

TREMITIES before he doth deliver it.—Because this method of the Lord Jesus is the greatest DIFFICULTY in providence, and the most *startling* to good men, let us consider it and place it in a fair and *amiable* LIGHT.

CONSIDERATION I.

It is indeed Christ's usual method to leave the church to extremity, before he doth give help and deliverance. Thus it was in Abraham's case at the offering of his son: thus it was at the Red Sea; and with Hezekiah, when besieged by Sennacherib's army: [See this finely illustrated by Rollin, in his method of study, vol. III. p. 126.] thus it was with the three heroes in the fiery furnace—Daniel in the den of lions—Esther, and Mordecai, and the Jews—Peter in prison, Acts xii. thus Constantine was raised up to deliver the christians from Dioclesian's bloody persecution: thus Christ appears for his people when he sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left, Deut. xxxii. 36. and thus he has appeared to deliver his people in Great-Britain in ten thousand instances.

CONSIDERATION 2.

Christ doth, by this peculiar conduct, *glorify* himself in the most illustrious manner. He then discovers that there is nothing too high for his
power

power to conquer; nothing too deep and crafty for his wisdom to disappoint. That is the season in which his mercy will be most prized, his power most admired, his wisdom most adored, and his truth, justice, and faithfulness most clearly displayed. This is the time when Christ glorifies his power, his wisdom, his care and compassion, and his sincerity, veracity, and upright regard to his word.

CONSIDERATION 3.

Such awful extremities, and CRITICAL TIMES of distress, with support under them, and deliverance in them, are most clearly advantageous for his people.

1. It being the fittest season to improve and know their interest in Christ; their intense union to his person, and deep share in his tenderest affections.

2. It is the fittest season for acting faith on Christ at present; and an encouragement of reliance upon him in all future trials and afflictions: it teaches us to act like Aša, when assaulted by a million of men under Zerah the Ethiopian, how doth he throw himself and the whole weight of his affairs on the hand of God, and make his cause the cause of God, 2 Chron. xiv. 11. Help us, O! our God, for we rest on thee; O! LORD, thou

thou art our God, let not man prevail against thee. Here you see entire faith, purely acting on Christ,—and that deliverance was an earnest of the perpetual security of the church, by special providence, in any succeeding trouble.

3. Another rich advantage, flowing from Christ's appearance in extremity, is this, he fits his people, by their DISTRESSES, for a holy reception of the mercy intended. God keeps up the distress of his people to expel self-confidence, and then the SET time shall come, Ps. cii. 13. The SET time is when they are most *humbled*, most *believing*, most *affectionate* to Christ's interest, and most *sincere*. Without FAITH we are not fit to desire mercy; without HUMILITY we are not fit to receive it; without AFFECTION and LOVE we are not fit to value it; without SINCERITY we are not fit to improve it. Times of extremity contribute to the growth and exercise of all the most excellent graces and noble qualities of the heart.

4. The last glorious advantage arising from Christ's appearing for his people in an hour of extremity, is this, that he thus secures them against future trials, and critical times of distress. Men and devils will more clearly take notice how God loves his people when he apprehends their enemies in the very height of their pride, and
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flings them down from the mount of their hopes. Thus it was in Christ's grand appearance *for* the Israelites, and against the Egyptians at the Red Sea.

It was this that melted the hearts of the Gibeonites, one of the nations of Canaan; and brought them to a submission to Joshua, as the sentiment of all their neighbours. We are come because of the name of the LORD thy God, for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt, Joshua ix. 9.

And the reason why it shall be *sharper* just before the last grand deliverance from the Papists and Turks, than it was in former ages, is this, because it is the last desperate and furious effort the enemy shall make; the last demonstration of Christ's infinite power and wisdom for the care of his people, and of justice, hatred, and wrath upon his enemies, till after the last resurrection of the wicked.

And truly this will be the last season for the people of God to multiply their earnest cries; and the last acting their faith, concerning their grand interest; for the assault of the devil and the whole wicked world, in the Gog and Magog army, will not distress them at all;—the whole church will then be in raised and changed bodies;

bodies; and feeling themselves spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal, they will feel themselves invincible and eternally victorious over all the united force and attack of the whole world of men and devils.

III. USE of EXHORTATION.

If it be so, that the providence of Christ is chiefly designed for the good of the church, then,

I. FEAR not the ENEMIES of the church. 'Tis a wrong to GOD. Fear of man is always attended with a forgetfulness of GOD. I, even I am he that comforteth you; who art thou, that art afraid of a man that shall dye, and forgettest the Lord thy maker? Isai. li. 12--13.

Will you fear man, who have a GOD to *secure* you? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Ps. xxvii. 1.

Will you fear man, who have a GOD to *watch* over their motions? What counsels can prevail against GOD?

Will you fear men or devils, who have a GOD to *restrain* them? Christ can bind the devil, not only for a thousand years, but for a thousand ages! The devil and death shall never keep the key of their own dungeons, nor has Satan the command of one link of his own chain, Rev. xx.

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Will you fear men or devils, who have a God to *ruin* them?

If all Christ's providences work for the richest good of his church and people, then,

2. CENSURE not CHRIST in any of his dark providences. As we are often too hasty in our desires for mercy; so we are too hasty in making constructions of providence, and will not stay God's leisure. Fix this in your minds, that God is just, wise, and good, in every thing. *Good*: therefore nothing can hurt his people. *Just*: therefore nothing can be wrong. *Wise*: therefore nothing can be imprudent or in vain. NO TRIAL can be in VAIN!

Fix this in your mind:—distinguish between preparations to the main work, and the perfection of the work.

Fix not your eye only upon the sensible operations of providence, but the ultimate end.

Consider not only one single act of providence, but the whole scheme to make a conclusion.

3. ENQUIRE into providence, and interpret all public providences by this rule,—the good of the church.

4. CONSIDER the former providences Christ hath wrought for the church in past ages. This will help us in our enquiries into present pro-

vidences. It will support our faith—it will enliven our prayer—it will prevent much sin.

5. ACT FAITH on Christ's providence.—Times of trouble should be times of confidence. *Fixedness* of heart on Christ would prevent *fears* of heart. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:—Why? His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, Ps. cxii. 7. We will walk in the name, i. e. the strength of the LORD our GOD for ever and ever, Micah iv. 5.

All the godly, in former ages, did act faith on a less foundation.—It is your only way to have mercy for the church and for ourselves. If he take pleasure in them that hope in his mercy, he will take pleasure to relieve them, Ps. cxlvii. 11. The more lively their hope, the more intense is God's pleasure.

6. WAIT upon Christ in the way of his providence—wait upon him obediently—wait patiently—wait constantly—wait in the use of lawful means for preservation and deliverance.

7. DUTY to the PROVIDENCE of CHRIST.

Pray for the church. Our prayers shall not be denied. The desire of the churches welfare is conformable to all the gracious counsels and promises of God. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. None shall stay his hand,

hand, or say to him with a prevailing voice, **WHAT DOST THOU?** Moses had the brightest manifestation of Christ's love, after he had prayed for sinful, provoking Israel, in an high act of rebellion, **Exod. xxxiii. 11.** Christ then spake with him as a man speaketh to his friend; and he shewed him his glory as much as his feeble frame was able to bear, **Exod. xxxiii. 18.** Daniel was a great pleader for the church of Christ; and he is upon that stiled a **MAN** greatly beloved, i. e. infinitely dear to God, and famous through all ages to the end of time, and to all eternity, **Dan. ix. 23.**

8. DUTY TO THE PROVIDENCE OF CHRIST.

When you receive any mercy for the church in answer of prayer, give Christ the glory of it with the most unbounded gratitude. The variety of his providences gives us matter for new songs and adorations! What volleys of joyful shouts? what boundless hallelujahs to God the Redeemer do we find on the ruin of popery, **Rev. xix. 1--3.** God calls for praise out of the throne, ver. 5. and the church returns it with the most ardent gratitude and rapture, ver. 6, 7. It is Christ, as the omnipresent, all-active, animating God, who enlivens all the motions of the church, and directs their praises to his eternal glory.

9. DUTY.

9. DUTY. IMITATE Christ in his AFFECTION to the church. Christ has always loved the people of God with the most ardent esteem, desire, goodwill, and delight. He never makes one motion in the universe, but it is for the good of the church. God the divine and eternal Father does every thing for the good of the church.

Let the same mind be in us which was in Christ Jesus. Let us prefer the church above ten thousand worlds. Let the same end be ours which is the end of God. Thus we shall be like our glorious creator, our governor, and our generous comforter. God loves all that love his people, and blesses all that bless and serve the church. I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee, Gen. xii. 3.

10. DUTY. Look well to your SINCERITY before God. It is for the security of such that Christ shews himself strong. SINCERITY consists in an upright desire to please Christ, and approve ourselves to him in every motion of the heart, and every action of the life, in an impartial enquiry into the whole law and will of God—in an active application to our duty, as far as it is known—and in having our hearts, words, and actions, all of a piece and quite self-consistent—and to be the same at all times, in all conditions,
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in all companies. No man, who bears this glorious character of INTEGRITY, or an ardent lover of justice and truth, but would be glad to be of that happy number, who are under the care of a watchful eye, and the mighty power of the *GOD* of the whole earth.

GOD never encouraged men to be christians by meer promises of worldly greatness; but by promises of a constant care of their precious souls for holiness and happiness; by promises of making all things and all worlds work together for their good.

If *GOD* the Saviour will shew himself strong for those that are perfect and sincere in heart towards him, then he hath no strength for those that are unsound and false in heart towards him.

No man hath an interest in his special providence without faith. The power, knowledge, wisdom, and holiness of Christ are all set against him. What security against wrath can riches give you? What defence against his power can your prudence or putrid righteousness afford you? For want of integrity Christ loaths the world. Labour therefore for sincerity towards *GOD*; beg the eternal Spirit of Christ to work it powerfully in your hearts; seek the clearest evidences of your sincerity, and preserve it with the utmost watchfulness and prayer all the days of your life.

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The above demonstrations, with some additions and alterations, are taken from that excellent Treatise on Providence, composed by one of the greatest divines in the world, STEPHEN CHARNOCK, and published, octavo, 1680; a treatise now almost forgotten, and with joy and gratitude I have made an attempt to revive the knowledge and usefulness of it in the church and the world.—I am likewise truly indebted to that most favourable and judicious author, Mr. Flavel, whose Treatise on the Divine Conduct, or the Mystery of Providence, 8vo. 1677, I sincerely recommend.

We will now burst into a SONG ON THE PROVIDENCE OF CHRIST.

CHRIST'S *providence* the friendly point supplies,
Where all the charms of Deity surprize;
Here goodness, power, and wisdom, all unite,
And dazzling glories whelm the ravish'd sight!

ALMIGHTY CAUSE! 'tis thy preserving care,
That keeps thy works for ever fresh and fair!
The sun from thy superior radiance bright,
Eternal sheds his delegated light,
Lends to his sister orb inferior day,
And paints the silver moon's alternate ray;
Thy HAND the waste of eating time renews,
Thou shed'st the tepid morning's balmy dews;
When raging winds the blackened deep deform,
Thy spirit rides commission'd in the storm;

Bids,

Bids, at thy will, the slack'ning tempest cease,
 While the calm'd ocean smooths it's ruffled face;
 When light'nings thro' the air tremendous fly,
 Or the blue plague is loosened to destroy,
 Thy HAND directs, or turns aside the stroke,
 Thy word the fatal edict can revoke:
 When subterraneous fires the surface heave,
 And towns are bury'd in one common grave;
 Thou suffer'st not the mischief to prevail,
 Thy sov'reign touch the recent wound can heal.
 To Zembla's rocks thou send'st the chearful
 gleam;
 O'er Libya's sands thou pour'st the cooling
 stream;
 Thy watchful providence o'er all intends,
 Thy works obey their great creator's ends.
 And all the ills we feel—or blifs we share,
 Are tokens of a heav'nly father's care.

DEITY, line 571 to 600.

We now return to consider the farther practical
 USES of the DOMINION of CHRIST.

FAITH in his DOMINION is our WISDOM, DUTY,
 and HAPPINESS.

Our faith is highly concerned in the dominion
 of Christ, because it obliges us to believe in him;
 and likewise affords matter of faith to work upon.
 To these ends the Lord Jesus holds it forth to
 Abraham,

Abraham, I am the almighty, the all-sufficient sovereign God, walk before me, and be thou upright, Gen. xvii. 1. This vital, victorious faith enabled him to believe Christ, that he would give him a son: and this faith animated him to sacrifice his son to the Lord Jesus.—See this displayed in a very sublime manner by Mr. Hervey, in Aspasio's letter to Theron, No. X.

Imitate the Father of the Faithful; take hold of Christ's absolute, independent, eternal dominion as your own, engaged in his covenant of grace to be yours, and to be exerted for your good. Faith claims a deep interest in this sovereign dominion of Christ, and draws out the virtues thereof for itself; therefore whatever difficulties, trials, or troubles be in your way, do not be frightened; be not distressed or cast down in your heart, but invoke the sovereign dominion of Christ, by faith, to step in for your help. You cannot believe greater or better things than Christ can do for you, yea, and will do for you: therefore take hold of his mighty dominion and strength, and your work is done.

Observe two MAXIMS.

MAXIM I. The divine power and dominion of Christ is too great a thing to be trifled with, or made to serve with the follies of men: therefore, if Christ has once healed your backsliding, by
sovereign

sovereign grace, beware, as for your life and soul, that you do not grieve his holy Spirit, and provoke him to withdraw a second time. All the sins of your unconverted state are not so heinous and horrible as one act of wilful backsliding from Christ's friendship and love.

MAXIM 2. Never dare to contemplate the absolute sovereignty of GOD without Christ. The sublime and independent dominion of GOD is an object full of terror and astonishment to sinners, without a mediator: and if meer rational men will speculate on divine sovereignty, without Christ, they will pay dreadfully dear for their imprudence and insolence. If you were to contemplate the awful dominion of GOD, without a continual regard to Christ, you would be in great danger of running into blasphemy and despair: or otherwise, of denying God's sovereignty altogether, and commencing a poor low ARMINIAN for life. It is only in Christ that sovereign dominion can be propitious to sinners. As nothing is pleasing to GOD but in and through Christ; so nothing in GOD is comfortable and pleasing to sinners, or for their eternal good, but as it comes to them through Christ. Therefore never look on the divine sovereignty but in Christ your redeemer and best friend.

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In a special manner have a respect to the dominion of Christ, as to your own eternal condition, and as to the eternal state of your dear children.

I. AS TO YOUR OWN ETERNAL CONDITION. Submit to mercy; to sovereign mercy. Yield yourself to Christ, without making any terms with him. Follow Christ in the darkest seasons; even when you have no light of his special favour and love to you in particular: and even if the greatest discouragements imaginable are before you, arising from all the acts of sin you have committed; the guilt of sin lying heavy on your soul; the power of indwelling lusts, and your present aversion to believe in Christ. Remember that the *greatest* commandment that GOD ever gave to men, is this,—BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS. Let your heart answer: Is it my duty to believe? my DUTY! Nay then, I must, I must and will believe, by the help of the Spirit of God. Remember Christ's grandeur, fulness and beauty, his absolute dominion, and awfully uncontrollable power; commit your soul to him as your sovereign Lord, and so leave it in his hands for ever.

A GREAT QUESTION answered.

Doth the absolute DOMINION of CHRIST require us to be willing to *perish* without MERCY?

ANSWER.

ANSWER. No. It is impossible that Christ should require this at the hand of any man in the world; because it is contrary to the original principle of self-love, and the grand law of self-preservation, created and blended with the essence, powers, and passions of the immortal soul of man; because it is contrary to the new and divine nature which the Spirit of God has created in the soul of every true christian; it is utterly repugnant to God's revealed will, which is our sanctification and salvation. It is horrid to think of a christian who is willing to be separated from Christ; willing to hate God; willing to blaspheme God in hell; willing to be without a capacity of glorifying the free grace of Christ, and to live absent from Christ for ever. Examine all the scriptures through and through with the greatest accuracy and the keenest attention; you will never find Christ commanding such a submission, as to be willing to go without grace and mercy—you will never find one instance of such submission amongst the saints in the Old and New Testament—you will never find one saint seeking to attain such a frame of soul. Nor does Christ ever blame any soul for not attaining it—nor does he give any one promises to such submission. Therefore we rise to a clear and absolute DEMONSTRATION, that the sovereign God, Christ Jesus, never did, and he never will require any man to

be willing to be damned, that he may be glorified : but, on the other Hand, he requires every man, where ever the gospel comes, to give an assent to it as a divine revelation ; and wherever grace comes into the heart, he requires such persons to believe in him with a special spiritual faith. For as the revelation is which God gives, such is the faith which God requires ; and this sets every thing in a clear, pleasing, and unexceptionable point of light. Your submission then to Christ's dominion doth not consist in a willingness to be damned, that God may be glorified ; for that is impossible. The nature of a rational, immortal creature is not capable of such a submission. The beautiful and lovely nature of God cannot require such a submission. God never did, he never will, he never can require it. It is every way as impossible as it is for God to lie, or for God to die. The infinite perfections of his goodness and love will never suffer him to propose it to one gracious and holy soul on earth.

When we say, you must submit to Christ's sovereign grace without making terms ; our meaning is, that you are not to treat upon terms of your own invention, nor propose any thing to Christ but what his sovereign love and mercy propounds to you, as the only means of obtaining your great end. And great reason you have
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for this submission, for in this lies your highest INTEREST, WISDOM, and HAPPINESS. The proposals of Christ being the only terms by which a sinful and lost creature can be rendered safe, and made capable of eternal salvation.

2. As to your OFFSPRING. This is the next interest to your own eternal condition. Submit to the same sovereign grace for your children as you did for yourself.

Next to your own personal salvation, Christ cannot shew a greater evidence of his love, than to regenerate and call your children by his grace. This is a most precious and ravishing consideration, and ought to make Christ infinitely dear and precious to those parents whose children are converted and united vitally with Christ. We owe him eternal gratitude for such a distinguishing favour to our dear children.

He doth not take all the children of believers: this would make us careless and indolent: our corrupt hearts would neglect their education. But he so frequently orders it, that electing love runs in a line from parents to children. That we have good reasons and motives to use the utmost diligence in giving them the very best religious education in our power. Let us be roused up to the utmost zeal and prudence in this great
and

and important work of religious education.—
Read Dr. Dodridge's four excellent sermons, on
the Religious Education of Children and Youth,
12mo. 1732.

5. USE. How happy are all true believers,
who have an interest in the sovereign DOMINION
of the Lord Jesus Christ!

To be the servant of such a prince is a great
privilege and honour! to be the free and willing
subject of such a king is a still higher favour:
but how much more to be a favourite of this
great and sovereign monarch. What a dignity
and happiness is this!—it is a blessedness suited
to our highest capacities and our noblest powers!

We have every thing in Christ to make us
happy to the full extent of our faculties, thro'
an immortal duration! Think over all the in-
gredients which make up true happiness, and you
will find they all flow from the fulness, grandeur,
and beauty of Christ!

Does happiness consist in health and strength?
All strength and health of soul flows from Christ!
Does happiness consist in vast wealth, or un-
bounded riches? Christ hath riches unsearch-
able! Does happiness consist in dominion and
power? Christ can and will give us the eternal
dominion of kings! Does happiness consist in
wisdom,

wisdom, learning, and prudence? Christ will furnish us out of his infinite treasures of wisdom and knowlege. He dwells with prudence, and will teach us to deal prudently! Does happiness consist in the beauty of holiness? Christ hath a rich assemblage of human, divine, christian, and social graces, to conform us to the beautiful nature and perfections of God! Is pure generous friendship essential to true happiness? Christ is our tender invariable friend. Is it the summit of happiness to know that all the above great qualities can never be lost? Christ hath rendered our security greater than our interest: for if all the power, life, and eternity of God can secure us; if all the virtue of his blood, the force of his love, and the oath of his mouth can secure us! then, as long as Christ is immortal in his existence, our being and happiness is secure! Rejoice! rejoice! and again I say rejoice in the Lord evermore.

6. USE. Let us humbly own Christ's eternal and absolute dominion, by our never daring for one moment to seek any reason of his decrees beyond or beside the wise good pleasure of his will.

The monarchs of this world resent all attempts to pry into their interior cabinet councils:—now, if worms and dust, who are the servants of the people, if they think their prerogative and dig-
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nity invaded, if you dare to indulge an active curiosity, to dive into their secrets;—is it not infinitely more indecent to indulge a sinful inquisition into the arcana of Christ's empire? Blessed be his name, enough is clearly revealed for our faith, duty, and happiness; and, therefore, with the most profound submission, let all secret things be left with our best friend, the LORD and GOD of the whole earth, Isa. liv. 5.

7. USE. See the reason why Christ doth sometimes defer an answer to our enquiries, and delay a return to our most fervent prayers!—it is to teach us a practical acknowledgment of his absolute dominion, and deep subjection to his sovereign will. Thus Christ dealt with Moses, in concealing from him the death of the men who fought his life, till he had brought him to an humble compliance with his sovereign pleasure. Thus Christ treated Job with rods, and trials, and darkness, till he brought him to cry out, with humble submission, “ I know that thou canst do every thing: and that no thought can be withholden from thee!” Job xlii. 2. and then he raised him to double riches, honours, and pleasures!

Let us likewise enter into the spirit of that noble resolution, “ I will wait on the LORD Jesus—and I will look for him,” Isai. viii. 17.

8. USE.

8. USE. See the grounds and reasons of the rebellion and insolence of the carnal wisdom and learning of this world against the Lord Jesus Christ!

Men of the highest intellectual powers, and of the greatest human learning, being destitute of the grace of God, have been the fiercest enemies to the eternal divinity and dominion of Christ.

They hate him with a perfect hatred, and say by their temper and actions, that they will be damned a thousand times rather than be in his debt for their whole salvation. I can make this appear to a full demonstration from the writings of the Socinians, in eight volumes in folio; especially from the two volumes of Faustus Socinus; who employs no less than fifteen chapters in the most violent attempts to destroy the divinity and satisfaction of our Lord Jesus Christ. See his *Prælectiones Theologicæ*, from chapter xv. page 564, to chap: xxix. page 600, vol. I. of his works in folio; and the three first parts of his book, *De Christo Servatore*; are wholly spent on the same subject, and are, indeed, but a repetition of what he had said before. The modern Socinians have the same proud and rebellious spirit, although they are far beneath the old Socinians in learning and abilities.

SOCINIANISM is the nearest approach to the sin against the HOLY SPIRIT, which is called the unpardonable sin, of any crime in our world: for this sin consists in a free and wilful rejection and opposition to the chief gospel truth and way of salvation, made clear to a man by the SPIRIT of GOD in it's truth and goodness.

9. USE. The absolute dominion of Christ, independent of all worlds, independent of the understandings and wills of all angels and men, shews us that the happiness of intelligent and immortal creatures is entirely from HIMSELF. The prudence, goodness, and free-will of angels, are not the cause of their standing in holiness and happiness for one moment, nor will be the cause to eternity.—The recovery of sinful, apostate man to holiness and happiness is not owing to the prudence and free-will of man for one moment.

CHRIST'S sovereign will, his eternal independent grace is the grand sole cause, or first spring of man's restoration, in conjunction with the absolute dominion of GOD the FATHER and GOD the HOLY SPIRIT.

Every particle and drop of angelic and human happiness hath it's head in the sovereignty of Christ, and is derived from it as it's proper, original independent fountain.

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The will of Christ is not conditional or dependent on the wills of angels and saints in heaven, nor on the will of men on earth. If Christ's will was *conditional*, then happiness would be dependent on the CONDITION to be performed, and not on the will of Christ; but the performance of the condition would be FIRST, and BEFORE the will of Christ, in the attainment of the end: and thus man would be the first and chief cause of his own eternal salvation and happiness.

If Christ willed to save all men conditionally; that is, on condition of man's free-will to good; i. e. to faith, repentance, and new obedience; Either men must be able for the performance of these conditions, or Christ must give them,

Where are the men that are able to perform these conditions? No man is to be found that hath, by nature, a free-will to moral good, a free-will to vital faith and true repentance. How can these conditions be had? No way, but by Christ's free gift. Consequently, then, they CEASE to be CONDITIONS! Conditional salvation is a fiction no where to be found in heaven or earth, except in the brains of natural men, in the proud conceptions of men that know not God the Redeemer nor themselves; of men full
of