall be saved in child-bearing, if child-bearing continue in the faith,” &c. Who, then, that duly weighs the thing, [but] would refer the verb “continue” unto the person, namely, the woman, and not to child-bearing, which is her allotted work or function? Besides, if it should be expounded of her children's perseverance in grace, it would follow, that a godly mother, who had faithfully done her duty toward her children, would endanger her own salvation, should her children prove untoward and impenitent. Whereas this were contrary to scripture, which doth engage both parents, fathers as well as (if not more than) mothers, in the pious education of their children; and doth clear godly parents, having done their own duty, from being chargeable with the guilt of their children, when they perish through their own personal default. (Ezek. xviii. 3—9.) So that though too often the wickedness of children may be imputed to the parents' neglect, yet certainly the righteous God will accept of the faithful mother's discharging of her own duty, though her children do wickedly miscarry.¶ Wherefore it is most rational, yea, necessary, to refer it, as most do,

(2.) *To the woman*.—And not to her children; to pious mothers, and not their offspring. Nor is there sufficient warrant, considering it is in contexture with the woman's proper office of child-bearing, to take-in both parents, as Chrysostom thinks.¶ And, however the verb “continue” be of the plural number, that is easily understood by an Hebraism frequent in the New Testament, or a figure very usual in sacred and civil authors, both Greek and Latin, suddenly to pass from one number to another, when there is an agreement in the structure with somewhat understood.** So here from the singular to the plural; as before, in this very chapter, from the plural to the singular, speaking of “women,” in verses 9, 10, to speak of “woman,” verse 11; and, again in this epistle, from “a widow” in the singular,

* *Syriac. et Æthiopic. Versiones*, HIERONYMUS, &c.

† ESTIUS, &c.

‡ CHAMIER.

§ WALTHERI *Harmonia*.

¶ CALVINUS.

¶ *Adversus*

Vituperatores Vitæ Monasticæ, lib. iii. Περὶ Γυναικῶν.

** *Enallage numeri*.

to speak of "widows" in the plural: "Let them learn to show piety at home." (1 Tim. v. 4.)* Where, in like construction, a noun collective singular is joined to a verb plural; woman, noting the sex, may be conjoined with either number; it being a grammar-rule, that a verb of the plural number is joined to a noun of the singular, [to] be sure, when the noun is collective, or indefinite; and the reason of the construction is of itself plain, because the singular number doth indeed comprehend in it the plurality of the collective noun.† And the reason of the apostle's sudden transition here might be, because he had briefly discoursed of the office of all Christian women in verse 9. But, collectively under the noun "woman," he saith emphatically of Christian wives, "if *they* continue constant," noting the whole body of Christian wives, who, passing through the pangs of child-bearing, as the allotment of God, do,

2. *Exercise the graces proper to such who mind their eternal welfare.*
—By persevering in their Christian walk, suitable to their high calling and holy profession; being qualified and adorned with "faith, charity, holiness, and sobriety," those rare jewels, "which in the sight of God are of great price." And the last of these, which some render "modesty," or "chastity," as a species of "temperance," the apostle makes necessary to married women, as well as to virgins.‡ Though not, as the Papists do ridiculously imagine, that matrimony is a sacrament, and doth confer grace: or that, with the Papists, we are to restrain the graces in my text only to the four matrimonial virtues, opposite to the four evils too often incident to a married state; § namely, *fidelity*, in opposition to *adultery*; *charity*, to *enmity*, chiding, and brawling; *sanctity*, to *dishonesty*, or lasciviousness, and rebellion of the members; *sobriety*, to *intemperance* and incontinence. But I know no warrant [which] we have to speak thus narrowly, when it is most rational to conclude, that the apostle doth respect "faith" in Christ for justification and salvation, and not only the faith of matrimony; "charity," or love to Christ and to his [people], and not only conjugal love; "holiness," which becomes all Christians, that is, sanctification of the whole inward and outward man, and not only the peculiar sanctity of the marriage-bed; "sobriety," noting that moderation [which] all who are Christ's should be endowed with, (Gal. v. 24,) and not only the continency of a wife. So that I shall take these graces in their exercises, comprehensively, as relating to a *Christian conversation in the general*, and a *marriage-state in special*.

Thus having been taken up, much longer than I wished, in obviating the difficulties which some cast in the way to the clearer explanation of the terms in my text, I shall be straitened in speaking to the deductions from it, as to the present solution of the case propounded, by reason I want that dexterity [which] some others might have used. I beseech you, bear with me a while, to touch upon two or three doctrinal observations, which methinks do clearly result from the words

* See 1 Cor. iv. 2; Gal. vi. 1, &c.

† GLASSII *Grammat. Sacra.*

‡ BEZA,

CHAMIER. § BELLARMINUS, tom. II. *De Matrim. Sacrament.*

thus explained, with respect to what went before in the chapter ; namely :—

DOCTRINAL OBSERVATIONS.

OBSERVATION I. *Not teaching in the public assemblies, but a patient breeding, bearing, and bringing-up of children, when God opens the womb, is the commendable office of a good woman in a marriage-state.*—It is clear from the apostle's discourse in the foregoing verses, that he might take-off such women, who, from the pride of their gifts, were apt to take a liberty in public church-meetings, which doth in no wise appertain to them, he enjoins them silence ; and enforceth it from this reason of the woman's subjection, and certain sorrow, inflicted for her forwardness in the transgression. And that such a temporal penalty might not obstruct their eternal felicity, he shows it doth not become "the weaker vessel" (1 Peter iii. 7) to be so puffed-up, as to be talking publicly about church-matters in the assemblies, where they ought to behave themselves modestly, and not indecently ; (1 Cor. xiv. 35 ;) but rather by a patient demeanour, suitable to their condition,* to glorify God in the parturition and education of a holy seed to serve him. If so be the Lord hath called them into that eligible and honourable estate of marriage, qualified them with an ability to conceive, and blessed them with a power of bringing-forth ; and if he is pleased to exercise them with the many troubles of breeding, but yet "gives them a miscarrying womb," (Hosea ix. 14,) for ends best known to himself, they are more eminently called to patience, "quietness, and meekness of spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price," (1 Peter iii. 4,) not desponding of God's mercy in that doleful condition.

APPLICATION OF REPROOF.

Some improvement of this first point may be made in a short application for the reproof,

APPLICATION I. *Of such malapert women who mind not their own business, the duties properly appertaining to their sex.*—But contrary thereunto, as the apostle speaks in this epistle, will be "busy-bodies, speaking the things which they ought not ;" (1 Tim. v. 13, 14 ;) as the Pepuzians of old,† thrusting themselves into church-assemblies, and invading the ministerial function ; yea, those, who though they do not (as some have done) contradict the pure doctrine of the gospel, in the faces of Christian congregations, yet, at least in their conferences, do imagine, that all their teachings and conceited opinions should pass for uncontrollable dictates and doctrines. If women professing godliness did really labour more after those things which the apostle here looks upon as most commendable for their sex, Christians in our age had not had so many sad experiments of the incon-

* LUDOVIC. VIVES *De Christianâ Femina*, p. 21.
 ἀροφητιδας εχουσι.—*Pandect. can.* tom. ii. p. 50.

† Πεπουζηνιοι γυναικας ὡς
 "Among the Pepuzian heretics
 women assume the functions of prophetesses."—EDIT.

veniences which have risen from the liberty of speech in church-matters, which some who would be reputed godly women, and of great attainments, have usurped to themselves. And if preaching in a fixed church do not belong unto women, then, [to] be sure, baptizing doth not. Both are to be performed only by men called, and solemnly set apart for the ministerial office.* Hence those women, who, from an unwarrantable indulgence of such as made baptism absolutely necessary to the salvation of all, did usurp a liberty and power to baptize weakly children, did evidently contradict the apostolical canon; as may be gathered from what, in the Hampton-Court conference, †—against the arguings of some of the then bishops, for the permission of midwives, in case of necessity, to baptize infants,—king James did assert, from our Saviour's commission, *Go preach, and baptize, &c.*, (Matt. xxviii. 20,) “that it was essential to the lawful ministration of that ordinance, that it should be performed by a minister duly called.”

APPLIC. II. Again: *it is for the reproof of such soft and delicate women, who like the pleasure, but are impatient of the pain, which ordinarily attends those in a married state.*—To say nothing of those bad women, who, “from a lustful cruelty, or cruel lustfulness,” as Augustine speaks, ‡ “do wish that their issue should perish rather than live;” and therefore do use ill arts, either to prevent conception, or procure abortion; which must needs be very displeasing to God, who, in his law, hath breeding, bearing women much upon his heart, to provide for their safety. (Exod. xxi. 22, 23.) There be some, who, from pre-apprehensions of their own pains, forbear to render their husbands their due, not well weighing the ill consequents of such forbearance. (1 Cor. vii. 3—5.) Others are ready to conceit, it is a discouragement to them to take pains, when very well able, about the nursing and education of their children. It is true, they are not of such nun-like dispositions, as some others, idolizing a single life for their ease, regarding not to be serviceable to God in their generation, according to their capacities, when called. For our apostle, in this epistle, “wills young women to marry, bear children,” (not, as too many in our age, to bear children when not married,) “guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” (1 Tim. v. 14.) Yet they are so greatly addicted to sensual pleasures in the married state, that they like not to take pains in going through their appointed time with their child-breeding, and child-bearing; but do so over-eagerly pursue their appetites, frolics, and fancies, that they too often forget the condition into which God hath brought them, and so deprive themselves and their husbands of those blessings, which, if they did behave themselves soberly and Christian-like, they might well hope for at God's hands, supposing them to continue duly careful (as they should be) to forbear excess in diet, and violent recreations, and to suppress vehement passions,

* See Mr. N. C. on Titus i. 5.
1603-4, vol. iii. p. 176, octavo edit. 1842.

† FULLER'S “Church-History,” lib. x. *ad annum*
‡ *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentiâ*, lib. i. cap. 15.

using that moderation in all things which their condition notably calls for. Which leads me to the second observation.

OBSERV. II. *That the sorrows of child-bed should not dishearten Christian women from entering into a marriage-state.*—We plainly see here, lest the pains of child-bed should deter good women from enjoying the comfort of the marriage-bed, Paul doth in my text introduce the great benefit of women's temporal and eternal safety, that they might not despond under the temporal chastisement of child-bearing sorrows, if they were true believers, and lived in subjection to God and their husbands, wherein their husbands act agreeably to God's word: so that, through God's gracious vouchsafement, they should receive no final damage by their grandmother Eve's being *first* seduced; but, upon their unfeigned returning to God, and resigning [themselves] entirely to him, they should find "in his favour life." (Psalm xxx. 5.) The penalty of their sorrows being converted into a blessing by the Sanctifying Spirit, they shall receive comfort in their sharp and tedious throes: and the thousand pains [which] they sustain in breeding, bearing, and religiously bringing up their children, shall work together, by God's infinite wisdom and benign influences, for their temporal safety, so far as God sees that good for them; (Rom. viii. 28;) and, in the issue, for their eternal salvation.

APPLICATION.

Hence I infer, to make a short application of this doctrine,

APPLICATION I. *That good women, when they are called to it, (for are not called to it at all, and some not at all times, upon several accounts,) they are so far from hindering, that they may forward, their own salvation by entering into a marriage-state.*—And though they may think "subjection to their own husbands," (1 Peter iii. 5,) only "in the Lord, as is fit," (Col. iii. 18,) (for the gospel requires no other subjection, but in the Lord Christ,) to be some obstruction to their comfort and happiness; yet they are much deceived in such apprehensions. For this doctrine, resulting clearly from my text, shows, "that this kind of willing submission and obedience to their own husbands, (Titus ii. 5,) is a better thing than they deem of, accompanying salvation, (Heb. vi. 9,) and acceptable to God;" * being [seeing] "marriage is honourable in all;" (Heb. xiii. 4;) an ordinance instituted by him, who brings so many good wives to heaven, to enjoy most contenting sweets there, from their afflicting sorrows in child-bed here. Further I infer,

APPLIC. II. *That hypocritical pretences of sanctity, and unwarrantable vows of perpetual virginity, should not bring a disparagement upon the honourable state of marriage, from the pains and perils which child-bearing women pass through.*—The disciples of Christ were overhasty in saying, "It is not good to marry." (Matt. xix. 10.) But these of antichrist embrace the "doctrines of demons, and forbid marrying" to their priests, (1 Tim. iv. 1—3,) whether they have the gift of

* *Admonetur hoc genus obsequii et sibi esse salutare et Deo acceptum.*—CALVINUS in textum.

continency, yea or no; and to such virgins, whom, for their gain, they decoy into an irrevocable vow, (as they call it,) [which] is detestable. Yet this is the common practice of the Papists, how odious soever it be, and in the consequents pernicious; * as well as the practices of those before reprov'd, who, either to cherish covetousness, or cover their wantonness, seek to prevent conceptions, or procure abortions: [these] are enemies to the propagation of mankind; and when the subtillties of school-distinctions † are laid aside, will be found culpable of homicide. God deliver us from that mystery of iniquity, which they who go a "wondering after the beast," (Rev. xiii. 3,) in contempt of marriage, labour to bring in, following a wicked Pope, ‡ though they incur the anathema of a council; § and though, as we may see some of our first Reformers, detecting the Acts of the English Votaries, || cast it out with abomination; in that they said, "the whorish papal synagogue was a great blemish to godly marriage:" ¶ which hath already in our days been ridiculed by some atheistical debauchees, whose monstrous immoralities make them contemptible. Whereas marriage derives its honourable pedigree from the first pair, when innocent in Paradise here below, and is no way obstructive to a happy entrance into the Paradise of God above.

OBSERV. III. Hence I am at last come to the third and principal observation from the words, which will directly answer the inquiry before us; namely, *By perseverance in Christian and conjugal graces and duties, child-bearing wives may be best supported against, in, and under the hazard of their travail.*—This doth clearly result from the text, as I have explained it, and needs not much proof.

"By patient continuance in well-doing, those who seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, have eternal life," saith the apostle elsewhere: (Rom. ii. 7:) and a prudent wife "abiding in faith, charity, holiness, and sobriety," may have such support from the strengthening word of promise here and elsewhere, that, "travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered," (as the borrowed speech expresseth the church's sorrow, Rev. xii. 2,) she may have good hope of being preserved, and seeing a comfortable separation betwixt her and the burden of her belly. When her "loins are filled with pain," and "pangs have taken hold on her;" (Isai. xxi. 3;) the Lord will say (as I may allude to that in the prophet) to the loins, "Give up," and to the womb, "Keep not back;" (Isai. xliii. 6:) so that all shall be sanctified to her; and in a proportion she may rejoice in hope, as Elizabeth from her own experience heartened her cousin Mary, Luke i. 45: "Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord;" if not in kind, yet in equivalency, or that which is better. For though, as the most beloved wife Rachel, in her hard labour, she should die; (Gen. xxxv. 17, 18;) or though the sad estate of the church should multiply her groans, as Phinehas's wife's were, for the taking of the ark; (1 Sam. iv. 20, 21;) yet she

* BERNHARDIN. in *Rosario*.
 § *Concil. Gangrense*, cap. 10.
 ¶ "English Votaries," p. 18.

† ESTIUS in *Senten.*

‡ SYRIC. *Distinct.* 82.

|| BALE'S "Mystery of Iniquity." pp. 17, 18.

may have good evidence,—from the clear shining of her jewels and chains, which Christ, her Husband, hath put upon her, as his spouse; (Canticles i. 10;) I mean, the exercise of her graces,—that she shall be eternally saved; her soul shall pass into that “rest which remains to the people of God,” (Heb. iv. 9,) where there shall be “neither sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain: for the former things shall be passed away;” (Rev. xxi. 4;) and that may be written on her tomb-stone, which a learned doctor wrote on that of pious Mrs. Wilkinson,* who with her child went to heaven from her child-bed: namely,

“Here lie mother and babe both without sins:
Next birth will make her and her infant twins.”

Those necessary and eminent graces to perseverance or continuance wherein the promise of salvation is made by the apostle unto child-bearing women, on which they live for support *against* and *in* their travail, are, as you have heard, these four; namely, “faith, charity, holiness, sobriety.”

I. ΠΙΣΤΙΣ, “FAITH:” which we may distinctly conceive of as comprehending both that which is divine and moral, or Christian and conjugal.

1. *A divine faith, which is “precious and saving.”* (2 Peter i. 1; Heb. x. 39.)—A grace of the Holy Spirit, whereby the enlightened heart, being united to Christ, doth receive him, and resigns up itself to him as Mediator; and so is “espoused to that one husband,” (2 Cor. xi. 2,) depending entirely upon him. By this faith, receiving the Son of God, who is also the Son of man, born of a woman, is the good wife to live in subjection to Christ, her spiritual Head; and then, though her pains be never so many, her throes never so quick and sharp, she may be confident that all shall go well with her, either in being safely delivered of the fruit of her womb, as “the Lord’s reward,” out of his free love; (Psalm cxxvii. 3;) or having her soul, and that of her seed, eternally saved, being taken into covenant with the Almighty God: (Gen. xvii. 1—7:) so that, in the issue, she will at last, with all humble adoration, yield that it could not have been possibly better with her, than to have been in that condition of subjection and sorrow, in breeding, bearing, and bringing up of children. It was this faith, for the substance of it, which the pious childing women, mentioned in the story of our Saviour’s genealogy, did exercise; a continuance wherein is required of every just, Christian woman, that she may live by it in the pains which threaten death. For by this principle she may be the best supported, and derive virtue from her Saviour, for the sweetening of the bitterest cup, and strength for the staying her up, when “the anguish of bringing forth her first child” is upon her; (Jer. iv. 31;) as Sarah, the notable pattern of pious women, in this case did, concerning whom it is recorded: “By faith Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged HIM

* DR. REYNOLDS in her “Life.” She and her child were buried together.

faithful who had promised." (Heb. xi. 11.) A staying and living by faith upon God's providence and promise will revive the drooping spirits of otherwise weak and fearful women, in their good work of child-bearing, for the multiplying of the church with those whom God will save. So that, though impending danger to mother and child may make even good women to quail, when their pangs, as so many touches of God's displeasure against sin, are upon them, yet "by faith" they can fetch relief out of the faithfulness of the Promiser, as Sarah did; and out of this good word [which] he hath recorded in my text; or that more general by the prophet David: "He will sustain," or take care of, those that "cast their care and burden upon him," with the like. (Psalm lv. 22; 1 Peter v. 7.) Hereupon the upright woman, though frail, can resign up herself to God, "being fully persuaded," with "the father of the faithful," "that what he hath promised, he is also able to perform" (Rom. iv. 21) in his own time and way, which is ever the best. And one,* now with God, speaking largely to this matter, in his "Present to teeming Women," (chap. xiii. p. 139,) hath very well observed: "It was His will, that in their travail there should ever be, while the world stands, that most eminent instance of His power;" indeed, that, I may say, which made Galen, the great heathen physician, after a deep search into the causes of a woman's bringing forth a child, to cry out, "O miracle of nature!" Hence, in her low estate, the pious wife who lives by faith above nature, when "she spreads her hands," and utters her doleful groans before the Almighty, (Jer. iv. 31,) concludes: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." (1 Sam. iii. 18; 2 Sam. xv. 26; Luke xxii. 42.) If it seems good unto Him then to call for her life, and the life of her babe, she can say, "Lord, here am I, and the child which thou hast given me," as the prophet speaks upon another account. (Isai. viii. 18.) She trusts to that good and great promise, that the Seed of the woman "shall break the serpent's head:" (Gen iii. 15 :) and therefore comforts herself, that the serpent's sting is taken away by Him that is born of a woman. And though the birth of her child may cost her much more sorrow than it doth her husband; yet, as Manoah's wife, she may have a secret intimation from the Angel of the Covenant, of and in her safe deliverance, one way or other, which her husband knows not of, (Judges xiii. 3, 9, 23,) and which will abundantly compensate all her sorrows. If she hath been in such a condition before, she can say, "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope:" (Rom. v. 3, 4 :) and so by faith conclude: "Because thou hast been mine help, therefore will I trust in the shadow of thy wings." (Psalm lxiii. 7.) This saving faith, I might farther show, doth presuppose and imply repentance, and express itself in meditation and prayer.

(1.) *It doth presuppose and imply repentance.*—Which, from a true sense of sin, and an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth cause "a loathing of ourselves for our iniquities;" (Ezek. xx. 43; xxxvi. 31;) which is a very proper exercise for a child-bearing woman,

* MR. OLIVER.

who is eminently concerned antecedently to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," (Matt. iii. 8,) that God may receive her and the fruit of her womb graciously, upon her hearty turning from sin, and returning to and trusting in him. Child-bearing women should fruitfully remember the sentence, acknowledge rightly God's displeasure against sin, and humble themselves very particularly before him, who doth in mercifulness infinitely surpass all the kings of Israel; that he may show special favour to them. For, as a woman newly delivered of her child is not out of peril, whilst that [which] physicians call "the *secundine*" and "the *placenta*," or part thereof, remains; so, neither, if there should be remaining any known sin unrepented of, could she, upon good grounds, expect to be saved from her groanings. One of the ancients * doth set forth repentance, by comparing the soul to a pair of writing-tables, out of which must be washed whatsoever is written with sin; and, instead thereof, must be entered the characters of grace. And as this spiritual washing is very necessary for all; (John iii. 3, 5; Titus iii. 5;) so, [to] be sure, it is specially necessary for those women who are apt to be over-curious in the washing of their linens for their lying-in, that the purity of the outward be not preferred to that of the inward man.

(2.) *This saving faith doth usually express itself*, in those women who are really espoused unto Christ and in whom he dwells, *by meditation and prayer*.—Which are also very requisite for the support of child-bearing ones, at the approaches of their appointed sorrows.

(i.) *Faith doth express itself in meditation*.—And so, by bringing the soul to contemplate upon God, doth (as wax is softened and prepared for the seal) make the heart soft for any sacred characters or signatures to be imprinted upon it. Hereby an handmaid of the Lord, "when she awakes, is still with him" in heartening soliloquies. (Psalm cxxxix. 18.) The good woman, seriously thinking on the sentence of the Almighty, that "sorrow should be multiplied in her conception, and bringing forth children," (Gen. iii. 16,) reflects upon herself, and considers well, how her portion of afflictions in a federal state is allotted to her by Divine disposal; and thereupon tastes some sweets in their bitterness, and resolves to submit thereunto, as her duty; and finding herself to have been "barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ," (2 Peter i. 8,) to bring forth "fruit unto holiness, which ends in eternal life." (Rom. vi. 22.) Instances of such fruitful meditation may be seen in MR. OLIVER'S "Present," fore-cited, chap. v.

(ii.) Further, *faith doth exercise itself in prayer to God*.—That being the mouth of faith in God through Christ; in whose prevailing name Christians are concerned to lift up their hearts unto him for relief in all their straits. Those good wives who own the religion of the Bible, should not with the Heathen in their pains, make their prayers to Lucina; or, with the Papists, to the Virgin Mary, or their St. Margaret; but unto Him alone "in whom they believe," (Rom.

* GREG. NAZIANZEN.

x. 14,) and who alone "heareth prayers." (Psalm lxxv. 2.) Chrysostom did greatly complain in his time, that the tender mind of a virgin on her marriage-day should be diverted from minding the things of Christ, with immoderate sports, and devices of mirth; and from eyeing of God, who alone could effectually give joy to a married couple.* And therefore she should then rather implore his aid, as she hath need to do all along in a married state; but much more peculiarly and fervently when, having conceived and grown big, the hour of her child-bed pangs is approaching, that her "heart is sore pained within her, and the terrors of death are fallen upon her," (Psalm lv. 4,) should her precious faith fervently utter her most necessary and affectionate requests unto Him, who hath freely given, by his apostle, the good word of support in my text, with those of the like import elsewhere; and is able to save to the uttermost, deliver effectually, and keep in perfect peace all that fly to him, and stay themselves upon him in that good work [which] he hath appointed them unto. Thus of the principal grace, a divine or Christian faith. There is also,

2. *A moral or conjugal faith.*—Which is more distinctly called "fidelity," or "faithfulness;" a grace much strengthened from the former; and [which] in a wife doth more peculiarly respect her husband; as we may particularly gather from our apostle in this epistle, (1 Tim. v. 12,) compared with that which he speaks more generally of it elsewhere, for "the adorning of the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (Titus ii. 10.) The wife hath plighted her troth to her husband according to the flesh, unto whom the Lord hath in the marriage-covenant joined her; and she is obliged to be constantly faithful in all conjugal duties to him with whom she hath trusted herself, and that by virtue of the covenant of her God. Neither is it enough to be really faithful, but also to seem so, or be seen, as much as may be, so to be.† Not that any Christian woman should be like some of those in the Great Mogul's country, who, to gain the repute of modest, loving, and faithful wives, will have their own corpse burned together with their deceased husbands:‡ but she should show her real fidelity, as in an honest and prudent concealment of her husband's secrets, so in avoiding all just suspicion, by any familiar converse with others, of being false to his bed; and religiously keeping till death the matrimonial obligation, not deserting her dear yoke-fellow when reduced to straits. For so it is storied of the wife of the king of Pontus, that she disguised herself to follow her banished husband, saying, there she reckoned was her kingdom, her riches, and country, wheresoever she could find her husband.§ The wife of a certain count of Castile, when the king had detained her husband in prison, went to visit him, whom she persuaded to put-on her clothes, and leave her there in his stead: of which fact the king hearing, did much wonder at the fidelity of the countess, and sent

* LUDOV. VIVES *De Christianâ Femina*, lib. ii. pp. 148, 149. † TERTULLIAN. ‡ PURCHAS'S "Pilgrims," lib. i. p. 225. § LUDOVIC. VIVES *De Christianâ Femina*, lib. ii. pp. 157, 158.

her to her husband, wishing he had such wives for himself and sons. I might produce more instances; but I hasten. If Christian servants should perform the offices of their relation, "as unto the Lord," (Col. iii. 23,) "with all good fidelity;" (Titus ii. 10;) much more should the Christian wife, who hath solemnly entered into the covenant of the Lord with her husband, in all faithfulness fill up her relation toward him with whom she is become one flesh. Yet, in too many, what a defection is there from this faith! What a violation of this good fidelity in our degenerate and decrepit age! which, unless God give timely repentance of [it], may not only hazard the *temporal*, but will also the *eternal, salvation* of many adulterous child-bearers, who (yet less impudent than some others) wipe their mouth, it may be, and (unless their sharp throes force them to confess their falsity) would be thought to be most genuine daughters of the church, when indeed they hasten its ruin in a spurious brood.

II. The next grace required here in my text, is *Αγαπή*, "CHARITY," or "LOVE." This, in a good wife, I take, as I did faith, for that which is *Christian and conjugal*, respecting *Christ and her husband*.

1. [To] be sure, *every Christian wife should love the Lord Jesus Christ, considered both personally and mystically*.—She should sincerely love Christ *in himself*, and *in his members*. Her faith toward him should "work by love." (Gal. v. 6.)

(1.) *It behoves her to give the primacy of her affection unto Christ himself*.—She is obliged, above all, most entirely and heartily to love the Lord Jesus Christ, her spiritual Husband. For they come under the apostolical benediction, "who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity," or with incorruption. (Eph. vi. 24.) Our Lord Jesus loves such, and is much affected with their doleful condition, as with that of his friend Lazarus. (John xi. 3, 35.) This indeed is a good evidence of a genuine faith, and shows itself to be of a right stamp, when there is a holy care to keep all Christ's commandments. (John xiv. 15.) Hence charity is compared by one to *an ever-turning spit*,* always providing and labouring for him in whom she resteth. Let this be the chief care of the Christian wife, and she may upon good grounds conclude Christ is hers, and she is his; (Canticles ii. 16;) and say in all trouble, as the good woman, when bloody Bonner threatened her, in the Popish persecution, to take away her husband and son: "Christ is mine husband, and better to me than ten sons: you cannot strip me of him!" Now, if the good wife hath Christ present with her in her travail, (as they who love him with a prevailing love, certainly have in all their affliction,) she hath all, having Him who will "command deliverances for her," (Psalm xliv. 4,) and a "blessing upon her;" (Lev. xxv. 21;) who being indeed Christ's friend, as she is to love him in himself, so also, in the next place,

(2.) *She is concerned to love him in his members*.—Her Christian

* *Spq* occurs here as a curious misprint for *spit*, which, in olden time, with all its paraphernalia of chains and wheels, and a spaniel trained to keep up the *momentum*, was a very cumbersome but imposing piece of machinery.—EDIT.

charity is to be manifested unto those that are Christ's, for Christ's sake; and, as the apostle writes in this epistle, is such, namely, which answers "the end of the commandment, out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." (1 Tim. i. 5.) We certainly prove our love to Christ, by keeping his commandment, in loving those that are his, sincerely and constantly. (John xiii. 34.) Love to the brethren goes along with our love to God; (1 John v. 1, 2;) and the continuance of it may well dispose to angelical comforts. (Heb. xiii. 1, 2.) However, it may be very advantageous to a child-bearing woman to endear Christian brethren, who are much in doing of God's will, and prevalent with God, to assist her more affectionately with their prayers, having seen her real charity to promote God's service, and advance piety. It will no doubt argue her "abiding in the light," (1 John ii. 10,) and sure "passage from death to life," (iii. 14,) and God's dwelling, or constant presence with her; which will be abundant support to her in the greatest pains, when "she bringeth forth with the most difficulty," as the physician * finds some to do. Then as she should love Christ in himself, and in his members; so,

2. *Next to Christ, the good wife is, above all others, dearly and constantly to love her own husband, and that "with a pure heart fervently."* (1 Cor. vii. 2; Titus ii. 4; 1 Peter i. 22.)—Yea, and she should never entertain low thoughts of *him*, in that relation, *whom* she could once think worthy of embracing for her husband; and whom, by the covenant of God, in all offices of love, she is obliged "to please." (1 Cor. vii. 34.) Without this bond of perfectness all will be loose, uneasy, and displeasing; yea, the laws and command of God, who by his wise providence ordered the match, will become tedious and irksome.† But where this *conjugal* love is consequent upon the foregoing *Christian* love, there all will become easy. This is the very life of perfect friendship; and where it resides in power, no diligence will be wanting to facilitate all other conjugal duties.‡ For never-failing charity, especially in this relation, will enable the good wife to "bear all things, to believe all things, to hope all things, to endure all things." (1 Cor. xiii. 7, 8.) This holy flame, therefore, as the vestal fire,§ should be ever cherished, that it go not out. Indeed, love being as the soul of society, and of itself immortal, it would argue it were not sincere at first, if it should cease. Dr. Goad, recommending "The Mother's Legacy to her Child unborn," (written by pious Mrs. Joceline, when big with child, preparing for her approaching child-bed,) saith, "What eyes cannot behold her true and unspotted love to her dearest husband? In her affectionate letter to him, prefixed to that little book, she declares, with thankfulness to God, her fears of child-bed painfulness were cured with the remembrance, that 'all things should work together for the best to those that love God,' (which cannot be right in a wife without this

* ΤΙΚΤΟΥΣΙ χαλεπώς.—HIPPOCRATES, *Aphorism.* 55.

† FRANCISCUS BARBARUS *De Re Uxorid.*, lib. ii. cap. 1.

‡ LUDOVIC. VIVES, p. 104.

§ ALEXANDER AB

ALEXANDRO, lib. v. cap. 12.

true love to her own husband,) and a certain assurance that God would give her patience according to her pain. And she bare all patiently." So did Mrs. Wilkinson, "a most loving wife, whose patience was remarkable in the midst of very sore pains, which frequented her in the breeding and bearing of children. Yet then her speech was, *I fear not pains. I fear myself, lest through impatience I should let fall any unbefitting word.* It is a blessed frame," said that grave divine,* who recorded it, "when pain seems light, and sin heavy." So, on the other hand, for want of this prevalent conjugal love, in conjunction with Christian love, a daughter of king Ethelred having found the difficulty of her first birth, she did afterwards perpetually abstain from her husband's bed, against the apostle's rule, (1 Cor. vii. 3,) protesting, from a principle of unaccountable self-love, that "it was not fit a daughter of a crowned head should commit herself any more to such perils." It was far otherwise with a young woman in Eubœa, who, being married to a man [whom] she loved dearly, became mother and grandmother to a hundred children. The story of Mrs. Honeywood, in our age, is not less famous. I might produce many other instances; but it is more than time I come to the next-mentioned grace; namely,

III. Ἀγιασμος, "HOLINESS:" which I take, as the former, for that which is *Christian* and *conjugal*, more *general* and *special*.

1. *There is holiness which is considered more generally.*—Being an universal grace, agreeing to a Christian as such, wrought by the Spirit in the new creature, from the peace made by Christ; whereby, the soul being changed into his likeness, there is an abiding in a state of gracious acceptance with God, and a striving in some measure to "be holy as he is holy, in every particle of our conversation," both toward God and man, publicly and privately, in some degrees. As all Christians are to mind their salvation in the "holiness of the Spirit," (2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Peter i. 2,) and to "follow after it" by Christ; (Heb. xii. 14; xiii. 12;) so Christian wives in a child-bearing state, that they may comfortably bring-forth the fruit of their wombs, are highly concerned for that good work to "have their fruit unto holiness." (Rom. vi. 22.) Then, [to] be sure, all shall go well with them, both here and hereafter. Blessedness belongs to "the pure in heart," and "the undefiled in the course of their lives." (Matt. v. 8; Psalm cxix. 1.) "What knows the holy wife, whether," if she should be married to a bad man, by parents' disposal, "she may save her husband?" (1 Cor. vii. 16.) We read of several Christian wives, whose husbands have been brought to real godliness, by their zealous endeavours; as Clemens by Domitia, &c.† For the holy conversation of a wife hath sometimes a great force upon the mind of the husband, who is thereby disposed to entertain good: and if a work of grace be wrought upon him, then he will be more fervent in prayer for his child-bearing wife; who, as she ought, through the whole course of

* DR. HARRIS in her "Life." p. 253. *Vide et pp.* 271, 211.

† LUDOVIC. VIVES *De Christianâ Femina*, lib. ii.

her life, to be daily "dying in sin, and living to righteousness;" so, in her approaching sorrows, she is more especially concerned,

(1.) *To conform to the preceptive or commanding will of God, in all the actions of her life.*—That she may "present her body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is her reasonable service;" and so, by universal obedience, "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," (Rom. xii. 1, 2,) in the prevailing desires of her soul to please God, who hath called her into a conjugal relation, and enabled her therein to conceive; and so, in her proper office, to "serve her own generation by the will of God," (Acts xiii. 36,) waiting upon him with cheerfulness in filling up her relation, to give her in due time a holy seed, for his glory and the enlargement of his church; as holy Mrs. Joceline, above-mentioned, earnestly desired of God, that she might be "a mother to one of his children."* Then,

(2.) *To submit to the effecting and disposing will of God, "who works all things according to the counsel of his own will,"* (Eph. i. 11,) *in preparing for death.*—Not to "neglect," but make ready for, "so great salvation" as is purchased by Christ, and offered in the rich and precious promises. (Heb. ii. 3.) If all should hearken to the charge [which] our Saviour gives to his own disciples, "Therefore be ye also ready;" (Matt. xxiv. 44;) then it eminently concerns a big-bellied woman to be in a readiness for her departure, that she may not be surprised, since the pangs are perilous that she is to pass through; and the more, if she be but of a weak, and not of a hale, constitution. The last-mentioned pious gentlewoman,† when she felt herself quick with child, (as then travailing with death itself,)—she secretly took order for the buying [of] a new winding-sheet; thus preparing and consecrating herself to Him who rested "in a new sepulchre, wherein was never man before laid;" (Luke xxiii. 53;) and privately in her closet, looking death in the face, wrote her excellent "Legacy to her unborn Child."

None ever repented of making ready to die. And every Christian is ready, who can entirely submit to God's disposal in life or death. Yea, and then a good woman is likeliest to have *her* will in a safe temporal deliverance, when she is most sincerely willing that God should have *his* in dealing with her as seemeth best to himself. When the yoke of Christ is easy and his burden is light, then is the good wife in the fairest way to be most easily delivered of the burden of her belly, so that she shall have the truest joys afterwards. Thus of holiness considered more generally, and how the child-bearing wife is concerned to exercise it.

2. *Holiness may be considered more specially as it is conjugal, and more peculiarly appropriated to the marriage-state.*—This being a more particular exercise of Christian holiness in the matrimonial band; wherein as every one (both husband and wife) in that relation is concerned, so the childing woman is obliged to be singularly careful to

* "Mother's Legacy," p. 1.

† MRS. JOCELINE.

“possess her vessel in sanctification,” or sanctimony, “and honour,” (1 Thess. iv. 4,) in a special kind of conjugal cleanness and chasteness, which is opposite to all turpitude, and “lust of concupiscence” in the very appearance of it; that there may be, as much as possible, no show or tincture of uncleanness in the marriage-bed; but that there may be a holy seed, and she may keep herself pure from any taint of lasciviousness. It will cheer up in the hour of her travail, if she can sincerely say in the sight of God, as, it is said in the apocryphal story Sara, the daughter of Raguel, did: “Thou knowest, Lord, I am pure from all sin with man, and that I never polluted my name, nor the name of my father.” (Tobit iii. 14, 15.) This is the true eagle-stone to be constantly worn for the prevention of miscarrying, that there may “not indeed be labouring in vain, or bringing-forth for trouble; but her seed may be the blessing of the Lord, and her offspring with her;” (Isai. lxxv. 23, with 21;) who may solace herself in her integrity, and unspotted reputation, having “her chaste conversation coupled with fear,” (1 Peter iii. 2,) that all shall issue well with her and the fruit of her womb. But this is so much of the same nature with the last grace mentioned here in my text, that the apostle annexeth that to holiness, with,

IV. *Σωφροσύνη*, “SOBRIETY:” so we render it; others, “temperance;” others, “modesty,” as in our old translation; others, “chastity.” And, taking it largely, “the word seems to speak that gracious habit which may best become a prudent, grave, temperate, moderate, or modest mother of a family;”* for that seems to reach the apostle’s sense, comparing it with what he hath in the ninth verse of this chapter, and elsewhere. (Titus ii. 4, 5; Acts xxvi. 25.) I might consider this, like the former graces, more *generally* and *specially*.

1. *More generally, as Christian.*—“Every one that nameth the name of Christ,” being under an obligation thereby to “depart from iniquity,” (2 Tim. ii. 19,) is engaged to labour after a “sound mind;” (i. 7;) to be “modest, sober,” and “temperate in all things;” (Titus i. 8; ii. 2, 4, 6; 1 Cor. ix. 25;) learning to “use this world as if we used it not;” minding “that which is comely,” and “attending upon the Lord without distraction.” (1 Cor. vii. 31, 35.) Yea, we should “let our moderation be known unto all men,” as “those that are Christ’s, who have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” (Phil. iv. 5; Gal. v. 24.) Certainly, then, a Christian wife, and that in a child-bearing condition, is concerned to seek that she may be endued with sobriety, which purgeth the mind from distempers, and putteth the affections into an orderly frame, acceptable to God; and so doth morally give the best insurance to the promises of temporal and eternal safety. But, more particularly,

2. *The special conjugal grace of temperance and modesty is to be exercised by the child-bearing woman in sobriety, chastity, and gracefulness, [graciousness,] both with reference to her affections and senses.*—I have warrant from the apostle, as well as the philosophers, †

* BEZA.

† WALLÆI *Ethica Arist.* lib. iv.

to take the word so largely, as to comprehend both modesty and temperance. Whereupon I conclude,

(1.) *With modesty she is to govern her passions and affections.*—So that there may be only a humble appetite of due respect, and an abstinence from those unbecoming; a holy care, as to avoid pride on one hand, so ignominy and contempt on the other, as well as to give check to boldness and indecency in her gesture, speech, and behaviour, as to lightness and wantonness in any of these: so that she may by a graceful deportment, as much as she can, in minding “things venerable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report,” (Phil. iv. 8,) “not with the outward adornings of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel,” (1 Peter iii. 3,) show herself to be a virtuous wife, who is not carried away with an affectation of glorying splendour, and artificial handsomeness; but with “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.” (Verse 4.) Then “her heart will not upbraid or reproach her” (Job xxvii. 6) with the glittering of her pendants, when “her pangs in travail have taken her;” (Micah iv. 9, 10;) (as a penitent gentlewoman, on a dangerous sick-bed, once with much sorrow told me, that her foregoing priding herself in *hers* did, and greatly wounded her spirit;) but her modesty, humility, and discretion, will be evidences of her unfeigned faith. For, as an excellent big-bellied woman* once wrote to her husband, with reference to her daughter: “She would not have her bold, modesty and humility being the groundwork of all virtue.” Again: she is to govern herself,

(2.) *With temperance.*—She should moderate her senses; especially take care to govern well those of taste and touch. For temperance indeed is such a virtue, as doth keep a mean in desiring and avoiding such bodily pleasures as are perceived by those senses, about the proper use of creature-enjoyments; so that, in eating and drinking, as well as other actions, a Christian may be kept in the best temper for “the glorifying of God;” (1 Cor. x. 31;) and in looking upon “temperance” as a “fruit of the Spirit.” (Gal. v. 22, 23.) Here may come under consideration, more strictly and particularly, the good wife’s sobriety and chastity in her conjugal relation.

(i.) *Sobriety.*—Which more strictly respects the moderation of the appetite, and sense of tasting, for the desiring of that which is convenient, and the avoiding of riot. Whilst exercised about meat and drink, for the shunning of intemperance in either, the breeding and big-bellied woman is highly concerned to take special care for her own and the child’s safety. Plato determined, † that “big-bellied women, above all, should so govern themselves during that space, that they may be neither carried away to many and furious pleasures, nor oppressed with grief; but live a mild, quiet, and pacate life.” Many have miscarried by an inordinate giving way to their appetites, and feeding immoderately upon various dainties. So that such should not despise the divine direction given unto Manoah’s wife by the angel. (Judges xiii. 4, 11—14.) For

* MRS. ELIZ. JOCELINE. † Δειν τας φερουσας εν γαστρι, κ.τ.λ.—*De Legibus*, lib. vii.

though that was given in an extraordinary case ; yet as to the equity of the thing in some proportion, it certainly suggests moderation in that which is ordinary. It is true, in case of a lingering appetite, there is a considerable allowance to be made unto pregnant women ; yea, after conception, before the growing big, lest they should miscarry (as too many modest ones have done) by a not-discovering of it in due season. But, out of that case, childing wives, who have “put on the Lord Jesus Christ,” (Rom. xiii. 14,) they are to eat and drink for health, and not for pampering of the flesh, which is done by excess in the quantity, rather than in the quality, of the food. It is odious in men to be given to immoderate drinking ; but in women, and those professing godliness, it is abominable. Excess in meats and drinks puts violence upon nature by intemperance, and may cause the death of the mother or child, or both at once, to the desperate wounding of the conscience, when “God makes inquisition for blood ;” (Psalm ix. 12 ; li. 14 ; Acts xvi. 28 ;) yea, and may too often precipitate into immodesty. Whereas the Christian wife should indeed be adorned with,

(2.) *Chastity*.—Which, for the matter, was partly hinted before in conjugal fidelity and sanctimony. This strictly respects the other sense afore-mentioned, and requires a keeping of the heart and body from uncleanness. (Prov. iv. 23 ; Matt. v. 28 ; 1 Thess. iv. 4.) It may be granted, men, yea, husbands, are generally more prone to incontinency ; and were I discoursing to them, I might remember them, as well as their wives, of that famous saying of the Roman orator, that, “in the predominancy or kingdom of sensual pleasure, men can have no commerce with virtue ;” * and therefore are concerned to be watchful and moderate, especially considering what the great philosopher hath said, that “of all the desires of the body, men are apt to be faulty this way.” † Yet since the command of God reaches those of each sex, both are under a religious band in the marriage-state ; and, as one saith, “The pleasure therein must be mingled with some severity ; it must be a wise and conscionable delight.” ‡ It much concerns the Christian wife to give check to any suggestion, much more to any parley, which is in a tendency to violate her matrimonial contract ; or to bring her into any carriage unbecoming that “honourable” state she is brought into, or the undue use of the “undefiled bed.” (Heb. xiii. 4 ; 1 Cor. vii. 5, 2, 3.) So that, however some of the Papists, in magnifying a single life, would appropriate chastity unto virgins, (whom they themselves do debauch in their nunneries,) yet we find from scripture and the ancient fathers, that there is chastity and continency in a marriage-state, as opposed to that in a single life.§ In the exercise of this, with the precedent graces, the good wife, having well learned the lesson of self-denial, can bear her burden in humble confidence of aids

* *In voluptatis regno nullum omnino esse posse hominibus cum virtute commercium.*
—CICERO *De Senectute*. † *Των πασων επιθυμιων μαλιστα ακολουθητικοι εισι ταις*
περι τα αφροδισια και ακραταις ταυτης.—ARISTOTELIS *Rhetorica*, cap. 14. ‡ CHAR-
RON “Of Wisdom,” lib. iii. cap. 12. § See CHAMIER, tom. iii. lib. xvi. cap. 14.

from above, in the hour of her child-bed sorrow, and a safe deliverance in the best way. For, being thus qualified, she hath, from the precious promise in my text, a sure ground of a comfortable exemption from the curse in child-bearing, and of the removal of that original guilt which otherwise greatens the sorrows of women in such a case.

REASONABLENESS.

I might now (could I have stayed) have showed to you **THE REASONABLENESS** of all this I have been discoursing,

1. *From the fidelity of God.*—Who hath passed his word for the preservation, in due circumstances, of all those thus qualified, as you have heard. Which indeed was Sarah's support, with reference to her child-bearing, "because she judged Him faithful who had promised." (Heb. xi. 11.) He who is most faithful, and cannot lie, hath said, "They who are not weary of well-doing, shall reap, if they faint not." (Gal. vi. 9.)

2. *From the evidence of their own sincerity.*—The continuance in these Christian and conjugal exercises of "faith, charity, holiness, with sobriety," shows, notwithstanding their frailties, (which are no other "spots" than those may be on God's own children,*) that they are in a safe state; which must needs be great support, supposing the worst that can befall them by their pains. And as "by abiding in Christ," they are spiritually "fruitful;" (John xv. 4;) so they may well hope, that, in bringing forth their natural fruit, they shall be evermore kept under God's benign influence and blessing. The promise in my text is insured, upon God's fidelity, to all those good women who are interested in it. But all those who have evidence of their sincerity, may be well satisfied as to their interest therein; and *the continuance* in the exercises of the graces of "faith, charity, holiness, and sobriety," doth clearly demonstrate, they are persons qualified with sincerity, who, in and through Christ, "in whom the promise is Yea, and Amen," shall certainly inherit it. (2 Cor. i. 20; Heb. vi. 12.)

I may not enlarge, having stayed over-long already; yet would crave a little further leave to make some use of what hath been said.

APPLICATION.

The application of this last and chief observation; namely, *That perseverance in Christian and conjugal graces and duties is the best support to child-bearing women against, in, and under their travail; may briefly serve to teach care, and administer comfort.*

1. *This teacheth a holy care.*—And that to men as well as to women. We shall find, of either sex may hence learn instruction.

(1.) *It may teach a lesson to men*, whether they be in a single or a married state.

(i.) *They who are not yet married*, but are waiting to meet with

* Deut. xxxii. 5.

good wives of God's giving,—they are concerned to be careful, as nigh as they can, to choose such as are so qualified as to be interested in the promise here of preservation and salvation in their child-bearing. Plato † derives the Greek word for *a woman* from that which signifies “fruitful, and a bringer forth.” And he that seeketh such an one “to marry with, only in the Lord,” (1 Cor. vii. 39,) that things may go well with her in her child-bearing condition, should consult well how she is endowed and stored with the graces [which] I have been discoursing of, both for the good of herself and the seed she may have by him. It is certainly of great importance to make choice of such a yoke-fellow as may be assuredly entitled to this good and comfortable word that we have here before us, for the support of child-bearing wives, in whose sorrows and joys good-natured and conscientious husbands cannot but have their shares.

(ii.) *They who have wives already* should take special care, upon this account, to discharge the duties of good husbands toward their child-bearing wives, with all good fidelity; namely,

First. *To “dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto them as unto the weaker vessels, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that their prayers be not hindered.”* (1 Peter iii. 7.)—Yea, and to labour daily with them, both by their Christian advice and holy conversation, to engage their fruitful wives more and more to the constant exercise of these graces and duties, that their sorrows may be sanctified to them, and they may see the salvation of God in their breeding and bearing of children; and if the great and holy God should, in his wise government, think it best to take them hence from a child-bed, they may learn to submit to his disposing will, and rest the better satisfied, as having good evidence of their souls' eternal welfare.

Secondly. *To endeavour, as much as may be, to discharge the parts of good, Christian, and tender husbands toward their dearest yoke-fellows in such a travailing condition.*—Laying much to heart those antecedent, concomitant, and consequent pains [which] a state of pregnancy involves them in; which these husbands themselves, in such a kind, cannot have experience of; that, as it becomes them for the sake of their good and godly wives, they may, as is sometimes said of some sympathizing ones, in a sort, breed with them and for them, by “putting on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering,” &c.; (Col. iii. 12;) and fulfil all the duties of the relation they are in, readily and timely providing for them, not only necessaries, but conveniences, as they can, for their longing appetites, and for the heartening of their dear and suffering wives, apt to be cast down under apprehensions of their approaching sorrows; and call-in aid of faithful praying ministers and pious friends, to make requests known unto God for them. And if God hears prayers,

Thirdly. *To be heartily thankful to God upon his giving safe deliverance to their gracious wives, from the pains and perils of child-*

* Γυνή δε γονή, κ. τ. λ.—*Cratylus*, p. 284.

bearing.—When the kind husband hath been really apprehensive of the sicknesses, pains, throes, and groans of his dear wife, in her breeding and bearing a child to him, by aids from above; nothing can be more necessarily incumbent on him, than to adore and be thankful to God, who hath made a comfortable separation betwixt her and the fruit of her womb, and that as a return to prayer, and hearkening unto her groanings. If he who was a Samaritan found himself healed of his leprosy upon crying unto Christ for mercy,—though the other nine (likely, Jews) remained unthankful for the same benefit,—and came “and fell down on his face at Jesus’s feet, giving him thanks, and returning to glorify God with a loud voice,” as expressive of his heartiest sense of the divine favour in the mercy received; (Luke xvii. 15—18;) then certainly the Christian husband, having seen his loving wife, in the exercise of the graces I have been discoursing of, to pass through the peril of child-bearing, and admirably preserved therein by God’s power and goodness, is greatly obliged to return his hearty thanks to God, who hath made good his word wherein he caused them to hope, in granting so signal a mercy. This giving thanks is acceptable unto God, and “a duty indispensably incumbent on us,”* who are charged “to give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;” (Eph. v. 4, 20;) much more for a singular favour earnestly sought for, and granted through difficulty and peril.

Thus briefly I have touched upon the care of married men, with reference to their child-bearing wives, in the fore-mentioned particulars. Again: this doctrine teacheth,

(2.) *A lesson of care to women.* Consider them, as the men, either in a single, or a married state.

(i.) *If yet in a single or unmarried state,* and, by the fair providence of God, called to the change of their condition, they are concerned to take care [that] they may be furnished with the above-mentioned qualifications; to “covet earnestly not only the best gifts,” but to be found in the “more excellent way.” (1 Cor. xii. 31.) This sacred ambition, or holy covetousness, is lawful to virgins, and may commend them to good husbands; that is, to “covet earnestly” those excellent graces of “faith, holiness, charity, and sobriety;” that if they are brought into the honourable state of marriage, and in due time God do bless them with blooming hopes of the fruits of their bodies, and the unknown pains of a woman in travail come upon them, (Gen. xxxviii. 27; Psalm xlvi. 6; 1 Sam. iv. 19; Micah iv. 10,) they may live by faith upon God’s power and promise, and expect salvation in a happy separation betwixt them and the babes [whom] God hath enabled them to conceive, in the appointed season. Yea, and then, though their pains should come as sharply upon any of them as they did upon Rachel and Phinehas’s wife, causing a separation betwixt their own souls and bodies; their souls may go in a very sure way, out of a great cross here, to receive a crown of glory hereafter. Believe it, virgins! These graces are the necessary quali-

* *Nullum officium magis quàm referenda gratia necessarium.*—SENECA.

fications to fortify your tremulous souls (apt "to be full of fear"*) against all occurrences. If you have the real ornaments of Christ's spouse, you need not torment yourselves with carking thoughts; your mystical Husband will take care of you, to make what you greatly fear the matter of your joy.

(ii.) *If you are already married, and that "in the Lord,"* who hath opened your wombs, and given you power to conceive; it behoves you, as righteous handmaids of the Lord,

First, *To continue in the constant exercise of these graces.*—Certainly you who are blessed in being instruments for the propagation of mankind, when you find you have conceived, and grow pregnant, are highly concerned to put on and use these ornaments. A great work you are usually busy about, in preparing your child-bed linen; and I shall not discourage, but rather encourage, you to make necessary provision for your tender selves and babes. I easily yield, according to the instinct of nature, as other females, (and with the help of their mates,) you ought to be somewhat indulged to make ready and feather your nests, wherein to lay yourselves and your young. (Luke ix. 58.) But the modesty and moderation you have heard of will not allow you, above your rank, to be costly in superfluous fine feathers, when Christ's poor ministers and members, up and down, do expect your charity. O, I beseech you, good Christian women, let your chief care be (lest you should die in your sorrows) to be arrayed in that truly spiritual "fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints, wherewith the Lamb's wife maketh herself ready." (Rev. xix. 7, 8.) This, this is the principal thing; the graces of "faith, charity, holiness, and sobriety," speak true Christian prudence. And if you therefore take care to put on these, you will be the most surely guided in a subordinate care about other circumstances. And if God hath given any of you real proof already of performing his promise in my text, by vouchsafing temporal salvation to you, it behoves you to take care,

Secondly, *To record the experiments [which] he hath given you of making good his word to you in particular.*—Hath God vanquished your fears, wiped away your tears, and heard your prayers? Engrave the memorials of his goodness and faithfulness upon the tables of your hearts. You have the great example of our dear Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, who, when he had been greatly troubled for Lazarus, whom "he loved," "groaned in spirit, and wept," making his request known to his Father on his behalf; which was graciously answered; he, with great devotion of heart, "lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." (John xi. 41, 3, 35, 38.) Let every ingenuous and grateful mother, whom God hath safely delivered from her child-bearing pains and peril, imprint a grateful remembrance of so signal a mercy with indelible characters in her mind: "Lord, thou hast regarded the low estate of thine handmaiden. When I was in an agony, and well-nigh spent with repeated pains, thou didst stand by me and my babe; yea, thou didst admiri-

* Γυνή φοβού πλεα.—EURIPIDES in *Medea*.

rably help us, making way for it to pass the bars into this world safely, keeping us both alive. Yea, and it may be, when our friends verily thought with sadness, that my child could not have seen the light, and I should shortly have shut mine eyes upon it, being ready to despair in bringing it forth; then didst thou find a way for us both to escape." (1 Cor. x. 13.) When the above-noted gentlewoman * was made a mother of a daughter, whom shortly after, being baptized, and brought to her, she blessed, and then "gave God thanks that herself had lived to see it a Christian;" having dedicated it to the Lord in his ordinance, she accounted it an additional mercy to her bringing her forth, and so would have it communicated to others' support. As Paul, when he was made sensible of great mercy in his deliverance, by superadded favours,—“he thanked God, and took courage;” (Acts xxviii. 15;) so should every joyful mother thank God, and be of good courage for the time to come: and “good,” because, by how much the more common, the better it is. She should communicate her rare experiment to encourage others, who are apt to look upon themselves as “a most miserable offspring,”† when their pangs come upon them, that they may be helped. For well said the Greek tragedian,‡ “It becomes one woman to be at hand to help another in her labour.”

Thus we briefly see, this doctrine teacheth care to men and women, both in a single and a married state.

2. *It doth also administer comfort.*—As to the good wives themselves, so likewise to the husbands of such good wives.

(1.) *To good wives themselves, who are qualified as you have heard,* but yet in an hour of temptation are apt to walk very heavily from pre-apprehensions of grievous pains; yea, and, it may be, from great fear of death in their appointed sorrows that are coming upon them, grown weary with their heavy burdens. Whereas a constant abiding in the fore-mentioned graces and duties is a sure ground of good hope that you shall pass well through your child-bed sorrows; which, be sure, shall be no obstacle at all to your eternal welfare. And if you be eternally saved, it will be better for you than to be only temporally delivered. Yes: but you will say, you shall have a rough passage. And if, as Sabina, a Christian martyr, when she travailed, being in prison, you shall cry out,—as she was heard to do in her child-bearing throes: whereupon some asked her how she would endure the torments [which] her persecutors had prepared for her, if she shrunk at those; to whom she said, “I now bear the punishment of my sin; but then I shall suffer for my Saviour!”—it may be answered: “Notwithstanding, be of good cheer.” The apostle certainly brings in my text, as an antidote against discouragement, and to cheer up suspicious and fearful women. They are heart-reviving words to every drooping woman, and should lead her, with Sarah, to “judge him faithful who hath promised;” (Heb. xi. 11;) whereupon she may, notwithstanding her state of subjection and sorrows, be humbly con-

* Mrs. Joceline, October 12th, 1622.

† Εσμεν αβλιωτατων φυτων.—EURIPIDES

in *Medea*.

‡ Γυναικα γαρ συμπονειν γυναικι χρη.—Idem in *Helena*.

fidest in this great work of serving her generation according to the will of God in child-bearing, of preservation and salvation ; and God will lay no more upon her than he will enable her to bear ; and find a way for her escape, either by a comfortable, sanctified deliverance here, or a blessed translation to heaven, to reap in joy what was sown in tears ; and those but temporary, when the joys are eternal. Further, it doth administer comfort,

(2.) *To the husbands of such good wives ;* that is, such as continue in the graces and duties before and in their pregnancy, or growing big, hoping in God's word, that root and branch shall do well, being under the blessings of the new covenant. When they cannot but sympathize with their wives in their sorrows, they may cheer up in humble confidence, that, the sting being taken out of the punishment, their wives' joys shall be increased by the pains [which] they undergo ; and that God will deliver them, and hear their prayers, and they shall glorify him. (John xvi. 21 ; Psalm l. 15.) And if, after prayers and tears, their dearest consorts should decease, and depart from them, out of their child-bearing pains ; though this be a most cutting and heavy cross in itself, yet comfort may be gathered from it in the issue. For indeed that is the comfort of comforts, which affords life in death ; that is the honey which is taken out of the dead carcass ; that, supposing the worst which can befall us in temporals, gives better security in those things which are eternal. The fruition of God in glory is the highest end ; and when we and ours attain that, after the serving of our generation here according to the will of God, and thereby glorifying his most sacred Majesty, there is matter of greatest consolation and truest joy to holy souls. In expectation of which, let pious husbands and gracious chiding wives, in their mutual offices, wait upon God with submission for a sanctified support, when they stand in most need of divine aids. Then such handmaids of the Lord may humbly hope they shall receive help in and under their child-bearing travail, and, in due time, even a temporal deliverance (supposing that to be best for them) from those pains and perils ; taking comfort from that gracious word of the Lord by the prophet, (though spoken upon another account,) with which I shall conclude : " 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." (Isai. xli. 10.)