

# Freedom of the Will

A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of the Will  
which is Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment,  
Praise and Blame

Jonathan Edwards

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis . . . . indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Larger omitted passages are reported on between brackets, in normal-sized type.—Edwards's discussions of and quotations from Biblical passages are omitted, as they add nothing to the book's *philosophical* value. Those omissions are signposted as they occur.

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## Part I: Terms and Topics that will come up in the rest of the work

### Section 1: The nature of the will

You may think that there is no great need to take trouble to define or describe the will, because the word ‘will’ is generally as well understood as any other words we might use to explain it. You would be right if it weren’t for the fact that scientists, philosophers, and polemical preachers have thrown the will into darkness by the things they have said about it. But that *is* the fact; so I think it may be of some use, and will increase my chances of being clear throughout this book, if I say a few things concerning it.

Well, then: setting aside metaphysical subtleties, the will is *that by which the mind chooses anything*. The •faculty of the will is the power of, or source in, the mind by which it is capable of choosing; an •act of the will is an act of choosing or choice.

If you think the will is better defined by saying that it is that by which the soul either chooses *or refuses*, I’ll settle for that; though I don’t think we *need* to add ‘or refuses’, for in every act of will the mind chooses one thing *rather than another*; it chooses something rather than the absence or non-existence of that thing. So in every act of •refusal the mind •chooses the absence of the thing refused, so that refusing is just a special case of choosing. . . . So that whatever names we give to the act of the will—

‘choosing’, ‘refusing’, ‘approving’, ‘disapproving’, ‘liking’, ‘disliking’, ‘embracing’, ‘rejecting’, ‘determining’, ‘directing’, ‘commanding’, ‘forbidding’, ‘inclining’, ‘being averse to’, ‘being pleased with’, ‘being displeased with’

—they all come down to *choosing*. . . . Locke says: ‘The will

signifies nothing but a power or ability to prefer or choose.’ On the previous page he says: ‘The word “preferring” seems best to express the act of volition’, but then he adds that ‘it doesn’t express it precisely; for although a man would •prefer flying to walking, who can say he ever •wills to fly?’ This example doesn’t prove that there is anything to •willing other than merely •preferring. Bear in mind that the immediate object of the will with respect to a man’s walking (or any other external action) is *not* moving from one place to another on the earth or through the air; these are *more distant* objects of preference. The *immediate* object is this or that exertion of himself—for example, trying to move his legs, setting himself to move his legs, willing to move his legs. The *next to immediate* thing that is chosen or preferred when a man wills to walk is not •arriving at his chosen destination but •his legs and feet moving in a way that will get him there. And his willing this alteration in his body right now is simply his choosing or preferring that alteration in his body right now, or his liking it better than its non-occurrence. And God has constructed human nature in such a way that when a soul is united to a body that is in good condition, •the soul’s preferring or choosing such an immediate alteration of the body is instantaneously followed by •the alteration’s occurring. When I walk, all that I am conscious of happening in my mind are •my moment-by-moment preferences or choices of such-and-such alterations of my external sensations and motions, together with •moment-by-moment expectations that what I choose will indeed happen—because I have always found in the past that when I have immediately preferred *those* sorts of sensations and motions, they always actually occur straight away. But it isn’t like that with

flying. It may be said that a man remotely chooses or prefers flying; but given his view of his situation he doesn't prefer or desire any immediate movements of his limbs in order to fly, because he doesn't *expect to get* the desired end—namely, his flying—by any such movements, and he doesn't prefer or incline towards *any* bodily movements that he thinks will be entirely in vain. Thus, if we carefully distinguish the proper objects of the various acts of the will in cases like these, we won't find any difference between volition and preference; i.e. we won't find that a man's •choosing, liking best, or being pleased with something are different from his •willing it. Thus we often report an act of the will by saying 'It pleases him to' do such-and-such; and in ordinary talk there is no difference between 'He does what he wills' and 'He does what he pleases'.

Locke says:

The will is entirely distinct from desire. It can happen that an action that our will gets us to perform is contrary to our desire. A man whom I must obey may require me to use persuasions to someone else, and it may be that at the very time I am speaking I want the persuasion to fail. In this case it is plain the will and desire run counter to one another. (*Essay II.xxi.30*)

I don't assume that 'will' and 'desire' mean exactly the same: it seems that 'desire' has to do with something absent, whereas 'will' can *also* cover things that are present: I may prefer to be, as indeed I *am*, sitting here with my eyes open, •but we wouldn't say that I 'desire' it. But I can't think that 'will' and 'desire' are so entirely distinct that they can ever properly be said to go against each other. No-one *ever* wills anything contrary to his desires, or desires anything contrary to his will; and Locke's example gives no proof to the contrary. A man may for some reason say things that will tend to persuade his hearer, and yet desire that they not

persuade him; but in this situation his will and his desire don't conflict at all: what he wills is exactly what he desires; in no respect does he will one thing and desire its contrary. Locke in his example doesn't attend carefully observed to *what* is willed and *what* is desired; if he had, he'd have found that will and desire don't clash in the least. What the man wills is •to utter certain words, and his reason for willing to utter them stop him from desiring not to utter them: all things considered, he chooses to utter those words and doesn't desire not to utter them. As for the thing that Locke speaks of as desired—namely •that the words should not be effectual—his will is not contrary to this; he doesn't will that they be effectual, but rather wills that they should not, which is what he desires. . . . The same holds for Locke's other example, of a man's desiring to be eased of pain etc.

I shan't spend longer on the question of whether desire = will, whether preference = volition. I hope you'll agree with the following. In every act of will there is an act of choice; in every volition there is a preference or prevailing inclination of the soul which at that moment takes the soul out of a state of perfect indifference with respect to the immediate object of the volition. . . . Where there is absolutely no preferring or choosing—where there is nothing but an ongoing perfect equilibrium—there is no volition.

## Section 2: Determination of the will

[The word 'determine' and its relatives will occur often, starting now. It can't be systematically replaced by something more familiar. The basic idea that it conveys is that of *settling* something, *fixing* it, or the like. In an example that Edwards gives, to 'determine the motion' of something is to make it go in that direction, to settle which of its possible directions it will go in. When 'determination' can satisfactorily be replaced by 'resolve' or 'decision', as on page 32, that replacement is made.] If the phrase

‘determining the will’ is to be used with any meaning, it must be

causing it to be the case that the act of the will, or the choice, should be thus and not otherwise:

and the will is said to be ‘determined’ when

some event or influence causes its choice to be directed to and fixed upon a particular end.

As when we speak of the ‘determination of motion’, meaning causing the motion of the body to be in this direction rather than that. The determination of the will involves an •effect, which must have a •cause. If the will is determined, something must determine it. This is part of what ‘determination’ means, even for those who say that *The will determines itself*. If it does, then *it* is both determiner and determined; it is a •cause that acts and has an •effect on itself, and is the object of its own influence and action.

With respect to the great question ‘What determines the will?’, there is no need now to go into a tedious study of all the various answers that have been given to it; nor do I need here to go into details of the disputes about that other ·related· question ‘Does the will always follow the last dictate of the understanding?’ All I need to say for my purposes is this: *What determines the will is the motive that the mind views as the strongest*. But perhaps I should explain my meaning a little.

By ‘motive’ I mean the whole of whatever it is—whether it’s one thing or many things acting together as one complex motive—that moves, excites, or invites the mind to ·perform an act of· volition. . . .

Whatever is a ‘motive’ (in this sense) ·for a person· must be something that that person’s understanding or perceiving faculty has in its view. Nothing can encourage or invite the mind to will or act in any way except to the extent that it is perceived or is somehow in the mind’s view; for what is out

of the mind’s view can’t affect the mind at all. . . .

And I don’t think it can be denied that anything that is properly called a ‘motive’—anything that induces or arouses a perceiving willing agent to act in some specific way—has some tendency to move or arouse the will on the way to the effect. [Edwards writes ‘. . . tendency or *advantage* to move . . .’ etc. He seems to mean that the motive (a) tends to etc. or (b) is especially well placed to etc. In future occurrences of this sort, the word ‘advantage’ will be allowed to stand.] Instances of such tendency or advantage can differ from one another in kind and in degree. A motive’s tendency to move the will is what I call its ‘strength’: the •strongest motive is the one that •appears most inviting, and •is viewed by the person’s mind in such a way as to have the greatest degree of tendency to arouse and induce the choice; a •weaker motive is one that has a •lesser degree of previous advantage or tendency to move the will—i.e. that appears less inviting to the mind in question. Using the phrase in this sense, I take it that **the will is always determined by the strongest motive**.

Something that exists in the view of a mind gets its strength, tendency, or advantage to move or excite the will from many features of

- the nature and circumstances of the thing that is viewed,
- the nature and circumstances of the viewing mind, and
- the intensity of the view, and its type.

It would perhaps be hard to make a complete list of these. But there can’t be any controversy about this general fact: if something *x* has the nature and influence of a motive to volition or choice for some thinking and willing agent, *x* is considered or viewed ·by that agent· as **good**; and *how much* tendency *x* has to get the soul to choose to pursue it is proportional to *how good* *x* appears to the soul. If you

deny this, you'll have to accept that x's appearance tends to invite or persuade the soul to *desire* x through some means other than *appearing desirable* to x. [Edwards puts this in terms of getting the soul to 'elect' x through something other than appearing 'eligible'.] It must be true in some sense that •the will is always as •the greatest apparent good is. But if you are to understand this correctly, there are two things you must get clear about.

(1) You must know what I mean by 'good'—namely, the same as 'agreeable'. To 'appear good to the mind', as I use the phrase, is to appear agreeable to the mind or to seem pleasing to it. If something x is considered as evil or disagreeable, it won't appear inviting and desirable to the mind, tending to get it to want and choose x; it won't even appear to the mind as 'indifferent' in the sense of being neither agreeable nor disagreeable. If x is to draw the inclination and move the will, it must be seen as something that suits the mind. Thus, the thing that is viewed by the mind as •having the greatest tendency to attract and engage it is the thing that •suits the mind best and pleases it most—and is *in that sense* the greatest apparent good. To deny that what draws the will is the greatest apparent good is near enough to an outright contradiction.

[We are about to encounter the word 'evil', which is used nearly two hundred times in this book. Edwards uses it to mean the same as 'bad', not necessarily *extremely* bad, which is how we use it today. There is a reason why 'evil' isn't replaced by 'bad' throughout this version: Edwards often uses 'evil' as a noun ('avoiding evil'), and it isn't natural to use 'bad' as a noun in that way ('avoiding bad').] The word 'good' in this sense also covers the removal or avoiding of evil or of whatever is disagreeable and unpleasing. It is agreeable and pleasing to •avoid what is disagreeable and unpleasing and to •have uneasiness removed. This brings in what Locke thinks determines the will. He says that what determines

the will is 'uneasiness', by which he must mean that when anyone performs a volition or act of preference, his end or aim is to avoid or remove that uneasiness; which is the same as choosing and seeking what is more easy and agreeable.

(2) When I say that . . . volition has always for its object the thing that appears most agreeable, take careful note—to avoid confusion and needless objections—that I'm speaking of the *direct and immediate* object of the act of volition, and not some indirect and remote upshot of the act of will. Many acts of volition lead *eventually* to something different from the thing that is most immediately willed and chosen. For example, when a drunkard has his liquor before him and has to choose whether or not to drink it, the immediate possible upshots that his will is taking account of are his own acts in drinking or not drinking the liquor, and he will certainly choose according to what presents itself to his mind as over-all the more agreeable. . . .

But there are also more remote upshots of this act of volition, pairs of possible outcomes that are less directly settled by this present choice, such as:

- the present pleasure the man expects by drinking,
- and •the future misery that he thinks will be the consequence of his drinking.

He may think that this future misery, when it comes, will be more disagreeable and unpleasant than refraining from drinking now would be. But in approaching this present act of volition, he is not choosing between these two things—

- near-future discomfort? or remote-future misery?.

The act of will we are talking about involves a different choice: drink now? or not drink now?

If he wills to drink, then *drinking* is the proper object of the act of his will; something makes drinking now appear more agreeable to him and to suit him better than not drinking now. If he chooses to refrain, then *not drinking*

is the immediate object of his will and is more pleasing to him than drinking. If in his choice he prefers a present pleasure to a future advantage that he thinks would be greater when it came, then a lesser present pleasure appears more agreeable to him than a greater advantage further off. If on the contrary a future advantage is preferred, then that appears most agreeable and suits him best. And so still the present volition is as the greatest apparent good at present is.

There are two ways of expressing the thesis I have been defending. There's the one I have used:

- (a) The will always **is as** the greatest apparent good, or  
he will always **is as** what appears most agreeable.

And there is the one I have chosen not to use:

- (b) The will is always **determined by** the greatest apparent good, or  
The will is always **determined by** what appears most agreeable.

I have used (a) because appearing most agreeable to the mind and being preferred by the mind seem to be scarcely distinct (and if x is almost the same thing as y, it is better to say 'x is as y' than to say 'x is determined by y'). . . . I like to say that volition itself is always determined by whatever it is in or about the mind's view of the object that causes it to appear most agreeable. I say 'in or about the mind's view of the object' because the influences that make an object agreeable are not confined to what appears in the object as viewed, but also include how it is viewed and the state and circumstances of the viewing mind. To enumerate all those influences in detail would be a hard task, and might require a book to itself. My present purpose doesn't require this, so I shall confine myself to some general points.

- (1) When someone is considering whether to choose to

pursue some state of affairs S, how agreeable S appears to him to be will depend on various properties that S has and various relations that it enters into. Here are three examples:

(a) Features that S appears to have just in itself, making it beautiful and pleasant or ugly and unpleasant to the mind.

(b) The amount of pleasure or displeasure that appears to come with S or to result from it. Such accompaniments and consequences are viewed as relational properties [Edwards calls them 'circumstances'] of the object, and should therefore count as belonging to it—as it were *parts* of it.

(c) How far off in time the pleasure or displeasure appears to be. The mind finds the temporal nearness of a pleasure to be agreeable, and finds a pleasure's temporal remoteness to be disagreeable; so that if upshots S and S\* appear to the mind to be exactly alike in how much pleasure they involve, and alike in every other respect except that S is temporally closer than S\*, the mind will find S to be the more agreeable of the two, and so will choose it. The two upshots are equally agreeable considered in themselves, but not with their relational properties taken into account, because S has the additional agreeableness of the relational property of being temporally nearer.

(2) Another thing that helps to make it the case that *upshot S, as viewed by a particular mind, is agreeable* is *how* that mind views S. If S appears to be connected with future pleasure, its agreeableness will be affected not only by the amount of pleasure and the apparent temporal nearness of that pleasure, but also facts about *how* that future pleasure is registered in the mind in question—especially by the following two.

(a) As well as the question of how far in the future the mind thinks the pleasure is, there is the question of how sure it is that there will be such pleasure. It is more agreeable to have a certain happiness than an uncertain one; and a

pleasure viewed as more probable is, other things being equal, more agreeable than one viewed as less probable.

(b) Agreeableness is also affected by the liveliness or the strength of the present idea or thought [Edwards writes 'idea or apprehension'] of the future pleasure. When we are thinking about things past, present or future, our ideas of them vary greatly in their clarity, liveliness and strength. The ideas of sense-perceptible things that we get from immediate sensation are usually much livelier than the ones we have in mere imagination or in thinking about them in their absence. My idea of the sun when I •look at it is more vivid than when I only •think of it. Our idea of an apple's taste is usually stronger when we •eat it than when we only •imagine it. And if we think about something at several different times, the ideas we have at those times may differ in strength and clarity. . . . Well, the *strength* of the idea or the sense that men have of future good or evil has a great influence on what volitions they perform. Suppose someone has to choose between two kinds of •possible• future pleasure S and S\* which he regards as equally pleasurable and equally probable; if he has a livelier present *sense* of S he is much more likely to pursue it than to pursue S\*. Going after •the pleasure of which he has a strong and lively sense is more agreeable to his mind *now* than going after •the pleasure of which he has only a faint idea. His view of S is accompanied by the stronger appetite, the •thought of• not having S is accompanied by the stronger uneasiness; and it is agreeable to his mind to have its appetite gratified and its uneasiness removed. Suppose now that someone has to choose from among several •possible• future pleasures, which differ among themselves in respect of

- how great he thinks each pleasure will be,
- how lively his idea is of each pleasure, and
- how probable he thinks each pleasure is;

with none of the candidates being at the top in each respect. In such a case, the over-all agreeableness that determines his volition will be in some way compounded out of the above three factors, because all three jointly settle how agreeable a given objective is *now*, and that is how volition will be determined.

How agreeable or disagreeable a possible object of choice is to someone's mind depends in part on the person's over-all state of mind. This includes

- very durable• features that are part of his basic nature,
- fairly durable• features caused in him by education, example, custom, etc., and
- temporary features that constitute his mood at this moment.

•Because of the third of these•, one object may differ in how agreeable a given person finds it at different times. •And then there are inter-personal differences•. Some men find it most agreeable to follow their reason; others to follow their appetites. To some men it is more agreeable to •deny a vicious inclination than to •gratify it; for others it's the other way around. People differ in how disagreeable they find it to oppose something that they used to support. In these and many other respects, different things will be most agreeable to different people, and even to one person at different times.

[In the next paragraph Edwards says that perhaps those frame-of-mind features affect volition only *through* affecting how •the person's mind views the nature and relational properties of S, and/or •how lively the person's idea of S is; and if that is so, it is needless and even wrong to mention 'frame of mind' as something additional to the preceding two. Then:] Anyway, this much is certain: volition *always* pursues the greatest apparent good, in the way I have explained. The mind's choice *always* picks on the one of

the available options that appears to be over-all the most agreeable and pleasing. I am saying this about the *direct and immediate* objects of the will, not the remote or indirect ones. If the immediate objects of the will are a man's own actions, then he wills the actions that appear most agreeable to him. If right now what is most agreeable to him, all things considered, is to walk, then he now wills to walk. [Other examples are given. Then:]

When men act voluntarily, doing what they please, then they do what suits them best or what is most agreeable to them.

There is scarcely a plainer and more universal dictate of the sense and experience of mankind than *that*. To say that someone

- does what he pleases, i.e. does what pleases him, and yet
- does not do what is agreeable to him amounts to saying that he
- does what he pleases but does not act his pleasure [Edwards's exact phrase], and that amounts to saying that
- he does what he pleases and yet doesn't do what he pleases.

The upshot of all this is that in some sense the will always follows the last dictate of the understanding. In what sense? Well, the 'understanding' must be taken in a broad sense as including the whole faculty of •perception or •thought, not merely the part of it that is called •reason or •judgment. Suppose we take 'the dictate of the understanding' to mean 'whatever *reason* declares to be best, or most conducive to the person's happiness, over the long haul', it's **not true** that the will always follows the last dictate of the understanding. [Edwards goes on to say that when we are considering how to act, the dictates of reason will be *one ingredient* in the mix

of relevant considerations; but it doesn't always outweigh all the others.]

I hope that what I have said in this section somewhat illustrates and confirms •the thesis that I advanced near the start of the section, namely that the will is always determined by *the strongest motive* or by *the mental view that has the greatest tendency to arouse volition*. Even if I haven't had the good fortune to explain what the strength of motives consists in, that won't overthrow •the thesis itself, which is fairly evident just on the face of it. It will be centrally important in the rest of this book; and I hope that its truth will show up very clearly by the time I have finished what I have to say on the subject of human liberty.

### **Section 3: The meanings of 'necessary', 'impossible', 'unable' etc., and of 'contingent'**

The words 'necessary', 'impossible' etc. are abundantly used in controversies about free will and moral agency. So the sense in which they are used should be clearly understood. One might say that

- It is necessary that P when it *must* be the case that P and *can't* not be the case that P,

but this wouldn't properly define 'necessary', any more than the reverse.

- It must be the case that P when it's *necessary* that P is a proper definition of 'must'. The words 'must', 'can' and 'cannot' need to be explained as much as 'necessary' and 'impossible' do, the only difference being that 'must' etc. are words that we use more as children than 'necessary' and 'impossible'.

•'NECESSARY' AS USED IN ORDINARY LANGUAGE•

'Necessary' as used in common speech is a relative term. [The rest of this paragraph expands what Edwards wrote, in ways that

·small dots· can't easily convey.] (a) We say 'It is necessary for him to abandon ship' (or more colloquially 'He'll have to abandon ship') meaning that his abandoning ship can't be prevented by anything *he* can do. (b) In the basic and proper sense of 'necessary', something is called 'necessary' meaning that it couldn't be prevented by anything at all—anything we can conceive of happening. **The word is relative in each usage:** in (a) it is relative to some specified kind of opposition; in (b) it is relative to every conceivable kind of opposition.

·As well as being a relative term, 'necessary' belongs to a tightly inter-connected cluster of terms that are *all* relative. [Edwards doesn't use the word 'cluster', but it's a convenient label for a concept that is hard at work in this section.] 'Necessary' is tightly tied to 'impossible'—to say that S is necessary is to say that it's impossible that S should not happen; and 'impossible' is clearly a relative term—to say that S is 'impossible' is to say that some supposed power exerted to make S happen is not sufficient to do this; ·as when we say 'It's impossible for him to swim to shore', meaning that no efforts that *he* can exert will suffice to let him swim to shore·. 'Unable' is also relative; it relates to some ability or effort that isn't sufficient. And 'irresistible' is relative; it always has reference to resistance that •may be made to some force or power tending to an effect and •is insufficient to withstand the power or hinder the effect. The common notion of necessity and impossibility—the thread that holds the cluster together—implies something that frustrates effort or desire. Here several things are to be noted.

(1) Things are said to be (a) necessary in general which do or will exist or happen, despite any supposable opposition from whatever quarter. But things are said to be (b) necessary *to us* which do or will exist or happen, despite all opposition supposable in the case *from us*. The same holds also for 'impossible' and other such like terms. ·Roughly and

idiomatically, (a) goes with

•S can't be stopped',

while (b) goes with

•You can't stop S'.

Each of these is relative, because each involves some thought of possible, conceivable, supposable opposition to S's coming about·.

(2) In controversies about liberty and moral agency, the terms in the 'necessary'-cluster are mostly used in sense (b), i.e. in the sense of 'necessary (or impossible) *to us*, this being relative to any supposable opposition or effort that *we* might make.

(3) When we say that S is necessary *to us*, the 'supposable opposition' we are thinking of is an opposition of our *wills*—some *voluntary* exertion or effort of ours to prevent S from happening. ·This isn't a limited special case of opposition-by-us·; our *only* way of opposing S (with 'oppose' taken strictly) is by voluntarily opposing it. So any statement of the form

•S must be, *as to us*, or

•S is necessary, *as to us*,

means that S will come about even if we want it not to and try to stop it from happening, which always either consists in or implies opposition of our *wills*.

It's obvious that all the words in this cluster are, in their ordinary use, understood in this manner. Thus:

•S is necessary—We can't stop S from happening, try as we may.

•S is impossible to us—S won't happen however hard we try to stop it.

•S is irresistible—S overcomes all our resistance to it, all our attempts to block it.

•We are unable to make S happen— Our supposable desires and attempts are insufficient to make it hap-

pen.

The common use of ordinary language habituates us to using and understanding these expressions in the way I have described; through daily use of them from our childhood onwards, these meanings become fixed and settled in our minds. . . . We may decide to use words in the ‘necessity’ cluster in a different sense, treating them as technical terms; but if we aren’t *very* careful we’ll slide back to their ordinary meanings. Then we’ll be using these supposed technical terms in an inconsistent manner that will deceive and confuse us in our reasonings and in expounding our results.

(4) [Edwards’s next point will be expressed as one about ‘necessary’, and then re-applied to the other members of the ‘necessity’ cluster. His own formulation applies the point to the whole cluster from outset—but it is hard to follow in that form.] Let S be some state of affairs, some possible outcome, such that

•there isn’t and can’t be any coherent thought of S’s being opposed in any way, i.e. such that the very nature of S rules out any possibility of its being opposed, any possibility of a will or effort being exerted to prevent S from being the case.

If for an S of that sort someone says ‘S is necessary’, he is not using ‘necessary’ with its proper meaning; he is either uttering nonsense or using ‘necessary’ in some new sense different from its basic and proper meaning. . . . Here are two examples, the second of which brings in another member of the ‘necessity’ cluster:

- ‘At a time when a man prefers virtue to vice, it is **necessary** for him to choose virtue rather than vice.’
- ‘At a time when a man prefers virtue to vice, it **must be** that he chooses virtue rather than vice.’

And two more, bringing in two more members of the cluster:·

- ‘As long as a man has a certain choice, it is **impossible** that he should not have that choice.’
- ‘As long as a man has a certain choice, his having it is **irresistible**.

Each of these four is either nonsense or a non-standard use of a member of the ‘necessary’ cluster, using it in a sense different from its ordinary one. You can see why. The ordinary senses of the words in the ‘necessary’ cluster involves a reference to supposable opposition, unwillingness and resistance to S’s becoming the case; and in these four examples S itself is willing and choosing—you don’t choose or decide or will to prefer virtue to vice, or choose or decide or will to have a certain choice.

(5) These remarks imply that words in the ‘necessity’ cluster are often used by scientists and philosophers in a sense quite different from their common and basic meaning; for they apply them to many cases where no opposition is supposable. For example, they use them with respect to •God’s existence before the creation of the world, when there was no other being; with regard to •many of God’s dispositions and acts, such as his loving himself, loving righteousness, hating sin, and so on; and with regard to •many cases—like my recent quartet of examples—where some member of the cluster is applied to the inclinations and actions of created intelligent beings, so that there can’t be any question of there being an opposition of the will because the item in question is defined in terms of the will.

·‘NECESSARY’ AS USED BY PHILOSOPHERS·

*Metaphysical* or *philosophical* necessity is just a thing’s certainty. I’m talking not about something’s being •known for certain, but about its being •in itself certain. This ·inherent· certainty is the *basis* for the certainty of the knowledge, the *basis* for the infallibility of the proposition that affirms it.

Philosophical necessity has sometimes been defined as ‘That by which a thing cannot *not* be’ or ‘That whereby a thing cannot be otherwise’. But neither of these is a proper definition, for two reasons. (a) Neither definition could be **helpful**, even if it were correct, because the words ‘can’ and ‘cannot’ need explanation as much as does the word ‘necessity’; so that explaining ‘necessary’ through ‘can’ is no better than explaining ‘can’ through ‘necessary’... (b) Anyway, neither definition is **correct**, because ‘can’ etc. belong to the ordinary-language ‘necessity’ cluster, and are thus relative terms, whose meaning involves the thought of some power that is or might be exerted. . . etc., whereas the word ‘necessity’ as used by philosophers is, as I have pointed out, not relative in this way.

[Edwards is going to speak repeatedly of the ‘subject’ and the ‘predicate’ of a proposition; but the propositions he is talking about include many that aren’t obviously of the subject-predicate form. This may not be much of a hindrance to following his thought. It soon becomes clear that he counts ‘existent’ as a predicate, so that for him ‘God exists’ is a subject-predicate proposition, as is ‘There are tigers’ because it is equivalent to ‘Tigers exist’.] For a proposition to be necessary in the philosophical sense of ‘necessary’ is for there to be a full and fixed connection between •whatever its subject signifies and •whatever its predicate signifies. Philosophical necessity is just this full and fixed connection.

**what Edwards wrote next:** When the subject and predicate of the proposition, which affirms the existence of anything—either •substance, •quality, •act, or •circumstance—have a full and certain connection, then the existence or being of that thing is said to be ‘necessary’ in a metaphysical sense.

**what he meant:** When there is that kind of connection between the subject and the predicate of a proposition which asserts that a •substance exists, that something has a certain •quality, that an •event occurs, or that •a state of affairs

obtains or is the case, then it is said to be *necessary*, in the metaphysical or philosophical sense, that the •substance exists, that the thing has the •quality, that the •event occurs, or that the •state of affairs obtains.

It is in *that* sense of ‘necessity’ that I shall be arguing in this book that necessity is not inconsistent with liberty.

There are three ways in which the subject and predicate of a proposition that asserts existence of something x can have a full, fixed, and certain connection.

(a) They may have a full and perfect connection **•in and of themselves**, because the supposition that they are not connected implies a contradiction or gross absurdity. There are many cases of this—many things that are necessary •in their own nature. An example is the eternal existence of *being*—not this or that individual being, or this or that kind of being, but just being in general; this is necessary in itself, meaning that it is philosophically necessary that at every time *there is something*, i.e. *something exists*. Why? Because denying the existence of being in general, i.e. saying that *there is absolutely nothing*, would be **in itself** the greatest absurdity, as it were the sum of all contradictions [Edwards’s exact phrase]. (I could prove that, but this isn’t the right place to do so.) Other examples: It is philosophically necessary that

- God is infinite, omniscient, just, etc.,
- two and two make four,
- all straight lines from a circle’s centre to its circumference are equal,
- men should treat others as they would like to be treated [Edwards calls this not only ‘necessary’ but also ‘fit and suitable’].

There are countless other examples of metaphysical and mathematical truths that are necessary **in themselves**; in each case, the subject and predicate of the proposition that

asserts them are perfectly connected **of themselves**.

(b) They may have a full and perfect connection because the proposition of which they are the subject and predicate asserts the **past or present** existence of *x*. Because *x* *did* or *does now* exist, it has (as it were) made sure of its existence; and the proposition asserting that *x* does or did exist is made certain and necessarily and unalterably true. The past event has fixed and decided the matter. . . . Thus, if *x* has already come into existence, is it now necessary; it has become impossible for it to be false that *x* has existed. [Bear in mind that although *x* may be a genuine thing = substance, it may instead be a quality or event or state affairs.]

(c) They may have a real and certain connection **con-sequentially**, so that the existence of *x* is consequentially necessary—meaning that it is surely and firmly connected with something else that is necessary in the manner of either (a) or (b)—that is, something else that either (a) is absolutely necessary in its own nature or with something that (b) has already come into existence and thus made sure of existence. This necessity consists in—or can be explained through—the connection of two or more propositions one with another. Things that are perfectly connected with other things that are necessary are themselves necessary by a necessity of **consequence**.

If *x* lies only in the future, it can't be necessary *now* in any way except (c) consequentially. It can't be necessary (a) in itself, because anything that is necessary in itself has always existed. And for obvious reasons, a purely future *x* can't be (b) necessary through being securely lodged in the past or present. And the scope of consequent necessity extends much more widely still: if *x* is (b) necessary because lodged in the past, then *x* at some time *began* to exist; and before that time the only necessity it could have was (c) the consequential sort. To say it again in slightly different

words: Let *x* be an effect or outcome or anything else that did or will have a beginning: then the only way it can be true that *x* *necessarily* did or *necessarily* will come into existence is by the coming-into-existence of *x* being necessitated by something that existed already. So *this* is the necessity that is especially involved in controversies about the acts of the will.

As we get into those controversies it may be useful to bear this in mind: when a thing exists with metaphysical necessity, that necessity may be either (i) general or (ii) particular. (This runs parallel to the general/particular line that I drew through ordinary-language 'necessity'. The existence of a thing *x* is necessary with (i) a **general** necessity if

all things considered, there is a foundation for the certainty of *x*'s existence, i.e. the most general and universal view of things shows an infallible connection between the subject and the predicate of the proposition asserting *x*'s existence.

The occurrence of an event  $x_e$  or the existence of a thing  $x_t$  can be said to be necessary with (ii) a **particular** necessity relative to some person or thing or time: if

no facts concerning that person or thing or time •have any bearing on the certainty of the occurrence of  $x_e$  or the existence of  $x_t$ , i.e. no such facts •can play any part in determining the infallibility of the connection of the subject and predicate of the relevant proposition.

When that is the case, the situation is the same—at least as regards that person or thing, at least at that time—as if the existence were necessary with a necessity that is entirely universal and absolute. Examples of this include the many cases where something happens to an individual person without his will's being in any way involved in the occurrence. Whether or not the happening is necessary with regard to

things in general, it is necessary to that person and happens to him whatever his will may be doing. . . . In this book I shall have occasion to use the notion of particular necessity as it applies to particular cases. Is everything that is •necessary with a particular necessity also •necessary with a general necessity? That may be something we'll have to consider; but we can leave it aside now, because either way we can use the distinction between the two kinds of •philosophical-necessity.

What I have said may sufficiently explain the terms 'necessary' and 'necessity' as technical terms that are often used by metaphysicians and controversial writers on theology—with a sense that is broader than their basic ordinary-language meaning that I explained in section 3.

And it may also sufficiently explain the opposite terms 'impossible' and 'impossibility', for these differ from the others only as negative differs from positive. Impossibility is just negative necessity: a thing's existence is impossible just in case its not existing is necessary. And the negative terms have a technical sense which differs from the ordinary-language one in a manner exactly parallel to how the ordinary-language sense of 'necessary' differs from its technical philosophical sense.

The words 'unable' and 'inability' also have technical senses differing from their ordinary ones in the same way. That's because philosophers and theologians—especially in controversies about free will—often apply these words to cases where the ordinary-language senses can't get a grip because there is no thought of anything's being brought about through an exercise of the will, i.e. through *trying*.

The analogous thing has also happened to the term 'contingent' and its relatives. In the basic ordinary-language senses of the words, a thing is said to be 'contingent', or to happen 'by chance' or 'by accident', if its connection with

its causes (i.e. its antecedents according to the established course of things) is not detected, so that we couldn't have foreseen it. And an event is said to be contingent or accidental *relative to us* if it happens without our foreknowledge and without our having planned or envisaged it.

But 'contingent' is lavishly used in a very different sense, with 'x is contingent' being used to mean *not*

we couldn't detect the prior events connected with x,  
so we couldn't have foreseen x,

*but rather*

x occurred without being grounded in or caused by  
*any* prior events with which its existence had a fixed  
and certain connection.

#### **Section 4: The division of necessity and inability into natural and moral**

The •philosophical-necessity that I have explained divides into •moral necessity and •natural necessity. You'll recall that this kind of necessity involves an infallible connection between the thing signified by the subject and the thing signified by the predicate of the relevant proposition; well, such a case of necessity is classified as *moral* if the subject of the proposition is a thinking being; otherwise not.

I shan't stop to inquire into how sharp and deep this distinction is; I shall merely explain how these two sorts of necessity are understood as they are used in various places, including this book.

The phrase 'moral necessity' has various uses; I shall pick out three of them, two because they are pretty common, and the third because it is the use I shall adhere to in this book. (i) There is the necessity of moral obligation: we say that a man is under •moral-necessity when he is subject to bonds of duty and conscience from which he can't be let

off ('He *had* to do it; he had solemnly promised to·'). An analogous *non*-moral notion of necessity kicks in when we say that someone is bound by his own interests ('He *had* to do it; otherwise he'd have been ruined·'). **(ii)** Sometimes the language of moral necessity is tied to the notion of moral evidentness: it can be morally evident that P if the evidence for P is strong enough to be relied on in moral reasoning. [In the present day, people sometimes say things of the form 'It's a moral certainty that P' meaning that P's truth is certain enough for practical purposes. That's the notion that Edwards is talking about here.] In this usage, to say that something is •'morally necessary' is to say that it's morally evident that the relevant items are connected in the relevant way. This is different from its being •absolutely necessary, which involves the sure connection of things that is a basis for infallible certainty. •Moral necessity—understood in this way—is about the same as •the high degree of probability that is usually sufficient to satisfy mankind when they are considering how to conduct themselves in matters involving their own safety and interests and the proper treatment of others. **(iii)** And sometimes 'moral necessity' is used to mean the necessity of connection and consequence that arises from such moral causes as the strength of inclinations or motives, and the connection that these often have with volitions and actions. That's the sense in which I use the phrase 'moral necessity' in this book. [In the phrase 'moral causes' Edwards uses 'moral' in an old meaning = 'having to do with the aspects of the human condition that do or can involve thought'—a usage in which psychology, for example, counted as one of the 'moral sciences'. That covers acknowledged motives and reasons, and also *habits* and their like. One might thoughtlessly act from a habit, but even there one *could* thoughtfully consider whether to resist the habit.—We can't replace 'moral cause' by 'human cause'; Edwards is about the explain why.]

By 'natural necessity' as applied to men I mean any

necessity that a man is subject to through the force of •natural causes, as distinct from so-called •moral causes such as habits, dispositions of the heart, moral motives, and inducements. Three examples of natural necessity as applied to humans: **(i)** When men are placed in certain circumstances, they necessarily have certain sensations—pains when their bodies are wounded, visual sensations when objects are presented to them in clear light and their eyes are open. **(ii)** When men understand the terms used in certain propositions, they ·necessarily· assent to the propositions' truth—e.g. that two and two make four, that black is not white, and that two parallel lines can never cross one another. **(iii)** When there is nothing to support a man's body, it ·necessarily· moves downwards.

Here are three points of some importance concerning these two kinds of necessity, moral and natural. ·Remember that the moral necessity I'll be talking about is always the kind **(ii)** that involves psychological causation, not the kind **(i)** that involves moral obligation, duty, and so on·.

**(1)** Moral necessity can be as absolute as natural necessity. That is, the effect may be as perfectly connected with its moral cause as a naturally necessary effect is connected with its natural cause. You may not ·yet· agree that the will is *always* ·absolutely· necessarily determined by the strongest motive, and can't *ever* resist such a motive or oppose the strongest present inclination. But I don't think anyone will deny that in *some* cases a previous bias and inclination, or the motive that is presented, is so powerful that the act of the will is certainly and unbreakably connected with it. ·If you have doubts about that, then consider·: Everyone agrees that when a motive or previous bias is very strong, there is some difficulty in going against it, and that if it were even stronger the difficulty would be greater. Therefore, if the motive were further strengthened to a certain degree, the difficulty of

resisting it would rise to the level of complete impossibility. Why? Simply because whatever power men may have to surmount difficulties their power is not *infinite*; it thus has limits, beyond which the man has no power. . . . So it must be conceded that there can be a sure and perfect connection between moral causes and their effects; and *this*—and only this—is what I call ‘moral necessity’.

(2) When I draw a line between ‘moral’ and ‘natural’ necessity, I’m not implying that *the nature of things* is involved only in the latter and not in the former. When a moral habit or motive is so strong that the act of the will infallibly follows, this is because of the nature of things—I’m not denying that! But ‘natural’ and ‘moral’ are the labels usually given to these two kinds of necessity, and we need *some* labels for them, because the difference between them has very important consequences. It isn’t a difference between two kinds of connection, however, but rather between the things that are connected. What marks off moral necessity is that •the cause is of a moral nature (either some previous habitual disposition or some motive presented to the understanding), and •the effect is likewise of a moral nature, consisting in some inclination or volition of the soul or some voluntary action.

[Edwards now devotes a page to a suggested explanation for how ‘natural necessity’ and kindred expressions are used. It boils down to this: We get our first notion of *nature* from the orderliness we observe in the perceptible material world; so we prefer to use some word other than ‘nature’ for events that don’t obviously fit into *those* patterns of order. Where we can’t see how an event fits in with the general order, we bring in such terms as ‘accident’, ‘chance’, etc. In the special case where something comes about partly through a choice that some person has made, we bring in the term ‘choice’, and think of this as distinct from nature—as though •material

causes operating through the laws of motion were *one* source of observable events, and •choice were *another*. Clearly Edwards thinks that neither nature/chance nor nature/choice is a clean and deep distinction. But we talk in these ways, he concludes, because] things are usually labelled according to what is most obvious, what is suggested by what appears to the senses without reflection and research.

(3) In explaining ‘moral necessity’, I have *not* been using ‘necessity’ in its basic ordinary-language meaning. As I showed in Section 3, the basic ordinary-language senses of the words in the ‘necessity’ cluster are •relative: they speak of how the item to which the word is being applied •relates to some supposable voluntary opposition or effort. And no such opposition or contrary will and effort is supposable in the case of moral necessity, because that moral necessity is a certainty of the inclination and will itself, leaving no room for the supposition of an opposing will. To suppose that •one individual will opposes itself in its present act, or that •a present choice is opposite to—and sets up resistance to—a present choice, is as absurd as it is to talk of a single body moving in two opposite directions at the same time. . . .

What I have said about natural and moral •necessity can be re-applied to natural and moral •inability. We are said to be ‘**naturally unable**’ to do x if

•Even• if we will to do x, we *can’t* do it because it is ruled out by what is most commonly called ‘nature’, i.e. because of some obstacle that lies outside the will.

The obstacle to a man’s reaching the summit of a mountain (•to take a single example•) may lie

- in his faculty of understanding—•he hasn’t learned how to ‘read’ the weather•,
- the constitution of his body—•he hasn’t enough muscular strength•, or
- external objects—•he would freeze to death on the

way·.

**Moral inability** doesn't consist in any of these things but rather in the lack of inclination or the strength of a contrary inclination—i.e. the person's not being aware of sufficient motives to induce and arouse the act of the will, or the strength of apparent motives to the contrary. [Edwards first states these—the 'inclination' story and the 'motive' story—as though they were different, and then goes on to say that they amount to the same thing.]

Here are some instances of moral inability. •A chaste and honourable woman may be morally unable to prostitute herself to her slave. •A dutiful and loving child may be morally unable to kill his father. •A very lascivious man may in some circumstances, where there are great temptations and no external restraints, be unable to refrain from gratifying his lust. •A drunkard may in certain circumstances be unable to refrain from drinking liquor. •A very malicious man may be unable to bring benefits to an enemy, or to want the enemy to prosper. •Someone with a very vile character may be unable to love those who are most worthy of his esteem and affection. •Someone with a very holy disposition and a strong habit of virtue may be morally unable to love wickedness in general, to get pleasure from wicked persons or things, or to choose a wicked life in preference to a virtuous one. And, on the other hand, •someone who has a great degree of habitual wickedness may be morally unable to love and choose holiness, and utterly ·morally· unable to love an infinitely holy Being, ·namely God·, or to choose and cling to him as his chief good.

Cases of moral inability can be classified into two kinds—**(a)** general and habitual, and **(b)** particular and occasional. By **(a)** 'general and habitual moral inability' I mean an inability in the heart to perform any acts of will of the kind in question, because of (i) a fixed and habitual inclination ·going

the other way· or (ii) an habitual and stated defect in (or lack of) a certain kind of inclination. For example, (i) a very ill-natured man may be unable to perform acts of kindness of the sort a good-natured man often performs; and (ii) a man whose heart is habitually devoid of gratitude may be unable to perform acts of gratitude because of that stated defect of a grateful inclination. By **(b)** 'particular and occasional moral inability' I mean an inability of the will or heart to perform some particular act because of the strength or defect of *present* motives or because of inducements presented to the view of the understanding *on this occasion*. [Regarding 'strength or defect': Edwards presumably means the strength of motives *not* to perform x or the lack of strong motives *to* perform x.] If I am right that the will is always determined by the strongest motive [see page 3], then it must always have a particular and occasional inability to act otherwise than it does; because it isn't possible, *ever*, that the will should *now* go against the motive that *now* has, all things considered, the greatest advantage to induce the action in question. When people speak of 'inability' in ordinary informal contexts, they are usually talking about general and habitual moral ability. . . . The main reason for this is as follows. The word 'inability' in its basic ordinary-language use is a relative term: when someone is said to be 'unable' to do x, the thought is that he wants to do x but no will or effort that he can be supposed to exert would be sufficient to bring about x. Now, this thought is never appropriate when x = *doing something other than what he is actually doing*. Whether the man's present action is occasional or habitual, there is no way to suppose him to exert will and effort against, or different from, what he is doing; because that would involve supposing his will to be *now* different from what it is *now*. However, even when x = *doing something other than what he is actually doing*, there can be—though not a *real* ordinary-language

‘inability’—the appearance and shadow [Edwards’s phrase] of such an inability. Here is what makes it possible:

When someone is voluntarily doing *x*, there is no room for any thought about how he would be acting now if he wanted and tried not to do *x*; but there *is* room for a thought about how he would act on a *later* occasion if he *now* wanted and tried to prevent himself from doing *x* on that later occasion. There is no contradiction in supposing that the acts of the will at •one time go against the acts of the same will at •another time; someone may want to, and try to, prevent or arouse certain future acts of his will; and it can happen that in a given case his desire and attempt is not enough to prevent the future act.

•And so we get the ‘appearance and shadow’ of ordinary-language ‘inability’ to act other than how one does act. When someone is doing *x* voluntarily, the question ‘Would he be doing *x* now if he didn’t want to or tried not to?’ is always Yes, just because his action is voluntary; so the notion of inability-to-do-otherwise gets no grip. But questions of the form ‘Will he do *x* on such-and-such a future occasion if he *now* wants and tries not to do so?’ will sometimes have the answer Yes and sometimes No; and when the answer is No, we have the ‘appearance and shadow’ of ordinary-language inability, to which I referred above. When the action in question is a strongly habitual one, the answer is likely to be No. In those cases, desires and attempts to act differently in future are defeated by the strength of a fixed habit, which overcomes and baffles all opposition; in this respect a man may be in miserable slavery and bondage to a strong habit. In contrast with this, it can be comparatively easy to make an alteration with respect to merely occasional and transient future acts, because the transient cause of such an act, if it is foreseen, can often easily be prevented or avoided. That

completes my explanation of why it is that the moral inability that accompanies fixed habits is especially likely to be called ‘inability’ •by people who are speaking informally and not meaning to use technical terms•.

But bear in mind that in the phrase ‘moral inability’, when it is properly used, the word ‘inability’ is used in a sense very different from its basic meaning. In the latter meaning, a person is said to be ‘unable’ to do *x* only if he wouldn’t be doing *x* even if he wanted or were inclined to do *x*. Take the case of a nasty man, and let him be as malicious as you like: it won’t be true (in the ordinary basic sense of the term) that he is ‘unable’ to refrain from punching someone, or that he ‘cannot’ exhibit kindness towards someone else. It won’t be true that a drunkard—however strongly addicted to alcohol he may be—‘cannot’ keep the cup from his mouth. In strictly correct speech, a man has a thing ‘in his power’ if it is *up to him* whether it occurs or not: a man can’t be truly said to be unable to do *x* when he can do it if he wills to do it. It is •wrong to say that a person can’t perform external actions that depend on acts of the will and that would be easily performed if the act of the will occurred. And it is in a way even •more wrong to say that he can’t perform the act of the will itself; because it is more obviously false to say ‘He can’t do *x*, even if he wills to’ where *x* is itself an act of the will, for that amounts to saying that he can’t will •to do *y*• even if he does will •to do *y*•. This is a kind of case where not only is it easy for the man to do the thing if he wills to do it, but the willing is itself the doing—once he has willed to do *y*, the thing *x* is performed. In these cases, therefore, it is simply wrong to explain someone’s not doing *x* to his lacking the power or ability to do it—wrong because what he lacks is not *being able* but *being willing*. He has the required faculties of mind and natural capacities and everything else except a disposition: the only thing lacking is a will.

## Section 5: The notions of liberty and moral agency

·LIBERTY·

The plain and obvious meaning of the words ‘freedom’ and ‘liberty’ in common speech is *the power, opportunity, or advantage that anyone has to do as he pleases*. Or, in other words, the person’s being free from blockage or obstacle in the way of doing, or in any way conducting himself, as he wills.<sup>1</sup>

And the opposite of liberty—whatever name we give it—is a person’s being hindered or unable to do such-and-such as he wills, i.e. his being necessitated to act otherwise.

I don’t think any fair-minded and competent speaker of English will deny that what I have just offered is indeed the meaning of ‘liberty’ in the ordinary speech. If it is, then liberty and its opposite can’t properly be ascribed to any being that doesn’t have a faculty—power—property—of the sort that is called ‘will’. A thing can’t have a power or opportunity to act according to its will, and can’t be necessitated to act contrary to its will, if it doesn’t *have* a will! To talk as though the will itself has liberty or its opposite is, therefore, *nonsense*—if we identify sense and nonsense in terms of the basic and proper meanings of words. The will is not an agent that *has* a will; the power of choosing doesn’t *have* a power of choosing. [In this context, an ‘agent’ is simply something that *acts*. These days an ‘agent’ is usually someone who acts *on behalf of* someone else, but that wasn’t part of the word’s meaning in Edwards’s time.] What has the power of volition—the power of choosing, the faculty of will—is the •man or the •soul and not the •power of volition itself. And someone who has the liberty to do what he wills to do is the agent—the doer—who *has* the will, not the will that he has. . . . Freedom is the property of an agent who has

powers and faculties such as being cunning, brave, generous, or zealous. But these qualities are properties of persons, not properties of properties.

[Edwards repeats this point as applied to the opposite of liberty; and remarks that it is presented ‘with great clearness’ in Locke’s *Essay*.]

One more point about what is called ‘liberty’ in common speech: *all* it refers to is the person’s power and opportunity to act •as he will or •according to his choice; the meaning of the word doesn’t bring in anything about the cause of •that choice or about how the person came to have •such a volition. Was his choice or volition caused by some external motive or internal habitual bias? determined by some internal antecedent volition or happened without a cause? necessarily connected with some previous state or event or not so connected? The answers to questions like these have no bearing on whether the person was free according to the basic and common notion of freedom.

What I have said may be sufficient to show what ‘liberty’ means according to the common notions of mankind, and in the usual and basic meaning of the word: but when the word ‘liberty’ is used by Arminians, Pelagians and others who oppose the Calvinists, it means something entirely different. [Arminians were followers of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609). Some of his complex disagreements with Calvinism (of which Edwards was a proponent) will come up in the Conclusion of this book; but all that matters just now is that Arminians differed from Calvinists about the workings of the human will, and the content of *that* disagreement will appear clearly enough from Edwards’s text. Pelagians can for present purposes be equated with Arminians, who are mentioned about 150 times in this book.] Here are three things that Arminians believe about liberty. **(a)** It consists in a *self-determining* power in

<sup>1</sup> I say not only ‘doing’ but also ‘conducting himself’, because voluntarily refraining from doing—e.g. sitting still, keeping quiet, and so on—are instances of a person’s *conduct*, in which he can be at liberty; but they aren’t properly called *doing*.

the will, i.e. a certain sovereignty that the will has over itself and its own acts, whereby it determines its own volitions to the exclusion of any prior cause lying outside the will. **(b)** Liberty involves indifference, i.e. it requires that until the act of volition occurs the mind is evenly balanced between the alternatives. **(c)** Something else that is essential to liberty is contingency—not in the ordinary meaning of ‘contingency’ that I have explained [page 12] but as opposed to all necessity, i.e. to or any fixed and certain connection between the contingent item and some previous reason for its existence or occurrence. According to the Arminians, a man has no real freedom, however much he is at liberty to act according to his will, unless his will is ‘free’ in the sense given in this paragraph.

•MORAL AGENCY•

A moral agent is a being who is capable of actions that have a moral quality and can properly be called ‘good’ or ‘evil’ in a moral sense—‘virtuous’ or ‘vicious’, ‘commendable’ or ‘faulty’. To be a moral agent one has to have

- a moral faculty—a *sense* of moral good and evil, or of something’s deserving praise or blame, reward or punishment; and one must also have
- the ability to be led by moral inducements—motives presented to one’s understanding and reason—to act in ways that are agreeable to one’s moral sense.

[Edwards lists some things that can do good (the sun) or harm (house-fires) or both (‘the brute creatures’), but are not moral agents. Then:] The moral agency of a ruler differs from that of a subject in a circumstantial way—by which I mean this: the ruler and the subject are in different circumstances, so the moral inducements by which they can be influenced are different. A ruler acting purely as a ruler can’t be influenced by a moral law and its sanctions of threats and promises, rewards and punishments, as the

subject is; though both ruler and subject may be influenced by a knowledge of moral good and evil. So the moral agency of God, who acts *only* in his role as a ruler of his creatures and *never* as a subject, differs in that circumstantial way from the moral agency of created thinking beings. God’s actions, especially those he performs as a moral governor, are *morally good* in the highest degree. . . . We must think of God as influenced in the highest degree by the supreme moral inducement, namely the moral good that he sees in such and such things. Thus, he is in the strictest sense a *moral agent*—the source of all moral ability and agency, the fountain and rule of all virtue and moral good—although because of his being supreme over everything it isn’t possible for him to be influenced by law or command, promises or threats, rewards or punishments, advice or warnings. So God has the essential qualities of a moral agent in the greatest possible perfection—

- understanding, to see the difference between moral good and evil;
- a capacity to see the moral worthiness and unworthiness by which some things are praiseworthy while others deserve of blame and punishment; and also
- a capacity to choose, and to do so under the guidance of the understanding, and a power to act as he chooses or pleases, and a capacity to do the things that are in the highest sense praiseworthy.

We read in Genesis 1:27 that ‘God created man in his own likeness’, this being how he distinguished man from the beasts [= ‘the lower animals’]. What I have been discussing is God’s natural likeness, namely his capacity for moral agency. Man was initially made also in God’s spiritual likeness; that consisted in the moral excellence with which he was endowed.

## **Part 2: The freedom of will that the Arminians think is the essence of the liberty of moral agents: Does it exist? Could it exist? Is it even conceivable?**

### **Section 1: The Arminian notion of liberty of will as consisting in the will's self-determining power—its obvious inconsistency**

... I shall now consider the Arminian notion of the freedom of the will, and its supposed essentialness for moral agency, i.e. for anyone's being •capable of virtue or vice and •a fit subject for command or advice, praise or blame, promises or threats, rewards or punishments. The rival view is that the only thing that does or can make someone a moral agent, and make him a fit subject for praise or blame etc., is what counts as 'liberty' in ordinary language. In this Part, I shall discuss whether any such thing as Arminian freedom is possible or conceivable; I shall discuss in Part 3 the question of whether anything like Arminian freedom is necessary to moral agency and so on. [The phrase 'Arminian freedom' replaces Edwards's 'that freedom of the will that Arminians insist on'. Similar abbreviations will be used several times in what follows.]

Let us start with the notion of a self-determining power in the will, which is what the Arminians count as the absolute essence of the will's freedom. I shall especially press this question: Isn't it plainly absurd and a manifest inconsistency to suppose that the will itself determines all the free acts of the will? [See the note on 'determine' on page 3.]

There is a linguistic point that I want to set aside. It is very improper to speak of the will as determining itself ·or anything else·, because the will is a •power, whereas determining is done by •agents [see page 17]. This improper way of speaking leads to many mistakes and much confusion, as Locke observes, but I shan't argue against the Arminians

on this basis. When they speak of the *will's* determining itself, I shall take it that what they mean by 'the will' is 'the willing soul'. I shall assume that when they speak of the will as determining x they mean that the soul determines x through its power of willing or acting voluntarily. That is the only thing they *can* mean without gross and obvious absurdity. Whenever we speak of powers-of-acting as *doing* x, we mean that the agents that have these powers of acting do x in the exercise of those powers. 'Valour fights courageously'—we mean the man who is influenced by valour fights courageously. 'Love seeks the beloved'—we mean that the loving person seeks the beloved. 'The understanding detects x'—we mean that the soul in the exercise of its faculty of understanding detects x. 'The will decides or determines x'—we had better mean that x is determined by the person in the exercise of his power of willing and choosing, or by the soul acting voluntarily.

[Edwards now offers an argument that he states in the language of 'the will determining itself'. He means this to be understood as short-hand in the manner he has just described, and the argument goes through on that interpretation. Here it is, expressed without the distracting 'self-determination' idiom: Arminians say that every free act someone performs—including every act of the will—was caused by a preceding act; and if that had also to be free, it was caused by a yet earlier act, and so on backwards. How did this sequence of acts start? •If its first member was a free act, then that act is a counter-example to the Arminian thesis that freedom involves causation by a free act. •If the first member was not a free act, then—given that

it determined the second member of the sequence, which determined the third etc.—it seems to follow that none of the acts in the sequence has been free. Although this is obvious at first glance, Edwards says, he proceeds to 'demonstrate' it. Unfortunately, the 'demonstration' is stated in the language of *self*-determination; we had better get used to it. Here it is:]

If the will governs itself and determines its own actions, it doubtless does this in the same way that we find it governing our limbs and determining how they shall move—namely by antecedent volitions. The will determines how the hands and feet shall move by an act of choice, and it has no other way of determining, directing, or commanding *anything*. Whatever the will commands, it commands by an act of the will. . . . Thus, if the will's freedom consists in its having itself and its own actions under its command, so that its own volitions are determined by itself, it will follow that every free volition arises from an earlier volition that directed and commanded it; and if that directing volition was also free, it was determined by a still earlier one . . . and so on, until we come to the first volition in the whole series. •If that first volition is free—if it is a case of self-determination by the will—then the Arminian must say that it too was determined by a yet earlier volition—and that is a contradiction, because here we are talking about the *first* act in the series. •And if that first act of the will is not free, then none of the following acts that are determined and fixed by it can be free either. [Edwards tries to make this more intuitively compelling •by stating it in terms of a five-act sequence, and then maintaining that the point is just as good with ten acts in the sequence, or a hundred or ten thousand. And •by presenting an analogous argument about the movements of links in a chain. Then:] If the first act on which the whole sequence depends, and which determines all the rest, isn't a

free act, then the will isn't free in causing or determining any one of those acts. . . . Thus, this Arminian notion of liberty of the will as consisting in the will's self-determination is inconsistent with itself and shuts itself wholly out of the world.

## Section 2: Two attempted escapes from the foregoing reasoning

(A) Here is something that might be said in an attempt to evade the force of what I have been saying:

When Arminians speak of the will as determining its own acts, they don't mean that the will determines an act by any preceding *act*, or that one *act* of the will determines another. All they mean is that the faculty or power of will—or the soul in its use of that power—determines its own volitions, doing this without any *act* occurring before the act that is determined.

This is full of the most gross absurdity. I admit that I made it up; and it might be an injustice to the Arminians to suppose that any of *them* would make use of it. But it's as good an escape-attempt as I can invent, so I want to say a few things about it.

(1) If the power of the will determines an act of volition—meaning that the soul in its use or exercise of that power determines it—that is the same thing as the soul's determining the volition by an act of will. An •exercise of the power of will and an •act of the will are the same thing. It is a contradiction to say that the power of will—or the soul in the use or exercise of that power—determines volition without an act of will preceding the volition that is determined.

(2) If a •power of will determines the act of the will, then a •power of choosing determines it. As I pointed out earlier, in every act of will there is choice, and a power of willing is

a power to choose. But if a power of choosing determines the act of volition, it determines it by choosing it. It's just absurd to say that a power of choosing *determines* one thing rather than another without *choosing* anything! But if a power of choosing determines volition by choosing it, then we are back with a preceding act again—the act of choosing.

**(3)** To say 'The faculty or the soul •determines its own volition, but not by any •act' is a contradiction. For the soul to direct, decide, or determine anything is to act. . . . And this act can't be identical with the act that it aims to produce; so it must be something prior to it.

**(4)** The advocates for this 'Arminian' notion of the freedom of the will speak of a certain *sovereignty* in the will that gives it the power to determine its own volition. This means that the determination of volition must itself be an *exercise* of that supposed power and sovereignty, and that must be *act* of the will.

**(5)** If the will determines itself, then in doing this either it is active or it is not. If it is active, then the determination is an act of the will. If it isn't active in its determination of itself, then how does it exercise any liberty in this? . . .

**(B)** Here is a second kind of thing that might be said to defend Arminianism from my attack:

Although it is true that if the soul determines its own volitions, it must do so by *acting* in some way, the relevant act doesn't have to be *prior* to the volition that it determines. It could be that the will or soul determines the act of the will *in* performing that act; it determines its own volition in the very act of volition; it directs and shapes the act of the will, causing it to be thus and not so, *in* performing the act and without any preceding act.

Anyone who says something like this must mean one or other of these three things. **(1)** The determining act precedes the

determined one in the order of nature, but not in the order of time. **(2)** The determining act doesn't precede the determined act in the order of time or of nature; in fact it isn't truly distinct from it; the soul's *determining* the act of volition is identical with its *performing* the act of volition. . . . **(3)** Volition has no cause, and isn't an effect; it comes into existence with such-and-such a particular determination without any ground or reason for its existing or having the properties that it does have. I shall consider these separately.

**(1)** 'The determining act is not *temporally* before the determined act.' Even if that were right, it wouldn't help. If the determining act x is before the determined act y in the order of *nature*, being the cause or ground of y's existence, that makes x *distinct from* y just as much as if it occurred earlier than y in time. Causes are always distinct from their effects: the cause of a body's movement may occur at the same time as that movement, but it isn't *identical with* the movement. . . . And so we still have a series of acts with each member causing the one before, which leads to the problem of the status of the first act in the series. Because it is the first, it isn't caused by any act of the will distinct from it; so it isn't a free act according to the Arminian account of freedom; and if it isn't free then neither is any act that depends on it—which means that there is no freedom anywhere in the series. In short, the *first-act-in-the-series* problem is fatal to the Arminian account of freedom, whether the *firstness* is temporal or only causal.

**(2)** 'The determining act is not temporally or causally before the determined act, because it is identical with it. The performance of that act *is* the determination of the act; for the soul to •perform a particular volition is for it to •cause and determine that act of volition.' In this account, the thing in question—namely freedom of the will—seems to be forgotten, or hidden by a darkness and unintelligibility of

speech. [Edwards criticizes this at some length. The core of the criticism is the point he has already made in passing in (1), namely that any cause must be distinct from its effect, so that what determines an act of the will can't be that very same act of his will. Acts of the will do determine—settle, fix—things, but they can't determine *themselves*.]

(3) 'The soul's performance of a particular act of will happens without any cause. There is absolutely no reason why the soul is determined to perform *this* volition rather than *that*.' This can't possibly be said in support of the Arminian view that the will determines its own acts, for liberty of will consists in the power of self-determination! If the will determines the will, then *something* determines it, and now we have the claim that *nothing* determines it!

And yet this very thesis that the free acts of the will happen without a cause *is* certainly implied in the Arminian notion of liberty of will, even though it is flatly inconsistent with many other things in their system and in conflict with their notion of liberty. Their view implies that the particular determination of volition has no cause, because they hold that free acts of the will are *contingent* events—•contingency is essential to •freedom on their view of freedom. Events that have a prior ground and reason for their occurrence, a cause that antecedently determines them to occur just as and when they do, don't happen contingently. [Edwards is here using 'contingent' not in what he has called its ordinary-language sense but rather in the special sense that philosophers have invented for it. See page 12. When he writes that it is 'certainly implied in the Arminian notion of liberty of will' that all free actions are 'contingent' in this sense, he is presumably relying on his view that if x is caused it is necessitated by something that is necessary (because securely lodged in the past or present), which means that x itself is necessitated and so isn't 'free' in any Arminian sense. After discussing the 'contingency' claim through sections 3 and 4, he will start 5 by saying, in effect, that the claim was

after all irrelevant to the Arminian cause.] If some previous thing by a causal influence and connection determines and fixes precisely when and how the event occurs, then it isn't a contingent matter whether the event will occur or not.

Do the free acts of the will occur without a cause? This question is in many ways very important in this controversy, so I shall go into it thoroughly in the next two sections.

### **Section 3: Can volition occur without a cause? Can any event do so?**

Before starting in on this, I want to explain what I mean by 'cause' in this discussion, because I shall—for want of a better word—be using it in a broader sense than is sometimes given to it. The word is often used in a narrow sense in which it applies only to something that has a positive effectiveness or influence in producing a thing or making an event occur. But many things that have no such positive productive influence are still *causes*, in that they really are the reason why some events occur rather than others or why the events are as they are. For example, the absence of the sun in the night isn't the cause of the fall of dew at that time *in the same way as* its beams are the cause of mist rising in the day-time; and the sun's withdrawal in the winter isn't the cause of the freezing of lakes *in the same way as* its approach in the spring is the cause of their thawing. And yet the absence (or withdrawal) of the sun is an antecedent with which the dew (or the freezing) is connected, and on which it depends; it is part of the ground and reason why the dew falls (or the lakes freeze) then rather than at other times; although the absence (or withdrawal) of the sun is not something positive and has no positive influence.

I should further point out that when I speak of connection of causes and effects, I am talking about •moral causes [see

the note on page 13] as well as the ones that are distinguished from those by being called •natural. Moral causes can be *causes* in as proper a sense as any causes whatsoever, can have as real an influence, and can as truly be the ground and reason for an event's occurring.

So I shall sometimes use 'cause' to signify any antecedent *x*—natural or moral, positive or negative—on which some outcome *y* depends in such a way that *x* is all or part of the ground or reason why *y* exists, or occurs, or is as it is. In other words, if antecedent *x* is so connected with a consequent outcome *y* that *x* truly belongs to the reason why the proposition asserting that *y* exists or occurs is true, then *x* is a 'cause' of *y* (in my usage), whether or not it has any positive influence. And in conformity with this, I sometimes speak of something *y* as an 'effect' of something else *x*, when strictly speaking *x* may be an occasion of *y* rather than a 'cause' in the most usual sense. [The word 'occasion' was variously used for various kinds of *leading-to* that were thought to fall short of outright *causing*. Occasionalism was the thesis that bodies can't cause changes in one another but seem to do so because (e.g.) a •collision is the occasion of a •rebound through being the occasion for God's causing the rebound. In our present context, Edwards is probably thinking of negative states of affairs: the sun's *not* shining overhead is an occasion but (he thinks) not strictly a 'cause' (in the ordinary sense) of the formation of icicles. ] What makes me especially careful to explain what I mean by 'cause' is this: There may be people who will look for chances to object to and find fault with things I am going to say about how everything that happens depends on and is connected with some cause, and I want to protect myself against fault-finding.

Having thus explained what I mean by 'cause', I assert that **nothing ever happens without a cause**. Anything that is self-existent—i.e. anything whose nature is such that it must exist, whatever else is the case—must exist

from eternity and must be unchangeable; things that *begin* to exist are not self-existent, so their existence must be founded on something other than themselves. Anything that *begins* to exist must have a cause why it begins to exist *just then*—that seems to be the first dictate of the common and natural sense that God has implanted in the minds of all mankind, and the main basis for all our reasonings about the existence of things past, present, or to come.

This dictate of common sense applies equally to substances and modes, i.e. to things and the manner and circumstances of things. Consider the two cases:

We see a motionless body start to move.

We see a body come into existence.

In each case we suppose that there is some cause or reason for this new •mode of existence (in one case) or this new •existence (in the other), and the supposition is as natural to us and as necessary in the former case as it is in the latter. Similarly with change of direction, of shape, of colour—the beginning of any of these new modes is a new event, and the human mind necessarily supposes that there is some cause or reason for it.

If this great principle of common sense is taken away, we lose all our arguments from effects to causes. That will rob us of all knowledge of anything's existence except the knowledge we have by the most direct and immediate intuition. We'll still be able to know that a certain pain exists, but not that a certain damaged finger exists. Most importantly: all our proof of the existence of God will be lost. We argue for his existence from

- our own existence, from
- the observed coming into existence of other things, and from
- the existence of the world with all its parts and their properties.

We can see plainly that these things are not necessary in their own nature—so they aren't self-existent—so they must have causes. But if things that aren't in themselves necessary (·i.e. aren't self-existent·) can come into existence without a cause, all this arguing gets nowhere.

·AN ASIDE ON *a priori* KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S EXISTENCE·

I'm not denying that the nature of things contains a basis for the knowledge of God's existence without any evidence of it from his works. I do think there is a great absurdity in denying Being ·or Existence· in general, and imagining an eternal, absolute, universal *nothing*. And that leads me to suppose that the nature of things contains something that could make it •intuitively evident that there must be an eternal, infinite, most perfect being, if only our minds were strong enough and broad enough to have a clear idea of *general and universal Being*. In that case, though, we wouldn't come to know of God's existence by •arguing; we would see it as •intuitively evident; we would see it as we see other intrinsically necessary truths whose contraries are intrinsically absurd and contradictory—that twice two is four, that a circle has no angles. If we had as clear an idea of *universal infinite entity ·or thing·* as we have of these other things, I suppose we would intuitively see the absurdity of supposing that there is no such universal infinite thing. . . . But our minds aren't strong and broad enough for us to know this for certain in this intuitive way. The way in which *we* come to the knowledge of God's existence is the one Paul speaks of in Romans 1:20: 'The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen; being understood by the things that are made; even his eternal power and Godhead.' We first *ascend* and prove from the effects that there must be an eternal cause; then we prove—by argument, not by intuition—that this being must be necessarily existent; and then thirdly from the proved necessity of his existence

we can *descend* and prove many of his perfections, arguing from cause to effect. ·END OF ASIDE·

But if we give up the great principle that what is not intrinsically necessary must have a cause, and start maintaining that things can come into existence—*begin* to exist—without any cause, that will deprive us of *all* our means of reasoning our way upwards from the creation to the creator, *all* our grounds for believing that God exists. . . . The reasoning that we do now engage in involves supposing not just that what begins to exist has a cause, but also that the cause is proportional to the effect. The principle that leads us to determine that nothing can occur without a cause also leads us to determine that there can't be more in the effect than there is in the cause.

If we once allowed that things can happen without a cause, we would not only have no proof of the existence of God but we would also have no evidence of the existence of anything at all except our own immediately present ideas and consciousness. We have no way to prove anything else except by arguing from effects to causes: from •ideas that are now immediately present to us we infer •other things that are not immediately in view; from •sensations now aroused in us we infer the existence of •things outside us as the causes of these sensations; and from the existence of •these things we infer •other things on which they depend as effects on causes. When we infer the past existence of ourselves and other things by memory, we're relying on the view that our present ideas are consequences ·or effects· of past ideas and sensations. . . . If there's no absurdity or difficulty in supposing **one** thing to begin to exist of itself and without a cause, then there's no absurdity or difficulty in supposing the same of **millions of millions** of things. For nothing (or no difficulty) multiplied ·by any number you like· is still nothing (or no difficulty).

And indeed according to the theory I am attacking—that the acts of the will happen without a cause—there are in fact millions of millions of events continually occurring without any cause or reason, all over the world and at every moment down through the centuries. There is a constant stream of such events within every moral agent! This contingency—this effective *nothing*—this productive *no-cause*—is always ready at hand to produce such effects as long as the agent exists and as often as he needs them. Suppose this were how things stand:

Acts of the will seem to happen of themselves, .i.e. without and cause distinct from them. They happen all the time, wherever there are subjects capable of acts of the will. And they are the only events that seem not to be caused.

That would show that •there is some cause of these acts of the will—something that picked them out and made them different from other events—and that •they didn't really happen contingently. For contingency is blind; it doesn't pick and choose a particular sort of events. *Nothing* doesn't choose. This *No-cause*. . . can't cause it to be the case that just one particular sort of event happens, distinguished from all other sorts. For example: The only sort of matter that drops out of the sky is *water*, and this has happened so often, so constantly and plentifully, all over the world and all through the centuries in all ages, *shows* that there is some cause or reason for the falling of water out of the sky, and that something besides mere contingency has a hand in the matter.

Suppose that *non-entity* is about to bring something x into existence: it must do this without any cause or antecedent that settles what kind of item x shall be. If this is happening all the time, there is never a cause or antecedent that could determine whether the things that come into existence are

to be stones or stars or beasts or angels or human bodies or souls, or merely some new motion or shape in natural bodies, some new sensations in animals, some new ideas in the human understanding, *some volitions in the will*—or anything else out of all the infinite number of possible items. With many millions of millions of items coming into existence in this way all over the face of the earth, you couldn't expect them all to be of one particular kind. . . .

Someone might want to try this reply:

Free acts of the will are items of an utterly different kind from anything else, and it's because of their special nature that they can occur without any previous ground or reason whereas other things cannot. It is something *in* these acts that enables them to come into existence without a cause.

Someone who seriously says this seems to be strangely forgetting himself: in the course of maintaining that there is no ground for the occurrence of acts of will, he is giving an account of some ground for their occurrence! •And the account he gives is incoherent in itself, quite apart from its conflict with his over-all position. Here is why: The special nature of acts of the will, no matter how different it makes them from everything else, can't lay the foundation for an act of the will to occur without a cause; because to suppose that it did would be to suppose that the special nature of the act exists prior to the act's occurrence—to suppose that it is *clearing the way* for the act to occur without a cause. Something that in any fashion clears the way for an event to occur must itself be *prior to* that event. The event's special nature can't have influence *backward*, enabling it to act •as a way-clearer• *before* the event occurs. The special nature of a volition can't do anything, can't have any influence, at a time when it doesn't yet exist; and afterwards it is too late for it to influence the occurrence of the volition, because by then

the volition has made sure of occurring without its help.

So the supposition that an act of the will might come into existence without a cause is as contrary to reason as the supposition that the human soul or an angel or the globe of the earth or the whole universe might come into existence without a cause. And once we allow that •a volition could occur without a cause, how do we know that there aren't many •other sorts of effects that can do so as well? What makes it absurd to think that a volition occurs without a cause is not some special fact about *volitions*. . . .

#### **Section 4: Can volition occur without a cause because the soul is active?**

The author of *Essay on the Freedom of Will in God and in Creatures* defends the doctrine of a self-determining power in the will. [The author in question was Isaac Watts, as Edwards knew. He didn't use the name out of respect for Watts's evident desire to publish his works anonymously. On later occasions, this version will put the name into Edwards's text.] He answers the objection that

Nothing exists or happens without a sufficient reason for its existence or occurrence, and for its being *thus* rather than *so*,

by maintaining that

Although that is true of •corporeal things, which are—strictly and philosophically speaking—•passive, it doesn't hold for •spirits, which are •active and have the spring of action within themselves, so that they can determine themselves.

He is clearly supposing that an act of the will can occur in a spirit without a sufficient reason why it occurs or why it is *thus* rather than *so*. But he has certainly handled this matter very incautiously and carelessly—and I have *five* reasons for saying so!

(1) In giving his answer to the objection, Watts seems to have forgotten what the objection was. His own statement of the challenge was this:

•How can an event occur without a sufficient reason for its occurrence and for its being *thus* rather than *so*?

Instead of solving this difficulty as it applies to volitions, as he says he will do, he forgets himself and answers this completely different question:

•What sufficient reason is there why a volition occurs and why it is *thus* rather than *so*?

And he answers *this* in terms of the active being's own determination as the cause, a cause that is sufficient for the effect; which leaves the original challenge untouched. . . . The soul's activeness may enable it to be the •cause of effects; but it doesn't enable it to be the subject of •effects that have no cause! [In this section and a few later places, 'activeness' replaces Edwards's 'activity'. He uses the latter to refer to a property that a thing has, an aspect of its nature; but we today use 'activity' more to refer to something the active thing does or engages in, an *exercise of* its activeness.]. . . . A soul's having an active nature won't enable it to produce (and settle the details of) uncaused effects •within itself, any more than it will enable it to produce uncaused effects in •something else. But if an active being were to exercise its activeness by determining an effect in some external object, how absurd it would be to say that the effect was produced without a cause!

(2) The question is not so much 'How does an active spirit come to act?' as 'Why does an active spirit act *thus* rather than *so*?' If the activeness of a spirit (the soul of a man, for instance) is the cause ·or reason· why it acts rather than remaining inactive, *that* alone isn't the cause ·or reason· why it acts in one way rather than another. . . . To explain this there must be more than mere activeness, which is a

•general tendency to action; there must also be a •particular tendency to perform that individual action. 'Why does the soul of man use its activeness in the particular way it does?' Faced with that question, the answer 'Because it is active' would strike us as entirely missing the point.

(3) The only way the activeness of an active being can lead to •something x's being the case is for •x to result from the exercise of his activeness, i.e. from *actions* that he performs. . . . And any such action, any such exercise of his activeness, must occur prior to its effects. 'We all know that' this priority is required if one thing's action is to produce an effect in •something else; but it holds just as strongly when one thing's action produces an effect in •itself. Therefore a person's activeness can't cause the details of his first action—the first exercise of his activeness—because that would imply a contradiction. It would be to say that the first exercise of activeness is before—and is the cause of—the first exercise of activeness.

(4) If the soul's sheer *activeness* were the sole cause of any of its actions, then all the actions that it caused would be exactly alike. It would be the •same substantial soul, and the •same nature of activeness, at work in each case, so the effects would have to be the •same also. And that won't do, because we are trying to explain human volitions, which exhibit great variety. To get a variety of actions as effects, the soul has to put in a variety of actions as causes. But then how can those I am opposing explain the variety of the input-actions? 'We are back at the starting-point of the problem, with only one difference: we now know that the problem *can't* be solved by appealing simply to the soul's activeness'. It's true that the substance of the soul may, independently of how and with what variety it acts, be in different states and circumstances 'at different times'; but those whom I am opposing won't allow differences in the soul's circumstances

to be the determining causes of the acts of the will, because that is contrary to their notion of self-determination. [In this context as in many others, 'circumstances' means 'relational properties'. Edwards says that his opponents won't allow acts of the will to be caused by any of its relational properties; but that seems to leave the 'in different *states*' part of their argument untouched.]

(5) Let us suppose, as do the theologians 'whom I am opposing', that strictly speaking the only things the soul actively *does* are free volitions. It follows that all the exercises of the soul's activeness reflect its nature as a •willing and •choosing being, so that whenever it actively produces effects it does so •voluntarily and •by choice. But for x to produce y *by choice* is for x to produce y *in consequence of and according to x's own choice*. So it can't be true that the soul through its activeness produces *all* its own acts of will or choice, because that would take us right back to the contradiction of a free act of choice before the first free act of choice. According to these gentlemen's own notion of action, if a volition occurs in the mind without a free act of the will to produce it, the mind is not the voluntary cause of that volition, because it doesn't arise from, and isn't regulated by, choice or design. So it can't be the case that the mind is the active voluntary determining cause of the first volition that starts off the whole series.

- The mind's being a designing cause only enables it to produce effects in consequence of its design; but it doesn't enable it to be the designing cause of all its own designs.

- The mind's being a choosing cause enables it to produce effects in consequence of, and according to, its choices; but it can't enable it to be the choosing cause of all its own choices.

And in the same way:

•The mind's being an active cause enables it to produce effects in consequence of its own acts, but it can't enable it to be the determining cause of all its own acts—

because that introduces the contradiction of supposing a determining act that occurs prior to the first act. . . . These five points show us that the activeness of the soul's nature provides no relief from the difficulties associated with the notion of a self-determining power in the will, and won't help that notion's absurdities and inconsistencies.

**Section 5: Even if the things said in these attempted escapes were true, they are quite irrelevant and can't help the cause of Arminian liberty; so that Arminian writers have to talk inconsistently**

I have shown in section 4 that the soul's activeness can't be a reason why an act of the will occurs, or why it is thus rather than so. But the case against Arminianism doesn't depend on that. You'll recall that 'activeness' was brought into the story in an attempt to defend the view that volitions are *contingent* events, not depending for their occurrence or their detailed natures on anything that came before them. Well, I now maintain that even if I were wrong in section 4, even if it were shown that every volition is after all contingent in the philosophical sense of 'contingent' [introduced on page 12], that wouldn't help the Arminians to establish their notion of freedom as consisting in the will's determination of itself. The absolutely central case against their view doesn't have to mention contingency. It goes like this:

For the will to determine x is the same as for the soul to determine x by willing; and the only way the will

or the soul can determine a volition is by willing that it occur, i.e. by *choosing* it. (If the will doesn't cause and determine the act by choosing it, it doesn't cause or determine it at all. What isn't determined by choice isn't determined voluntarily or willingly; and our present topic is the Arminian view that the soul does willingly—i.e. with its will—determine the volition in question.) On the Arminian theory, therefore, every free act of the will has to be determined by some previous act of the will; so we have here two acts of the will—one producing or choosing the other. And that brings us—or rather the Arminian—back to the old absurdity and contradiction of holding that *every* free act of will is caused and determined by a preceding free act of will.

To counter this charge of absurdity and contradiction by claiming that free acts are not caused at all is not to *rescue* the Arminian position but to *destroy* it.

A different attempt to rescue Arminianism might be to claim that the soul determines its own acts of will not by a preceding act of will but in some other way. But this can't succeed. If the soul determines its volition by an act of the understanding, or an act of some other power, then the will doesn't determine itself, and the theory that the self-determining power of the will is the essence of liberty is given up. (I am relying here on the discussion [on page 17] in which I freed Arminianism from its way of talking as though the **will**, which is a faculty, were a substance that acts, does things, produces effects. I did this by replacing the Arminian 'The will causes. . . ' by the conceptually cleaner 'The **soul** causes. . . , doing this **through its will**'.) On this account, the acts of the will may indeed be directed and effectively determined and fixed; but this is done without any exercise of choice or will in producing the effect; and if will and choice

aren't exercised in this procedure, how can liberty of the will be exercised in it?

Thus, the Arminian notion of liberty as consisting in the will's determining its own acts destroys itself—no matter how they dodge and weave in deploying it. •If they hold that every free act of will is determined by the soul's own free choice, a free act of will that occurs either temporally or causally *before* the act in question, they come to the grossly contradictory position that the *first* free act is determined by a free act that *precedes* it! •If instead they say that the will's free acts are determined by some other act of the soul and not an act of will or choice, this destroys their notion of liberty as consisting in the acts of the will being determined by the will itself. •As for the view that the acts of the will are not determined by anything at all that is temporally or causally prior to them, and are 'contingent' in the sense of not being determined at all, this also destroys—or, more accurately, it *deserts*—their notion of liberty as consisting in the will's determining its own acts.

Because this is how things stand with the Arminian notion of liberty, the writers who defend it are forced into gross inconsistencies. An example is provided by Daniel Whitby in his discussion of freedom of the will in his book *The Five Points of Calvinism*. He there opposes the opinion of the Calvinists who identify a man's liberty with his power to *do what he will*, saying that on this point those Calvinists plainly agree with Hobbes. Yet he himself introduces the very same notion of liberty as dictated by 'the sense and common reason of mankind, and a rule laid down by the light of nature, namely that liberty is a power of •acting from ourselves or •doing what we will'. He is right—this is agreeable to 'the sense and common reason of mankind'! So it isn't very surprising that Whitby accepts it against himself, for what *other* account of liberty can anyone invent? Indeed,

this author repeatedly seems to accept this view of liberty; it comes up in the passages he quotes from the Church Fathers in his own support. Here are small excerpts from the passages:

- Origen: 'The soul acts by its own choice.'
- Justin Martyr: 'Every man does good or evil according to his own free choice.'
- Maccarius: 'God made it in men's choice to turn to good or evil.'

Thus Whitby arrives in effect at the very notion of liberty that the Calvinists have—the one he condemns because Hobbes accepts it. . . . I have said 'what other account of liberty can anyone invent?', and I now admit that Whitby offers one. He says elsewhere that liberty consist not only in liberty of •doing what we will but also a liberty of •willing without necessity. (For convenience of reference, let us call this 'the two-part account' of liberty.) But then the question comes around again: what does that 'liberty of willing without necessity' consist in if not the power to *will* as we please without being impeded by an opposing necessity? i.e. a liberty for the soul to will as it chooses? And if we take the basic do-what-we-will account of liberty and—following the two-part account—apply it to the acts of the will themselves, we get the result that the man performs acts of will according to his own free choice or proceeding from his choice. And then you be the judge: don't you agree that this involves a free choice preceding the free act of will? And if that's how it is with all free acts, then you again be the judge: doesn't it follow that there is a free choice *before* the first free act of the will? And you be the judge of one last thing: does the system of these writers offer any possibility of avoiding these absurdities?

If liberty consists, as Whitby in the two-part account says it does, in a man's doing what he will, with 'doing'

understood as covering not only •external actions but also •the acts of the will themselves, then the liberty of the latter—the liberty of the will—must consist in the man's *willing what he wills*. There are only two things this could mean. here is one of them:

(i) The man has power to will as he does will; because what he wills he wills; and therefore has power to will what he has power to will.

If that is what is meant, then all this mighty controversy about freedom of the will and self-determining power comes to absolutely nothing. All that is being defended is the thesis that the mind of man does what it does, and is the subject of what it is the subject of; or that *what is the case is the case*. No-one has any quarrel with *that*.

The other thing that might be meant is this:

(ii) A man has power to will in whatever way he chooses to will; i.e. he has power by one act of choice to choose another. . . .

And someone who says *this* is merely dodging his opponents and baffling his own reason. For we keep coming back to the question; what constitutes the liberty of the first of the two acts of choice? The only answer our philosopher can give is one that re-applies to the first act the account he gave of the liberty of the second act; and so he is launched on an infinite regress of acts in the soul of every man without beginning.

### **Section 6: What determines the will in cases where the mind sees the options as perfectly indifferent?**

Some believers in the self-determining power ·of the will· say that the view is strongly supported by a kind of experience we all have (according to them), namely the experience of being able to determine our wills at times when no prevailing motive is presented to our minds. [See note on 'determine' on

page 2.] In such a case, they argue,

The will has to choose between two or more actions that are perfectly equal in the view of the mind; the will seems to be altogether indifferent, ·i.e. evenly balanced between the two·; and yet we find it easy to come to a choice—the will can instantly determine itself to one ·action· by its over-riding power over itself, without being moved by any inducement that outweighs its rivals.

Thus Watts in his *Essay on the Freedom of Will etc.* writes as follows:

In many cases the will is not determined by •present uneasiness or by •the greatest apparent good or by •the last dictate of the understanding or by any thing else [each of those three was said by some philosophers to be *only* determinant of the will] , but merely by •*itself* as a dominant self-determining power of the soul. In some cases the soul wills a certain action not because of any influence on it but just *because it will*. I can turn my face to the south or the north; I can point with my finger upward or downward. In these cases the will determines itself. . . .without a reason borrowed from the understanding; and this reveals its perfect power of choice arising from within itself and free from all influence or restraint of any kind.

And he explicitly says that the will is often determined by no motive at all, and acts without *any* motive or basis for preference. I have two things to say about this.

(1) The very supposition that is made here directly contradicts and overthrows *itself*. This argument rests on the supposition that out of several possible courses of action the will actually •chooses one rather than another at the same time that it •is perfectly indifferent—·perfectly evenly balanced between them·—which is just say that the mind

•has a preference at the same time that it •has no preference. •You might want to challenge 'at the same time', but I am right to include it. If Watts had meant only that the mind is indifferent *before* it comes to have a choice, or *until* it has a preference, he wouldn't have thought he was engaged in a controversy. And anyway it *isn't* what he meant: it is pretty clear that what he is supposing is not that

the will chooses x rather than y, having been indifferent between them *before* making that choice,

but rather that

the will is indifferent between x and y *when* it chooses; and it stops being indifferent between them only *afterwards*, as a result of its choice. . . .

Here is what he says:

Where the courses of action that are proposed appear equally fit or good, the will is left without a guide or director; so it has to make its own choice by its own determination, •which it *can* do• because it is strictly speaking a *self*-determining power. In such a case, what the will does is (as it were) to make a good to itself by its own choice, i. e. create its own pleasure or delight in this self-chosen good. This is analogous to someone who seizes a patch of unoccupied land in an uninhabited country, makes it his own possession and property, and rejoices in it as such. Where things were previously indifferent, the will finds nothing to make one agreeable than another, when they are considered merely in themselves, but the pleasure it feels *arising from the choice it has made* and carried through with.

We love many things that we have chosen, *purely because we chose them*.

He can't have been thinking hard when he wrote this! Choice or preference can't be *before itself* either temporally or causally; it can't be the basis for itself or a consequence

of itself. The very act of •choosing one thing over another is •preferring that thing, which is •setting a higher value on it. It is not the case that the mind sets a higher value on one thing than on another as a result of setting a higher value on that thing!

[Edwards devotes about two more pages to **(i)** more quotations showing that Watts really does have the view that Edwards is here attacking, and **(ii)** developing his reasons for rejecting the view as impossible. Here is a bit of **(i)**, linked to the core of **(ii)**:] Speaking of the case where none of the courses of action presented for choice is fitter to be chosen than the others, Watts writes: 'In such a case the will must act by its own choice and determine itself *as it pleases*.' He is supposing that the very determination that is the basis and impetus for the will's act is an act of *choice and pleasure*, in which one act is more agreeable than another: and this preference and greater pleasure is the basis for all that the will does in this case. So the mind is *not* indifferent when it determines itself, but *prefers* to do one thing rather than another. [Edwards writes '*...but had rather do one thing than another*'. The italics are his.] So the will does not act in indifference. . . . Perhaps it is possible for the •understanding to act in indifference, but surely the •will never do so, because the will's beginning to act is the same thing as its beginning to choose or prefer. . . .

**(2)** It's not very hard to show, with regard to the sorts of cases Watts presents, not only •*that* in them the mind must be influenced in its choice by something that has an outweighing influence on it, but also •*how* this happens. All that is needed to clear up this matter is a little attention to our own experience and some clear thinking about the acts of our own minds in such cases. Consider this case:

I am confronted by an empty chess-board. For some reason I am resolved to put my finger on one square of

the board, without having decided which square it will be—perhaps my employer has ordered me to do this, or a friend has asked me to do so. Not being confined to or steered towards any one square in particular, and finding nothing in the squares—considered in themselves—that recommends any one of the sixty-four over the others, my mind determines to give itself up to what is commonly called 'accident',<sup>2</sup> by resolving to touch whatever square

happens to be most in view,  
happens to catch my eye at that moment,  
happens to be most in my mind, or  
has my attention on it through some other such accident.

Here the mind takes three steps, though they can all be performed seemingly instantaneously.

1. It forms a •general resolve to touch one of the squares.
2. It forms a second •general resolve, namely to let itself be led to whatever individual square is made salient by some accident such as those listed above.
3. Finally, it makes a •particular decision to touch a certain individual square; the one that the mind lands on through that sort of accident *does* now offer itself in preference to the others.

Now, it is obvious that in each of those three steps the mind is proceeding *not* in absolute indifference but under the influence of an outweighing inducement. It takes step 1 because of an order or request or for some other reason. It takes step 2—i.e. resolving to pick whatever square accidentally becomes salient—because it seems at that time to be a convenient way of doing what is needed to fulfill the general purpose resolved on in step 1. Then in step 3 the

mind decides to touch the individual square that actually does become salient to it. It doesn't do this in a state of indifference; on the contrary, it is influenced by a prevailing inducement and reason—namely to carry through with the procedure resolved on in step 2.

In a case like this there will always be accidents that serve the purpose without creating any delays. Among many objects in the mind's view, one will be salient in our •visual field or in our •thoughts. When we are open-eyed in bright sunshine, many objects strike our •eye at once and countless images may be traced on the eye by the rays of light; but the mind can't attend to many of them at once, or anyway not for long. Similarly with •ideas in the mind: we don't have—or anyway not for more than a moment—a number of ideas that are equally strong in the mind's view and equally getting its attention. Nothing in the world varies more constantly than the ideas of the mind; they don't remain precisely the same for the least perceivable stretch of time. (And we know why. [What follows is Locke's theory about the origin of our idea of time passing.] The only way the mind has of perceiving the passage of time is through the successive changes of its own ideas. Therefore, while the perceptions of the mind remain precisely the same there is no sensible succession and therefore no perceivable length of time.)

[Edwards next makes the point that just as each of the three mental steps has a cause, so does the 'accident, as I have called it' by which the mind is guided in step 3. There is no appeal here to events that happen without a cause, any more than there is in such 'accidents' as the fall of dice.]

When people insist that, in cases like the chess-board one, the will acts while being strictly indifferent, not moved

<sup>2</sup> I pointed out •on page 12• that what is commonly called 'accident' is nothing like the Arminian metaphysical notion of *contingency*, i.e. something that isn't connected with anything that came before it. Ordinary-language 'accident' is something that happens in the course of some human activity, without being foreseen and without being produced by human planning.

by any inducement in its decisions, they are confused in their thought, and there are probably two reasons for this.

[One, Edwards says, is that people don't distinguish different things that a mind might be said to be indifferent about at a particular time. That stops them from properly grasping that at the instant of taking step 1 the mind may be indifferent with respect to what step 3 will be, although a second or two *later* it reaches a resolve, a determination, a non-indifference, with respect to step 3. There is more to chew on in his other suggested explanation for people's confusion, namely:] They seem to drift away from the real question, or at least not stay clearly focused on it. They debate the question:

Is the mind indifferent about the **objects** presented to it, one of which is to be taken, touched, pointed to, etc.—such as two eggs or two cakes that appear equally good?

Whereas the question we are really discussing is:

Is the person indifferent with respect to his own **actions**, e.g. *taking* an egg or *taking* a cake?

When the mind is confronted by these choices, its most immediate and direct concern is not with the objects that are presented but with the acts to be performed concerning these objects. [Edwards, like all his philosophical contemporaries, often uses 'object' extremely generally, so that actions can be called 'objects'. Already in this work he has sometimes used 'object' in this very general way, and the present version has usually replaced it by 'action'. Edwards is not confused about this; it's just that the narrower sense of 'object', which he is following here in order to make a good philosophical point, is really *our* only sense for it.] Even if the objects appear equal, the mind doesn't have to make any choice between *them*; what it has to choose is an external action relating to the objects—taking one, touching one, etc.—and these possible actions may not appear equal, so that one can be

chosen before another. In each of the three steps, what the mind resolves on is not an object but an action relating to an object.

There is no need to assume that the mind *ever* chooses or prefers one of the objects over the others—before it has taken one, or afterwards. The man does indeed choose to take, or touch, one object rather than any other; but not because he chooses the object he takes or touches. It can happen that of two things that are offered a man may prefer to take the one that he values less, bypassing the one that his mind prefers. In a case like that, •choosing the thing taken is obviously different from •choosing to take it; and the same is true whenever the things presented are equally valued by the mind. The Arminian argument that is the topic of this section is said to be based on our *experience* of choosing between options without any preference for any one of them. The only thing that fact and experience make evident is that in such cases the mind chooses one *action* rather than any other. So the Arminians can't further their cause unless they show that the mind chooses one action in perfect indifference with respect to that *action*, not to prove that the mind chooses one action in perfect indifference with respect to its *object*. . . .

### **Section 7: The view that freedom of the will consists in indifference**

What I have said in section 6 has gone some way to showing the absurdity of the opinion that

•liberty consists in indifference, or in the equilibrium that clears the will of any antecedent bias; •when the indifferent will chooses one way rather than another, it does this entirely *from itself*, exercising its own power

and the sovereignty that it has over itself.<sup>3</sup>

But this view has been around for so long, and has been so generally accepted and so strenuously insisted on by Pelagians, Semi-Pelagians, Jesuits, Socinians, Arminians, and others, that it may deserve a fuller consideration. So I shall now proceed to a more detailed and thorough inquiry into it.

·A SUPPOSED REFINEMENT·

[To guard himself against accusations of misrepresenting his opponents, Edwards now devotes a page to a fairly recent minority view about what kind of indifference is essential to liberty. It is the view that what liberty involves is not indifference ·or equilibrium· in the will's •inclinations or •tendencies, but rather indifference ·or equilibrium· in the soul's •power of willing—meaning that the will *so far as its power or ability to choose goes* can go either way. This is offered as a refinement of the 'indifference' theory of freedom, Edwards says, but he can't find any sense in it that doesn't make it collapse back into the more familiar form of the theory. Then:]

But I needn't go on about the inexplicable abstruseness of this ·equilibrium-of-power· idea. All I need is this:

*Any* Arminians who talk in *any* way about indifference as essential to liberty of will, if they mean something that is relevant to their over-all system, must be talking about an indifference that leaves the will in a state of being *not yet determined*, but free from actual

possession, and vacant of predetermination [those nine words are Edwards's], so as to make room for the exercise of the self-determining power of the will. Their position has to be that the will's freedom consists in or depends on this •vacancy and •opportunity that is left for the will itself to be the determiner of the act that is to be the free act.

·That fits the main line of the 'freedom-as-indifference' theory, and also the more recent 'refinement' of it; so from now on we needn't attend to the 'refinement' separately·.

·PERFECT EQUILIBRIUM·

The first point I want to make is that this theory of liberty won't work unless the indifference ·that it postulates· is perfect and absolute; there must be *perfect* freedom from all prior bias or inclination. [It seems that Edwards here uses 'absolute' to mean 'complete', which in this context is also what 'perfect' means. At any rate, he continues the discussion in terms of 'perfect', and 'absolute' drops out of sight.] Why? Because if the will is already ·somewhat· inclined before it exerts its own sovereign power on itself, then its inclination is not *wholly* owing to itself. . . . The slightest degree of antecedent bias is inconsistent with the Arminians' notion of liberty; for as long as a prior inclination—·however slight·—continues to possess the will, the will is *bound* by it and can't *possibly* act otherwise than in conformity with it. ·Isn't that right·? Surely the will can't act or choose contrary to a prevailing inclination that it has; to suppose that it can would be to suppose that the will can

<sup>3</sup> Whitby and some other Arminians distinguish two kinds of freedom—that of God and perfect spirits above, and that of persons in a state of trial [= 'human beings here below']. He allows that the former kind of freedom is consistent with necessity; the latter, he thinks, doesn't go with necessity; and he takes this freedom from necessity to be required if we are to be subjected to praise or dispraise, rewards or punishments, precepts and prohibitions, promises and threats, exhortations and dehortations, and treaties and covenants. It is this ·human· freedom that he thinks requires indifference. He quotes Thorndike with approval: 'We don't say that indifference is required for any freedom—only for the freedom of man in this state of travail and proficiencie [= (roughly) 'hard work and gradual self-improvement'], the basis of which is God's offer of a treaty, and conditions of peace and reconciliation to fallen man, together with those precepts and prohibitions, those promises and threats, those exhortations and dehortations, with which the treaty is enforced.'

be inclined •against its present prevailing inclination, i.e. •contrary to what it is inclined to. . . . The will can no more •choose contrary to its own present greatest •inclination than it can •prefer contrary to its own present •preference, or •choose contrary to its own present •choice! Thus, so long as the will is under the influence of a left-over prevailing inclination, it isn't at liberty for a new free act, or for any act of self-determination.

Possible objection: There is no need for the indifference to be perfect. A former inclination may still remain, but be weak enough so that the strength of the will can oppose and overcome it.' This is grossly absurd; for the strength of the will, however great it is, can't give the will such sovereignty and command that it can cause itself to prefer and not to prefer at the same time, or to choose contrary to its own present choice.

[Having dismissed as 'grossly absurd' the idea that a free action may go *against* a pre-existing inclination, Edwards now returns to the original proposal, that a free action might be one in which the will is tilted one way by a 'remaining inclination' and exercises its self-determination (and thus its freedom) in making itself go in the direction indicated by that inclination but *going further* than the unaided inclination would take it—meaning 'further' in a broad sense that covers not just literally walking further but also shouting louder, throwing harder, thinking more intently, pushing harder, pulling for a longer time, giving someone more help, harming someone more, and so on. (The term 'distance', just below, is also to be understood similarly broadly.) Edwards's rather difficult way of opposing this has at its core the following fairly simple thought. An inclination *x* inclines the soul to go a certain 'distance' in a certain action; the soul's freedom is exercised in its making itself go 'further'. Now, what interests us is

•the outcome of the soul's self-determination, and that upshot is  
•the total distance of the action *minus* the part of its distance that is due to inclination *x*.

And, Edwards says, **the inclination *x* is entirely irrelevant to this**; it makes no contribution to it at all; and it is just wrong to bring that inclination in as a way of ducking the problem of how a soul could determine itself when in a state of *perfect* indifference or equilibrium. The inclination makes the equilibrium less than complete; but is also irrelevant to the soul's alleged achievement of self-determination; so it doesn't make the achievement less difficult. Edwards follows this up with two physical analogues, and then concludes that he was right all along to insist that the indifference theory of freedom of the will is doomed unless it can make its case in terms of *perfect* equilibrium. He then resumes the argument he was about to engage in when he was interrupted by the thought about a left-over *slight* inclination.]

·IN THE STATE OF FREEDOM, NOT AFTER IT·

I now offer this as an axiom that is undoubtedly true: every free act is done *in* a state of freedom, not merely *after* such a state. If an act of the will is an act *in* which the soul is free, it must be exerted *in* a state of freedom and *in* the time of freedom. . . . The notion of a *free act of the soul* is the notion of an act in which the soul •uses or •exercises liberty; and the soul can't put its liberty to •use in its act unless it has that liberty at the very time when it acts.

So now our question is:

Does the soul of man ever perform an act of will while remaining in a state of liberty—meaning a state of ·perfect· indifference ·or equilibrium·? Does the soul ever perform an act of preference at the very time at which it is in a perfect equilibrium, not inclining one way more than another?

You have only to read the question to see how absurd it would be to answer Yes. It would be ridiculous for anyone to insist that the soul *chooses* one thing rather than another when at the very same instant it is perfectly indifferent regarding them. That would be to say that the soul prefers one thing to another at the very same time when it has no preference. Choice and preference can't be in a state of indifference, any more than motion can be in a state of rest. . . . Motion may occur immediately after rest, but it can't co-exist with rest for even the tiniest stretch of time. Similarly, choice may occur immediately after a state of indifference, but it can't exist with indifference; even at the very start of its choice, the soul is not in a state of indifference. If *this* is liberty, then, no act of the will is ever performed in a state of liberty or in the time of liberty. Volition and liberty, far from being •essential one to another, are •contrary one to another: one excludes and destroys the other, just as motion destroys rest, and light destroys darkness. So the will doesn't act *at all*—doesn't even *begin* to act—while it has this kind of 'liberty', •i.e. the kind that consists in perfect indifference or equilibrium. As soon as the action begins, freedom stops; and this 'freedom' can't touch the action, can't affect it or entitle it to be described in one way rather than another—any more than it could if it had stopped twenty years before the action began. . . .

•TWO FURTHER ESCAPE-ATTEMPTS•

(1) An Arminian might want to argue back in this way:

Your argument is nothing but a trick and delusion. What the will exercises its liberty on is not •the act of choice or preference itself but •the determining of itself to a certain choice or preference. The act of the will in which it is free and uses its own sovereignty consists in its causing or determining the *change* from a state of indifference to a certain preference,

i.e. causing itself to give a certain tilt to the balance which has until now been horizontal; and it does *this* while remaining in equilibrium and perfect master of itself.

Let us see whether this can give the Arminian the success that has so far escaped him!

The claim is that the will, at a time when it is still in perfect equilibrium, with no preferences, determines to •change itself from that state and •arouse in itself a certain choice or preference. Isn't this just as absurd as the previous version of the theory, whose absurdity we have already seen? If the will in a state of perfect indifference determines to leave that state and give itself a certain inclination, tell me this: doesn't the soul determine this *by choice*? That is: isn't the will's coming to a •determination to change its state the same thing as the soul's coming to a •choice to change its state? If the soul doesn't *choose* to do this, then it doesn't *voluntarily* determine its change of state. And if *the soul* doesn't determine it voluntarily, i.e. of its own will, then in what sense does *its will* determine it? And if the will doesn't determine the change of state, then how in making that determination does it make any use of its liberty?. . . . Suppose, then, that the opponents •concede that this determination is an act of choice, and •insist that the soul, while still in a state of perfect indifference, *chooses* to put itself out of that state and to turn itself in one direction rather than another. That brings us right back to the very same absurdity that we had before!. . . .

(2) Or the opponents might try this:

A state of liberty is not the same as a state of indifference, and liberty can exist without indifference. But indifference is still essential to freedom, because it is needed to go immediately before it: it's essential to the freedom of an act of will that it should directly and

immediately *arise out of* a state of indifference.

This won't help the cause of Arminian liberty, or make it consistent with itself. For if the act springs immediately out of a state of indifference, then it doesn't come from antecedent choice or preference. And if the act arises directly out of a state of indifference, without any intervening choice to determine it, then it isn't determined by the will; the mind exercises no free choice in the affair, and free choice and free will have no hand in the determination of the act.

·THE POWER TO SUSPEND·

Here is another attempted way out of the difficulty

The absurdities ·you have pointed out· can be avoided by saying that. . . indifference is not essential to liberty in such a way that the mind must make its choice *in* a state of indifference (which is an inconsistency) or that the act of will must spring immediately out of indifference (·which is absurd·); but indifference may be essential to the liberty of acts of the will in a different way from those, namely: Liberty of the will consists in the mind's power to hold back or suspend the act of volition, keeping the mind in a state of indifference in the meantime, until there has been opportunity for proper deliberation.

It would be a great mistake to think that this is any help. It doesn't reconcile any inconsistency or lessen any difficulty. I now show this.

The first point to be grasped is that this •suspending of volition (supposing that there *is* such a thing) is itself an •act of volition. If the mind determines to suspend its act, it does so voluntarily; it has some reason for choosing to suspend; and this choice or determination is an act of the will. And the opponent would have to agree about this, because he holds that the liberty of the will consists precisely in its power to suspend, and that its suspending is the very thing in which

the will *exercises* its liberty. . . .

·With that point firmly established, let us see what we get·. This determining to suspend acting is not only an act of the will, but is supposed to be the *only* free act of the will; because the opponent is saying that the liberty of the will *consists in this*, which implies that this is the only kind of act of will that we have to consider in this controversy. And now the difficulties arise again, as we confront our old question:

In the acts in which the will is free, what does its freedom consist in?

This question, as put to our present opponent, is:

In an act in which the will suspends action, what does its freedom consist in?

The answer he is committed to is that the liberty of the will in this act of suspension consists in a power to suspend *even this act* until there has been opportunity for thorough deliberation. But this plunges us directly into the grossest nonsense, because what we're talking about is an act of suspension, and there is no room for a space of deliberation and suspension in order to determine whether we will suspend or not. If there were, that would mean that even the suspension might be deferred; and that is absurd, because •postponing the decision about whether or not to suspend will actually •*be* suspending. Why? Because during the time of suspension to consider whether to suspend, the act is automatically suspended! Either you act immediately or you suspend—there is no other alternative.

[Then a paragraph drawing the 'liberty = power-to-suspend-action' theory into an infinite regress. Then:] And besides all this there is yet another a delusion and a latent gross contradiction in this theory. . . . The question was: When the mind performs act of volition x, what does its liberty consist in? And now we are given an 'answer' that doesn't answer *that* question at all, because it talks only

of the mind's liberty not in •performing x but in •resolving to suspend performing x. This is simply irrelevant to the question that was asked. . . . Summing up the discussions in this section: it's very obvious that the liberty of the mind does *not* consist in indifference, and that indifference is not essential to it, necessary to it, or in any way involved in it, as the Arminians suppose. . . .

### **Section 8: The view that freedom of the will rules out every kind of necessity**

Arminians in this controversy lay great stress on their thesis that it is essential to human liberty that volitions or acts of the will are *contingent* events—understanding contingency as opposite not only to constraint but to all necessity. Because it is emphasized so much, I want to look closely into this.

Two questions arise. •Is there—*can* there be—any such thing as a volition that is 'contingent' in the sense of having no infallible connection with anything that happened previously? •If there were such a thing, would this be any help to the cause of liberty? •I shall devote this section to the first question. The second will come up in section 13.

Could any volition occur *contingently* in this manner? Bear in mind what I have already shown, namely that nothing can ever happen without a cause or a reason why it occurs *thus* rather than *so*, and I have especially produced evidence for this in connection with acts of the will. If that is right, then the acts of the will are never 'contingent' in the sense of 'not necessary', because anything that has a cause or reason must be •necessarily• connected with its cause. Here are three reasons for saying this.

**(1)** For something to have a cause and ground of its existence and yet not to be connected with its cause is an inconsistency. If it isn't connected with the cause, it

is not dependent on the cause; its existence is loose from the cause's influence (so to speak) and *may* accompany it but *may not*, because it is a mere contingency, whether or not it follows or comes with the cause's influence. That amounts to saying that it isn't dependent on it. And to say something *isn't dependent on its cause* is absurd—it is saying that its cause is not its cause. If two things are not related in this way:

x is connected with y and depends on it,  
then they are not related in this way:

x is an effect of y, which is its cause.

There is only as much causality between two things as there is connection and dependence between them. . . . 'Perhaps the connection and dependence is not total, but only partial; Perhaps the effect x, though having *some* connection and dependence on the cause y, isn't *entirely* dependent on it.' That is to say that not all of x is an effect of y—that only a part of x arises from y, and a part from something else.

**(2)** If some events are not necessarily connected with their causes, then it follows that some events occur without *any* cause, which is contrary to what we are supposing and I have demonstrated. Why? Well, if x wasn't *necessarily* connected with the influence of y, then •y could have happened without x following; and so• given that y occurred, it was a contingent matter whether x would accompany or follow it. Suppose x *did* follow: *why* did it follow? There is no cause or reason for this. . . . Here is something in the present manner of the existence of things and state of the world that is absolutely without a cause—which is contrary to the supposition and contrary to what I have demonstrated.

[Edwards's **(3)** is really a rewording of **(2)**. He expresses it by saying that to suppose that x has a cause and ground of its existence with which it is not necessarily connected is to suppose that it has a cause that isn't its cause. Then:]

I have probably made this matter so plain that there is no point in reasoning about it any further, but I shall add just one more point. It is that in the supposed case we are discussing, the 'cause' isn't really a cause at all, because its power and influence have turned out not to be sufficient to produce such an effect, and if it isn't *sufficient* to produce it then it doesn't *produce* it. . . . Something that isn't sufficient to produce x at one time can't be sufficient to produce it at another time when the causally relevant circumstances are exactly the same. So even in a case where x does follow y, it doesn't do so because of y as its cause. You might try to get around this by supposing that the difference of time is a causally relevant circumstance; but that conflicts with the stipulation that y is the cause. Anyway, no-one thinks that mere difference of time is causally relevant, and that suggests yet another argument against the view I am attacking here. If mere difference of time has no causal influence, then obviously the statement

y was sufficient to produce x at T<sub>1</sub> and not sufficient to produce it at T<sub>2</sub>

is as absurd as the statement

y was sufficient to produce x at T<sub>1</sub> and not sufficient to produce it at T<sub>1</sub>.

Summing up: It is obvious that every effect has a necessary connection with its cause, i.e. with whatever is the true ground of and reason for its existence. Thus, if there is no event without a cause—as I proved earlier—then no event whatever is contingent in the way that Arminians suppose the free acts of the will to be contingent.

### Section 9: How acts of the will connect with dictates of the understanding

It is clear that no acts of the will are contingent in the sense of being entirely without necessity—i.e. of not being necessary consequences of anything else to which they are connected—because every act of the •will is connected in some way with the •understanding. How? Well, each act of the will is shaped by the greatest apparent good in a way that I have already explained, namely: the soul always wills or chooses whatever appears most agreeable to it, given the mind's present view of the whole situation. . . . Nothing is more evident than that when men act voluntarily, doing 'what they please', they do what appears most agreeable to them. To deny this would be tantamount to saying that men don't choose what appears to suit them best or what seems most pleasing to them; or that they don't •choose what they •prefer—which is a contradiction. In those remarks, the understanding comes in through the expressions 'what appears. . .', and 'the mind's present view'.

Because it is so obvious that the acts of the will have some connection with the dictates or views of the understanding, this is accepted by some of the main Arminian writers, particularly Whitby [see page 29] and Samuel Clarke. And George Turnbull accepts it too, although he is a great enemy to the doctrine of necessity. In his work *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy* he approvingly cites another ('excellent') philosopher as sharing his view about this, in these words:

No man sets himself to do anything without having some view that serves him as a reason for what he is doing; and whatever faculties he employs, it is always the understanding that leads the way, shining whatever light it has; and all the soul's operative powers

are directed by that light, whether it is true or false. The will itself, however absolute and uncontrollable it may be thought to be, never fails to obey the dictates of the understanding. . . . The ideas and images in men's minds are the invisible powers that constantly govern them; and to these they all submit readily.

Let us now look impartially into the question of whether •the notions of liberty that these writers have is consistent with •this thesis about how the will relates to the understanding. Whitby clearly holds that the acts and determinations of the will always follow the understanding's view of the greatest good to be obtained or the greatest evil to be avoided. In other words, he holds that the determinations of the will constantly and infallibly follow these two things in the understanding:

- the content of the understanding's thoughts about what good is to be obtained and what evil is to be avoided by the conduct in question;
- the intensity and clarity of those thoughts, which are increased by attention and consideration.

He is extremely confident and dogmatic in this, as he is in every opinion that he maintains against the Calvinists, contemptuously writing off the contrary opinion as absurd and self-contradictory. You can see this in the following quotation from his *Five Points of Calvinism*:

It is certain that what naturally makes the understanding *perceive* is evidence that is proposed, apprehended, and taken into account. What makes the will *choose* is something that is approved by the understanding and therefore appears to the soul as good. And whatever the will *refuses* is something represented by the understanding as evil and therefore appearing to the will as evil. So all that God does or can require of us is to refuse the evil and choose the good. Thus, to say that

- evidence proposed, apprehended, and taken into account is not sufficient to make the understanding approve; or that

- the greatest good proposed, the greatest evil threatened, when thoroughly believed and reflected on, is not sufficient to get the will to choose the good and refuse the evil,

is in effect to say that

- the only thing that moves the will to choose or to refuse is not sufficient to get us to do so;

which *must* be false, because it is self-contradictory.

- Suppose we have a natural dislike for the truths proposed to us in the Bible; that can make us reluctant to attend to them, but it can't block our belief when we do read or hear them and attend to them. •Suppose we also have a resistance to the good that we ought to choose; that only can disincline us to believe that it is good and to approve it as our chief good. •Suppose we are drawn to the evil that we should decline; that only can make it harder for us to believe that it is the worst of evils. But through all this, what we do really believe to be our chief good *will* still be chosen; and what we do really apprehend as the worst of evils *will* be refused by us as long as we have that belief about it. To get us to pursue good and avoid evil, therefore, all God has to do is to illuminate our understandings so that we, attending to and considering what lies before us in our understandings, will apprehend and be convinced of our duty. . . .

Notice how clearly and confidently Whitby asserts that the greatest good proposed and the greatest evil threatened, when thoroughly believed and reflected, on is sufficient to get the will to choose the good and refuse the evil, and is the *only* thing that moves the will to choose or to refuse; that

it is self-contradictory to suppose otherwise; . . . and that we'll always choose what we *believe* to be our chief good, and refuse what we *apprehend* to be the worst of evils. He couldn't have made it clearer:

The determinations of the will must always follow the illumination, conviction, and attention of the understanding regarding the greatest good and the greatest evil that are proposed, going by •*how good or evil* the understanding takes them to be, and by •*how strongly* the understanding believes them to be good or evil. And this is •*necessarily* the case, and can't fail to be the case in even a single instance.

That last sentence certainly expresses what Whitby takes to be the status of his thesis, because he asserts that it is •*self-contradictory* to suppose the thesis false.

I am aware that in these assertions he is taking aim at the Calvinists. He wants to show, in opposition to them, that there is no need for the spirit of God to act on the will, altering it and steering it towards a good choice; and that all God does in this matter is to suggest ideas to the understanding; and Whitby thinks that if those ideas are attended to they will infallibly achieve the end of good decisions by the will. [In the original, what God is said not to do is called a 'physical operation', and what he is said to do is called a 'moral' one.] But whatever his plan was, he did say very directly that every act in which the will chooses or refuses is *necessary*; which is flatly contrary to his own notion of the liberty of the will. . . . On the view he has expressed here, every act of choice or refusal by the will depends on, and is necessarily connected with, some prior cause; and **the cause is not the will itself** or any act of the will's or anything pertaining to the will; rather, it is something belonging to another faculty, the understanding, whose acts precede all the acts of the will, and govern and determine them.

[Edwards now devotes more than a page to introducing and dismissing two attempts that Whitby might make to escape this conclusion. Each tries to make the will partly responsible for what the understanding does. How much attention the understanding gives to its own 'lights' may depend on (i) how much attention the person has voluntarily decided to pay to them, and/or on (ii) whether the person has been led by his earlier voluntary conduct to form bad habits. Edwards easily shoots both of these down. With either supposition, he says, the earlier acts of the will *necessarily* follow yet earlier deliverances of the understanding, so that the problem of freedom of the will re-arises with *them*. And trying to deal with this by *re-applying* move (i) or move (ii) still brings us back to acts of the will that are necessitated. Edwards concludes:] So Whitby's view implies that the will is necessarily determined in every one of its acts. . . . by a cause other than the will, a cause that doesn't come from or depend on any act of the will at all. This utterly abolishes his whole theory of liberty of will; at one stroke he has •*cut the sinews* of all his arguments from God's goodness, righteousness, faithfulness, and sincerity in his commands, promises, threats, calls, invitations and protests, which Whitby expounds in terms of 'reprobation', 'election', 'universal redemption', 'sufficient and effectual grace', and 'freedom of the will of man'; and has •*revealed* as pointless all his exclamations against the doctrine of the Calvinists, which he says accuse God of obvious unrighteousness, unfaithfulness, hypocrisy, untruthfulness, and cruelty.

Samuel Clarke in his *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* tries in a different way to get around the argument from •*volition's* necessary connection with the last dictate of the understanding to •*volition's* status as necessary. He supposes that the last dictate of the understanding is the act of the will—as distinct from its

occurring prior to the act of the will and necessitating it. Let him have this supposition—it won't alter the case for the necessity of the act. If the dictate of the understanding is the very same thing as the determination of the will (as Clarke supposes), then the determination of the will doesn't arise from choice; and if it doesn't arise from choice then freedom of choice had no hand in it: it is necessary, i.e. choice can't prevent it. . . .

Let us combine this view of Clarke's with the Arminian view that

- Liberty consists in the will's determining its own acts, having free opportunity, and being without all necessity,

or—to put this more correctly by not treating the will as though it were an agent, an acting substance, rather than a power or faculty of the soul—

- Liberty consists in the soul's having power and opportunity to have what determinations of the will it pleases.

And if the determinations of the will are the very same things as the last dictates of the understanding, then

- Liberty consists in the mind's having power and opportunity to choose its own dictates of the understanding.

But this is absurd; for it makes •the determination of choice prior to •the dictate of the understanding, and the ground of it; which is inconsistent with the view that the dictate of the understanding is the determination of choice.

The only apparent way out is to suppose that one determination of the will (= dictate of the understanding) is caused by a *prior* determination of the will (= dictate of the understanding); but that will lead us back into the old absurdity [Edwards's phrase] of an infinite regress of determinations, each caused by an earlier member of the series. . . .

And another point: Clarke's view runs the understanding together with the will, implying that they are one and the same. Never mind just now whether they *are* the same; the point I want to make concerns what happens to the Arminian notion of liberty if we combine it with this view that understanding = will. It turns the Arminian doctrine of liberty into this:

- Liberty consists in a self-determining power in the *understanding*, free of all necessity; being independent, undetermined by anything prior to its own acts and determinations; and the more the *understanding* is thus independent and sovereign over its own determinations, the more free it is.

(This is a fairly standard formulation of the Arminian doctrine, with 'will' replaced by 'understanding' throughout.) This means that •the freedom of the soul as a moral agent must consist in •the understanding's independence from any evidence or appearance of things, or anything at all that presents itself to the mind prior to the understanding's determination! What a liberty *this* is! An understanding that has this 'liberty' has no trouble judging either •according to the evidence or •against it; it has at all times a sovereign command over itself to judge either favorably or unfavorably anything that is plainly exhibited to it. It's a kind of 'liberty' that makes people impervious to persuasive reasoning, arguments, protests, and other such moral means and inducements. Yet the Arminians defend their notion of liberty-with-no-necessity by just such means as those. According to Clarke's view, the •more free men are the •less they are governed by such means, the less they are subject to or influenced by the power of evidence and reason in their decisions about what to believe.

Coming back now to the Arminian view of freedom on the assumption that understanding and will are not the same:

The Arminian notion of liberty-without-necessity implies that a free will is not determined by the understanding or necessarily connected with the understanding; and that the further the will is from such connection, the freer it is. When its liberty is full and complete, the determinations of the will have *no connection at all* with the dictates of the understanding. If that is how things stand, it will be useless to try to get someone to perform a free virtuous act by presenting things to his understanding; indeed, *all* instructions, advice, invitations, protests and arguments will be useless; for in all these we merely present things to the understanding, trying to give the person's mind a clear and vivid view of the objects of choice. This will be in vain if the person's will is free, i.e. self-determined and independent of the understanding. [Edwards begins the paragraph 'And whether the understanding and will are the same or no', but this must be a slip, because all the rest of the paragraph presupposes that they are *not* the same.]

### **Section 10: Volition necessarily connected with the influence of motives; criticisms of Chubb's doctrines and arguments concerning freedom of the will**

We have reached the conclusion that every act of the will

- has some cause,

and therefore (as I have proved)

- has a necessary connection with its cause,

and therefore

- is necessary by a necessity of connection and consequence.

Something that clearly brings out the truth of this conclusion is the fact that *every* act of the will is aroused by some motive. Here's a consideration that makes it obvious that

this is right. Suppose that a mind wills without being aroused by any motive or inducement; that mind has no goal that it proposes to itself or pursues in willing; it aims at nothing, and seeks nothing. If it doesn't seek anything, then it doesn't *go after* anything or exert any inclination or preference towards anything. And so we are brought to a self-contradiction, because the mind's •willing something is the same thing as its •going after something by an act of preference and inclination. . . .

If the acts of the will are aroused by motives, then motives are the causes of their being aroused—or (the same thing) causes of their coming into existence. From which it follows that the existence of the acts of the will is strictly speaking the *effect* of their motives. The only way motives can *do* anything as motives or inducements is by their influence; and what comes about through their influence is the *effect* of them. For that is the notion of an effect—something that comes about through the influence of something else.

And if volitions are strictly speaking the effects of their motives, then they're necessarily connected with their motives. I have shown that every effect and outcome is necessarily connected with whatever is the real ground of and reason for its existence. Obviously, then, volition is necessary, and doesn't come from any self-determining power in the will: a volition that is •caused by previous motive and inducement is not •caused by the will's sovereign power over itself to determine, cause, and arouse volitions in itself. And these obvious facts about motives push the notion of indifference or equilibrium out of the picture, because what motives do is precisely to tilt the will, giving it a certain inclination in one direction.

Thomas Chubb in his *Collection of Tracts on Various Subjects* has advanced a theory of liberty that is greatly divided against itself and undercuts itself—doing this in

many ways, of which I shall pick out five.

(1) Chubb asserts over and over again that the will in all its acts is influenced by motive and arousal; and that this is *always* the prior ground of and reason for all its acts. [Edwards supports this with quotations from Chubb. Then:] And yet according to his theory what enables the influence of motives to arouse us to action and to be actually a ground of volition is the mind's volition or choice that they should do so. He loudly insists that in all free actions the mind doesn't have the volitions that motives arouse until it *chooses* to do so. It chooses whether to go along with the motive that presents itself to the mind; and when various motives are presented, it chooses which it will give way to and which it will reject. 'Every man has power to act or to refrain from acting agreeably with or contrary to any motive that presents itself.' [Edwards quotes two more passages to the same effect, says there are many others, and continues:]

Now how can these things hang together? How can the mind first act, and by its act of volition and choice determine what motives are to be the ground of and reason for its volition and choice? Chubb's account implies that the choice is already made before the motive has its effect, and that the volition is already performed before the motive prevails so as actually to be the ground of the volition—so that one motive's coming out top is a consequence of the volition of which that same motive is the ground! If the mind has already chosen to comply with a particular motive and to consent to being aroused by it, the arousal arrives too late and has no more work to do. . . . In the picture that Chubb draws for us, the son enters the scene before the father who begets him: the choice is supposed to be the ground for the motive's influence, yet that same influence is supposed to be the ground for the choice. . . .

[Edwards adds a further paragraph pointing out that on Chubb's theory the notion of what is prior or 'previous' comes unstuck: a volition is influenced by a prior motive which gets its influence from the prior occurrence of that volition.]

(2) In line with the inconsistent notion of the will that I have been criticizing, . . . Chubb frequently calls motives and arousals of the will to action 'the passive ground or reason of that action'. A remarkable phrase! I don't think there's anything more unintelligible and empty of clear and consistent meaning in all the writings of Duns Scotus or Thomas Aquinas. [This is said in contempt for those famous scholastic philosophers.] [Edwards devotes two pages to discussing things that Chubb might have meant by 'passive ground etc.', shooting each one down. The discussion brings great analytic competence to bear on a topic that doesn't deserve it.]

(3) Although Chubb asserts that every volition has some motive, and that 'in the nature of the thing no volition can take place without some motive to induce it', he says that volition doesn't always follow the *strongest* motive. . . . Here are his words:

Though with regard to •physical causes the strongest always prevails, it is otherwise with regard to •moral causes. With them, sometimes the stronger prevails but sometimes the weaker. It's clear why there is this difference: it is because what we call 'moral causes' are strictly speaking not *causes* at all, but merely passive *reasons* for or *arousals* to the action in question—arousals that we have power to (or are at liberty to) comply with or reject, as I have showed above.

And so throughout the paragraph he uses various phrases in insisting that the will isn't always determined by the strongest motive. (That is, by the motive that is strongest

prior to the volition itself. If we absurdly used 'strongest' to mean 'actually prevailing', *defining* the strongest motive as the one that is acted on, then of course, as Chubb points out, it is trivially true that the strongest motive always prevails.) In other parts of his work he says repeatedly that the will is not determined by any superior strength or advantage that motives have from any constitution or state of things or any circumstances whatsoever previous to the actual determination of the will. His whole discussion of human liberty implies this; his whole theory is based on it.

But these claims can't all be right. Before a choice is made, the relevant motives vary in how strong they are. Chubb rightly supposes that the motives 'invite', 'induce', 'arouse', and 'dispose the mind to action'. This implies that the motives have in themselves something that is *inviting*, some tendency to *induce* and *dispose* the mind to volition. And if they have in themselves this nature and tendency, no doubt they have it in different degrees, some greater and some less. And the ones that have most of this tendency, considered with all their nature and circumstances prior to the volition, are the *strongest* motives, and those that have least are the *weakest* motives.

Now, we are invited to believe that volition sometimes doesn't follow the motive that is strongest, i.e. has the most previous tendency or advantage (all things considered) to induce or arouse it, but follows the weakest motive, the one which, as it stands previously in the mind's view, has least tendency to induce it. If that ever happens, it will be a case in which **the will apparently acts wholly without motive**, without any previous reason to dispose the mind to it; and this is contrary to what Chubb thinks is the case. What act is this? It is **the act of preferring the weakest motive**. [Edwards argues ingeniously and at length for his view that Chubb must say that there is no reason or motive

for choosing to be influenced by the weakest motive x. If there were one, *its* strength would be part of the strength of x-all-things-considered, so that x-all-things-considered wouldn't be the weakest motive after all. He then continues:]

An act of choice or preference is a *comparative* act, in which the mind compares two or more things that it sees as competitors. If the mind in this comparative act prefers the option that appears inferior in the comparison, then it does this without any motive or inducement or temptation whatsoever. Here is a parallel case, which may help you to see that I am right about this:

Suppose that a hungry man has the offer of two sorts of food; he has an appetite for each, but a stronger appetite for one than for the other; and apart from his appetites there is absolutely nothing in the situation to induce him to take either kind of food. If he chooses the food for which he has the lesser appetite, declining the food his appetite for which is stronger, this is a choice made absolutely without previous motive, arousal, reason, or temptation—just as it would be if he had no appetite at all for either kind of food. . . .

If the mind in its volition can go *beyond* motive, then it can go *without* motive; for when it goes beyond the motive it is out of the reach of the motive, out of the limits of its influence—so it is without motive. If that can happen, it follows that volition doesn't depend on motive, and no reason can be given for what Chubb so often asserts, namely that 'in the nature of things volition cannot take place without a motive to induce it'.

If God endowed a balance with a natural agency or activeness of such a sort that: when unequal weights are put into the scales of the balance, its agency could enable it to cause the balance to tilt so that the lesser weight goes down and the greater one goes up, this would clearly demonstrate

that how the balance moves doesn't depend on weights in the scales; any more than it would depend on weights if the balance could move itself when there is no weight in either scale. The balance has an activeness that allows it to move itself against the greater weight; it must certainly be more than sufficient to allow the balance to move itself when there is no weight at all.

Chubb holds that the will can't stir at all without some motive; and that if there is a motive for doing x and none for not doing x, a volition to do x will *infallibly* follow that motive. This amounts to supposing that the will is **entirely dependent on motives**; for if it weren't *wholly* dependent on them, surely it could help itself a little without them; or help itself a little against a motive without help from the strength and weight of a contrary motive. But his view that the will can choose as it pleases from amongst the motives that are presented to it, even choosing to be influenced by the weakest of them and neglecting the strongest, supposes the will to be **wholly independent of motives**.

[In two further paragraphs, Edwards picks out two other features of Chubb's position that are inconsistent with his view that the will can choose what motive to be influenced by.]

(4) Chubb holds that necessity is utterly inconsistent with agency. According to him, to say of an event of which x is the subject that

(a) the event was necessitated, and (b) the event was an *action* that x performed,

is self-contradictory. All through his discussions of liberty he supposes that necessity rules out agency [= activeness] or freedom; and that if you deny this you'll be implying that liberty and necessity are the same thing, that action and passion [= 'doing and undergoing', 'doing and being-done-to'] are the same thing. Thus, he seems to believe that strictly

speaking the only action is volition, because the only actions are free actions, and those are all volitions. As for the *effects* of volition in body or mind, they are all necessary but we call them 'free' because they are the effects of an act that isn't necessary.

And yet according to him volition itself—every act of volition, every *free* act of volition—is the effect of a volition; and it follows from this, given the things I have quoted from him, that every act of free volition must be necessary! [Edwards devotes most of two pages to quoting passages from Chubb which, he says, imply that every volition is the effect of a volition. When someone has chosen to act in a certain way, 'he could *if he had pleased* have chosen and done the contrary'. Edwards reads this as meaning that he could have chosen to choose the contrary, implying that the choice he did make resulted from his choice to make it. 'The will. . . is at liberty to choose what kind of good it pleases.' Edwards comments: 'If those last words mean anything, they must mean that the will is at liberty to choose what kind of good it chooses to choose; implying that the act of choice itself is determined by an antecedent choice.' All this presupposes that Chubb regards not only physical events but also mental ones as produced by volitions; and Edwards quotes passages showing that he does. Then:]

Now these things imply two great absurdities.

(a) Chubb clearly supposes that every free act of choice is commanded by and is the product of free choice, which implies that the first free act of choice that occurs in the situation we are thinking about—or indeed the first free act of choice that anyone ever performed—is the product of a previous act of choice. I hope I don't need to work hard to convince you that it is an absurdity to say that the very first act is the product of another act that occurred before it.

(b) Suppose that Chubb were right in his insistence that every free act of choice is the product or the effect of a free act of choice; it would follow from this, by his own principles, that no act of choice is free—every single one is necessary. Why? Because every act of choice, being the •effect of a foregoing act, would be •necessarily connected with that foregoing cause. As Chubb himself says: 'When the self-moving power is exercised, it becomes the necessary cause of its effects.' So his notion of a free act that is rewardable or punishable is a heap of contradictions. It is a •free act, and yet by his own notion of freedom it is •necessary. . . . According to him, every free act is the product of a free act; so that there must be an infinite sequence of free acts, *without* a beginning, in an agent that *has* a beginning. Thus: an infinite sequence of acts—every one of them free, yet none of them free and all of them necessary. They are all rewardable or punishable, yet the agent can't reasonably be the object of reward or punishment on account of any one of these actions. He is active in them all and passive in none; yet also active in none but passive in all.

(5) Chubb strenuously denies that motives are *causes* of the acts of the will. [Edwards goes on to quote instances of this denial in Chubb's book, following that by many other quotations in which Chubb implies that motives *are* causes of volitions—saying that they 'dispose' the mind to act, 'influence' it, 'produce' actions, are 'necessary' to actions, and so on. All these passages taken together yield 'another whole heap of inconsistencies', Edwards says. He winds up this entire section thus:]

So we see that Chubb is driven into strange inconsistencies by combining •his notion of liberty as consisting in the will's power of self-determination and freedom from all necessity with •the common-sense view that there can't be any volition without a motive. If we think hard about this, we

may become convinced that the two can't be reconciled. •So we have to choose•. Well, it is in a way self-evident that there can't be any act of will or preference of the mind unless there is some motive or inducement—something in the mind's view that it aims at and goes after. So it is really obvious that the kind of liberty that Arminians insist on doesn't exist anywhere in the universe, and isn't even possible or conceivable.

### **Section 11: The evidence that God has certain foreknowledge of the volitions of moral agents**

In this section I shall defend the thesis that

•God has certain foreknowledge of acts of the wills of moral agents,

and in the next section I shall defend the inference from that premise to the conclusion that

•The volitions of moral agents are not contingent, i.e. are necessary consequences of prior events.

You might think that there isn't any need to argue in defence of that premise when addressing oneself to people who profess to be Christians, but there *is*! There have been—especially in recent times—people who claim to believe that the Bible is the word of God yet *deny* that God has certain foreknowledge of the free acts of moral agents. So I shall consider the case for such foreknowledge on God's part, doing this as fully as the designed limits of this book will permit; assuming throughout that I am talking to people who accept the truth of the Bible.

My **first argument** [the second begins on page 50] is based on God's prediction of the acts of moral agents. My handling of this matter will have two axioms in the background:

•*The need-to-know axiom*•: If God doesn't •foreknow these events then he can't •peremptorily and certainly

foretell them. If he has merely an uncertain guess concerning events of this kind, then an uncertain guess is all he can declare. To predict something in a positive manner is to imply a claim to *know* about it in advance.

·*The scope axiom*·: If God doesn't certainly foreknow the •future volitions of moral agents then he can't certainly foreknow •events that depend on those volitions either. The only way to foreknow those dependent events is *through* foreknowledge of the volitions on which they depend, and the former knowledge can't be more certain than the latter.

Let the consequences of the volitions of moral agents be as large, numerous and widespread as you like, making series of differences that multiply as they branch off, with each series running all through the universe and continuing to all eternity; God must be as ignorant of all these infinitely many consequences as he is of the volition that started them off. That whole state of things—however important and extensive it is, must be hidden from him ·if he can't foreknow the volitions of moral agents·.

I don't think anyone will deny either of those two axioms, so I now proceed to point out certain facts.

**(1)** Men's moral conduct and qualities, their virtues and vices, their wickedness and good practice—things rewardable and punishable—have often been foretold by God. Pharaoh's moral conduct in refusing to obey God's command to let his people go was foretold. God said to Moses: 'I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go.' (Exodus 3:19) Here God professes not only to guess at but to know Pharaoh's future disobedience. [Edwards adds a long series of further examples from the old and new testaments.]

**(2)** Many events have been foretold by God that *depend on* the moral conduct of particular people, being brought about

through their virtuous or vicious actions. For example, God told Abraham in advance that the children of Israel would go to live in Egypt (Genesis 15); and their doing so came about through the wickedness of Joseph's brothers in selling him, the wickedness of his mistress, and his own notable virtue in resisting her temptation. [Then there are about eight further biblical examples.]

**(3)** God has often foretold the future moral conduct of nations and people, of numbers, bodies, and successions of men; and has foretold his own judicial proceedings which—along with many other events—depend on the virtues and vices of men; none of which could be foreknown if the volitions of men acting as moral agents hadn't been foreseen. The future cruelty of the Egyptians in oppressing Israel, and God's judging and punishing them for it, was foretold long before it actually happened (Genesis 15:13-14). [Edwards backs this up with about four pages of further biblical examples, including:] Christ himself foretold his being delivered into the hands of the elders, priests, and scribes, and being cruelly treated by them and condemned to death; that they would hand him over to the Gentiles; and that he would be mocked, flogged and crucified (Matthew 16:21). . . .

**(4)** Unless God foreknows the future acts of moral agents, all the prophecies we have in scripture concerning the great apostasy of the Antichrist—

the rise, reign, wicked qualities, and deeds of 'the man of sin' and his workers and hangers-on; the extent and long continuance of his dominion; his influence on the minds of princes and others, to corrupt them and draw them away to idolatry and other foul vices; his great and cruel persecutions ·of Christians·, the behaviour of the saints under these great temptations, and so on

—are prophecies that God uttered without *knowing* the things that he foretold. The predictions concerning this great apostasy are all of a moral kind, relating to men's virtues and vices and the behaviour and other upshots that depend on them; and they are very detailed, with most of them being often repeated with many precise descriptions of qualities, conduct, influence, effects, extent, duration, periods, circumstances, final result, and so on, which it would take too long to specify in detail. It would be utterly absurd to suppose that God predicted *all these* when he didn't have any certain knowledge of the future moral behaviour of free agents.

(5) Unless God foreknows the future acts of men's wills, and their behaviour as moral agents, all the great things that are foretold in both the old and new testaments concerning the glorious future of the •kingdom of the Messiah were things that God predicted and promised on the basis of mere guesses, not knowing in advance whether any of them would happen. For that •kingdom is not of this world; it doesn't consist in external things, but is within men, and consists in •the reign of virtue in their hearts, in •righteousness and peace and joy in the holy ghost. . . . [Edwards goes on a great length about how the coming of Christ's kingdom depends on the moral conduct of men, and emphasizes the positive, confident, 'peremptory' manner in which God makes his predictions. He lays special stress on two of these:] That great promise and oath of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so much celebrated in both the old and new testaments, namely 'In their seed all the nations and families of the earth will be blessed'. . . . That first gospel promise that ever was made to mankind, that great prediction of the salvation of the Messiah and his victory over Satan, made to our first parents (Genesis 3:15).

(6) If God doesn't have foreknowledge of the future actions of moral agents, it follows that the prophecies of scripture

*in general* are made without foreknowledge. For most if not all the prophecies in scripture are either predictions of the future behaviour of moral agents or of outcomes depending on them or somehow connected with them. . . . Consider for example the individual men who have been the great conquerors of the world, having (under God) the main hand in the states of the world at all later times—I mean men such as Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, Pompey, Julius Caesar and so on. *Their* coming into existence undoubtedly depended on many millions of acts of the will in their parents. And most of these volitions depended on millions of volitions in their contemporaries of the same generation; and most of these on millions of millions of volitions in preceding generations. As we go back in time, the number of volitions that were in some way the occasion of the event multiply like the branches of a river until they come at last to a virtually infinite number. This won't seem strange to you if you think about what scientists tell us of the innumerable multitudes of things that are at work in the generation of animals. [Edwards lists some of them: sperm, ova, and so on. Then he goes into ways in which voluntary human conduct affects which human beings are conceived and born. Then an example in which the founding of a whole empire can be traced back to one person's happening to have a thought at a particular moment. And so on, concluding:] These hints may be enough to convince any thoughtful person that the whole state of the world of mankind in all ages, and the very existence of every person who has ever lived since the times of the ancient prophets, has depended on more volitions or acts of the wills of men than there are sands on the sea-shore.

Thus, if God doesn't exactly and perfectly foresee the future acts of men's wills, all the predictions that he ever uttered concerning. . . all the wars, commotions, victories,

prosperity, and calamities of any kingdoms, nations, or communities in the world have all been made without knowledge.

Thus, if it were true that God cannot foresee the volitions and free actions of men, he couldn't foresee anything relating to the state of the human world in future ages—not so much as the existence of one person who will live in that world. All he could foresee would be (a) events that he himself would bring about by the miraculous exercise of his immediate power; and (b) things that would occur in the natural material world by the laws of motion and those parts of the course of nature that are independent of the actions of mankind—like a very able mathematician and astronomer calculating precisely the revolutions of the heavenly bodies. . . .

And if we think hard about this matter, we'll find good reason to think that God couldn't with any absolute certainty foresee even those events if he couldn't certainly foreknow the volitions of human beings. (a) Whenever God miraculously intervenes in the natural order of things, he does so because the state of the moral world requires him to do so. And knowing when *that* will be the case involves knowing in advance how men will behave. (b) What the natural world is *for* is the moral world, and how things go in the former is undoubtedly subordinate to God's designs with respect to the latter. So, on the present supposition that God can't foreknow how men will act voluntarily, he can't predict the sorts of natural things that a good astronomer might try to predict, because he can't know in advance when he will find it appropriate to intervene miraculously in the natural order. [Edwards adds four 'corollaries', stating further consequences of the thesis that God can't foreknow the voluntary actions of men. •The apostle James spoke falsely when he said 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world' (Acts 15:18). •Predictions

that God has uttered 'in the most positive manner' are not merely unaccompanied by *knowledge* but are based on *very uncertain conjectures*, because they depend on countless human volitions no one of which God knows about in advance. •Jesus spoke falsely when he expressed many great and important predictions depending on men's moral actions, and said 'Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away' (Matthew 24:35). •God spoke falsely on the many occasions when he spoke of his predictions as evidences of foreknowledge (several verses in Isaiah 41-48).]

**Second argument:** [the first began on page 47.] If God doesn't foreknow the volitions of moral agents, then he didn't foreknow the fall of man or of angels, and so couldn't foreknow the great things that resulted from those events; such as his sending his Son into the world to die for sinners, and everything relating to the great work of redemption; all the things that were done for four thousand years before Christ came to prepare the way for it. [Edwards lists some of the events that were parts of 'the great work of redemption', and refers to biblical passages where God is said or implied to have *known* that the great work was going to be done.]

**Third argument:** If God is ignorant of the future volitions of free agents, it follows that he must in many cases truly repent [here = 'regret'] what he has done, and must genuinely wish he had acted differently. Why? Because in the most important affairs—namely the affairs of God's moral kingdom—the outcomes are uncertain and contingent, and must often turn out quite differently from how he had expected. If that were so, we would have reason to understand *literally* the statement in Genesis 6:6: 'It repented the lord that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him at his heart.' [Edwards cites other biblical passages saying that God does not 'repent' of anything.]

**Fourth argument:** It will also follow that God, because he is continually repenting of what he has done, must be constantly changing his intentions regarding his future conduct. . . . His purposes for the main parts of his scheme—namely the ones affecting the state of his moral kingdom—must be always liable to be upset through his lack of foresight; and he must be continually setting his system right again after it gets out of order through the contingency of the actions of moral agents. Instead of being absolutely unchangeable, God must perform countless acts of repentance and changes of intention—ininitely more than any other being, simply because his vastly extensive responsibilities range over infinitely many things that are to him contingent and uncertain. In such a situation he must be mostly occupied in mending broken links as well as he can, correcting his disjointed scheme of things in the best manner possible in the circumstances. In governing the world that he has made and has the care of, the supreme lord of all things must be under great and miserable disadvantages, through his being utterly unable to find out in advance various important things that will later happen to his system—things that he could have provided for in advance if only he had known about them in advance. . . . And man has the power through his voluntary actions to disappoint God, smash his plans, make him continually change his mind, subject him to vexation, and bring him into confusion.

[Then a long paragraph of biblical quotations asserting God's unchangeability.]

**Fifth argument:** If you *think through* this notion of God's ignorance of future volitions of moral agents, you'll see reason to think that it implies this: God after he had made the world was liable to be *completely frustrated, not achieving the end* for which he had created it. . . . It's clear that the moral world is what the natural world is *for*: the rest of the

creation is merely a house that God has built with furniture for moral agents, and the good or bad state of the moral world depends on how moral agents employ their moral agency, and so depends on their volitions. So if God can't foresee the volitions (because they are contingent and subject to no kind of necessity), the affairs of the moral world are liable to go •wrong, •extremely wrong, right up the scale to being •utterly ruined. . . .

According to the theory I am arguing against, God couldn't foresee the fall of men or the fall of angels, and must be greatly disappointed by these events; and so his grand scheme for our redemption and for destroying the works of the devil, and all the great things God has done to further these designs, must be merely the *products of his own disappointment*—contrivances to mend as well as he could his system, which originally was entirely good and perfectly beautiful, but was broken and thwarted by the free will of angels and men. And still he must be have been liable to be totally disappointed a second time: he couldn't know that he would have his desired success in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of his only-begotten Son, and the other great works that he performed to restore the state of things. He couldn't know after all whether there would actually be any reasonable amount of restoration, because that depended on the free will of men. Most of the Christian world fell away from Christianity into something worse than heathenism, and this continued for many centuries. [Edwards is referring here to the Roman Catholic church.] If God couldn't foresee men's volitions, how could he know whether Christ-endom would ever return from this falling away? And how could he foretell how soon it would begin? The apostle ·Paul· says it began to happen in his time—how could it be known how far it would go in that age? Indeed, how could it be known that

the gospel that wasn't effective in reforming the Jews would ever be effective in turning the heathen nations from their heathen religions in which they had been confirmed for so many centuries?

It is often said in the Bible that •God, who made the world for himself and created it for his pleasure, would certainly achieve his purpose in creating the world and in all his works; that •just as all things come *from* him so they would all be *to* him; and that •in the final outcome of things it would appear that he is the first and the last: 'And he said unto me "It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last"' (Revelation 21:6). These things are not consistent with God's being liable to be disappointed in everything he has done; indeed, they aren't consistent with his failing in *anything* that he has undertaken.

### **Section 12: God can't have certain foreknowledge of the future volitions of moral agents if they are contingent in a way that excludes all necessity**

Having proved that God has a certain and infallible foreknowledge of the voluntary acts of moral agents, I now embark on showing that it follows from this that these events are necessary with a necessity of connection or consequence. •This will complete the inference presented at the start of section 11• [page 47].

So far as I have been able to discover, the leading Arminian theologians deny that this follows, and affirm that such foreknowledge is not evidence that the foreknown event is in any way necessary. Let us go into this question thoroughly and in detail. I can't help thinking that the right answer can be discovered by careful thought.

As an aid to having this matter properly considered, I offer three major points.

(1) It is very evident that if a thing *x* already exists or has existed, and the existence of another thing *y* is infallibly and unbreakably connected with *x*, then the existence of *y* is necessary. Note four points of detail: (a) As I pointed out earlier when explaining the nature of necessity [item (b) on page 11], if something has existed in the past, its past existence is now *necessary*: it has already made sure of existence, so it's too late for any possibility of alteration in that respect; it's now impossible for it to be false that the thing has existed. (b) If there is any such thing as a divine foreknowledge of the •present• volitions of free agents, that foreknowledge is something that has already existed; so now its •past• existence is necessary; it is now utterly impossible for it not to be the case that this foreknowledge did exist. (c) It is also very obvious that things that are indissolubly connected with other things that are necessary are themselves necessary. (Just as a proposition whose truth is necessarily connected with another proposition that is necessarily true is itself necessarily true.) To deny this would be a contradiction: it would be in effect to say that •the connection was unbreakable and also that •it could be broken. . . . I leave it to you to judge how absurd that is. (d) It is equally obvious •that if there is a full, certain, and infallible foreknowledge of the future existence of the volitions of moral agents, then there is a certain, infallible, and unbreakable connection between those volitions and that foreknowledge; and •that therefore—by (a), (b) and (c)—those volitions are necessary events, because they are infallibly and unbreakably connected with something that has already existed and thus is now necessary and cannot not have been. To say otherwise. . . is to commit oneself to the absurdity that it isn't impossible for a proposition that is now infallibly known to be true to have no truth in it!

(2) I shall prove that no future event can be certainly foreknown if its occurrence is contingent and without any necessity. [Edwards could validly infer this from his previous point, by elementary logic. From

(1) If for some  $x$ :  $x$  is necessary and *If  $x$ , then  $y$  is necessary*, then  $y$  is necessary,

infer

(2) If  $y$  is not necessary, then there is no  $x$  such that  $x$  is necessary and *If  $x$ , then  $y$  is necessary*.

For some reason, Edwards ignores this proof, and goes in for something more roundabout, though it is not without interest.] It is impossible for a thing to be certainly •known to any intellect unless it is •evident to that intellect. To suppose otherwise is to imply a contradiction: because

P is certainly known to understanding U

is the same as

P is evident to U,

which is the same as

U sees P's evidentness.

But no understanding—created or uncreated, •human or divine—can see evidentness where there isn't any! for that would be to see something to exist that *doesn't* exist. So any truth that is absolutely without evidentness •at a given time• is absolutely unknowable •at that time•; to suppose that it is known is a contradiction.

But if there is any future event whose existence is contingent, with nothing necessary about it, the future occurrence of that event is absolutely without evidentness •now•. For it to be evident in any way, it must be either •self-evident or •proved. Why? Because if something is evident, it must either be evident in itself (•i.e. self-evident•) or evident in something else—i.e. evident through its connection with something else (•through which it can be proved•). But a future event whose occurrence isn't in any way necessary can't be evident in either of these ways. •It can't be self-evident;

for if it were, it could now be known through what is now to be seen in the thing itself, i.e. its present existence or the necessity of its nature; but we have stipulated that it doesn't yet exist and that it isn't necessary that it will come to exist. •Nor can it be proved, i.e. made evident through its connection with something else, because that is also contrary to the case as we have stipulated it. If something existing *now* were connected with the future occurrence of the contingent event, that would destroy its contingency! Thus it is demonstrated that there is in the •present• nature of things absolutely nothing making it evident that the contingent—in no way necessary—event will occur; so it can't •now• be seen to be evident, which is just to say that it can't •now• be known. [Throughout all this, and in some other places, 'evidentness' replaces Edwards's 'evidence'. The words could mean the same in his day, but they can't in ours. In the next paragraph our sense of the word seems to be involved, as well as the other sense, and accordingly 'evidence' is allowed to stand. But bear in mind that for Edwards the 'evidence' of something is conceptually tied to the thing's being 'evident'.]

Let us consider this in an example. Suppose that 5760 years ago the only thing that existed was God, and that then something else—a body, a spirit, an entire *world*—sprang into existence out of nothing, taking on a particular nature and form; all in absolute contingency, without God or anything else being involved in its causation, and with there being no sort of ground or reason for its existence, no dependence on or connection with anything that existed before. In this situation, there was no evidence of that event beforehand. There was no evidence of it to be seen in the thing itself, for it didn't yet exist. [You might think that in that sentence Edwards is making the highly dubious assumption that *one can't see anything in the nature of  $x$  unless  $x$  exists*; but he isn't. Rather, he is relying on the thesis that *one can't see existence in the nature of  $x$  unless  $x$  exists*—and that is perfectly all right. If existence

can be seen in the nature of x then x exists necessarily, and what exists necessarily exists at all times; so if x doesn't exist now, . . . etc.] And there was no evidence of it to be seen in anything else, for that would involve connection, which is contrary to the initial stipulation. . . . This event was absolutely without evidence, and therefore absolutely unknowable. Any increase in power of understanding or in capacity for noticing—even an *infinite* increase in these—would contribute nothing towards spotting any signs or evidences of this future contingent event. An increase in the strength of our sight may increase our ability to discern evidence that is far off and very much hidden and shrouded in clouds and darkness; but it doesn't increase our ability to discern evidence where there isn't any! . . . Rather, it increases our ability to see and be sure that there isn't any.

(3) To . . . say that God knows for sure—not merely conjecturing—that a certain thing will infallibly happen, while at the same time knowing that it is contingent in such a way that possibly it won't happen, is to imply that his knowledge is inconsistent with itself. . . . And if God knows everything, he knows that this future occurrence is uncertain. If it really is contingent, then God sees it as contingent. . . . If volitions are in themselves contingent events, with nothing necessary about them, then someone's predicting them in a peremptory and confident manner doesn't show how complete his knowledge is, but rather that he is ignorant and mistaken, because it reveals him as supposing to be certain a proposition that is—in its own nature, and all things considered—uncertain and contingent. Possible defence:

'God may have foreknowledge of contingent events by means that we can't conceive of.'

That is ridiculous, just as it would be ridiculous to say

'For all we know to the contrary, God may know contradictions to be true',

or

'God may know a thing to be certain while also knowing it not to be certain, though we can't conceive how he could do this—he has ways of knowing which we can't grasp.'

[Edwards now embarks on something he labels 'Corollary 1'. Its basic content is sharp and clear; but his presentation is hard to follow, partly because he approaches his target by an indirect route without properly explaining what he is doing and why. The target is a line of thought that says

God's foreknowledge of x's occurrence doesn't imply that x is necessary, in the way that God's decreeing that x shall occur implies that x is necessary.

Edwards identifies two bases someone might have for accepting this, and criticizes them in turn. (a) The assumption might be that a divine decree that x shall occur makes x *more* necessary than does divine foreknowledge of x's occurrence. Edwards says he has shown that divine foreknowledge of x's occurrence implies that x is absolutely, perfectly, completely necessary; there can't be any question of anything's implying that x is *more* necessary than that. (b) The assumption might be that a divine decree that x shall occur *makes* it necessary that x shall occur, whereas divine foreknowledge of x's occurrence doesn't *make* anything be the case—it doesn't have any *influence* in the world. Edwards quotes Whitby and two other writers making this point, e.g. writing that 'God's foreknowledge is not the cause of future things; rather, their being future is the cause of God's foreknowledge of them'. Edwards in reply concedes this difference between decrees and foreknowledge, but declares it to be irrelevant to the real point at issue, namely whether events that God foreknows are necessary. He writes:] Infallible foreknowledge of x can prove the necessity of x without being what causes the necessity. If the foreknowledge of

x is absolute, this proves x to be necessary—proves that it is impossible for x not to come about *somehow*, through a decree or in some other way if there are any other ways. My opponents on this matter assume that because certain foreknowledge doesn't *cause* an event to be necessary as a decree does, therefore it doesn't *prove* it to be necessary as a decree does. But that rests wholly on the supposition that nothing can •prove something to be necessary, or be •evidence of its being necessary, unless it has a causal influence to •make it necessary; and this is untenable. If certain foreknowledge of the future occurrence of an event isn't what first •makes it impossible that it should fail to occur, it can and certainly does •demonstrate that it is impossible that it should fail to occur, whatever the source of that impossibility may be. . . . It is as evident as anything can be that a thing that is infallibly known to be true can't possibly turn out not to be true; so there is a necessity that it should be true—and it makes no difference to *this* whether the knowledge is the cause of this necessity or the necessity is the cause of the knowledge.

[This next paragraph responds to something Whitby has quoted someone as saying: 'Foreknowledge has no more influence on things, to make them necessary, than after-knowledge does'.] All certain knowledge—whether it be foreknowledge, or after-knowledge, or at-the-same-time knowledge—proves the thing known to be necessary now, by some means or other; i.e. it proves that it is impossible that the thing should now be otherwise than true. I freely admit that foreknowledge doesn't prove a thing to be necessary *any more than* after-knowledge does; but •in saying this I am tying necessity to after-knowledge, not cutting it loose from foreknowledge. After-knowledge that is certain and infallible proves that it is now impossible that the known proposition should be not true. After-knowledge proves that it has now, somehow or other, become impossible

that the relevant proposition—the one affirming that the event in question has occurred—should be false. And the same holds for certain foreknowledge. . . .

There must be a certainty in things themselves before they can be •certainly known or—the same thing—•known to be certain. For certainty of knowledge is simply knowing or detecting the certainty in the things themselves that are known. So there must be a certainty in things, to be a basis for certainty of knowledge and to make things capable of being known to be certain. The necessity of the proposition that something will occur consists in the firm and infallible •connection between the subject and predicate of that proposition. All certainty of knowledge consists in a grasp of the firmness of that •connection. So God's certain foreknowledge that x will occur is his view of the firm and unbreakable connection between the subject and the predicate of the proposition affirming that x will occur. The subject is the possible outcome x; the predicate is x's future existence; and if future existence is firmly and unbreakably connected with x, then the future existence of x is necessary. If God certainly knows the future occurrence of an event that is wholly contingent and may possibly never occur, then he sees a firm connection between a subject and predicate that are not firmly connected; which is a contradiction. . . .

•BACKWARDS CAUSATION•

And another point: Granting that Whitby and the others are right in saying that God's foreknowledge of x is not the cause but the effect of x's occurrence, far from showing that this foreknowledge •doesn't imply the necessity of x's occurrence, this really brings out more clearly that it •does. Why? Because it shows the occurrence of the event to be so settled and firm that it's as if it had already occurred;. . . .its future occurrence has already had actual influence and effectiveness, and has produced an effect, namely foreknowledge:

the effect exists already; and as the effect presupposes the cause and entirely depends on it, it's as if the future event that is the cause had occurred already. The effect is as firm as possible, because it has already taken possession of existence or occurrence, and has made sure of it. But the effect can't be more firm and stable than its cause, ground, and reason. The building can't be firmer than the foundation.

To illustrate this matter, consider a situation in which a reflecting telescope has images that are the real effects of stars that they resemble, the stars themselves being too far away to see ·with the naked eye·. If these images in the telescope have actually existed in the past—·e.g. a few seconds ago·—it has now become utterly impossible for them *not* to have existed. And since they are the true effects of the heavenly bodies that they resemble, this proves the existence of those heavenly bodies to be as real, infallible, firm, and necessary as the existence of these effects. . . . ·That is plain sailing. But now let us think about something weird·. Let us suppose that future existences—·e.g. stars that will come into existence at some future time·—can somehow have influence *backwards* in time to produce effects *beforehand*, causing exact and perfect images of themselves in a telescope a thousand years *before* they exist, or indeed at all earlier times. I am supposing that these images are real *effects* of these future stars, and are perfectly dependent on and connected with their cause. ·Now think about the situation after the images have come into existence but before the stars they are images of have done so·. The •effects, the images, have already achieved actual existence, so their existence is perfectly firm and stable and utterly impossible to be otherwise; and in this case, as in the other ·less weird· one, this proves that the existence of ·the stars·, their •causes, is also equally sure, firm, and necessary; their not existing ·at some time· is as impossible as it would

be if they—like their effects—were now in the past. Now vary the case again: suppose that the antecedent effects (through backward causation) of things that don't yet exist are not •images in a telescope but rather •perfect ideas of the things in God's mind, ideas that have existed there from all eternity. Those ideas are *effects*, which are truly *connected* with their cause—and in saying this I am using 'effects' and 'connected' in their strict senses. The case is not altered—·i.e. the backward causation of a •divine idea by a future existent x makes the future existence of x necessary, just as does the backward causation of a •telescopic image by a future existent x·. [Does Edwards think that God's foreknowledge is a case of backward causation, or does he merely consider that possibility in order to make his point about how cause-effect relates to necessity? This version leaves it unclear which answer is right; so does the text as Edwards wrote it.]

·GOD AS NOT IN TIME?·

Arminians, wanting to undercut the argument from •God's foreknowledge to the •non-contingency of the volitions of moral agents, say things along the lines of this:

It is not strictly correct to speak of 'foreknowledge' in God. It's true that God has the most utterly complete knowledge of all events, from eternity to eternity, but there is no such thing as *before* and *after* in God. He sees all things in one perfect unchangeable view, not in a time-taking series.

I have two main things to say about this.

(1) I have already shown that *all* certain knowledge proves the necessity of the truth that is known, whether it be before, after, or at the same time. Although it is true that there is no before and after in God's knowledge, and that we have no idea of how he knows what he knows, we do know this much: there is no outcome—past, present, or to come—that God is ever uncertain of. He never is, never was, and never will

be without infallible knowledge of everything that actually occurs at some time; he always sees each item's existence to be certain and infallible. And as he always sees things just as they really are, nothing is ever really 'contingent' in the sense that it could have never come about. If it's true that strictly speaking there is no *foreknowledge* in God, that is because things that are •future to us are •as-though-present to God, as if they already existed; which amounts to saying that future events are, in God's view, always as evident, clear, sure, and necessary as if they already existed. . . .

[Edwards continues arguing at some length that the 'God isn't in time' thesis doesn't interfere with his argument that •God's knowledge of future events implies that •those events are necessary. One detail in this: even if God's knowledge of events that are in *our* future isn't knowledge-of-the-future from *his* standpoint, he can and sometimes does communicate that knowledge to us, enabling us to *foretell* the future with absolute certainty; and the argument against contingency can go through on the basis of our certain foretelling. He concludes:] So it's clear that •there being no before and after in God's mind doesn't affect •the necessity of the existence of the events known. Indeed. . .

**(2)** The view that there is no before and after in God's knowledge, so far from weakening the case for holding that no events are contingent, makes the case's *strength* even easier to see. There are two reasons for this.

(a) Why is there no succession—no before and after—in God's knowledge? Because it is absolutely perfect to the highest possible degree of clearness and certainty. All things past, present, and to come are viewed with equal evidentness and fullness; future things are seen as clearly as if they were present; the view is always absolutely perfect [partly = 'complete']; and if something is constantly perfect there is no way for it to change, and so no before and after in it; a

thing's coming into existence doesn't *add* anything to God's knowledge, making it larger or clearer or more certain. From God's point of view, things that did, do, or will exist are all the same to him. And that gives strength to my demonstration regarding future things, namely that it is as impossible they should fail to exist as it would be if they existed already. This 'God is timeless' objection, instead of weakening my argument, sets it in the strongest light. . . .

(b) What stops God's knowledge from having any before and after is its *unchangeability*. But that directly and plainly demonstrates my conclusion that it is utterly •impossible for any known event to fail to occur. For if that were •possible, then a change in God's knowledge and view of things would be possible (because if the known event didn't occur as God expected, he would change his mind and see his former mistake); but he is unchangeable, so that it is utterly infinitely impossible that his view should be changed. . . .

I conclude that no geometrical theorem—no proposition of *any* kind—is more capable of strict demonstration than the proposition that God's certain foreknowledge of the volitions of moral agents rules out •their being 'contingent' in the sense of being without any kind of necessity, and so rules out •their being 'free' in the Arminian sense. [That concludes the discussion of 'Corollary 1', started on page 54].

Corollary 2: Thus, what the Calvinists teach concerning the absolute decrees of God doesn't at all imply any more *fatality* in things than demonstrably follows from the teachings of most Arminian theologians, who acknowledge God's omniscience and universal foreknowledge. [In this context, 'fatality' means something like 'inevitability'; the basic notion is that of something's being *settled long in advance*.] So all their objections against the Calvinist doctrine—as implying Hobbes's doctrine of necessity or the stoics' doctrine of fate—count as much against their own teachings as it does against that of the

Calvinists. . . .

[The half-page labelled 'Corollary 3' is a single vast sentence in which Edwards expands what he has said in Corollary 2. The thesis is that Arminians are not entitled to object to Calvinism on grounds involving its thesis that 'men are under necessity in their moral operations', because they—or such of them as believe God to be omniscient—are committed to the very same thesis about necessity. The bulk of the paragraph is taken up by a listing of the more specific objections that Edwards has in mind: the one that is easiest to understand is 'arguments against the necessity of men's volitions from premises about the reasonableness of God's commands, promises, and threats, and the sincerity of his advice and invitations'.]

### **Section 13: Even if the volitions of moral agents are not connected with anything antecedent, they must be 'necessary' in a sense that overthrows Arminian liberty**

**Suppose some act x of the will has a cause.** Then I have shown that x is not contingent but necessary, because it is an effect that is necessarily dependent and consequent on its cause, whatever that may be. If the cause is the will itself, by antecedent acts of choosing and determining, x must be a necessary effect of those previous acts. The act x—a determined effect of the previous cause—can't prevent the effectiveness of its cause; it has to be wholly subject to its determination and command, as much as movements of the limbs are. The consequent commanded acts of the will are as passive and as necessary, with respect to the previous determining acts, as the parts of the body are with respect to the volitions that determine and command them. Therefore, if all the •free acts of the will are like this,

if they are all effects determined by the will itself, i.e. by antecedent choice, then they are all •necessary; they are all subject to, and decisively fixed by, the previous act that is their cause. And indeed all this can be re-applied to the previous act, the one that determined act x, if it is a free and voluntary act; for it too must be determined and fixed by a still earlier act, and so it too must be necessary. So that on this Arminian account of freedom **all the free acts of the will are necessary. . . .** And yet the Arminians say that **necessity is utterly inconsistent with liberty.** So that according to their view, the acts of the will can't be free •unless they are necessary, and can't be free •if they are necessary!

**Suppose that some act x of the will does not have a cause.** This means that x is not connected with and determined by anything that happens before it; in short, x is absolutely contingent. Allowing this to be possible still won't help the Arminians. For if x happened completely contingently, with no cause at all, then no act of the will, no prior act of the soul, was its cause; no determination or choice by the soul had any hand in it. This accidental event x did indeed occur *in* the will or the soul, but the will or the soul wasn't the cause of it. The will is not active in causing or determining x, but is purely the passive subject of it, the thing to which or in which x happens; at least according to the Arminians' notion of activity and passivity. In this case, contingency does as much to prevent [= 'get in ahead of'] the determination of the will as a proper cause does; and so far as the will is concerned x was necessary, and couldn't have been otherwise. For to suppose that

•x could have been otherwise if the will or soul had pleased

is to suppose that x depends on some prior act of choice or pleasure, which is contrary to what we have stipulated to be

the case. And supposing that

•x could have been otherwise if its cause had ordered it otherwise

conflicts with its not having any cause or orderer [Edwards's phrase]. Anything that doesn't depend on any free act of the soul is necessary so far as the soul is concerned; and the volition x we are discussing here doesn't depend on anything and isn't connected with anything; so it doesn't depend on any free act of the soul, and is therefore necessary so far as the soul is concerned. It comes to the soul by accident, and the soul is necessarily subjected to it (just as the passive earth is necessarily subjected to whatever falls upon it). This conflicts with the Arminian notion of liberty as the will's power of determining itself in its own acts, being •wholly active in this, •with no passiveness and •with no subjection to necessity. Thus, contingency is required by the Arminian notion of liberty and yet is inconsistent with it.

This is a good place to call attention to something that Watts wrote in his *Essay on the Freedom of Will in God and in Creatures etc.*:

The word 'chance' always means something done without design. Chance and design stand in direct opposition to each other; and 'chance' can never be properly applied to acts of the will. That is because the will is the source of all design; whatever it chooses it *designs* to choose, whether or not the choice is a good one; and when it is confronted with a need to choose between two perfectly equal things, it *designs* to set itself onto one of the two, merely because it will.

Watts seems to have been very careless here. For if 'the will is the •source of all design', as he says it is, then certainly it isn't always the •effect of design; there must be *some* acts of the will that occur without having been designed, and those acts must happen by chance, according to his definition of

'chance'. And if the will 'designs to choose' whatever it does choose, . . . as he says it does, then it designs to determine all its designs. Which leads us into an infinite regress of designs determining designs. The very first design would have to be the effect of a preceding design, or else it would occur by chance, according to this author's notion of chance.

We should look into another possible way of connecting the acts of the will with something earlier that is their cause. . . ., namely by relating them to *the views of the understanding*. This is not so very different from things we have already discussed, but let's deal with it anyway. This idea won't help the Arminians if it takes the form:

•Volitions are necessarily connected with the views of the understanding,

because that leaves the necessity of volitions standing, thus knocking out liberty on the Arminian view of what that is. So the Arminian will have to suppose that although volitions are •related to the views of the understanding, they aren't •connected with and •necessitated by them. Here is what this implies regarding liberty:

The liberty of the soul consists at least partly in its acts' being free from restraint, limitation, and government by the understanding, and in liberty and liableness to act contrary to the views and dictates of the understanding; so that the more disengaged from the understanding the soul is, the more liberty it has.

Think what this implies regarding the noble principle of human liberty, especially in the form of *complete* liberty, i.e. an unconstrained liableness to act altogether at random, without the least connection with, or restraint from, or government by any dictate of reason or anything whatever that is apprehended, considered, or viewed by the understanding. . . . The notion mankind have had of liberty is as a dignity or privilege, something worth claiming. There's no dignity or

privilege in being given up to such a wild contingency as this, to be perfectly and constantly liable to act unreasonably, and to be no more guided by the understanding than we

would be if we had no understanding, or were as destitute of perception as smoke that is driven by the wind!

## Part 3: The kind of liberty of will that Arminians believe in: is it necessary for moral agency, virtue and vice, praise and dispraise etc.?

### Section 1: God's moral excellence is necessary, yet virtuous and praiseworthy

At the start of Part 2, I announced two inquiries: •into whether any such thing as Arminian freedom ever did, does, or can exist; and •into whether anything like Arminian liberty is required for moral agency, virtue and vice, praise and blame, reward and punishment, etc. Having finished with the first inquiry, I now turn to the second.

Let us start by considering the virtue and agency of ·God·, the supreme moral agent and fountain of all agency and virtue. Whitby in his *Five Points of Calvinism* writes:

If all human actions are necessary, 'virtue' and 'vice' must be empty names, because we can't do anything that deserves blame or praise; for who can blame a person merely for doing something he couldn't help doing? or judge that he deserves praise merely for doing something he couldn't avoid doing?

He says countless things along the same lines, especially in the part of his book that deals with freedom of the will. He steadily maintains that a freedom not only from *compulsion* but from *necessity* is absolutely required if an action is to be worthy of blame or deserving of praise. And we all know that most Arminian writers these days agree with this, holding that there is no virtue or vice, reward or punishment, nothing to be commended or blamed, without this freedom. And yet Whitby allows that God does not have this freedom; and the Arminian writers that I have read generally agree that God is *necessarily* holy, and that his will is *necessarily* determined to that which is good. When these two views are put together,

the result is this: The infinitely holy God used to be thought of by his people, and is described all through the Bible, as a being who

- is virtuous,
- has all possible virtue,
- has every virtue in the most absolute purity and perfection, and in a way that is infinitely brighter and more lovable than in any creature,
- is the most perfect pattern of virtue, from whom all the virtue of others is merely beams from the sun, and
- is, because of his virtue and holiness, infinitely more worthy to be esteemed, loved, honoured, admired, commended, extolled, and praised than any creature.

But this being, according to the views of Whitby and other Arminians, *has no virtue at all!* When 'virtue' is ascribed to him, it is merely an empty name. He doesn't deserve commendation or praise; he is under necessity, and so he can't avoid being as holy and good as he is; therefore no thanks to him for that! It seems that God's holiness, justice, faithfulness, etc. mustn't be thought of as being virtuous and praiseworthy. The Arminians won't deny that these features of God are *good*; but we must understand that they are no more *commendable* than are other goods in things that aren't moral agents; the sun's brightness and the earth's fertility are good, but they aren't virtuous, because these properties are necessary to those bodies and don't come from any self-determining power.

Talking to Christians acquainted with the Bible, all that is needed to refute this view of God is to *state it in detail*, ·as I have just done·. I could set out scriptural texts in which

God is represented as being—in every respect and in the highest manner—virtuous and supremely praiseworthy; but there would be no end to them, and there is no need to do this for readers who have been brought up in the light of the gospel.

It's a pity that Whitby and other theologians of the same sort didn't *explain themselves* when they said that nothing that is necessary deserves praise, while also saying that God's perfection is necessary, thereby implying that God doesn't deserve praise. If their words have any meaning at all, they must be using 'praise' to mean the expression—in language or otherwise—of some sorts of esteem, respect, or honourable regard. Will they then say that •men's small and imperfect virtue makes them worthy of the esteem, respect, and honour that God is *not* worthy of for his infinite righteousness, holiness, and goodness? If so it must be because of some sort of special excellence in the virtuous man, something that puts him in a certain way above God, something that he doesn't get *from* God. [Edwards goes on at some length mocking this idea—for example, asking what name we should give to this special excellence, given that all the best-sounding names have already been given to God—and then he drops it.]

Whitby's work clearly implies that the •necessity of God's moral perfections and actions is as inconsistent with his being worthy of praise as is •necessity of compulsion. If that is right, why should we *thank* God for his goodness, any more than we would if he were forced to be good, or any more than we would thank one of our fellow-creatures who did us good not freely and of good will or from any kindness of heart, but from mere compulsion? Arminians take God to be necessarily a good and gracious being; for this is the basis for some of their main arguments against many Calvinist doctrines. They say that those doctrines are

*certainly* false, and that it's *impossible* that they should be true, because they aren't consistent with the goodness of God. This assumes that it is *impossible* that God should not be good: for if it were possible that he should be otherwise than good, they no longer have any argument for the *impossibility* of the truth of those Calvinist doctrines.

God's virtue is not strictly speaking *rewardable*—not because his moral perfections and actions aren't good enough to deserve rewards from his creatures, but because he is infinitely above any capacity for receiving any reward or benefit from his creatures. He is already infinitely and unchangeably happy, and we can't be profitable to him. But still he is *worthy* of our supreme •benevolence for his virtue, and he would be worthy of our •beneficence—which is the upshot and expression of benevolence—if there were any way in which we *could* do him good. ['Benevolence' and 'beneficence' are from Latin words meaning 'wishing good' and 'doing good'.] If God deserves to be thanked and praised for his goodness, he for the same reason deserves that we should also repay his kindness if that were possible. . . . It is very natural for us to want to express our gratitude to God by acts of beneficence; and he has provided an outlet for this desire. . . .by appointing others—especially our needy brethren—to receive benefits on his behalf, standing in place of him as the objects of our beneficence.

## **Section 2: The acts of the will of Jesus Christ's human soul were necessarily holy, yet truly virtuous, praiseworthy, rewardable etc.**

I have already considered Whitby's insistence that a freedom not only from compulsion but also from necessity is required for virtue or vice, praise or dispraise, reward or punishment. He also insists on the same freedom as absolutely required

for •a person to be subject to a law of precepts or prohibitions, for •promises and threats, and for •a state of trial. [Edwards backs up these three claims about Whitby's views with a total of 19 references to pages in Whitby's book.—A 'state of trial' is a course of events in which someone's courage, resolution, strength, honesty etc. are *tested*, the implication being that the test is hard to pass. Whitby's thesis was, presumably, that if the person lacks Arminian freedom his conduct in the test *can* go only one way, so that what's going on isn't really a *test*. In item (xi) on page 64 Edwards suggests a near-equation of 'trial' with 'temptation', a suggestion that appears even more strongly at the end of this section.]

With these claims in mind, let us look into the moral conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he exhibited in his human nature in his humble state as a man. ·In this section·, I will show *first* that Jesus' holy behaviour was necessary, i.e. that it was impossible for him to conduct himself otherwise than in a holy manner, otherwise than being perfectly holy in every single act of his life. And *secondly* that his holy behaviour was strictly speaking virtuous, and worthy of praise; and that he was •subject to law and commands, •subject to promises and rewards, and •in a state of trial.

(1) It was impossible that the volitions of Christ's human soul should ever, in any circumstance, differ even slightly from what is holy and agreeable to God's nature and will. The following ·eleven· things make this evident.

(i) God had promised to preserve and uphold Jesus. . . .through his Spirit, under all Jesus' temptations, so effectively that he *could not* fail to achieve the end for which he came into the world; but he would have failed if he had fallen into sin. [Edwards devotes nearly two pages to biblical citations backing this up.]

(ii) The same thing is evident from all the promises God made to the Messiah regarding his future glory, kingdom

and success in his role as a mediator; and he couldn't have had this glory if his holiness had failed and he had been guilty of sin. [Most of a page of citations in support of this.]

(iii) God often comforted the members of the ancient church by promising them that he would give them a righteous, sinless saviour. [Many supporting biblical quotations. Then:] If it was impossible that these promises should fail. . . .then it was impossible that Christ should commit any sin. Christ himself signified that it was impossible that the things that had been said about him should fail to be fulfilled. [Several more quotations.]

(iv) [This repeats the claim made in (iii), with remarks about whether what were involved were really *promises*. Thus:] The ancient predictions given to God's church of the Messiah as a saviour were of the nature of *promises*; as can be seen from the predictions themselves and from the manner of delivering them. In the new testament they are often explicitly called 'promises'. [Several supporting quotations, including this:] The apostle Paul, speaking of a promise God made to Abraham, that in it God wanted 'by two *unchangeable* things in which it was *impossible* for God to lie, to give us strong consolation' (Hebrews 6:18). In this, the necessity of the accomplishment, or (which is the same thing) the impossibility of the contrary, is fully declared.

(v) All the promises that were made to the church of God under the old testament—promises of the great enlargement of the church and the advancement of her glory in the days of the gospel after the coming of the Messiah. . . .—were given in such way manner that it was impossible that the Messiah should fail or commit sin.

(vi) It was impossible that the Messiah should fail to persevere in integrity and holiness, as the first Adam failed, because this would have been inconsistent with the promises Christ made to the blessed Virgin his mother and to her

husband. These promises implied that he would ‘save his people from their sins’ [etc.]. . . . These promises were sure, and it was impossible that they should fail. . . .

(vii) That it should have been possible for Christ to sin, and so fail in the work of our redemption, is inconsistent with the eternal purpose and decree of God—revealed in the Scriptures—that he would provide salvation for fallen man through Jesus Christ, and that salvation would be offered to sinners through the preaching of the gospel. The Arminians don’t deny that God made these absolute decrees. That much at least (out of all controversy) is implied in such scriptural passages as [and he gives four references]. The Arminians ·implicitly· concede that such an absolute decree as this is signified in many biblical texts. Their ·doctrine about· . . . the conditional election of particular persons implies this. God couldn’t ·conditionally· decree before the foundation of the world that

- if anyone comes to believe in and obey Christ, that person will be saved,

unless he had *absolutely* decreed that

- salvation will be provided and effectively brought about by Christ.

And since (as the Arminians themselves strenuously maintain) what God decrees will necessarily come about, it became *necessary* that Christ should persevere and actually work out salvation for us and that he should not fail by the commission of sin.

(viii) That it should have been possible for Christ’s holiness to fail is not consistent with what God promised to his Son before all ages. . . ., namely that salvation would be offered to men through Christ. Paul referred to this in referring to ‘that eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began’.

(ix) That it should be possible for Christ to fail to do his Father’s will is inconsistent with the promise made to the Father by the Son, i.e. by the Logos that was with the Father from the beginning before he took the human nature. . . . [The rest of this paragraph is omitted, as too hard to follow. It is a fairly intricate exercise in biblical scholarship.]

(x) If it was possible for Christ to have failed to do the will of his Father, thereby failing to bring about redemption for sinners, then the salvation of all the saints who were saved—from the beginning of the world to the death of Christ—was not built on a firm foundation. [Edwards devotes a page to this. His point is that various old-testament people were saved because of their trust in the redemption that would be brought by the Messiah when he eventually arrived. If it was *possible* that Jesus should fail, ‘this trust and dependence. . . was leaning on a staff that was weak and might possibly break’, in which case ‘their faith, their comfort, and their salvation was built on a fallible foundation’.]

(xi) The man Christ Jesus, before he had finished his course of obedience and while in the midst of temptations and trials [see note near start of this section, page 63], often positively predicted his own future glory in his kingdom, and the enlargement of his church, the salvation of the Gentiles through him, and so on; and often promised blessings that he would bestow on his true disciples in his future kingdom—and demanded that his disciples fully depend on those promises. But the disciples would have no ground for such dependence if Christ had been liable to fail in his work; and Christ himself would have been guilty of presumption in giving so many outright unqualified promises of great things if the things really depended on a mere contingency. I mean the contingency ·that the Arminians believe in, with· the determinations of Christ’s free will consisting in a ‘take-your-pick’ freedom to choose either sin or holiness, with these

being equally balanced—with thousands of choices, each of which could go either way.

Obviously, therefore, it was impossible that the acts of the will of the human soul of Christ should be otherwise than holy and conforming to the will of the Father; or in other words they were necessarily so conformed. I have given so much space to this matter [in the original four times as long as in this version] because it is denied by some of the leading Arminians, especially by Episcopius, and because I regard it as a point that clearly and absolutely *settles* the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians concerning the question of whether Arminian freedom of will is required for moral agency, virtue, command or prohibition, promise or threat, reward or punishment, praise or dispraise, merit or demerit. So I now proceed to the second of the questions ·that I announced [page 63]·, the question: Was Christ in his holy behaviour on earth a moral agent, subject to commands, promises etc.?

(2) Whitby very often speaks of what he calls a freedom *ad utrumlibet* [= ‘freedom to go (either way), as one pleases’], without necessity, as required for law and commands; and he speaks of necessity as entirely inconsistent with injunctions and prohibitions. Yet we read of Christ’s being the subject of his Father’s commands (John 10:18 and 15:10). And Christ tells us that everything that he said or did was in compliance with ‘commandments he had received from the Father’, and we often read of Christ’s obedience to his Father’s commands [several biblical references given].

Whitby contends that

- promises offered to people as motives to do their duty, and
- a being who is moved and induced by promises,

are utterly inconsistent with a state in which people aren’t at liberty to go either way, being instead necessarily determined

to ·go· one ·way·. . . . But what he is asserting here is demonstrably false if the Christian religion is true. If there is any truth in Christianity or the Bible, the man Christ Jesus had his will infallibly and unalterably determined to good, and to that alone; yet God promised him glorious rewards on condition of his persevering in and perfecting the work that God had assigned to him. . . . Christ says to his disciples. . . something whose plain meaning is this: ‘As you have shared in my temptations and trials, and have been steadfast and have overcome, I promise to make you share in my reward and to give you a kingdom—as the Father has promised me a kingdom for steadfastly overcoming in those trials.’. . . How *strange* would it be to hear any Christian assert that the holy and excellent character and behaviour of Jesus Christ, and the obedience that he showed under such great trials, was not virtuous or praiseworthy because his will wasn’t free to go either way—to holiness or to sin—but rather was unalterably determined to holiness; and that for this reason there is no virtue at all in Christ’s

- humility, meekness, patience, charity, forgiveness of enemies, heavenly-mindedness;
- submission to the will of God;
- perfect obedience to God’s commands right through to his death—death on the *cross*;
- great compassion to the afflicted;
- unparalleled love to mankind;
- faithfulness to God and man under such great trials;
- praying for his enemies even while they were nailing him to the cross.

It would, ·I repeat·, be *strange* to hear a Christian say that •the word ‘virtue’ when applied to these things is merely an empty name; that •there was no merit in any of them, i.e. that they didn’t make Christ worthy of anything at all, of any reward or praise or honour or respect from God or

man; because his will was not evenly balanced and free to go either way, but rather was so strongly inclined or biased in favour of excellent things that it was impossible for him to choose the contrary; that •it would be (in Whitby's phrase) 'sensibly unreasonable' [= 'perceptibly unreasonable' = 'obviously unreasonable'] that human nature should be rewarded for any of these things.

According to this doctrine, the creature who is clearly set forth in the Bible as the 'first-born of every creature' [this surprising phrase is applied to Jesus Christ in Colossians 1:15], as having 'in all things the pre-eminence', and as the highest of all creatures in virtue, honour, and worthiness of esteem, praise, and glory on account of his virtue, is less worthy of reward or praise than the very least of saints—indeed, no more worthy than a clock or mere machine that is purely passive and moved by natural necessity.

If we judge by what the Bible says, we have reason to believe that the reason why Christ took our nature onto himself, living among us in this world in a suffering state, was not only to satisfy [= 'make payment'] for our sins, but also so that

he, having our nature and our circumstances and being under our trials, might be our most fit and proper example, leader, and captain in the exercise of glorious and victorious virtue, and might provide us with a visible instance of the glorious end and reward of virtue; so that we might see in him the beauty, loveliness, and true honour and glory and enormous benefit of the virtue that it is appropriate for us human beings to practice, and might learn from this, and be energized to seek a similar glory and honour and to obtain a similar glorious reward. [Many biblical references given.]

But if there was absolutely *no* virtue or merit, no worthi-

ness of any reward, glory, praise, or commendation in all that Christ did, because it was all necessary and he couldn't help it, then what makes his example fit to energize and motivate us free creatures to seek for honour, glory, and virtue by patient continuance in well-doing [= 'by acting well, uncomplainingly putting up with whatever knocks we receive']?

God says that he is especially well pleased with the righteousness of this distinguished servant. [Several biblical quotations, including:] 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. . . . And Christ tells us explicitly that the Father loves him for his wonderful obedience in voluntarily yielding himself to death in compliance with the Father's command: 'Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life: No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself. This commandment received I of my Father.'

[A paragraph to the same effect, quoting a passage from Revelation, including:] Millions of angels said with a loud voice 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing.'

Christ speaks of the eternal life that he was to receive as the reward of his obedience to the Father's commandments. [Several biblical quotations which Edwards glosses in terms of 'reward'. That word doesn't occur in any of the passages as he quotes them—a fact that he goes on to address:] There is no room to maintain that the glorious benefits bestowed in consequence of Christ's obedience are not really a *reward*. What is a 'reward', in the strictest sense, but a benefit (a) given to someone because of something morally excellent in his nature or his behaviour, and (b) with the intention of testifying to how pleased the giver is with that moral excellence and testifying to his respect and favour? If we take a stricter view of what a reward is, putting into the meaning of 'reward' not just (a) and (b) but also (c) 'the

recipient's being worthy of this gift', and (d) 'the benefit's being given in fulfillment of a promise', *still* it will be found that there's nothing in that meaning that the Bible doesn't most explicitly ascribe to the glory bestowed on Christ after his sufferings. Passages that I have already cited show that there was a glorious benefit (a) bestowed in consequence of something morally excellent, called 'righteousness' and 'obedience', that (b) the giver of the benefit had great favour, love, and pleasedness for this righteousness and obedience, that (c) the recipient's obedience was worthy of the benefit, and that (d) the benefit was given in fulfillment of promises made to that obedience.

·Early in this section [page 63] I undertook to show that Christ 'was •subject to law and commands, was •subject to promises and rewards, and was in a •state of trial'. I have addressed two of these, and now turn to the third.· While Jesus Christ was here in the flesh, he was manifestly in a state of trial [see note on page 63]. In 1 Corinthians 15:45 and Romans 5:14 Christ is called 'the last Adam'. This last Adam took on himself human nature, and thus the form of a servant and of someone who is under the law, so as to stand in for us or act for us; and this involved his being put into a state of trial as the first Adam was. Whitby lists three things as signs of someone's being in a state of trial: •his afflictions' being spoken of as his 'trials' or 'temptations', •his being the subject of promises, and •his being exposed to Satan's temptations. Christ was evidently the subject of each of these. I have already discussed the promises that were made to him. The difficulties and afflictions he met with in the course of his obedience are called his 'temptations' or 'trials'. [Biblical citations are given in support of this.]

### **Section 3: Moral necessity and inability are consistent with blameworthiness. This is shown by the case of people whom God has given up to sin, and of fallen man in general**

Whitby says that anything deserving the name of 'sin', and any culpable action, requires freedom—not only from compulsion but also from necessity. Here is how he puts it:

If they are thus necessitated, then neither their 'sins of omission' nor their 'sins of commission' can deserve to be called 'sins'; for it is essential to the nature of sin—according to St. Augustine's definition—that it be an action that the agent is free to abstain from. For an action or omission to be culpable, three things seem plainly necessary. One is that be in our power to perform the action or abstain from performing it, because—as Origen and all the church fathers say—no man is blameworthy for not doing what he could not do.

And elsewhere Whitby insists that 'when anyone is necessitated to do evil, what he does is no vice; he is guilty of no fault, and deserves no blame, dispraise, or dishonour; he is unblamable'.

If these things are true, with 'necessity' taken in Whitby's sense, they imply that those whom God 'gives up to sin' are blameless with respect to any sin that they commit after they have been 'given up'. *Is there such a thing as someone's being judicially given up to sin?* There certainly is, if the Bible is to be believed:

- 'So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels' (Psalm 81:12).
- 'God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.' 'For this cause, God

gave them up to vile affections.’ ‘And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient.’ (Romans 1:24, 26, 28)

There is no need to go in detail into what is meant by God’s ‘giving men up to the lusts of their own hearts’; all we need to know here is that it certainly means that God brought it about (either by doing things or by allowing them) that men would continue in their sins. Whatever it is that men are ‘given up to’, whether it be much or little, *that* is what will happen as the consequence of their being given up. If God doesn’t arrange matters (either by doing or allowing) so that sin is the consequence, then that upshot proves that they are not ‘given up to’ sin. . . . It follows, then, that if they are ‘given up to evil’, the evil they do in consequence of this is done necessarily.

If not only compulsion but any kind of necessity is enough to clear someone from blame, then Judas was blameless after Christ had given him over, declaring his certain damnation and declaring that he would betray him. On Whitby’s view, Judas was not guilty of any sin in betraying his master, although his betrayal is spoken of by Christ as the most aggravated sin, worse than the sin of Pilate in crucifying him. And the Jews in Egypt in Jeremiah’s time weren’t guilty of any sin in not worshipping the true God, after God had ‘sworn by his great name that his name should be no more named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt’ (Jeremiah 44:26).

Whitby denies that men in this world are ever given up by God to sin in such a way that their wills are •necessarily determined to evil; though he admits that a man’s being given up to sin by God may make it exceedingly •difficult for him to do good, having a strong bent and powerful inclination to what is bad. But that weakening of the notion of ‘giving

up to sin’ still doesn’t make it consistent with his views about what kind of liberty is needed for praise or blame to be appropriate. If an •impossibility of avoiding sin •wholly excuses a man, then for the same reason its being •difficult to avoid sin •partly excuses him; how far the excuse goes depends on how difficult the avoidance was. It is taken for granted that when it come to excusing someone for doing or not doing something,

- moral impossibility or inability has the same force as
- natural inability.

But if that is so, then surely when it comes to excusing someone for his conduct,

- moral difficulty has the same force as •natural difficulty.

Everyone agrees that natural impossibility wholly excuses, and that natural difficulty excuses in part, making the act or omission less blamable in proportion to the difficulty. . . .—the nearer the difficulty approaches to impossibility the nearer a person is to being blameless. So we must conclude that the same holds for moral difficulty; which implies that a person may be partly excusable for his bad conduct if he acted under the influence of a strong bias or inclination to evil, such as Whitby admits in the case of those who have been ‘given up’ to the lusts of their own hearts. Thus, *their* fault also must be lessened in proportion to the difficulty and its closeness to impossibility. If ten degrees of moral difficulty make the action quite impossible, and so wholly excuses the person for not performing it, then nine degrees of difficulty will have the effect of a 90 per cent excuse for the person’s not performing it.—All this is clearly correct on Arminian principles.

From all of this it follows that a strong inclination and bias one way, and difficulty of going the other way, never causes a person to be *at all* more exposed to sin or anything

blamable, because every •increase in difficulty is matched by a •decrease in what is required and expected. . . .

Thus, to suppose that there might be more or less difficulty in the way of a man's duty is an inconsistency, according to Whitby's notions of liberty, virtue and vice, blame and praise. This holds not only for the supposed difficulty that comes from being 'given up' to hardness of heart, but for any supposed difficulty coming from any source whatever. On his views, the avoiding of sin and blame and the doing of what is virtuous and praiseworthy must be always equally easy!

Whitby's notions of liberty, obligation, virtue, sin, etc. lead him into another great inconsistency. He often insists that necessity is inconsistent with the nature of sin or fault. Here are some quotations from his book [Edwards gives the page-number for each]:

- Who can blame a person for doing what he could not help?
- It is clearly unjust to punish any man for doing something that was never in his power to avoid.

And to confirm his opinion he quotes one of the church fathers:

- Why does God command, if man doesn't have free will and power to obey?
- Who will not cry out that it is folly to command him that hath not liberty to do what is commanded; and that it is unjust to condemn him that has it not in his power to do what is required?

And another of the fathers:

- A law is given to someone who can turn either way, i.e. obey it or transgress it; no law can be against someone who is bound by nature.

And yet this same Whitby asserts that fallen man is not *able* to behave perfectly obediently. He writes: 'Adam's nature

gave him power to remain innocent and without sin, whereas our nature has certainly never had such power.' [By 'our nature' Whitby meant: the nature of 'fallen man'—human beings other than Adam and Eve, ones who are 'fallen' in the sense that they have somehow inherited the sinfulness of Adam's sin of disobedience.] But if we don't have the power to remain innocent and without sin, then **sin is consistent with necessity**, and we can be sinful through doing things that we don't have the power to avoid. That is inconsistent with the things Whitby says elsewhere, typified by this: 'If we were necessitated, neither "sins of omission" nor "sins of commission" would deserve the name "sins".' If we don't have the power to be innocent, then we don't have the power to be blameless, which is to say that we are *necessarily* blameworthy. [This is perhaps the worst argument in Edwards's fine book. A pebble doesn't have the power to be innocent, but it doesn't follow that the pebble is necessarily blameworthy.] How does this square with Whitby's frequent assertions that necessity is inconsistent with blame or praise? If we don't have the power to obey all God's commands perfectly, then we are necessitated to breaking some of his commands in some degree. . . . But then why does Whitby exclaim over the unreasonableness and folly of giving men commands that go beyond what they have power to do?

Arminians in general are very inconsistent with themselves in what they say about the inability of fallen man. They strenuously maintain that

- it would be unjust for God to require anything of us beyond our present power and ability to perform;
- and they also hold that
- we are now unable to obey God perfectly; and Christ died to satisfy [= 'pay'] for the imperfections of our obedience, and has cleared the way for our imperfect obedience to be accepted •by God• instead of perfect.

In this pair of opinions they seem to run, all unawares, into the grossest inconsistency. Here is how I put the point in another of my writings:

They hold that God in mercy to mankind has abolished that rigorous constitution or law that they were under originally, and instead of it has introduced a more mild constitution and put us under a new law that requires no more than imperfect sincere obedience in compliance with our poor, infirm, impotent, circumstances since the fall.

How can these things be made consistent? Tell me this: *What* laws do we break through the imperfections of our obedience? If those imperfections don't break any law that we were ever under, then they aren't sins. And if they aren't sins, what need was there for Christ's dying to pay for them? And if they *are* sins, and involve us in breaking some law, what law is it? The imperfections in our obedience can't be breaking the *new* law that the Arminians talk about—the one that holds because of Christ's sacrifice—because that requires only imperfect obedience, i.e. obedience with imperfections, which is exactly what we are supplying! And they can't be a breach of the Arminians' *old* law, because that—they say—is entirely abolished, and we never were subjected to it. They say that it wouldn't be just if God required perfect obedience from us, because it wouldn't be just to require more than we can perform, or to punish us for failing to perform it. Therefore, according to their views the imperfections of our obedience don't deserve to be punished. So •what need was there for Christ to die to pay for them? What need for his suffering to pay for something that is not a fault and in its own nature doesn't deserve that anyone should suffer for it? . . . What need for Christ's dying to clear the way for God to accept the kind of obedience—namely, *partial* obedience—that it would be unjust for him *not* to accept?

Did Christ have to die to get God not to act unrighteously? You may want to say:

Christ died to satisfy the old law for us, so that we wouldn't be subjected to it but only to a less demanding law.

But then I ask: what need was there for Christ to die so that we wouldn't be subject to a law which we couldn't have *justly* been subjected to in any case—whether or not Christ died—simply because we weren't and aren't able to obey it?

So the Arminians contradict themselves not only in what they say about •the need for Christ's payment to atone for the imperfections that we can't avoid, but also in what they say about •the grace of God that has been granted to men to enable them to obey sincerely the new law. Henry Stebbing writes: 'I grant indeed that original sin has brought it about that without new grace from God we are utterly disabled for the performance of the condition . But I add that God gives to us all a grace that makes it truly possible for us to perform the condition; and on that basis he may and most righteously does require it.' If Stebbing intends to speak correctly, by 'grace' he must mean the assistance that is given out of free favour and kindness. But in the same place he says that it would be very 'unreasonable', 'unjust', and 'cruel' for God to set as a condition for pardon something that original sin has made impossible for us. If unaided we *can't* meet the condition, what *grace* is there in helping us to meet it? Why label as 'grace' something that is absolutely owed to us, something that God is bound to bestow on us and that it would be unjust and cruel in him to withhold, given that he requires that as the condition of his pardoning us?

#### **Section 4: Command, and the obligation to obey, are consistent with moral inability to obey**

Arminian writers heavily insist that necessity is inconsistent with law or command. More specifically, they hold that it is absurd to suppose that God by his command should require men to do things they are unable to do—and in this context no distinction is made between natural inability and moral inability. So I now want to look into this question in detail.

In the interests of clarity, I shall break up what I want to say into three distinct parts. They will be the sole topic of this section.

•COMMANDS ARE ADDRESSED DIRECTLY ONLY TO THE WILL•

(1) A precept or command can be aimed at the will itself and not only at actions that are the effects of the will. What is required of a man by such a command is a certain state of or action by his will, not merely a certain alteration in the state of his body or his mind resulting from a volition. This is very obvious; for it is *only* the soul that is properly *and directly* the subject of precepts or commands, for it is only the soul that is capable of receiving or perceiving commands. The motions or state of the body are •commandable only to the extent that they are •subject to the soul and •connected with its acts. And the will is the only faculty the soul has by which it can in the strictest sense consent to, yield to, or comply with any command. It is only through the will that the soul can directly disobey, or refuse to comply; because consenting, yielding, accepting, complying, refusing, rejecting, etc. are—by the very meanings of the terms—nothing but certain acts of the will. Obedience, in its basic nature, is the submitting and yielding of the will of one person to the will of another. Disobedience is the will's not consenting to, or not complying with, the proclaimed will of the commander. Acts that are not the acts of the will—such as certain bodily movements and

alterations in the soul—count as obedient or disobedient only indirectly, being connected by an established law of nature to the state or actions of the will. It is clear, then, that demands may be made on the will itself; and the most proper, direct, and immediate subject of command is the being of a good will. [That is Edwards's phrase. He means 'the existence of a good will', so that his topic is just the will's *being good*; the command in question is 'Be good!', addressed to someone's will.] If *that* can't be prescribed or required by a command or precept, *nothing* can; for the only way anything else can be required is through its being the product of a good will.

Corollary 1: If there is a series of acts of the will, with each act after the first being determined by the one that preceded it, the first act in the series—the determining act—is properly the subject of command, and not merely the consequent acts that depend on it. . . . This first act is what determines the whole affair: the obedience or disobedience lies in the first act in a special way, because the consequent acts are all governed and determined by it. If this governing act isn't the proper object of the command, then no act is. [Edwards has been talking about a linked series of acts of the will, or volitions,  $V_1, V_2, V_3, \dots$  with special attention to  $V_1$ , the 'first act that determines the whole affair'. He is now going to talk about an act of the soul—let's call it PV, for 'prior to volition'—that precedes and kicks off the entire series. Notice: an act of the *soul*, not of the *will*. The series that PV *belongs to* is PV,  $V_1, V_2, V_3, \dots$ ]

Corollary 2: It also follows from what I have said that if the soul acts or exerts itself in any way prior to any free act of choice that might direct and determine the acts of the will, such an act PV of the soul can't properly be subject in any way to any command or precept whatsoever—neither directly nor indirectly, neither immediately nor remotely. Because PV occurs prior to all acts of the will, it can't •involve consent or obedience to any command, nor can it •be an effect of

acts that did involve consent or obedience. If you tried to talk about PV in terms of (dis)obedience, it would be an act of (dis)obedience in which the will has no concern at all; it would be wholly involuntary, with no *willing* obedience or rebellion—no compliance or opposition of the will—and what sort of obedience or rebellion is that?

Now, the Arminians think of freedom of the will as consisting in the soul's determining its own acts of will. And what emerges from what I've just been saying is that *this* kind of 'freedom of the will', instead of being •essential to moral agency and to men's being the subjects of moral government, is •utterly inconsistent with it. For if the soul determines *all* its acts of will, it does so by means of acts like PV—ones that are not themselves acts of will or of choice, and don't come within the scope of any command or moral government. So any •acts of the will that depend on PV can't be the subjects of command either, because •they are necessary consequences of PV, which is not subject to any command. And the person can't be the subject of command or government in respect of his external [= 'physical', 'bodily'] actions, because they—as necessary effects of the acts of the will—are all necessary too. So this Arminian theory implies that mankind are subjects of command or moral government in *nothing at all*; all their moral agency is entirely excluded from moral government, and no room is left for virtue or vice.

So it is the Arminian theory, and not that of the Calvinists, that is utterly inconsistent with moral government and with all use of laws, precepts, prohibitions, promises, or threats. And there is no possible way to make the Arminian principles consistent with these things. Someone might try:

•There is •no act PV•, no prior determining act of the soul prior to all the acts of the will. Rather, volitions are events that happen by pure accident, without any determining cause.

That is most obviously inconsistent with all use of laws and precepts; for nothing is clearer than that laws can't serve to direct and regulate perfect accidents—which by definition are never regulated by anything. . . . The Arminian notion of indifference as essential to the liberty that is needed for virtue or vice is also completely useless for laws and precepts. What a law is *for* is to bind the person to one side; and what a command is for is to turn the will in one direction, so it is useless unless it turns or biases the will in that direction. But if liberty consists in indifference—•meaning, as always, the will's being evenly balanced—•then all a command will achieve in biasing the will is to destroy its liberty by disturbing its equilibrium. . . .

•MORAL FAILURE IMPLIES MORAL INABILITY•

(2) I have shown that precepts and commands are directed towards the will itself—especially those of its acts that lead to and determine a sequence of such acts—and not merely the movements of the body etc. that are the effects of the will. With that established, I now assert, •and shall argue•, that when the will in its leading and determining act  $V_1$  opposes itself to a command to do  $x$ —or fails to obey it—that opposition or failure shows that the will was morally unable to do  $x$ . Put a little differently: whenever a command requires a certain state or act of the will, and the person commanded—despite the command and the circumstances under which it is presented—still finds his will opposed to, or lacking in, whatever is needed to get started on obeying, that person is *morally unable* to obey that command.

This is obvious from what I said in Part 1, section 4, about the distinction between moral inability and natural inability. I made the point there that a man can be said to be 'morally unable' to do a thing when he is influenced or prevailed on by a contrary inclination. . . . It is also obvious, given things that I have proved, that the will is always, in every

single act, necessarily determined by the strongest motive; and so is always unable to go against the motive which, all things considered, has at that moment the greatest strength and advantage to move the will. But I needn't insist any further on these claims. The truth of the thesis I am now presenting—namely that

•when the will ·is faced with a command to do x, and·  
opposes or fails to comply with this in getting started  
on obedience in doing x, it *isn't able* to comply

—can be seen from the following two points.

(a) Consider the state of the will at the time of that diverse or opposite leading act or inclination [= the act  $V_1$  which *diverges from* or *opposes* the command that has been given. Why doesn't Edwards call it 'disobedient'? Possibly because he is tending all through this to slide back and forth between the first member of the series  $V_1, V_2, V_3, \dots$  and the first member of the series PV,  $V_1, V_2, V_3, \dots$ , and, as we have seen, he doesn't regard PV as a case of disobedience. Editorial notes and the use of the labels ' $V_1$ ' and 'PV' have kept the two severely separate; Edwards ought also to do so; but it isn't certain that he does.] At the very time when the will is under the influence of that leading act or inclination, it isn't *able* to exert itself to go a different way, making an alteration in itself that would produce compliance ·with the command·. The inclination can't change itself, because—obviously—it can't be inclined to change itself. The choice that is made at that moment can't be otherwise, for that would involve choosing *now* something different from what is chosen *now*. If the will,

•all things now considered, inclines or chooses to go  
in one direction,

then it can't

•choose, all things now considered, to go in a different  
direction,

and so it cannot

•choose to be made to go in a different direction.

To suppose that the mind is now sincerely inclined to change itself to a different inclination is to suppose the mind is *now* truly inclined otherwise than it is *now* inclined. The will may oppose some •future remote act that it is exposed to, but not its own •present act.

(b) Thus, while the command-opposing leading act  $V_1$  is being performed, it isn't possible for the will to comply with the command by any act of its own at that time (or of course, *after* that time). And now I add that the will can't possibly be determined to comply with the command by any preceding act; for what we are talking about here is  $V_1$ , the volition that starts up the whole series of volitions; it's the *first* member of the series; there isn't any preceding act ·of the will·. It follows, then, that if this first determining act  $V_1$  •doesn't comply with the command that it has been given, then the mind is morally •unable to obey. To suppose that it *is* able to obey is to suppose that can •determine and cause its first determining act to be different from what it is, and that it has •power to govern and regulate its first governing and regulating act better than it does; and this is absurd, because it supposes an act that precedes the *first* act.

Here is something that may be said to fend off this conclusion:

Granted that, for the reasons you have given, the mind isn't able to will contrary to what it does will in  $V_1$ , the original and leading act of the will, it *does* have the ability *now* •to refrain from proceeding to action and •to spend some time thinking things over; and that ·thoughtful interval· may bring about a change in the will's inclination.

I have two things to say in reply to this. **(1)** The objector seems to have forgotten something that I pointed out earlier [page 37], namely that •determining to take something into consideration is itself •an act of the will; and if *it* is the only

act in which the mind exercises ability and freedom, then it is the only one that can be commanded or required by precept. And if this act is  $V_1$ , the commanding act, then everything I have said about the commanding act of the will will be true of it, namely that its not occurring proves a moral inability to perform it, and so on. **(2)** It really doesn't matter where we try to fit the choice-to-delay-and-deliberate into the picture, it can't alter the force of my general proof that if  $V_1$ , the original and leading act in the series of volitions, doesn't conform with the command, that shows a moral inability to comply with the command.

You may want to object that the position I have taken makes all cases of moral inability *equal*, and supposes that men who are morally unable to will otherwise than they actually do will in all cases are all equally unable in every instance. In answer to this objection, I want to make two points.

(a) If by being 'equally unable' the objector means 'really unable', then so far as moral inability is concerned the objector is right. It is as true in one case as in any other that the will in every instance acts by moral necessity, and is morally unable to act other than how it does act. (I humbly think I have perfectly demonstrated this in earlier parts of this book.) But there is a way in which someone's moral inability to do  $x$  may be greater in some cases than in other. If moral inability can truly be called 'inability', then someone may be truly unable to do  $x$  or to do  $y$ , but be *further* from being able to do  $x$  than he is from being able to do  $y$ . Take first the analogous case of natural inability: if a person's strength is only just enough for him to lift the weight of 100 pounds, then he can't lift 101 pounds, and that is just as true as 'He can't lift 1,000 pounds'; but he is *further* from being able to lift 1000 pounds than he is from being able to lift 101 pounds, and in colloquial speech we say that he is

'more unable' to lift the one than to lift the other. It is like that also with moral inability. A man is truly morally unable to choose contrary to his strongest present inclination, even if it is strongest by only a tiny margin; but he is *further* from being able to resist a very strong habit and a violent and deeply rooted inclination or a motive that is vastly stronger than all the others, and we colloquially express this too by saying that he is 'more unable' in one case than in the other. Another basis on which inability  $x$  may be called greater than inability  $y$  is this:  $x$  is an instance of a general inability to perform acts of the kind in question, i.e.  $x$  is a •general and habitual moral inability, whereas  $y$  is •occasional and particular. Similarly with natural inability: a man born blind can be said to be unable to see in a different way—and to be 'further from' being able to see—than someone whose sight is hindered by a passing cloud or mist.

[In a further paragraph Edwards makes the point that •although 'there can't possibly be any sincere attempts against a present choice', you can try to bring it about that you won't *in future* behave as you are *now* behaving; and that •such an attempt is more likely to succeed if your present lapse is an occasional one than if it belongs to a pattern of well-established habit.]

(b) The second point I want to make relating to the 'equal inability' objection is this: Things I have said earlier imply that no inability that is merely moral is properly called an 'inability'. In the strictest propriety of speech, a man can be said to have the doing of  $x$  'in his power' if whether he does it or not depends on what he chooses; and he can't be said to be 'unable' to do  $x$  if

•He can do  $x$  if he now pleases, or •He can do  $x$  whenever he has a proper, direct, and immediate desire to do  $x$ .

[Edwards is here repeating what he said on page 13, in the section he

refers to on page 72. It is a point about how ‘inability’ and its cognates should be used in careful ordinary-language non-philosophical speech, *not* about how he uses it in his philosophical arguments.] What about the case where someone wants and tries to stop himself from succumbing in future to a strong habit that he has? Can’t it be said that sometimes such a person is ‘unable’ to break the habit? Well, there are two things to be noted about attempts to break habits. •First as to time: they are never against present volitions but only against future ones—volitions of the same kind viewed at a temporal distance. •Secondly as to their nature: such a desire to break a habit is not directly and properly aimed at the habit or inclination itself, or the volitions that occur when the habit is in play; because these, considered in themselves, are agreeable. Rather, aim is being taken at something else that goes with these inclinations and volitions, or is their consequence; the opposition of the mind is leveled entirely against *this*, and the volitions themselves are not opposed directly and for their own sake, but only indirectly and remotely on the account of something distinct from them. [Edwards will explain and defend this on page 78.]

•MORAL INABILITY IS NOT A SHIELD AGAINST COMMANDS•

(3) I have shown that what any command requires, strictly speaking, is the existence of a good state of will or the performance of an act of will. So the following can happen:

A command is properly given, requiring a state or act of will that doesn’t exist at present, and continues to be lacking after the command has been given.

I maintain this in face of the fact that when some action *x* has been commanded, the will’s opposition to doing *x*, or the mere lack of a will to do *x*, implies a moral inability to do *x*. Conclusion: *things for which men have a moral inability may properly be commanded.*

A command can require a state or act of the will that

doesn’t already exist. If the only things that could be commanded were volitions that are already occurring, there would be no work for commands to do—they would all be pointless and irrelevant. And it can happen that not only is the required volition absent when the command is given but also it is absent after the command too, the command not having been effective in starting it up. If that were not so, there could never be such a thing as *disobedience* to a proper and rightful command, and there couldn’t ever be faulty disobedience. Arminians couldn’t accept that consistently with their principles, for it would mean that obedience to just and proper commands is always *necessary*, and disobedience impossible. If the Arminian accepted that, he would be capitulating to us, conceding the very thesis that I am supporting and he so strenuously denies, namely that law and command are consistent with necessity.

If mere inability excuses disobedience—the disobedience involved in opposing or neglecting what has been commanded—then wickedness always carries within it its own excuse. The more wickedness there is in a man’s heart, the stronger is his inclination to evil, and the greater is his moral inability to do the good required. His moral inability, consisting in the strength of his evil inclination, is the very thing in which his wickedness consists; and yet according to Arminian principles it is inconsistent with wickedness, and the more he has of it the further he is from wickedness.

Summing up this matter: it is clear that moral inability alone (which consists in disinclination) never stops a person from being a fit target for precepts and command, and can never excuse any person for his disobedience or lack of conformity to a command.

If a person is naturally unable to do *x* or is prevented from doing *x* by something external to himself—these being the only cases that are properly called ‘inability’—then he is

no doubt to be excused for not doing x, and the command to him to do x is improper. But the range of excuses is no wider than that. If a man is to be excused from doing or bringing about a good thing that is supposed to be commanded, it must be through some defect or obstacle that is not in his will itself but either in the capacity of his understanding or in his body or in his outward circumstances. I have three things to say about this.

(a) As to spiritual [here = 'mental'] acts, or any good thing in the state or internal acts of the will itself or of the affections. . . ., if anyone is to be justly excused it must be through his lack of capacity in the natural faculty of understanding. The other two excusing factors are irrelevant, because they have no bearing on internal acts of the will. That is why men can't be assigned the same spiritual duties—the same holy affections and exercises of the heart—as can be required of angels, our capacity for understanding being so much inferior to theirs. That's why we men can't be required to love any lovable people whom we haven't met and haven't known in any other way that fits the natural state and capacity of the human understanding. But the insufficiency of someone's motives won't excuse him unless it arises not from the moral state of the will or inclination itself but rather from the natural state of the understanding. Consider two cases in which a person acts with great kindness and generosity for the benefit of someone else, who is *not* grateful because he hasn't a motive sufficient to arouse gratitude.

Case 1: He hasn't such a motive because he has a vile and ungrateful temperament.

Case 2: He hasn't such a motive because he doesn't know what has been done for him, and there is no way in which he—with the level of his present understanding and other faculties—*can* come to know.

In case 1 the insufficiency of the motive arises from the state of the will or the inclination of the heart, and doesn't provide the slightest excuse. But in case 2 the insufficiency goes with a natural inability, which entirely excuses it.

(b) As to motions of body or exercises and alterations of mind that don't consist in the internal acts or state of the will itself, but are supposed to be required as effects of the will: if in such a case there is no relevant lack of capacity in the understanding, the only inability that excuses is the inability consisting in a lack of connection between the required items and the will. If the will fully complies, and the proposed effect turns out—according to the laws of nature—not to be connected with his volition, the man is perfectly excused because he has a *natural* inability to do the thing required. As I pointed out earlier, the will itself is all that can be directly and immediately commanded; other things can be commanded only *indirectly* through their connection with the will. So if the person's will fully complies with the command, he has done his duty; and if other things turn out not to be connected with his volition, that is not because of any crime committed by him.

(c) Both these kinds of natural inability (i.e. all inability that excuses) boil down to one thing, namely *lack of natural capacity or strength*—either capacity of understanding or physical strength. Aren't there also external defects and obstacles? Yes, but they wouldn't be obstacles if the person had a less limited understanding and greater strength. Corollary: If things for which men have a moral inability can properly be commanded, then they can also properly be the subject of invitation and advice. Commands and invitations come very much to the same thing, with only a circumstantial difference. Each of them expresses the will of the speaker, and each shows that the speaker expects compliance. The main difference between them—one that is quite irrelevant

to our present purposes—consists in the source or the enforcement of the will of the commander or inviter. The inviter's will arises from his kindness; the commander's from his authority. But whatever the speaker's will comes from, and whatever there is to enforce what he says, what he says expresses his will and his expectation equally well in both cases, i.e. equally well in commands and in invitations. Now consider these two cases:

- Person x *invites* person y to do A, while not wanting or not expecting him to do A.
- Person x *commands* person y to do A, while not wanting or not expecting him to do A.

From my previous discussion, it follows that neither of these speakers need be in any way insincere. It is pretty obvious that the inviter need not be insincere, because his invitation doesn't imply anything about what he wants or expects; so this point about their equality amounts to an argument for the conclusion that *someone can sincerely give a command that he doesn't expect to be obeyed*. Now, the Arminians argue against the doctrine that fallen men are unable to exert faith in Christ or to perform other spiritual duties; they say that this can't be so, because God *sincerely* advises and invites men to do those things. What I have been saying shows that argument to be without force.

### **Section 5: A close look at the sincerity of desires and attempts, which is supposed to excuse the non-performance of things that are good in themselves**

Many writers have urged the following claim:

Someone who isn't *able* to perform spiritual duties—such as repentance for sin, love to God, a warm acceptance of Christ as exhibited and offered in the gospel, etc.—may sincerely *want* to do these things

and sincerely *try* to do them. He should therefore be excused, because it is unreasonable to blame him for not doing things that he sincerely wants and tries to do but cannot.

I have four observations to make about this matter.

(1) What is here supposed is a great mistake and gross absurdity. Concerning those spiritual duties of love, acceptance, choice, rejection, etc.—all of them consisting in the exercise of the will itself or in the disposition and inclination of the heart—we are being told that a man may sincerely choose and desire to perform these and yet not able to do so! This is absurd. It is the absurdity of supposing that a man might directly, properly, and sincerely incline to have an inclination that at the same time is contrary to his inclination—i.e. supposing him *not* to be inclined to something that he *is* inclined to. So far as duties of *that* kind are concerned, if a man

•properly and directly *goes along with* them in the state and acts of his will and inclination,

then he

•*performs* them.

For the duties themselves consist in that very thing: they consist in the state and acts of the will being formed and directed in that way. If the soul properly and sincerely goes along with a certain proposed act of will or choice, the soul thereby makes that choice its own. . . .

(2) Consider someone who doesn't perform his inward duties but is said to have a desire and willingness to perform them: what he really has a desire and willingness for is something that relates to these duties only indirectly and remotely, and shouldn't be called a desire and willingness to perform *them*. For one thing (and I pointed this out earlier), these willings and desires are directed to those good volitions only as seen from afar and with respect to future

time. And a second point: what they aim at is not—now or ever—those good volitions themselves but rather something else altogether. I shall explain this through an analogous case:

Consider a drunkard who continues in his drunkenness because he has a violent appetite for strong drink and no love for virtue, but who is very tight with his money, which makes him concerned and upset by the lessening of his wealth and the prospect of poverty. This man does *in a way* desire to have the virtue of temperance; his present will is to gratify his extravagant appetite, but he wishes he had a heart to refrain from future acts of intemperance and to give up his excesses—all because of his unwillingness to part with his money. Yet he goes on with his drunkenness: his wishes and attempts to give it up are insufficient and ineffective.

This man does not have any proper, direct, sincere willingness to give up this vice and the vicious deeds that go with it; for when he continues with his excessive drinking he is acting voluntarily. It is quite wrong to call his desire ‘a willingness to be temperate’, because it’s not a true desire for that virtue. His wishes don’t aim at that virtue, and have no direct relation to it. The end-point of his desire is the saving of his money or the avoiding of poverty—the desire’s strength comes entirely from *that*. The virtue of temperance comes into this only very indirectly; indeed it isn’t really right to say that virtue is involved *at all*, even as a necessary means to gratifying the vice of covetousness. Now:

Consider a man with an exceedingly corrupt and wicked heart, who has no love for God and Jesus Christ but on the contrary is greatly inclined to sins of the flesh, and therefore thoroughly dislikes and opposes the things of religion. This man comes from

a family in which most people down the generations have died young from hereditary tuberculosis, so that he hasn’t much hope of living long. Also, he has been taught that if he is to be saved from eternal misery he must have a supreme love of Christ and gratitude for his death and sufferings. His fear of eternal torments makes him wish that he had such a disposition; but his worldly and sins-of-the-flesh heart remains the same, so that he continues with his long-established dislike of and enmity towards God and religion, without the slightest love and gratitude for Christ. (No doubt the very devils themselves, despite all the devilishness of their character, would wish for a holy heart if that would get them out of hell!)

This man has no sincere willingness to love Christ and choose him as his chief good. These holy dispositions and exercises are not *at all* the direct object of his will; they truly share no part of the inclination or desire of the soul. All that he wishes for is deliverance from torment; and despite his forced consent to these graces and pious volitions, he doesn’t regard them as desirable; like a sick man who, wanting to save his life, desires to take a medicine that he finds disgusting. It follows from all this that. . .

**(3)** . . . this indirect willingness is not the exercise of the will that the command requires, but a completely different one—different in its nature, and utterly different in what it aims at. And . . .

**(4)** . . . this other volition, having only some indirect concern with the duty required by the command, does not excuse the lack of the good will that is commanded. It doesn’t constitute obedience to the command, and has *none* of the virtue that the command is looking for. [Edwards then gives most of a page to a further illustration: a man

hates his father (who has always loved him and been kind to him), but treats his father well because he doesn't want to be disinherited. His behaviour relating to his father, Edwards argues at length, doesn't detract *at all* from the badness of his feelings towards him.]

The indirect willingness that I am discussing isn't made any better by being sincere. A desire that is real and heartfelt is often called 'sincere', whether it is virtuous or vicious. Some people are sincerely bad, others are sincerely good; and others may be sincere and heartfelt about things that are neither good nor bad in themselves—e.g. a man who sincerely wants to eat when he is hungry. But there is nothing virtuous about being sincere, heartfelt and in earnest, unless this attitude aims at something that is *in itself* virtuous. A man may be sincere and earnest in joining a crew of pirates or a gang of robbers. When the devils cried out and asked Christ not to torment them, it was no mere pretence; they had a very heartfelt desire not to be tormented: but this didn't make their will or desire *virtuous*. Well, when a man has a sincere desire that is no better than that one of the devils', this can't excuse his lack of some required virtue.

A man's failure to do something he ought to do is not excused *•*by his sincerely having this sort of indirect desire or willingness to do his duty, and it isn't excused either *•*by any attempts of his that arise from that willingness. The attempts can't have any more goodness in them than there is in the will that they express and arise from. A person may be utterly sincere in a desire, and may try his uttermost to achieve what he desires, without this counting in the least towards his moral credit. For *that* the attempts have to come from a will that is truly good and virtuous. And what isn't truly virtuous is in God's sight good for nothing; so it can't have any value or influence in his account, to make up for any moral defect. Nothing can counterbalance evil but good.

If evil is in one pan of the scale, and we pile up on the other a great deal of stuff—sincere and earnest desires, strenuous efforts—if there's no real goodness in the pile then there is no weight in the second pan, so that it does nothing towards balancing the real weight in the first pan of the scale. . . .

Things that have no positive virtue have no *•*positive moral influence; but efforts of the kind I have been discussing may have a *•*negatively good influence, involving somebody's avoiding some positive evils. Someone might save from drowning another person to whom he has ill will, because the drowning man owes him money that won't be repaid unless he survives this crisis. What he does in preserving the other man from drowning is nothing good in the sight of God: but through it he avoids the greater guilt that he would have incurred if he had deliberately let his neighbor drown. When Arminians in their disputes with Calvinists insist so much on *sincere desires and attempts* as what must excuse men, must be accepted by God, and so on, they are clearly thinking of those desires and attempts as having some positive moral weight or influence. . . . that may help to outweigh some moral defect.

But the phrase 'sincere attempts' has an ambiguity that leads to seriously defective thinking of a kind that isn't generally recognized. Indeed, *•*the trouble is worse than that: very many (if not most) of the terms used in speaking of moral and spiritual matters have a vast indistinctness and unfixeness [Edwards's phrase], giving rise to countless mistakes, strong prejudices, hopeless confusion, and endless controversy. The word 'sincere' is most commonly used to mean something that is good: men are accustomed to taking it to mean the same as 'honest' and 'upright'—words that convey the thought of something 'good' in the strictest and highest sense, good in the sight of God, who sees the heart as well as the outward appearance. This leads men *•*to think

that if a person is 'sincere' he will certainly be accepted. When someone is said to be 'sincere' in his attempts, this suggests that his heart is good, that his inclinations are virtuous, that he honestly and uprightly desires and attempts to do what is required of him; and this leads them to suppose that it would be very hard and unreasonable to punish this man merely because what he tries to do is beyond his power, so that he doesn't succeed in achieving it. But it ought to be observed that 'sincere' has two different meanings.

**(1)** 'Sincerity', as the word is sometimes used, signifies no more than that something professed or claimed is backed up by real will and endeavour, with no implications about the nature of the source or aim from which this real will and true endeavour arise. . . . For example, a man who is kind to his neighbour's wife who is sick and languishing, and is very helpful in her case, makes a show of wanting her restored to health and vigour and trying to bring this about; and indeed he really does have a heartfelt and earnest desire that she recover, and does his utmost to help her do so. This man is said 'sincerely' to desire and endeavour after her recovery because he really and truly wants it; yet it may be that the source of his desire and action is a vile and scandalous passion: he has lived in adultery with her, and *earnestly* wants to have her health and vigour restored so that he can return to his criminal pleasures. That is one sense of 'sincerity'; now for the other.

[In this next paragraph, Edwards speaks of (i) *what* is done in a virtuous act and (ii) *why* it is done. He refers to these as, respectively, (i) the 'matter' of the act and (ii) its 'form', and also as (i) the 'body' of the act and (ii) 'the soul'; these pairs of terms are borrowed from Aristotelian philosophy, according to which each particular thing is an instance of matter that has a form, and according to which the human soul is the form of the human body. As used by Edwards here, the terms

are metaphorical, and may even be meant in a faintly joking way. They will turn up again on 88, and in the reference to 'the *soul* of virtue and vice' on page 91.]

**(2)** By 'sincerity' is sometimes meant not merely a reality of will and endeavour of some sort, with some motivation or other, but a *virtuous* sincerity. What that involves is that in the performance of the particular acts that are the matter of virtue or duty, there is not only the matter but the form and essence of virtue, consisting in the aim that governs the act and the reason exercised in it. There is not only the reality of the act that is (as it were) the body of the duty, but also the soul that ought to belong to such a body. A man is said to be 'sincere' in *this* sense when he acts with a pure intention, and not for some sinister reason; he doesn't merely want and pursue the required thing for some end or other, but rather wills the thing—wills *the virtue of* the thing—directly and properly, without being either forced or bribed. . . .

A man may be 'sincere' in sense **(1)** and yet be so far from 'sincere' in sense **(2)** that in the sight of God, who searches the heart, he is a vile hypocrite.

It's only sincerity of kind **(2)** that contains anything valuable or acceptable in the sight of God. It is what in scripture is called 'sincerity', 'uprightness', 'integrity', 'truth in the inward parts', and 'having a perfect heart'. Suppose that someone is 'sincere' in this sense, and is so in as high a degree as he ought to be: if there is something more that he isn't able to perform, or that turns out not to be connected with his sincere desires and efforts, he is wholly excused and acquitted in the sight of God. In this case God will surely accept his will as an adequate substitute for the deed; such a sincere will and effort is all that in strictness is required of him by any command of God. Whereas the type-**(1)** sincerity of desires and efforts has no virtue in it and can therefore. . . .

have no positive moral weight or influence whatsoever.

Corollary 1: So there is no basis in the reason and nature of things [Edwards's phrase] for thinking that God has made any positive promises of salvation or grace or any saving assistance or any spiritual benefit whatsoever to those who have only 'sincerity' in sense **(1)**. The moral weightlessness of •that kind of sincerity implies that someone who has •it but has no true virtue or holiness in his heart will achieve *nothing* by his prayers, efforts, striving, or obedience—even if his type-**(1)** sincerity is as strong, and his efforts as strenuous, as they can be in a person without holiness. Against the view that God requires, as the condition of salvation, the sort of holy exercises that are the result of a •supernatural renewal—supreme respect for Christ, love towards God, love of holiness for its own sake, and so on—some people object:

These inward dispositions and exercises are above men's •natural powers; so we can conclude that when men are brought to be sincere in their attempts and to do as well as they *can*, they are accepted •by God•, and that this must be all that God requires for them to be received as objects of his favour and must be what God has set as the condition of salvation.

When these objectors speak of men as being accepted because they are sincere •in sense **(1)** of 'sincere'•, and do 'as well as they can', they are assuming that there is *some* virtue, *some* degree of real goodness •in such men•, even though it doesn't go as far as might be wished. •But this assumption is just *false*•. For men's doing 'what they can' is. . . not a whit better than their doing nothing at all, unless their doing what they can comes from some good source, disposition, or exercise of heart—some virtuous inclination or act of the will. Without that, there is no more positive moral goodness in a •man's doing 'what he can' than in a •windmill's doing 'what it can'•; because the man's action doesn't come from virtue

any more than does the windmill's. . . . Neither of them has *any* true moral weight or value.

Corollary 2: It also follows that there is nothing in the reason and nature of things to support the view that God will certainly give the necessary means of salvation to, or in some way or other bestow true holiness and eternal life on, heathens who are sincere (in the sense **(1)** of that word) in their attempts to find out what God wants and to please him, so that they may escape his future displeasure and wrath and obtain happiness in the future state through his favour.

**Section 6: Liberty of indifference, rather than being required for virtue, is inconsistent with it. •More generally•, 'liberty' and 'moral agency' on the Arminian pattern are inconsistent with any habits' or inclinations' being virtuous or vicious**

[Remember that 'indifference' here means 'equilibrium'. Someone performs act A in a 'state of indifference' only if he is evenly balanced, motivationally speaking, between doing A and not doing A.] To suppose that 'freedom of the will' as Arminians describe it is required for virtue and for vice is in many ways contrary to common sense. They hold that

- a virtuous action must be performed in a state of liberty,

and that

- liberty of will involves indifference.

From these two doctrines it follows that

- a virtuous action must be performed *in a state of indifference*,

which obviously entails that

- a virtuous action must be performed *at a time of indifference*.

And so we get the result that for an act to be virtuous the agent's heart must be indifferent at the time when he performs it;

- the more indifferent and cold the heart is with relation to the act in question,
- the greater the freedom with which it is done, and so
- the better the act.

Compare that Arminian position with the view about virtue that mankind have had down through the centuries, namely that virtue consists in what is *contrary* to indifference, and that

- the stronger the inclination (and thus •the further from indifference),
- the more virtuous the heart and correspondingly
- the more praiseworthy the act that comes from it.

•If this seems extravagantly opposed to indifference, remember that •the indifference or equilibrium valued by the Arminians extends to the heart's inclination to virtuous action; •Arminianism implies that free actions occur only in a state where the soul is evenly balanced as between virtue and vice•!

I showed earlier that there *can't* be an act of will in a state of indifference, but •for purposes of discussion• let us suppose that there *can*, and let's take as our example

an act in which someone's will acts to put itself out of a state of indifference and to incline itself one way or the other.

On Arminian principles this act or determination of the will is the only one that can be virtuous, because it is the only one performed while the mind is still in a state of indifference and so in a state of liberty; once the mind has been •tilted•, put out of its equilibrium, it is no longer in such a state; so that all the subsequent acts, coming as they do from a biased state of mind, can't have the nature of either virtue or vice. Or it might be held that the only thing the will can do while still

in a state of indifference (and thus of liberty) is to •suspend acting and •set itself to think about the matter. That would imply, •on Arminian principles•, that virtue consists only in this determination to pause and consider, and that there is no virtue or vice, nothing to praise or blame, in anything the soul does *after* the pause, being led to do it by the tilt in the scale that the thoughtful pause produces. But how plainly this contradicts the universal sense of mankind and our notion of sincerely virtuous actions! What that universal sense says is this:

Virtuous actions come from a heart that is well disposed and well inclined; and the stronger, the more fixed, and the more determined the good disposition of the heart is, the greater is the virtue's sincerity and thus its truth and reality. If any acts are done in a state of equilibrium, i.e. spring immediately from perfect indifference and coldness of heart, they can't arise from any good source or disposition in the heart, and consequently they have no sincere goodness in them. To have a virtuous heart is to have •a heart that favours virtue and is friendly to it, not •one that is perfectly cold and indifferent about it.

And another point: actions that are done in a state of indifference, or that arise immediately out of such a state, can't be determined by any preceding choice. If there were such a choice, it would intervene between the state of indifference and the act; which is contrary to the supposition of the act arising •in or •immediately out of indifference. But by Arminian principles acts that aren't determined by preceding choice can't be virtuous or vicious, because they aren't determined by the will. Thus, Arminian principles don't allow for any action to be virtuous or vicious. •An action determined by a preceding act of choice can't be virtuous, because such an action is not done in a state of indifference

and doesn't arise immediately from such a state; so it isn't done in a state of liberty. •An action that isn't determined by a preceding act of choice can't be virtuous, because in it the will is not self-determined. So no room is left for virtue or vice anywhere in the universe!

Also: the view that a virtuous action must be performed in a state of indifference because that is a state of liberty is contrary to common sense. For common sense says that indifference itself is often vicious—indeed, extremely vicious. Think about the common-sense judgment on someone who is indifferent—as much inclined to say Yes as to say No—regarding •whether to help a near and dear friend who is in extreme distress that threatens his life, •whether to blaspheme against God, •whether to kill his own father; and countless other examples could be given, in which indifference, even very short-lived indifference, would be highly vicious and vile.

And yet another point: The thesis that the 'liberty' of indifference is essential to virtue and vice destroys the great differences there are in *how much* guilt is involved in different crimes, and takes away the dreadfulness of the most horrid *wicked* iniquities—adultery, bestiality, murder, perjury, blasphemy and so on. For according to Arminian principles there is no harm at all in having your mind in a state of perfect indifference with respect to these crimes; indeed, indifference is absolutely necessary if there is to be any virtue in avoiding them or any vice in doing them. But •having a mind that is indifferent with respect to them is next door to •doing them: coming into a state of equilibrium about committing adultery (for example) is coming infinitely near [Edwards's phrase] to choosing to commit adultery and then committing it. When your mind is in equilibrium concerning 'Adultery or no adultery?', it is one step away from coming down on the side of adultery; and to find that (all things

considered) adultery carries more weight than not-adultery, however little more, is to make a *choice* in favour of adultery. [The remainder of this paragraph makes a solid point that can be put more briefly than Edwards puts it: On Arminian principles, the moral value of your *not* committing murder (for example) depends on your not-committing it when you are in a state of equilibrium regarding 'To murder or not to murder?' But such states of equilibrium will lead on to murder about as often as to not-murder. So Arminianism recommends a state of mind which is as likely as not to lead to murder; and this conflicts with the obvious fact that murder is especially vicious.]

There are many ways in which it is clear the Arminian theory of liberty is utterly inconsistent with the existence of virtuous or vicious •habits or •dispositions. If liberty of indifference is essential to moral agency, then there can't be any virtue in habitual inclinations of the heart—e.g. a habitual tendency to feel sympathy for the miseries of others—because such •inclinations automatically rule out indifference = •equilibrium, or, as we might put it, a mind that is •tilted can't be •on a level. . . .

Also, if self-determining power in the will is necessary for moral agency, praise, blame, etc., then anything done by the will is praiseworthy or blameworthy only to the extent that it involves the will's being moved, swayed, and determined *by itself*—the balance being tilted by the will's over-riding power over itself. So the will mustn't be unbalanced; there must be no *prior* outweighing of one thing by another, which would get in ahead of the self-determining act and do its work for it. This brings to light in another way that habitual bias is inconsistent with the liberty that Arminians suppose to be necessary to virtue or vice; and so it follows that habitual bias itself can't be either virtuous or vicious.

The same thing follows from their doctrine that necessity is inconsistent with liberty, praise, dispraise, etc. Everyone knows that bias and inclination can be too strong to be overcome, leaving no possibility of the will's going against it, in which case it is accompanied by necessity. (Whitby [introduced on page 29] accepts this as it applies to the wills of God, angels and glorified saints with respect to good, and the wills of devils with respect to evil.) If necessity is inconsistent with liberty, therefore, then any irresistibly strong inclination excludes all virtue, vice, praise, or blame; and the nearer a habit is to this strength the more it interferes with liberty and so lessens praise and blame. If very strong habits destroy liberty, lesser ones hinder it by an amount that is proportional to their degree of strength. It follows, then, that the most virtuous or vicious act is one performed without any inclination or habitual bias at all—because that is the act performed with most liberty.

To the extent that a mind is biased in favour of x, it has that much moral inability to choose not-x. So if moral inability is inconsistent with moral agency, or the nature of virtue and vice, then we get this result: When someone is covetous, proud, malicious, cruel or the like, to the extent that this evil disposition is *habitual* with him, to that extent he is excusable for it. Similarly with a very virtuous person: the more *habitual* his excellences are, the less virtuous they are. . . .

An Arminian might want to object:

Despite what you have said to the contrary, there *can* be virtue and vice in the habits of the mind, because these habits may be the effects of acts in which the mind exercised liberty. Your arguments may show that no habits that are natural, or born or created with us, can be either virtuous or vicious; but they don't prove this of habits that have been acquired and

established by repeated free acts.

I reply that this evasion doesn't help the Arminian at all. For if freedom of will is essential to the very nature of virtue and vice, then there is no virtue or vice in anything but the very thing in which this liberty is exercised. Suppose that a man exercises liberty in one or more things that he does, and then by those acts is brought into circumstances where his liberty ends, and there follows a long series of acts or events that happen necessarily. Those consequent acts are not virtuous or vicious, rewardable or punishable, because in them the man wasn't free. Free acts of temperance (or intemperance) may lead necessarily to health (or sickness) of the body, but there is no virtue (or vice) in that health (or sickness). Just as there is no virtue in the good qualities of a clock that was made by the free acts of the clock-maker. . . . Whitby goes along with this when he holds that the necessity of the good habits of the saints in heaven and the evil habits of the damned in hell are not rewardable or punishable, although they are consequences of free acts in their state of probation [= 'their try-out time before going to heaven or hell'].

Summing all this up: It turns out that if the Arminians are right about liberty and moral agency, it will follow that there is no virtue in any such habits or qualities as

- humility, meekness, patience, mercy, gratitude, generosity, heavenly-mindedness;

nothing at all praiseworthy in

- loving Christ above father and mother, wife and children, or our own lives;

or in

- delight in holiness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, love to enemies, universal benevolence to mankind;

and on the other hand there is nothing at all vicious or worthy of dispraise in the most sordid, beastly, malignant, devilish dispositions; in being

- ungrateful, profane, habitually hating God and things sacred and holy;

or in being

- most treacherous, envious, and cruel towards men.

For all these things are dispositions and inclinations of the heart. In short, there's no such thing as any virtuous or vicious quality of mind; no such thing as inherent virtue and holiness, or vice and sin; and as for the habits or dispositions that used to be called virtuous and vicious, the stronger they are the further they are from actually being virtuous or vicious. The more violent men's lusts are, the more fixed their pride, envy, ingratitude, and malice are, the further are they from being blameworthy. If there is a man who—by his own repeated acts or by any other means—has come to have the most hellish disposition, •strongly inclined to treat his neighbours with injuriousness, contempt, and malignity, we ought to be •far from being disposed to be angry with him or in the least to blame him. And if there's a person with a most excellent spirit which •strongly inclines him to the most amiable actions, admirably meek, benevolent, etc., he is •far from anything rewardable or commendable. And in each case, the •stronger, the •further. On these principles, the man Jesus Christ was very far from being praiseworthy for the acts of holiness and kindness that he performed, because these propensities were strong in his heart. And, above all, the infinitely holy and gracious God is infinitely remote from anything commendable; his good inclinations are infinitely strong, which puts him as far from being at liberty as it's possible to be. . . . Whether these things are agreeable to scripture, let every Christian and every man who has read the Bible judge: and whether they are agreeable to

common sense let everyone judge who has the use of human understanding.

And if we follow through with these principles, we shall find that there never was and never could be any such thing as virtue or vice, in God or angels or men. I have shown why no propensity, disposition, or habit can be virtuous or vicious ·on Arminian principles· . . . And if habits and dispositions themselves are not virtuous or vicious, then neither is the exercise of these dispositions, for such exercise doesn't involve freedom. Consequently, no man is virtuous through having or acting from a good disposition, and no man is vicious through having or acting from a bad disposition. It makes no difference whether the bias or disposition is habitual or not; if it exists only a moment before the act of will that is its effect, it still makes the act necessary. And if the act isn't determined by any previous disposition, whether habitual or occasional, then it isn't determined by choice; and that makes it a contingency that *happens* to the man without arising from anything in him, which means that, so far as any inclination or choice of his is concerned, it is necessary. Therefore it can't make him either better or worse, any more than a tree is better than other trees because it oftener happens to be visited by a nightingale, or a rock more vicious than other rocks because rattle-snakes have happened oftener to crawl over it. So there is no virtue or vice

- in good or bad dispositions, whether fixed or transient,
- in acting from any good or bad previous inclination,
- or
- in acting wholly without any previous inclination.

Where then shall we find room for virtue or vice?

**Section 7: Arminian notions of moral agency are inconsistent with all influence of motive and inducement in both virtuous and vicious actions**

The Arminian theory about the liberty that is essential to virtue or vice is inconsistent with common sense, not only because •it rules out all virtuous or vicious *habits and dispositions* but also because •it rules out any influence of *motives* in moral actions. There can't be liberty or choice •on the Arminian pattern• if before the choice there was

- (1) an inclination to lean one way, or
- (2) a weight of circumstances having a tendency to move the inclination one way.

Those two, indeed, come to just the same thing: (2) 'The mind's circumstances are such as tend to tilt its inclination one way' is equivalent to (1) 'The mind's inclination is such as to tend to tilt one way under its actual circumstance'.

You may prefer to say that motives *alter* the mind's inclination, giving the mind a new bias; but that doesn't block my present argument. If motives work by •giving the mind an inclination, then they operate by destroying the mind's indifference and giving it a bias. And to do this is to destroy the Arminian freedom. . . . So nothing that is done from a motive can be either virtuous or vicious. Besides, if motives •arouse the acts of the will, those motives are the causes of those acts; which makes the acts of the will necessary, because effects necessarily follow their causes. And if the influence and power of the motive causes the volition, then the influence of the motive •determines volition, and volition doesn't determine itself; and so is not 'free' in the Arminians' sense, and consequently can't be either virtuous or vicious. [This paragraph has argued that motives conflict with liberty when this is construed as •requiring equilibrium, as •conflicting with necessity, and as •involving self-determination.]

I discussed earlier [page 37] the view that liberty consists in a power of suspending action for a while in order to think things over; this didn't help the Arminian back there •in the context of *inability*•, and it's equally useless to him in our present context of *motives*. If he tries to bring it in, he'll say something like this:

Though it is true that the will must eventually follow the strongest motive, it may in the meantime hold back from acting on the motive that is presented to it, until there has been •time and• opportunity to consider it thoroughly and compare its real weight with the merit of other motives.

In replying to this, I remind you of my point that if this determining-to-hold-back-and-•think is the *only* free act of the will, then •the Arminian must say that• it is the only kind of act that can be virtuous or vicious, and that acts that follow as effects of this •thinking are necessary, and thus no more virtuous or vicious than some good or bad events that occur when we are fast asleep in consequence of what we did when awake. So there are two points that I want to make.

(1) The thesis is that *all* virtue and vice in *every* case consists in determining whether to hold back and take time to consider what to do; and this clashes with common sense. For according to this thesis, the most awful crimes—adultery, murder, sodomy, blasphemy, etc.—are not vicious because of the awful nature of the acts themselves but because of the failure to think things through before they were performed; and that shrinks their viciousness to something quite small, and makes all crimes equal. The Arminian may say 'Failure to think about what to do, •though always bad•, is worse when it's a failure to think about whether to commit some really heinous evil'. But this is something that an Arminian can't consistently say, because it assumes something that he also denies—namely that failure-to-think-things-through

is *not* the only thing that is vicious, heinous, or morally evil. It assumes that some crimes are more heinous than others *in themselves*, in advance of any thinking about whether to perform them; which gives the person an obligation to think longer and harder about whether to perform *them* than he has about whether to perform other kinds of act.

(2) Even if it were *true* that all virtue and vice in every case consists only in the act of the will whereby it determines whether or not to pause and think, that wouldn't help the Arminian in the present difficulty. For it would still be the case that the will, in performing this act of determination, is induced by some motive and necessarily follows the strongest motive; so it occurs necessarily—and this is supposed to be the only kind of act that is either virtuous or vicious!

And here's another point about the clash between •Arminian notions of moral agency and •the influence of motives. Presumably no-one will deny that it is possible for motives that are set before the mind to be so powerful, and to be exhibited in so strong a light and under such advantageous circumstances, that they are invincible; these are motives that the mind *has to* give in to. In such a case, Arminians will doubtless say liberty is destroyed. Then it will follow that motives with half that much power will go halfway towards destroying liberty. •And so on with the rest of the arithmetic•. If 1000 degrees of motive abolish all liberty, then 500 degrees take it half-way, •and *any* strength of motive, however small, goes some distance towards abolishing liberty•. If one degree of the influence of motive doesn't *at all* infringe or diminish liberty, then two degrees don't do this either, for twice zero is zero. And if two degrees don't diminish the will's liberty, no more do four, eight, sixteen. or 6000. For zero multiplied by *any* number equals zero.

•If there is nothing in the nature of motive •as such• that is at all opposed to liberty, then the greatest

degree of it cannot hurt liberty.

•If there is something in the nature of motive as such that tells against liberty, then the tiniest degree of it hurts liberty—and thus diminishes virtue—a tiny bit.

If invincible motives to perform a good action take away all the •freedom of the act and so all its •virtue, then the more forcible the motives are, the less virtue there is in the act; and the weaker the motives are, the better for the cause of virtue; and best of all is to act from no motive at all!

Consider now whether these results are agreeable to common sense. If we allow that sometimes the soul chooses without any motive, what virtue can there be in such a choice? I'm sure there is no prudence or wisdom in it. Such a choice is not made for any good end, because it isn't made for *any* end (if it were made for an end, the mind's view of that end would be the motive for the act, •and we're discussing the case where there is no motive•). What is our common-sense view of an act that is performed for no good end and thus with no good aim and therefore with no good intention in it? According to all our natural notions of virtue, such an action has no more virtue in it than there is in the motion of smoke whirling around in the wind, moving without any aim or end and not knowing where it is going or why.

Corollary 1: Arminians insistently argue that the Calvinists can't deal properly with advising, urging, inviting, protesting, and so on; but what I have been saying shows that it is they—the Arminians themselves—who are in trouble here. For advising etc. can't have a good effect except by presenting motives and inducements that tend to arouse and determine the acts of the will; and •we have seen that• on Arminian principles the acts of will aroused by such causes can't be virtuous, because they come from motives rather than from the will's self-determining power. This implies that it's a waste of time to offer any arguments to persuade

someone to perform a virtuous volition or voluntary action; it's useless to set before him the wisdom and attractiveness of virtuous living or the odiousness and folly of vicious ways of life. This notion of liberty and moral agency frustrates every attempt to draw men to virtue by instruction—i.e. by persuasion, precept, or example. Such procedures may lead them to act in ways that are •materially virtuous, but at the same time they take away the •form of virtue, because they destroy liberty. [See long note on page 80 regarding 'form' and 'matter'.] That is because by their own power they put the will out of its equilibrium, determine and turn the scale, and snatch away from the will its power to determine itself. And the clearer the instructions, the stronger the arguments, and the more moving the persuasions or examples, the more likely they are to frustrate their own design; because the greater will be their tendency to put the will out of its balance, to hinder its freedom of self-determination, and so to exclude the very form of virtue and the essence of everything praiseworthy.

[This paragraph will invoke the distinction between 'physical' influences and 'moral' ones. See the explanation of 'moral' on 13. In the present context, any influence is 'physical' if it isn't 'moral'. There's no confinement to influences that fall within the sphere of *physics* as we now understand that.] So it clearly follows from these principles that •God has no hand in any man's virtue, and doesn't promote virtue by either a physical or a moral influence; •that none of the moral methods he uses with men to promote virtue in the world have any tendency to lead to that end; that

- all the instructions he has given to men from the beginning of the world right up to today, by prophets or apostles or by his son Jesus Christ,
- all his counsels, invitations, promises threats, warnings, and protests,
- all the commands and interventions he has directed

towards men, indeed

- all the influences of his Spirit, both ordinary and extraordinary,

have had *no tendency at all* to arouse any one virtuous act of the mind, or to promote anything morally good and commendable in any respect. For the only ways in which these or any other means could promote virtue are these three: **(a)** By a •physical operation on the heart [i.e. changing the man's feelings and attitudes in some way that doesn't involve his thoughts—e.g. by giving him a pill or hypnotising him]; but all Arminians agree that there is no virtue in any effects that are brought about in men by means of that sort. **(b)** •Morally, by presenting motives to men's understandings, to arouse good acts in the will. But I have shown that volitions aroused by motives are necessary, and not aroused by a self-moving power, and therefore by Arminian principles there is no virtue in them. **(c)** Simply by giving the will an *opportunity* to determine itself concerning the proposed action—to choose or reject the action by its (the will's) own uncaused, unmoved, uninfluenced, self-determination. With **(a)** and **(b)** ruled out, we are left only with **(c)**; and *those* means don't promote virtue any more than they promote vice; for all they do is •to give the will the opportunity to determine itself one way or the other, towards good or bad, •not giving it any bias either way, so that an opportunity to choose evil is provided just as much as one to choose good.

[Edwards devotes a paragraph to saying that •the Arminians, by 'their frequent and vehement exclamations', accuse the Calvinists of committing 'horrid blasphemy' by implying that God in his dealings with men acts in bad faith; and •that his discussion in the section shows that really the boot is on the other foot: 'Theirs is the doctrine which, if pursued to its consequences, reflects horribly on God and charges him with hypocrisy.']

Corollary 2: From what I have said in this section it again appears that Arminian principles and notions, when fairly examined and followed through to their demonstrable consequences, obviously shut all virtue out from the world, making it impossible that any such thing should ever exist or even be conceived of. For by these principles the very notion of virtue or vice implies absurdity and contradiction. . . . They imply that there can't be a virtuous act *with* a good design and end; and it is self-evident—a matter of common sense—there can't be one *without*; so there can't be any virtuous acts at all. Corollary 2: From what I have said in this section it again appears that Arminian principles and notions, when fairly examined and followed through to their demonstrable consequences, obviously shut all virtue out from the world, making it impossible that any such thing should ever exist or even be conceived of. For by these principles the very notion of virtue or vice implies absurdity and contradiction. . . . They imply that there can't be a virtuous act *with* a good design and end; and it is

self-evident—a matter of common sense—there can't be one *without*; so there can't be any virtuous acts at all.

[In Corollary 3, Edwards says that 'Arminian notions of moral agency are inconsistent with there being any faculty of *will*'. But in the rest of the paragraph he argues only that Arminian notions are inconsistent with there being any virtue or vice—the same conclusion as in Corollary 2, and defended in the same way.]

Corollary 4: If none of the moral actions of thinking beings are influenced by either previous inclination or motive, another strange thing will follow, namely that God not only can't foreknow any of the future moral actions of his creatures but he can't even make conjectures or form probable guesses about them. For any conjecture about how someone will voluntarily behave must be based on some information about two things prior to the behaviour, namely disposition and motive; and I have shown that Arminian notions of moral agency, when followed out to their real consequences, altogether exclude these.

## **Part 4: Examining the main reasons the Arminians give for their view about liberty, moral agency etc. and against the opposite doctrine**

### **Section 1: What makes dispositions of the heart and acts of the will vicious or virtuous is not their cause but their nature**

When Arminians defend their position, they rely on the supposition that what makes a disposition or act of the will virtuous is not its *nature* but rather its *cause*—not what it is like, but where it came from. However good a disposition or act may be in itself, if it isn't *caused by our virtue* there is nothing virtuous or praiseworthy in it; and, on the other side, however bad a disposition or act may be in itself, there is nothing vicious or blameworthy in it unless it arises from something that is our vice or fault. That is the basis for their grand objection 'to opposing views', and their claim to be able to demonstrate—or even to reveal as self-evident—that no habits or acts of the will can be virtuous and commendable, or vicious and blameworthy, unless they come from some virtuous or vicious determination of the will itself.

But if you think hard about this you'll see that it is altogether a mistake—indeed, a gross absurdity. . . .

If the essence of virtuousness or commendableness and of viciousness or fault lies not in the •nature of the dispositions and mental acts that are thus described but in their •cause, then it certainly doesn't lie *anywhere!* [Edwards devotes two pages to elaborately defending this. The core of the defence is fairly simple: if the moral status of an action depends purely on the moral status of its cause, then the moral status of the cause depends on the moral status of *its* cause, and so on backward to infinity; and there is no way for the Arminian

to wriggle free from this difficulty. Edwards then launches a different attack, aimed at the heart of the thesis in question rather than at its consequences:]

The natural notions of mankind hold that moral evil. . . .consists in •a certain ugliness in the nature of certain dispositions of the heart and acts of the will, and *not* in •the ugliness of something *else* that is supposed to be the cause of it and that itself deserves abhorrence. The latter view would be absurd, because it involves supposing that something that is innocent and not evil is truly evil and faulty because something else is evil! This implies a contradiction, for it supposes that the very thing that is morally evil and blameworthy is innocent and not blameworthy, and that what *is* blameworthy is only its cause. To say that vice doesn't consist in the thing that is vicious but in its cause is tantamount to saying that vice doesn't consist in vice but in what produces it.

It's true that something may be blameworthy because it causes vice; something's *producing* wickedness may be a wickedness *in* it. But then there are two wickednesses, not one; the wicked act of the cause in producing wickedness is •one wickedness, and the wickedness it produces is •another. So the wickedness of the latter doesn't lie in the former, but is distinct from it; and the wickedness of both lies in the evil •nature of the things that are wicked 'and not in their •causes'. [The word 'hateful' used to mean 'full of hate', and still does in the USA. Its now-dominant sense in the rest of the English-speaking world is 'fit to be hated, liable to attract just hatred from others, deeply nasty'; and that's what Edwards means by it.] What makes sin hateful is whatever features it has that make it deserve

punishment (which is nothing but the expression of hatred). And what makes virtue lovable is whatever features it has that make it fit to receive praise and reward (which are nothing but expressions of esteem and love). But what makes vice hateful is its hateful •nature; and what makes virtue lovable is its lovable •nature. According to the common sense of mankind, the *soul* of virtue and vice is their worthiness of esteem or disesteem, praise or dispraise; and what gives them that worthiness is the beauty or ugliness that are *inherent in* good or evil will, not in what *causes* it. If the cause of the rise of a hateful disposition or act of will is itself *also* hateful, that involves another prior evil •act of• will; it is entirely another sin and deserves punishment by itself, evaluated in itself. . . .

For instance, **ingratitude** is hateful and worthy of dispraise according to common sense, not because it was •caused by something as bad or worse, but because it is hateful •in itself by its own inherent ugliness. Similarly, **the love of virtue** is lovable and worthy of praise not because something else happened first, causing this love of virtue to enter our minds—for example, we *chose* to love virtue and somehow or other got ourselves to love it—but because of the •intrinsic• lovable-ness of such a disposition and inclination of the heart. . . .

This may be a good place to comment on something said by an author who has recently made a mighty noise in America. [Edwards is referring to *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination* by John Taylor, an English unitarian.] He writes: ‘A necessary holiness is not holiness. Adam could not be originally created in righteousness and true holiness; he couldn’t be righteous without first *choosing* to be righteous. So he must exist, he must be created, indeed he must exercise thought and reflection, before he could be righteous.’ There is much more to the same effect on that

page and several others [four page-numbers are given]. If Taylor is right, it certainly follows that the •first *choice to be righteous* was not a *righteous choice*; there was no righteousness or holiness in it, because it wasn’t •preceded by a still earlier choice to be righteous. •Taylor really is committed to this•, because he clearly affirms both these views:

- (1) Righteousness must be preceded by a choice to be righteous.
- (2) A necessary holiness is no holiness, •and more generally nothing that is necessary can be virtuous or righteous•.

Add to those two the following, which are certainly true:

- (3) Whatever follows from a choice to be righteous is an effect of it.
- (4) Any effect is helpless to prevent [probably here = ‘get in ahead of’] the influence of its cause, and therefore is unavoidably dependent on the cause, and therefore is necessary.

From (2)–(4) it follows that no effect of a choice to be righteous can be righteousness; yet (1) says that righteousness must come from a choice to be righteous. By this system of thought, then, all righteousness and holiness is shut out of the world with a single irrevocable slam of the door.

What led men to this absurd inconsistent idea that the moral good and evil of •internal inclinations and volitions lies not in their nature but their cause? I think I know what it was. With respect to all •outward actions and perceptible bodily movements it is true—indeed it is a very plain dictate of common sense—that the moral good or evil of them doesn’t lie at all in the movements themselves; those movements taken by themselves have nothing of a moral nature; and the essence of all the moral good or evil that they in any way involve lies in those internal dispositions and volitions that cause them. Now, in ordinary language such phrases

as ‘men’s actions’ and ‘men’s doings’ refer to their •external actions, so we become accustomed to saying—as obvious and uncontroversial—such things as that ‘the morality of **men’s actions** depends on their causes’. But then some people talked about volitions and •internal exercises of inclinations as also being among ‘men’s actions’, which led them to blunder into the view that the morality of **men’s volitions** etc. also depends on their causes, ignoring the vast difference between the two kinds of ‘actions’.

You may want to object:

Why isn’t it necessary that the cause should be considered in order to determine whether something is worthy of blame or praise? Is it agreeable to reason and common sense that a man is to be praised or blamed for something that he isn’t the cause or author of, something he had no hand in?

I answer: phrases like ‘is the cause of’, ‘is the author of’, ‘has a hand in’ and so on are ambiguous. Ordinary uneducated folk use them to say that

(1) x is the designing voluntary cause, or the cause by antecedent choice, of y.

But they can also be used to mean that

(2) x *does* or *performs* y; it’s the immediate agent of y. It’s as certain as anything can be that men are never in sense (1) ‘the causes’ or ‘the authors’ of the *first* act of their wills! . . . But they can be ‘the causes’ of them in sense (2). No doubt common sense says that if a man’s **acts of the will** are to be judged worthy of praise or dispraise, he must ‘be their author’, in sense (2). And it teaches that if a man’s **external actions** are to be justly blamed or praised he must ‘be the author of them in sense (1)—causing them by an act of will or choice. But common sense doesn’t say anything like that regarding the acts of the will themselves. What follows may help to make this more obvious.

## Section 2: The falseness and inconsistency of the metaphysical notion of action and agency that most defenders of the Arminian doctrine of liberty, moral agency, etc. seem to have

In defending their principles concerning moral agency, virtue, vice and so on, Arminians rely heavily and prominently on their metaphysical notion of •agency and •action. According to them,

- unless the soul has a self-determining power, it has no power of action;
- volitions caused not by the soul but by some external cause can’t be the soul’s own acts;
- if an event occurs in the soul necessarily rather than through its own free determination, the soul can’t be active—and must be wholly passive—in respect of that event.

Chubb bases his theory of liberty and his arguments in support of it on the thesis that man is an agent and is capable of action; and there’s no doubt that *that* is true. But his notion of *action* includes *self-determination*, which is indeed its very essence; so he infers that •a man can’t possibly act and be acted on in the same event at the same time, that •no action of x’s can be the effect of an action of y’s; and that •‘a necessary agent’—an agent that is necessarily determined to act—is a plain contradiction.

But when someone builds on a meaning that he arbitrarily gives to a word, the argument he constructs will be precarious! Especially when that arbitrary meaning is •abstruse, •inconsistent, and •entirely different from the word’s original sense in ordinary language.

The meaning that Chubb and many others give to ‘action’ is utterly unintelligible and inconsistent—you can see this from the following considerations ·in which I shall present

four distinct ways in which the inconsistency shows itself.

(1) Their notion of *action* rules out any action's involving any passion or passiveness, i.e. (according to them) rules out its being under the power, influence, or action of any cause. This implies that an action has no cause and is not an effect—because being an effect or having a cause implies passiveness, i.e. being subject to the power and action of its cause. Yet they also hold that any **action** x of the mind is the effect of the mind's own determination—its *free and voluntary* determination, its *free choice*—which means that with respect to x the mind is passive, subject to the power and action of the preceding cause, and so it **can't be active**. Contradiction! An action is always the passive effect of a prior choice, and therefore can't be an action (because, they hold, the mind can't be both active and passive with respect to the same event at the same time).

(2) They say that necessity is utterly inconsistent with action—that 'necessary action' is a contradiction in terms; so their notion of action implies contingency and excludes all necessity. So their notion of *action* implies that **an action has no necessary dependence** on or connection with anything that went before, because any such dependence or connection would exclude contingency and imply necessity. Yet their notion of *action* implies that **any action is necessary** and can't be contingent (because, they hold, anything that is properly called an 'action' must be determined by the will and free choice, which involves its being dependent on and determined by a prior event, and thus being necessary).

(3) Their notion of *action* implies that anything that is a proper and mere act [Edwards's phrase] **is the beginning of the exercise of power**, but that same notion also implies that an action **is not the beginning of the exercise of power**, but is consequent and dependent on a preceding exercise of power, namely the power of will and choice

(because, according to them, the only proper actions are ones that are freely chosen, i.e. determined by a preceding act of free choice).

Perhaps some Arminians will respond:

You are wrong about our views. We don't hold that *every* 'action' as ordinarily so-called is chosen or determined by a preceding choice. We do hold that the very first exercise of will is not determined by any preceding act; and it would nearer the mark to credit us with holding that *no* action is chosen etc., because that first exercise of the will is the only kind of event that is, strictly speaking, called an 'action'.

I reply that this 'strict' notion of *action* also implies necessity. Something that happens in the mind without being determined by its own prior choice is something that occurs there necessarily, the mind having had no hand in its occurring and no ability to prevent it. So that it's implied by *this* notion of *action* too that any action is both necessary and not necessary.

(4) According to their notion of *an act*, an action isn't an effect of a predetermining bias or leaning one way, but arises immediately out of indifference; and this implies that it **can't come from a preceding choice** (because that would involve a prior leaning-one-way or bias; even if were not habitual but only occasional, if this bias caused the act then it would be truly prior, efficacious, and determining). Yet it's also essential to their notion of *an act* that an action is what the agent is the author of, freely and voluntarily, i.e. **does come from previous choice and design**.

So their notion of *act* has the consequence that the following four things are all essential to an act. It must (2) be necessary and not necessary; it must (1) be from a cause and not from a cause; it must (4) result from choice and design and not result from choice and design; and it must

(3) be the beginning of motion or exertion and yet result from previous exertion. And the list of contradictions goes on: an act •must exist before it exists, it •should spring immediately out of indifference and equilibrium and yet be the effect of some tilting or bias, it •should be self-caused and also be caused by something else. . . .

So that an *act*, according to the Arminians' metaphysical notion of it, is something of which we have no idea; a confusion of the mind aroused by words without any distinct meaning, and apart from that *nothing*—an absolute nonentity. . . . No idea can possibly lodge in the mind if its very nature—the essence that makes it the idea that it is—destroys it. [Edwards then •imagines a case where someone includes an outright contradiction in some anecdote that he is telling, and •remarks on the scorn with which we would greet such a performance. Then:]

The notion of action that I have been discussing, being very inconsistent, is utterly different from the original meaning of the word 'action'. Its more usual meaning in common speech seems to be 'motion or exercise of power that is voluntary (i.e. an effect of the will)'; it means about the same as 'doing'; and it usually refers to outward •bodily actions, which is why we often distinguish from 'acting', and desiring and willing from 'doing'.

Besides this more usual and proper meaning of 'action', the word is also used in other ways that are less proper but still have a place in common speech. It is often used to signify some motion or alteration in inanimate things that is being •related to some effect. Thus, the spring of a watch is said to 'act on' the chain and wheels, sunbeams to 'act on' plants and trees, fire to 'act on' wood. Sometimes the word is used to signify motions, alterations, and exercises of power that are seen in material things considered absolutely, •i.e. non-relationally; especially when these motions seem

to arise from some hidden internal cause, making them more like the movements of our bodies that are the effects of natural volition or invisible exertions of will. For example, the fermentation of liquor and the operations of magnets and of electrical bodies are called the 'action' of these things. And sometimes 'action' is used to signify the exercise of thought or of will and inclination: thus, meditating, loving, hating, inclining, disinclining, choosing, and refusing may be sometimes called 'acting', though more rarely (except with philosophers and metaphysicians) than in any of the other senses.

But 'action' is never used in common speech in the sense that Arminian theologians give to it, namely for the self-determining exercise of the will, or an exertion of the soul that occurs without any necessary connection to anything prior to it. If a man does something voluntarily, i.e. as an effect of his choice, then in the most proper and common sense of the word he is said to 'act'. But the questions

Is that choice or volition self-determined?

Is it connected with a preceding habitual bias?

Is it the certain effect of the strongest motive or some intrinsic cause?

can't be answered by consulting the meaning of the word.

And if some people take it on themselves to use the word 'action' in some other sense, chosen to suit some scheme of metaphysics or morality, an argument based on such a deviant use can't prove anything—except proving something about how they like using words! Theologians and philosophers strenuously urge such arguments, as though they were sufficient to support and demonstrate a whole scheme of moral philosophy and theology; but they are certainly building their mighty edifice on sand—no! on *a shadow*. Perhaps long usage has made it natural for them to use the word in this sense (if something that's inconsistent with itself

can be said to have ‘sense’ or ‘meaning’), but that doesn’t prove that •this sense conforms to the natural notions men have of things or that •there can be anything in the world answering to it. They appeal to ‘experience’, but the fact is that men are so far from experiencing any such thing •as ‘action’ in the Arminian sense• that they can’t possibly have any conception of it.

[We are about to encounter the word ‘passion’, used in a sense that was current in Edwards’s day, namely as having to do with passivity or being acted on—not with high emotion. We’ll also meet the distinction between

- count nouns*: ‘puddle’, ‘grain’—we can say ‘a puddle’, ‘five grains’; and

- mass nouns*: ‘water’, ‘sand’—we can’t say ‘a water’ or ‘five sands’.

There can also be count and mass *uses* of a single noun:

- count use*: ‘a potato’, ‘three potatoes’, ‘a cloud’, ‘two clouds’.

- mass use*: ‘a kilo of mashed potato’, ‘a mountain-top immersed in cloud’.

Edwards doesn’t use the terms ‘count’ and ‘mass’, but he has and uses the concepts of them.] The following objection to what I am saying might be made:

The words ‘action’ and ‘passion’ quite certainly have contrary meanings. Yet you have been supposing that the agent in its •action •also undergoes a •passion because it• is under the power and influence of something intrinsic. So you are mixing up action and passion, making them be the same thing:

I answer that ‘action’ and ‘passion’ are doubtless words with opposite meanings, but they don’t stand for opposite *things* but only opposite *relations*. The words ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ are also terms with opposite meanings; but if I assert that a single thing can at a single time be both the cause of something and an effect of something else, you won’t infer that I am mixing up the terms! A single event in the soul can be both active and passive in different relations—active in relation to one thing and passive in relation to another.

[Edwards spends more than a page on developing this point, with much of the complexity coming from his distinguishing mass and count uses of ‘action’, while denying that we have count uses of ‘passion’. We can say ‘That was an example of **action** (= activeness)’ and ‘That was **an action**’, but on the other side, while we have ‘That was an example of passion (= passiveness)’, we don’t have the corresponding count use ‘That was a passion’. An action, Edwards says, is a *thing* of a certain kind, but it doesn’t enter into any action/passion contrast. To get that contrast we need the mass uses of the terms, in which they stand for activeness/passiveness; these are not *things* but they aren’t *qualities* either; they are *relations*. He continues:] It is no absurdity to suppose that contrary relations may belong to the same thing at the same time with respect to different things—as Siegmund can be the *son of Wotan* and the *father of Siegfried*•. So there is no mixing up of action and passion in the thesis that there are events in the soul of which this is true:

They are acts of the soul, by which the man voluntarily moves and acts on objects and produces effects, and so is this:

They are effects of something else; in them the soul itself is the object of something acting on it and influencing it.

The words may nevertheless have opposite meanings: there may be as true and real a difference between •acting and •being caused to act, when these are applied to the very same volition, as there is between •living and •being made to live. It is no more a contradiction to suppose that action may be the effect of some cause other than the agent than it is to suppose that life may be the effect of some cause other than the being that is alive.

What led men into this inconsistent notion of action, when applied to •volitions, as though it were essential to this

•internal action that the agent should be self-determined in it and that the will should be the cause of it? It was probably this: According to common sense and the common use of language, what they say about •internal volitions is actually true of men's •external actions—which are real *actions* in the best, most basic, and commonest sense of the word. Men in their bodily movements are self-directed, self-determined, and their wills are the causes of their bodily movements and the external things that are done; so that if a man's bodily movement is not made voluntarily—not made by his choice, not determined by his prior volition—it isn't an *action* of his. And some metaphysicians have incautiously let themselves be led by this into an extreme absurdity—namely, saying the same thing about volitions themselves, maintaining that a volition must also be determined by the will, i.e. be determined by a prior volition as a bodily movement is. They haven't noticed the contradiction that this implies.

The metaphysical distinction between action and passion is now well-entrenched and very common; but in developing it, the philosophers didn't take proper care to conform language to the nature of things or to any distinct clear ideas. The same is true of countless other philosophical, metaphysical terms that are used in these disputes; and this has given rise to indescribable difficulty, contention, error, and confusion.

That is probably how it came to be thought that necessity was inconsistent with action as these terms are applied to volition. In their original meanings,

•'action' means 'external voluntary action' and 'necessity' means 'external constraint',

and in *these* senses they obviously *are* inconsistent with one another. But the meanings were changed so that

•volitions count as 'actions', and 'necessity' came to mean 'certainty of existence'.

When that change of meaning was made, care was *not* taken to make proper allowances and adjustments to accommodate the changes; rather, the same things were rashly attributed to 'action' and 'necessity' in the new meaning of the words that plainly belonged to them in their first sense. That is, careless philosophers moved from the truth that

•External voluntary action is incompatible with constraint

to the falsehood that

•Volition is incompatible with certainty of existence,

getting from one to the other by expressing both in the very same sentence

•Action is incompatible with necessity.

· When things like that happen, maxims are 'established' without any real foundation, as though they were the most certain truths and the most evident dictates of reason.

But however strenuously it is maintained that what is necessary can't be properly called 'action'—that 'a necessary action' is a contradiction in terms—there probably aren't many Arminian theologians who would stand by these principles if they thought them through. Most Arminians will allow that God is in the highest sense an active being, and the highest source of life and action; and they probably wouldn't deny that the things that are called 'God's acts' of righteousness, holiness, and faithfulness are truly and properly God's *acts*—that God really is a holy *agent* in them—yet I trust that they won't deny that God *necessarily* acts justly and faithfully, and that it's impossible for him to act in an unrighteous and unholy way.

### Section 3: Why some people think it contrary to common sense to suppose that necessary actions can be worthy of either praise or blame

Arminian writers insist, over and over again, that it's contrary to common sense and to the natural notions and thoughts of mankind to suppose that necessity (whether natural or moral necessity) is consistent with virtue and vice, praise and blame, reward and punishment. And the arguments they have built on this basis have been presented triumphantly, and have been more than a little perplexing to many who have been friendly to the Calvinist truth as clearly revealed in the holy scriptures; they have found it hard to reconcile Calvinist doctrines with the notions men commonly have of justice and equity. The true reasons for this seem to be the five following ones.

(1) Common sense does indeed plainly dictate that *natural* necessity is wholly inconsistent with just praise or blame. If a man does something that is in itself very good, fit to be brought about, with very fortunate effects, but does this from necessity—against his will, or without his will's being involved in it in any way—common sense plainly dictates that this owes nothing to any virtue or moral good that the man may have, and it doesn't entitle him to any reward, praise, esteem, honour, or love. And on the other side, if he does something that is in itself very unfortunate and pernicious, but does this because he can't help it—doing it from necessity, without his will's coming into it in any way—common sense plainly dictates that he is not at all to blame, that the bad effect is not tainted by any vice, fault, or moral evil, and that this doesn't make him deserve to be punished, hated, or in the least disrespected.

Similarly, the universal reason of mankind teaches that a man is not to be *at all* blamed or punished for not doing

something that would be good and desirable but that it is naturally impossible for him to do.[Edwards continues with a page in which he re-applies the above to cases where doing the good or bad thing is *very difficult*. He says that difficulty is 'an approach to' natural necessity; from which he infers that just as

- a necessary doing brings *no* moral credit or discredit, so also

- a difficult-to-avoid doing brings *little* moral credit or discredit,

the degree of moral credit or discredit being proportional to the degree of difficulty of avoidance.]

(2) Men in their first uses of such expressions as 'must', 'can't', 'can't help it', 'can't avoid it', 'necessary', 'unable', 'impossible', 'unavoidable', 'irresistible' etc. use them to signify a necessity of constraint or restraint, a *natural* necessity or impossibility, or anyway some necessity that doesn't bring in the will, implying that the event would be the same whatever the man's inclinations and desires were. In their basic use, I think, terms like these in all languages are *relative*; their meaning carries with it a reference or relation to some contrary will, desire, or effort that is thought of as being actual or possible in the given situation. (I pointed this out earlier [this is presumably a reference to (3) on page 8]). All men find, starting in early childhood, that countless things that they want to do they *can't do*, and that countless things that they are averse to they *can't avoid*. This kind of necessity, which is found so early and so often, and in many cases makes all the difference, is what expressions like those listed above are first used to express. Their role in the common affairs of life is *that*, and *not* to carry the metaphysical, theoretical, abstract meaning that have been loaded onto them by philosophers engaged in philosophical inquiries into the origins, metaphysical relations, and dependencies of

things—a meaning that they couldn't find any other bearer for. I am talking, of course, about the philosophers' use of 'necessity' to stand for the connection in the nature of things or the course of events that •holds between the subject and predicate of a proposition and •is the foundation of the certain truth of that proposition. This is the meaning commonly given to 'necessity' and its cognates in the controversy between Arminians and Calvinists. But the meanings we learn to give to those terms and phrases—starting in our cradles!—is entirely different from this. It is (I repeat) a dictate of the universal sense of mankind, evident to us as soon as we begin to think, that the necessity signified by •these terms in the meaning in which we first learn them *does* excuse people and free them from all fault or blame; and so our idea of excusableness or faultlessness is tied to •these terms and phrases by a strong habit that started in childhood and is strengthened through the years by constant use and custom, the connection growing stronger and stronger.

The habitual connection that men's minds make between blamelessness and the terms I have mentioned—'must', 'can't', 'unable', 'necessary', 'impossible', 'unavoidable', etc.—becomes *very* strong because all through our thinking and speaking lives we have often made excuses for ourselves based on the natural necessity signified by these terms—'I can't do it', 'I couldn't help it' . . .

Someone who has from early childhood been accustomed to a union of different ideas will make the habitual connection very strong, as though it were laid down in nature. That's the general phenomenon that is relevant here, and there are countless instances of it. Consider someone who judges that a mountain that he sees ten miles away is bigger than his nose and further away than the tip of it. He has for so long been accustomed to joining such-and-such an appearance with a considerable distance and size that he

imagines that it's a dictate of natural common-sense that this appearance goes with that size and distance. But it isn't! Suppose someone experiences this visual appearance after being blind for the whole of his previous life: natural common-sense won't dictate anything to *him* about the distance or direction of the object that he was seeing.

(3) So, men became habituated to connecting the idea of innocence or blamelessness with such terms as 'can't', 'unable' and so on, connecting them so strongly that the union between them seems to be the effect of mere nature. Then they hear the same terms being used in the new and metaphysical sense that I have discussed, signifying a quite different sort of necessity that doesn't involve any relation to a possible contrary will and effort. They hear this usage, and they come to adopt it; and in this way they take the notion of plain and manifest blamelessness and, without being aware of what they are doing, rashly connect innocence etc. with something that really has nothing to do with it. [The phrase 'common necessity', which lies just ahead, isn't used by Edwards. He sometimes uses 'vulgar necessity' to signify the kind of necessity that is involved when 'necessary' and its kin are used by the mass of ordinary people—including ones who are not much educated; but it's hard for us to remember that that's what 'vulgar' meant in his day. The label 'philosophical necessity' for the other kind of necessity is his.] As for the change of the use of the terms to a quite different meaning—the switch from common necessity to philosophical necessity—they don't notice it or mention it. There are several reasons for this, of which I shall give two.

(a) The terms as used by philosophers are not very distinct and clear in their meanings—they are seldom used in a fixed and determinate sense. On the contrary, their meanings are very vague and confused, which is what commonly happens to words used to signify intellectual and moral things, expressing what Locke calls 'mixed modes'. If men had a

clear and distinct understanding of what these metaphysical terms mean, they would be better able to compare them with their original and common meaning, and thus be less easily led into delusion by them.

(b) The change of meaning of the terms is made harder to be conscious of by the fact that the things signified, though indeed very different, are alike in some general respects. (i) In •common necessity—i.e. what is called ‘necessity’ in ordinary talk—there is a strong connection between the thing that is said to be ‘necessary’ and something prior to it in the order of nature; and so there is also in •philosophical necessity. There is of course this difference: in the language of •common necessity the crucial connection **is** being thought of as opposing some will or effort to which it is superior; whereas in the language of •philosophical necessity this **is not** the case. But with both kinds of necessity, the crucial connection is prior to will and effort, and so is in some respect superior to it. (ii) And there is a second similarity in the fact that in each kind of necessity there is a basis for being fairly certain of the truth of the proposition that affirms the outcome. So the situation is this:

- The two kinds of necessity are expressed by the same words and phrases.
- They are alike in the respects (i) and (ii), and in some other general features.
- The expressions for philosophical necessity are not well defined and so are obscure and loose in their meanings.

For these reasons, people aren’t aware of the great difference between the two kinds of necessity; so they have taken the life-long tie between innocence or faultiness and common necessity and turned it into a tie between innocence or faultiness and philosophical necessity, still thinking of the connection as altogether natural and necessary; so that when

someone tries to separate innocence etc. from philosophical necessity, they think he is doing great violence to nature itself!

(4) Another reason why it looks unreasonable to blame someone for something that is necessary with a •moral necessity (which is a species of •philosophical necessity, as I have pointed out [in item (iii) on page 13]) is that people thoughtlessly get the idea that moral necessity may be against men’s wills and sincere efforts. They carry away the idea that men can truly will and wish and strive to be otherwise but that invincible •moral• necessity stands in the way. Many think like this about *themselves*. Some wicked men *think* they wish to be good and to love God and holiness, but don’t find that their wishes produce the effect. There are two reasons why men think like this. (a) They find in themselves an *indirect willingness*—as we might call it—to be good and love God etc. (It is impossible—it is downright self-contradictory—to suppose the will to be *directly* and properly against itself.) And they overlook how utterly different this indirect willingness is from properly •and directly• willing whatever it is that duty and virtue require, so they don’t see that there is no virtue in the •indirect• sort of willingness that they have. They don’t see that a wicked man’s wish to love God is not an act of the will against the moral evil of not loving God; all it is targeted at are some disagreeable consequences of not loving God. But making the required distinction •between direct and indirect willings• requires careful reflection and thought—more of them than most men are used to! Also, people are prejudiced in their own favour, so they are likely to think well of their own desires and dispositions, and to count them as good and virtuous because they *indirectly* wish to be virtuous. (b) Another thing that insensibly leads men to suppose that this moral necessity or impossibility can be against men’s wills and true

endeavours is the language in which it is talked about: the expressions that are often used seem to imply •this. Such words as 'unable', 'unavoidable', 'impossible', 'irresistible' carry, in their common-necessity sense, a plain reference to a possible power exerted, attempts made, resistance put up, in opposition to the necessity; and anyone who hears such expressions and doesn't suspect that they are being used in a non-standard way (to signify philosophical rather than common necessity) will inevitably think that what's being talked about *does* involve true desires and attempts that are blocked by some invincible necessity.

(5) Another thing that makes people readier to suppose it to be unreasonable that men should be exposed to the threatened punishments of sin for doing things that are morally necessary, or not doing things that are morally impossible, is that when the threatened punishment is very great, the *imagination* strengthens the argument and adds to the power and influence of the seeming reasons against it. It's not so hard to allow that men may be justly exposed to a small punishment for doing something it was not morally possible to avoid. Not that size of punishment affects the issue: if it were truly a dictate of reason that moral necessity is inconsistent with faultiness or just punishment, the demonstration of this would hold equally well for *any* punishment; but although size of punishment doesn't affect the •argument, it does affect the •imagination. Those who argue that it is unjust to damn men for things that are morally necessary make their argument *seem* stronger by using strong language to describe the severity of the punishment. They say, for example, that it isn't just 'that a man should be cast into eternal fire, that he should be made to fry in hell to all eternity, for things he had no power to avoid and was under a fatal, unavoidable, unconquerable necessity of doing.' [The quotation-marks are Edwards's; he gives no reference.]

#### **Section 4: 'Moral necessity is consistent with praise and blame, reward and punishment'—this squares with common sense and men's natural notions**

I have tried to explain why some people find it hard to reconcile with common sense the praising or blaming, rewarding or punishing, of things that are morally necessary. Whether or not my account of *why* they find the reconciliation •difficult is satisfactory, I now undertake to satisfy you that the reconciliation is •right. When this matter is looked at properly, and cleared of delusions arising from the impropriety and ambiguity of terms, it emerges very clearly that the supposedly hard-to-reconcile items *can* be reconciled. The thesis that blameworthiness etc. is compatible with moral inability is perfectly consistent with •the ways of thinking that come naturally to all mankind, •the sense of things that is found everywhere in the common people who are furthest from having their thoughts diverted from their natural channel by metaphysical and philosophical subtleties. Indeed, it's not only consistent with those thoughts—it is outright dictated by them.

(1) You'll see this if you consider what the common notion of blameworthiness is. It seems clear to me that common people across the nations and down the centuries have equated a person's *being at fault* with •his being or doing wrong when acting at his own will and pleasure, and •his being wrong in what he wills or is pleased with. Or in other words, perhaps making their notion clearer: they equate a person's being at fault with •his having his heart wrong, and •his doing wrong from his heart. And that is the whole story. The common people don't rise to abstract reflections on the metaphysical sources, relations, and dependencies of things, in order to form their notion of faultiness or blameworthiness.

They don't, ·in forming their ideas of faultiness etc.·, wait until they have refined their thought to the point where they can answer the questions:

- What first determines the will?
- Is it determined by something extrinsic or something intrinsic?
- Does volition determine volition?
- Does the understanding determine the will?
- Is there such a thing as metaphysicians mean by 'contingency' (if they mean anything)?
- Is there a strange inexplicable sovereignty in the will, through which it brings about all its own sovereign acts by means of its own sovereign acts?

They don't get any part of their notion of fault or blame from answers to any such questions as those. If the common notion of fault *did* depend on such answers, 99.9% of mankind would live and die without having any such notion as that of fault ever entering their heads, and therefore without having the faintest idea that anyone was to be either blamed or commended for anything. ·If that is an exaggeration, it is at least safe to say that· it would certainly be a long time before any individual man came to have such notions. Whereas it's obvious that in fact they are some of the first notions that appear in children, who reveal in themselves a sense of *desert* = *deservingness* as soon as they can in any way think or speak or act as rational creatures. And in forming their notion of desert they certainly make no use of metaphysics! All the ground they go upon [=? 'all that they steer by'] consists in these two things: •experience, and •a natural sense of a certain fitness in linking together ·three things, namely·:

- moral evil of the sort I have described, namely someone's willingly being wrong or doing wrong,
- resentment in others, and
- pain inflicted on the person in whom this moral evil

is.

This natural sense is what we call 'conscience'.

It's true that the common people and children, in their notion of a *faulty act* by someone, do suppose that it is the person's own act. But this comes simply from their notion of *what he did* or even *what he chose to do*. That notion of theirs doesn't include the idea of an event's •causing itself to occur, or of an event's •occurring accidentally or with no cause. [Edwards then repeats briefly why each of those leads to absurdity.]

It's also true that the common people in their notion of a faulty or praiseworthy deed do suppose that the man does it in the exercise of liberty. But their notion of *liberty* is merely that *someone's having the opportunity to do as he pleases*. They don't think of liberty as consisting in the will's first acting and so causing its own acts, ·first· determining and so causing its own determinations, or ·first· choosing and so causing its own choice! *That* sort of notion of liberty doesn't occur to anyone except those who have darkened their own minds with confused metaphysical speculation and abstruse and ambiguous terms. If a man isn't blocked from acting as his will determines, or constrained to act otherwise, *then he has liberty*, according to common notions of liberty; and this doesn't involve that massively self-contradictory idea that the determinations of a man's free will are the effects of the determinations of his free will!

Nor does the common notion of freedom bring in indifference ·or equilibrium·. If it did, then the common notion would be receptive to the view that the greater the indifference with which someone acts the more freedom he has in acting; whereas the reverse is true. According to common sense, the man who acts with the greatest freedom is the one who proceeds with the strongest inclination. . . .

(2) If the common sense of mankind maintained this:

•No-one should be blamed or commended for any volitions they perform from moral necessity, or for any non-performance of a volition that was morally impossible,

then it surely ought also to maintain this:

•The nearer someone's conduct is to coming from moral necessity (through a strong antecedent moral propensity) or from moral impossibility (through a strong antecedent opposition and difficulty), the nearer it comes to being neither blameable nor commendable.

[Edwards says in a footnote that he is assuming here that not all propensities involve outright moral necessity, 'which none will deny'. . . . 'To see how those two should stand or fall together', look at the analogous case of *natural* necessity and impossibility. As I have pointed out earlier, it is a plain dictate of the sense of all mankind that

•Natural necessity and impossibility take away all blame and praise;

and therefore, by parity of reasoning, common sense should also dictate that

•The nearer someone's conduct comes to being naturally necessary (and the nearer his avoiding it comes to being naturally impossible), the less praise or blame he deserves for that conduct.

And that's just what common sense *does* say. It holds that someone who would like to do some good thing x, but doesn't, is excusable to this *to the extent that* x would have been very hard for him to do. Well, if excusability wasn't affected by whether the **impossibility** was natural (and against the will) or moral (residing in the will), then partial excusability wouldn't be affected by whether the **difficulty** (the approach to impossibility) was natural (against the will) or moral (residing in the propensity of the will).

But quite obviously the reverse of this is true. When someone performs good acts of will, if they come from his strong propensity to good and his very powerful love of virtue—these being an approach to moral necessity—common sense says that he is not *less* but *more* deserving of love and praise, worthy of greater respect and higher commendation. . . . And, on the other hand, if a man performs evil acts of mind, e.g. acts of pride or malice, from an ingrained and strong habit of or drive towards haughtiness and malice, this source of his conduct makes him not less but more hateful and blameable, more worthy to be detested and condemned.

It is commonly supposed in many cases that good or evil dispositions are implanted in the hearts of men by nature itself; but it is *not* commonly thought that men don't deserve praise or dispraise for such dispositions. (This is despite the fact that what is •natural is undoubtedly •necessary, because nature is prior to all acts of the will whatsoever.) Consider for example a man who appears to be of a very haughty or malicious disposition, and it is thought that this is an aspect of his natural character. Common sense does *not* say that his haughtiness and malice, because they come from nature, are not vices or moral evils, that he doesn't deserve our disesteem or odium and dishonour, or that the proud or malicious acts that flow from his natural disposition are not fit objects of resentment. Rather the reverse: such vile natural dispositions and the strength of them will commonly be mentioned as making *worse* the wicked acts that flow from them. Men at the height of their indignation will often comment on the bad conduct's being natural for the person in question. They say things like: 'It is his very nature', 'He has a vile natural temperament', 'Acting like that is as natural to him as breathing', 'He can't help serving the devil', and so on; and each of these expresses an *intensifying* of the resentment and blame. But

it isn't like that with regard to any damaging or nasty things that anyone does or causes through natural necessity and against his inclinations. [Where this version has 'that anyone •does or •causes', Edwards wrote 'that any are the •subjects or •occasions of'. The meanings are close, but he may have been trying to avoid applying the full-fledged concepts of •*agent* and •*cause* to someone in a situation where he is governed by natural necessity.] In such a case, the common voice of mankind will speak of the necessity as a full excuse. So it is clear that common sense relates •natural necessity to •judgments regarding the moral quality and desert of men's actions in a vastly different way from how it relates •moral necessity to •those judgments.

These dictates of men's minds are so natural and necessary that the Arminians themselves have probably never got rid of them. Take any one of their leading exponents—let it be one who has gone furthest in defence of their metaphysical notions of liberty, and has argued most strongly against the consistency of virtue and vice with *any* necessity—and suppose him to be at different times in these two situations:

(a) He personally suffers greatly from the injurious acts of someone acting under the power of an invincible haughtiness and malignancy of character.

[Note the word 'invincible': Edwards is presenting a case of someone acting from moral *necessity*.]

(b) Equally great suffering comes to him from wind that blows, and fire that burns, by natural necessity. His natural common sense would lead him in (a) to feel a resentment that he wouldn't feel in (b). And his reaction would also be on the (b) side of the line if he suffered as much from the conduct of a man who was completely insane [Edwards: 'perfectly delirious'], even if his insanity had been brought about by some conduct that was his own fault.

Some writers seem to sneer at the distinction we make between natural and moral necessity, as though it were

altogether irrelevant to this controversy. They say:

What's necessary is necessary—it's what must be, and can't be prevented. And what's impossible is impossible and can't be done; so no-one can be to blame for not doing it.

But in this denial of a morally significant distinction, the Arminians are very unreasonable. Consider two cases, in each of which a man has offended his king, is thrown into prison, and is later faced with an offer of freedom.

(a) The king comes to the prison, and calls to the prisoner with an offer: if he will come out from his cell, and kneel and humbly beg the king's pardon, he will be forgiven and set free and also be greatly enriched and advanced to honour. The prisoner heartily repents of the folly and wickedness of his offence against his monarch, is thoroughly disposed to come out, bow down and accept the king's offer; but he can't come out because he is still locked in, confined by strong walls with gates of brass and bars of iron.

(b) The king comes to the prison and has this prisoner's chains knocked off *and his cell-door opened*, and then makes the same offer as was made to the prisoner in case (a). But *this* prisoner has a haughty, ungrateful, willful disposition; and when the compassionate king makes his offer, the prisoner is so stiff and proud and full of haughty malignity that he cannot be willing [Edwards's words] to accept the offer; his ingrained strong pride and malice have complete power over him, and as it were bind him by binding his heart; the opposition of his heart has mastery over him, having a much stronger influence on his mind than do all the king's kind offers and promises.

Now, does common sense allow anyone to assert—and *defend*—the thesis that these two prisoners are on a par so

far as their blameworthiness is concerned, because in each case the required act is impossible? A man's evil dispositions may indeed be as strong and immovable as the bars of a prison. But it should be obvious to everyone that when the prisoner in (b) is said to be 'unable to obey' the command, that expression is being used improperly, and not in the sense it has basically and in common speech; and that we can properly say that it *is* in the prisoner's power to come out of his cell, given that he can easily come out if he pleases, although because of his vile character, which is fixed and rooted, it is impossible that it should please him.

The bottom line is this: I think that any person of good understanding who impartially considers what I have said will agree that it is not evident from the dictates of the common sense (or natural notions of mankind) that moral necessity is inconsistent with praise and blame. So if the Arminians want to establish that there is any such inconsistency, they must do it by some philosophical and metaphysical arguments and not by appeals to common sense.

When the Arminians purport to base their demonstration on common sense, one grand illusion is at work. These ·purported· demonstrations get most of their strength—by which I here mean 'most of their plausibility'—from a prejudice that comes from two things:

- The surreptitious change in the use and meaning of such terms as 'liberty', 'able', 'unable', 'necessary', 'impossible', 'unavoidable', 'invincible', 'action', etc., in which they are taken away from their original non-technical sense to an entirely different metaphysical sense.
- The strong connection of the ideas of blamelessness etc. with some of those terms—a connection formed by a habit contracted and established while the terms were used in their original meaning.

This prejudice and delusion is the basis for all the positions the Arminians lay down as maxims that they •use in interpreting most of the biblical passages that they bring forward in this controversy, and •rely on in all their elaborately paraded demonstrations from scripture and reason. This secret delusion and prejudice gives them almost all their advantages; it makes their defensive walls strong and their swords sharp. It is also what gives them (·they think·) a right to treat their neighbours in such a condescending manner, and to launch insults at others who may be as wise and good as themselves are—calling them •weak bigots, •men who live in the dark caves of superstition and obstinately shut their eyes against the noon-day light, •enemies to common sense who maintain the first-born of absurdities etc. But an impartial consideration of what I have said in the preceding parts of this book may enable the lovers of truth to make a better judgment about whose doctrine is indeed absurd, abstruse, self-contradictory, inconsistent with common sense, and in many ways in conflict with the universal dictates of the reason of mankind.

Corollary: From what I have said it follows that common sense allows us to suppose that the glorified saints have not had their freedom at all diminished in any respect, and that God himself has the highest possible *freedom* (according to the true and proper meaning of that word) and that he is in the highest possible respect an •agent, and •active in the exercise of his infinite holiness, although in so doing he acts in the highest degree *necessarily*; and that his actions of this kind are in the highest most absolutely perfect manner virtuous and praiseworthy—precisely because they are most completely necessary.

### Section 5: Two objections considered: the ‘no use trying’ objection and (·near the end·) the ‘mere machines’ objection

[The above Section heading expresses the core of Edwards’s heading, which is 33 words longer.] Arminians say that if it is true that sin and virtue come about by a necessity that consists in a sure connection of causes and effects, antecedents and consequents, it can never be worth our while to *try* to avoid sin and obtain virtue, because no efforts of ours can alter the futurity of an outcome that has become necessary through a connection already established. [The ‘futurity’ of an event (or state of affairs) is its status as something that *is* going to happen (or be the case).]

Let us look into this matter thoroughly. Let us examine *rigorously* whether the thesis that events are necessarily connected with their antecedents implies that *attempts and arrangements to avoid or obtain some future thing must be in vain*—or rather that they must be *more* in vain on that supposition than on the supposition that events are *not* necessarily connected with their antecedents.

An attempt is ‘in vain’ only if it is unsuccessful—i.e. doesn’t lead eventually to the thing being aimed at. This can happen only in one of these two ways:

- The means are used but the outcome aimed at doesn’t follow.
- The means are used and the outcome follows, but its doing so has nothing to do with those means; it would have come about just as well if they hadn’t been used.

If either of these is the case, then the means are not properly successful and are truly ‘in vain’.

[In what follows, the expression ‘iff-connection’ will be used. It is not used by Edwards, of course. It comes from today’s short-hand for ‘if and only if’: there is an iff-connection between x and y just in case: if and only

if x occurs, y follows. Apologies for this, but you’ll see that it is useful to have *some* label for such connections.] The success or unsuccess of means to an effect, or their being in vain or not in vain, consists in their being or not being iff-connected with the effect, i.e. connected with it in such a way that:

- The effect comes when those means are used, and wouldn’t come if they weren’t used..

If there is an iff-connection between means and end, the means are not in vain; the more there is of iff-connection, the further they are from being in vain; and the less there is of iff-connection, the more they are in vain.

Well, then, what we have to answer. . . . is a question about the two suppositions:

- (a) There is a real and true connection between means and effect.
- (b) There is no fixed connection between antecedent things and consequent ones.

The question is: Does (a) imply that there is less iff-connection than (b) implies that there is? The very stating of this question is sufficient to answer it! Anyone who opens his eyes must see that it would be the grossest absurdity and inconsistency to answer Yes. . . . I can best show this by looking at (a) and (b) separately. **As for (b):** If there were no connection between antecedent things and consequent things, there would be no connection between means and end, so that *all* means would be *completely* vain and fruitless. What directs us in our choice of means is what we know—through observation, revelation, or whatever—about how antecedent things are connected with following ones. If there were no such thing as an established connection, we would have no way of choosing means; one thing would have no more tendency than another to produce our desired end. **As for (a):** Every successful means to some end thereby proves that it is a connected antecedent of that end; and therefore

to assert that a fixed connection between antecedents and consequents makes means vain and useless, or blocks the connection between means and ends, is just as ridiculous as it would be to say that a connection between antecedents and consequents blocks the connection between antecedents and consequents!

Suppose that the series of antecedents and consequents has been inter-connected from the very beginning of the world, the connection being made sure and necessary either by •established laws of nature or by •these together occasional special decrees by God or in •any other way (if there are any others). This supposition of a necessary connection of a •series of antecedents and consequents •doesn't threaten us with the conclusion that our means to our ends are in vain, because •our means can be members of the •series. •Indeed, they *must* be members of it; they are events that really happen, so they belong to the general series of events. And the supposition we are working with here implies that our attempts to achieve our ends will be connected with some subsequent effects. And there's no obstacle to their effects' being the very things we aim at; we *choose* our means to our ends, doing so on the basis of our judgments about what will lead to what—judging on the basis of •what we have observed to be the established order and course of things, or of •something in divine revelation.

Suppose that •a man's having his eyes open in the clear day-light with good organs of sight is really and truly connected with •his seeing, in such a way that there is an iff-connection between his opening his eyes and his seeing; and that •his trying to open his eyes is iff-connected with •his opening them. [‘iff-connection’ is explained in a note on page 105.] However sure and certain these connections are, they don't imply that it is in vain—•ineffective—•for this man, when he wants to see, to try to open his eyes. His aiming at

that outcome and his use of that means to achieve it by a connection that runs through his will, doesn't break the connection or block the success!

So the conclusion ‘If you are right, then it is no use our trying to achieve our ends’ doesn't hold against the doctrine of the necessity of outcomes that I have been defending; and it *does* hold with great force against the Arminian doctrine of contingency and self-determination. If the outcomes in which virtue and vice consist are not connected with anything antecedent to them, then there is no connection between those outcomes and any means or attempts used in order to achieve them—so those means must be in vain. The less connection there is between foregoing things and following ones, the less connection there is between means and end, attempts and successes, and to just that same extent means and attempts are ineffectual and in vain.

[Edwards now devotes a paragraph to repeating this more openly, concluding that if Arminianism is right then ‘all foregoing means •to virtue• must be totally in vain.’] It follows, further, that the Arminian theory implies that there can't be any reasonable ground even to *conjecture* about what means to escaping vice or achieving virtue are most *likely* to succeed. Such conjectures couldn't be based on •knowledge of •the natural connection or dependence of the end on the means, •because Arminianism denies that there is such a connection•. You might want to base conjectures on facts about God's nature and his revealed way of making things happen in consequence of means that we adopt—attempts, prayers, or actions. But conjectures on that basis depend on supposing that God himself is the giver or determining cause of the outcomes that are sought; but if they depend (•as the Arminians hold•) on *self*-determination, then *God* is not the determining author of them; and if these outcomes

are not at his disposal, then his conduct can't support any conjecture about how they may be achieved.

It gets worse for the Arminian. On his principles it will follow not only •that men can't have any reasonable ground for judging or conjecturing that their means and attempts to obtain virtue or avoid vice **will** be successful, but •that they may be sure that they **won't**—that their attempts will be in vain, and that if the outcome they seek comes about it won't be because of the means they have used. Why not? Because there are only two ways in which someone's means and attempts could be effective in getting him into a more virtuous state:

(a) Through a natural tendency and influence to prepare and dispose his mind more to virtuous acts, either by •causing the disposition of his heart to be more in favour of such acts or by •bringing powerful motives and inducements more fully into his mind's view.

(b) By putting him more in the way of God's bestowing of the benefit.

But neither of these is available to the Arminian. Not (b), because—as I have just pointed out—the Arminians' notion of *self*-determination, which they think essential to virtue, doesn't allow that God should be the bestower—i.e. the determining, disposing author—of virtue. And not (a), because 'natural influence and tendency' presupposes •causality and •connection and necessity of outcome, and that is inconsistent with Arminian liberty. I have abundantly shown that Arminian liberty of will, consisting in indifference and sovereign self-determination, rules out both achieving virtue by •biasing the heart in favour of virtue, and achieving it by •bringing the will under the influence and power of motives in its determinations.

[Edwards now devotes nearly two pages to an elaborate presentation of an essentially simple argument. It is ad-

dressed to someone who says: 'If you are right, then it is already absolutely settled what the future holds in store; no effort of mine can make any difference; so I'll just sit back and take it easy.' Edwards replies that someone who says that is contradicting himself, because on the grounds that nothing he does can make any difference he resolves to behave in a way that will make life easier for himself—which is one way of making a difference.]

Against the doctrine that I have tried to prove it has been objected that it makes men no more than mere machines. I reply that this doctrine allows that man is entirely, perfectly, and inexpressibly different from a mere machine, in that

- he has reason and understanding and has a faculty of will, and is so capable of volition and choice;
- his will is guided by the dictates or views of his understanding;
- his external actions and behaviour, and in many respects also his thoughts and the activities of his mind, are subject to his will; so that
- he has liberty to act according to his choice, and to do what he pleases; which makes him capable of moral habits and moral acts, inclinations and actions that the common sense of mankind judges to be worthy of praise, admiration, love, and reward, or on the other hand of disesteem, detestation, indignation, and punishment.

Those are all the differences from mere machines (with regard to liberty and agency) that count as any sort of perfection, dignity, or privilege; all the differences we could want, and all that can be conceived of; and indeed all that the claims of the Arminians boil down to when they are forced to explain themselves. . . . For they are forced to explain what a 'self-determining power of will' is by equating it with a power in the soul to determine as it chooses or wills; and

that amounts merely to saying that a man has a power to choose, and in many instances can do as he chooses. This is quite different from that contradiction, his having a power to choose his *first* act of choice in the given situation.

If their scheme makes any other difference than this between men and machines, it is for the worse. Far from supposing men to have a dignity and privilege •above machines, Arminianism puts men •lower in the way they are determined. Whereas machines are guided by an understanding cause—the skillful hand of the workman or owner—the will of man is left to the guidance of absolute blind contingency.

### **Section 6: The objection that the doctrine defended here agrees with Stoicism and with the opinions of Hobbes**

When Calvinists oppose the Arminian notion of the freedom of will and contingency of volition, and insist that every act of the will—and every event of whatever kind—is attended with some kind of necessity, their opponents cry out against them that they are agreeing with the ancient Stoics in their doctrine of fate and with Hobbes in his opinion of necessity.

It wouldn't be worthwhile to answer such an irrelevant objection if it hadn't been urged by some of the chief Arminian writers. Many important *truths* were maintained by the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, and especially by the Stoics; and they are not less true because those philosophers held them! The Stoic philosophers, by the general agreement of Christian theologians (even Arminian ones), were the greatest, wisest, and most virtuous of all the heathen philosophers; and in their doctrine and practice they came the nearest to Christianity of any of their sects. Their sayings often turn up in the writings and sermons even of Arminian theologians, not to illustrate some falsehood but

rather in confirmation of some of the greatest truths of the Christian religion—ones relating to the unity and perfections of God, a future state, the duty and happiness of mankind etc.—showing how the light of nature, and reason, in the wisest and best of the heathen harmonize with and confirm the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Although Whitby argues that the agreement of the Stoics with us shows that our doctrine is false, yet he—this very same Whitby—argues that some agreement of the Stoics with the Arminians shows that their doctrine is true! When the Stoics agree with the Arminians, this (it seems) confirms their doctrine and refutes ours by showing that our opinions are contrary to the natural sense and common reason of mankind; but when the Stoics agree with us, that is a great argument against us, showing our doctrine to be heathenish.

Some Calvinist writers have noted that the Arminians agree with the Stoics in some of the doctrines in which they are opposed by the Calvinists—especially in •their denying an original, innate, total corruption and depravity of heart, and in •what they held regarding man's ability to make himself truly virtuous and in harmony with God, and in •some other doctrines.

Another point: 'Calvinism agrees in some respects with the doctrine of the ancient Stoic philosophers' is no better an argument against Calvinism than the following is against Arminianism: in some of the Arminian doctrines in which they differ from Calvinists, they agree in some respects with •the doctrine of the Sadducees and Jesuits, and with •the opinions of the very worst of the heathen philosophers, namely the followers of Epicurus, that father of atheism and licentiousness.

In order to know what is true about *fate*, I don't need to know precisely what the ancient Stoic philosophers thought regarding it. (It's not as though a sure way to be right about

something is to differ from the Stoics about it!) It seems that they differed among themselves; and probably the doctrine of fate as maintained by most of them was in some respects wrong. But whatever their doctrine was,

- if any of them believed in a fate that is inconsistent with any liberty consisting in our doing as we please, **I utterly deny such a fate.**

- If they believed in a fate that isn't consistent with the common and universal notions mankind have of liberty, activeness, moral agency, virtue, and vice, **I disclaim any such thing and think I have shown that the system I defend has no such consequence.**

- If by 'fate' the Stoics meant anything that could be thought to stand in the way of the advantage and benefit of the use of means and attempts, or make it less worthwhile for men to desire and seek anything in which their virtue and happiness consists, **I accept no doctrine that is clogged with any such drawback.** . . .

- If they held any doctrine of universal fatality that is inconsistent with any kind of liberty that is or can be a perfection, dignity, privilege, or benefit, or anything desirable in any respect for any intelligent creature, or indeed with any liberty that is possible or conceivable, **I embrace no such doctrine.**

- If they held a doctrine of fate that is inconsistent with the world's being in all things at the disposal of an intelligent, wise agent that presides—not as the *soul* of the world, but as its sovereign *lord*—governing all things by proper will, choice, and design in the exercise of the most perfect liberty conceivable, without being subject to any constraint or being under the power or influence of anything before, above, or outside himself, **I wholly renounce such a doctrine.**

As for Hobbes's maintaining the same doctrine as the Calvinists regarding necessity—I admit that I have never read Hobbes. Whatever his opinion is, we needn't reject a

truth that has been demonstrated and made clearly evident merely because it was once held by some bad man! The great truth that *Jesus is the son of God* wasn't spoiled because it was once proclaimed with a loud voice by the devil. If truth is so defiled by being spoken by the mouth or written by the pen of some ill-minded mischievous man that it must never be accepted, we'll never know when we hold any of the most precious and evident truths by a sure tenure. If Hobbes has made a bad use of this truth, that is to be lamented; but the truth shouldn't be thought worthy of rejection on that account. It is common for the corruptions of the hearts of evil men to turn the best things to vile purposes.

Dr Gill, in his answer to Whitby, has pointed out that the Arminians agree with Hobbes in many more things than the Calvinists do—in what he is said to believe concerning original sin, in denying the necessity of supernatural illumination, in denying infused grace, in denying the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and other things

### Section 7: The necessity of God's will

Here is an objection that may be made against the position I have been defending:

You say that the idea of a self-determining power in the will is absurd and self-contradictory, and that it must be the case that the will is determined in every case by the motive which (as it stands in the view of the understanding) is stronger than any motive for acting differently. If you are right about this, it follows that not only the will of created minds but the will of God himself is necessary in all its determinations.

Watts in his *Essay on the Freedom of Will in God and in Creatures* has developed this objection in the following words:

What a strange doctrine this is, contrary to all our

ideas of the dominion of God! Doesn't it destroy the glory of his liberty of choice, and take away from the world's creator and governor and benefactor, that most free and sovereign agent, all the glory of this sort of freedom [presumably meaning: 'the glory of the sort of freedom that he actually has']? Doesn't it seem to make God a kind of mechanical instrument of fate, and introduce Hobbes's doctrine of fatality and necessity into everything that God is involved in? [For 'fatality', see note on page 57.] Doesn't it seem to represent the blessed God as having vast understanding, as well as power and effectiveness, but still to leave him without a will to *choose* among all the ends that he might aim at? In short, it seems to make the blessed God a sort of almighty servant of *fate*, acting under its universal and supreme influence—just as some of the ancients maintained that fate was above the gods.

This is rhetoric rather than argument; it is addressed to men's imaginations and prejudices rather than to mere reason. But I shall try, calmly, to see whether there is any reason in this frightful picture that Watts draws.

•A PRELIMINARY POINT: THE DIFFICULTY OF THIS EXERCISE•

Before getting into that in detail, though, I should make this preliminary point: When we are trying to speak or think in terms of exact metaphysical truth, it is reasonable to expect that we'll find it much harder to do this when our topic is

- the nature and manner of the existence of things in God's understanding and will, and the operation of these faculties (if I may so call them) of God's mind,

than it is when our topic is

- the human mind.

The human mind is infinitely more within our view ·than God's mind is·; and we are nearer to being able to think

and talk about it adequately, ·rather than falling *infinitely* short of adequacy as we do when thinking and talking about the mind of God. But even when our minds are the topic, our language falls considerably short·. Language is indeed very lacking in words to express precise truth about our own minds and their faculties and operations. Words were first formed to stand for external things; and the ones we apply to internal and spiritual things are almost all borrowed from the others and used in a sort of figurative sense. ·Think for example of the sentence 'I kept that at the *back* of my mind'·. Because of this, most of them are very ambiguous and unfixed in their meaning, giving rise to countless doubts, difficulties, and confusions in inquiries and controversies about things of this nature. But language is ·even· *less* adapted to saying precise and accurate things about the mind of the incomprehensible Deity.

We find it very hard to conceive exactly the nature of our own souls. In past and present ages much progress has been made in this kind of knowledge, making our metaphysics of the mind more complete than it used to be; but there's still work enough left for future inquiries and researches, and room for progress still to be made for many ages and generations. But we would need to be *infinitely* able metaphysicians to get a clear understanding, according to strict, proper, and perfect truth, of the nature of God's essence and the workings of the powers of his mind.

Notice especially this point: We have to think of some things in God as *consequent* and *dependent* on others, of some aspects of God's nature and will as the *foundation* of others and thus as *before* them in the order of nature. For example, we have to think of •God's knowledge and holiness as *prior* in the order of nature to his happiness, of •the perfection of his understanding as the *foundation* of his wise purposes and decrees, of •the holiness of his nature as the

*cause of* and *reason for* his holy decisions. But when we use the language of

cause and effect,  
antecedent and consequent,  
foundational and dependent,  
determining and determined,

in application to ·God·, the first being, who is (i) self-existent, (ii) independent, (iii) absolutely simple and (iv) unchangeable, and the first cause of all things, what we say is bound to be less correct than what we say in those terms about (i) derived, (ii) dependent beings who are (iii) compounded and (iv) liable to perpetual change and succession.

·NOW ON TO THE MAIN INQUIRY·

I'm now going to offer some comments on our author's exclamations about the thesis that God's will is necessarily determined in all things by what he sees to be fittest and best.

All the seeming force of such objections and exclamations must come from depicting the situation in terms like this:

There is some sort of privilege or dignity in *not* having a moral necessity that makes it impossible to do anything except always choose what is wisest and best. Such a necessity involves some disadvantage, lowness, subjection, in whoever has it, because his will is confined, kept under, enslaved, by something that maintains a strong and invincible power and dominion over him, by bonds that hold him fast, bonds that he can't get free from.

Actually, this is all mere imagination and delusion! If a being always acts in the most excellent and satisfactory manner because of the necessary perfection of his own nature, this isn't a disadvantage or dishonour to him. It doesn't point to any imperfection, inferiority, or dependence, or any lack of dignity, privilege, or ascendancy.<sup>4</sup> It isn't inconsistent with the absolute and most perfect sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God consists in his ability and authority to do whatever pleases him. . . . The following ·four· things belong to the sovereignty of God: **(1) He has supreme, universal, and infinite power**, enabling him to do what he pleases without control, without any restriction of that power, without *any* subjection—however tiny—to any other power, and therefore without any obstacle or restraint that would make it impossible or difficult for him to accomplish his will. His power isn't derived from, or dependent on, or standing in need of some other power; rather, all other power is derived from him and absolutely depends on him. **(2) He has supreme authority**—an absolute and most perfect right to do what he pleases without being subject to any higher authority. His authority isn't derived from or limited by any distinct independent authority, whether higher, equal, or lower, because he is the head of all government and the fountain of all authority. Nor is the exercise of his authority constrained by any *obligation* that would involved subjection, derivation or dependence, or limitation. **(3) His will is supreme, underived, and not dependent on anything else**, being always determined by

<sup>4</sup> [At this point Edwards devotes a two-page footnote to quoting at length from three writers saying things that agree with his position. Two quoted passages are from Samuel Clarke's *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, including: 'The only foundation for this necessity is an unalterable rectitude of will and perfection of wisdom that makes it impossible for a wise being to act foolishly.' And: 'God. . . cannot but do always what is best and wisest on the whole. . . because perfect wisdom and goodness are as steady and certain sources of action as necessity itself.' Another is a powerful passage from Locke's *Essay* II.xxi.47–50. Also one from Andrew Baxter's *Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul*, including: 'It is the beauty of this necessity that it is as strong as fate, with all the advantage of reason and goodness. It is strange to see men contend that God is not free because he is necessarily rational, unchangeably good and wise.'

his own counsel, having no rule except his own wisdom. His will is not subject to or restrained by the will of anyone else; all other wills are perfectly subject to his. (4) His **wisdom** (which determines his will) is **supreme, perfect, underived, self-sufficient, and independent**, as is expressed in this rhetorical question in Isaiah 40:14: ‘Whom did he go to for advice, and who instructed him and taught him in the path of judgment and taught him knowledge and showed to him the way of understanding?’ There is no other divine sovereignty but this; and this is strictly absolute sovereignty. No other kind of divine sovereignty is desirable, or honourable, or satisfactory—or indeed conceivable or possible! It is the glory and greatness of God as sovereign that his will is determined always by his own infinite and all-sufficient wisdom, and is *never* directed by any lower wisdom—or by no wisdom, which would involve senseless arbitrariness, determining and acting without any reason, design, or end.

If God’s will is steadily and surely determined in everything by supreme wisdom, then it is in everything necessarily determined to that which is most wise; and it would be a disadvantage and indignity to be otherwise. For if his will were not necessarily determined always to what is wisest and best, it would have to be subject to some degree of undesigning contingency—acting randomly, with no purpose in mind—which would make it in that degree liable to evil. To suppose that God’s will could be carried hither and thither at random, by the uncertain wind of blind contingency. . . . would be to attribute to him a great degree of imperfection and lowness, infinitely unworthy of God. If it is a disadvantage for God’s will to be accompanied by this moral necessity, then the •more free from it he is, i.e. •the more he is left at random, the •greater his dignity and advantage! In that case, the supreme glory would be to be completely free from the direction of understanding, and

always and entirely left to senseless, unmeaning contingency to act absolutely at random.

*God’s supremely wise volition is necessary*—that doesn’t imply that God’s will’s is in any way dependent, any more than *God’s existence is necessary* implies that his existence is dependent. *God necessarily always •wills in the highest degree holily and happily*—if this shows there to be something low about him, then why isn’t it also too low for him to have his •existence and the infinite •perfection of his nature and his infinite •happiness determined by necessity? It is no more to God’s dishonour to be necessarily wise than to be necessarily holy. And if neither of them is to his dishonour, then it isn’t to his dishonour necessarily to act holily and wisely. And if it isn’t dishonorable to be necessarily holy and wise in the highest possible degree, it isn’t mean and dishonorable necessarily to act holily and wisely in the highest possible degree—i.e. always to do the wisest and best thing.

The reason why it’s not dishonorable to be necessarily most holy is that holiness in itself is an excellent and honourable thing. For the same reason, it is no dishonour to be necessarily most wise and always to act most wisely, for wisdom is also in itself excellent and honourable.

Watts in his *Essay on the Freedom of Will etc.* says that the doctrine I am defending—that God’s will is always necessarily determined by a superior fitness—makes the blessed God out to be a kind of almighty executive, a mechanical distributor of fate; and he insists that this moral necessity and impossibility boils down to the same thing as physical and natural necessity and impossibility. He writes:

The theory according to which the will is always and certainly determined by the understanding, and the understanding by the appearance of things, seems to take away the true nature of vice and virtue. For

·on this theory· the sublimest of virtues and the vilest of vices seem rather to be matters of fate and necessity, flowing naturally and necessarily from the existence, the circumstances, and present situation of persons and things; for this existence and situation necessarily makes such-and-such an appearance in the mind; from this appearance necessarily flows a perception and judgment about those things; this judgment necessarily determines the will; and so by this chain of necessary causes virtue and vice would lose their nature and become natural ideas and necessary things instead of moral and free actions.

And yet Watts allows, twenty pages earlier, that a perfectly wise being will constantly and certainly choose what is most fit; and seventy pages after that he says: 'I grant, and always have granted, that wherever there is such antecedent superior fitness of things, God acts according to it so as never to contradict it, and especially in all his judicial proceedings, as a governor and distributor of rewards and punishments.' Indeed, sixty pages earlier he says explicitly: 'It is not possible for God to act otherwise than according to this fitness and goodness in things.'

So that according to him, putting together these scattered passages from his book, there is no virtue or anything of a moral nature in the most sublime and glorious acts and exercises of God's holiness, justice, and faithfulness; and he never does anything that is in itself supremely worthy and fit and excellent above all other things, except as a kind of mechanical instrument of fate; and in what he does as the judge and moral governor of the world he exercises no moral excellency, exercising no freedom in these things because he acts by moral necessity, which is on a par with physical or natural necessity; and therefore he only acts by a Hobbesian fatality, 'as a being with vast understanding, as well as

power and effectiveness, but with no will to choose, being a kind of almighty servant of fate, acting under its supreme influence.' For he allows that in all these things God's will is determined constantly and certainly by a superior fitness, and that it isn't possible for him to act otherwise. And if all this is right, what glory or praise belongs to God for acting holily and justly? or for taking the most fit, holy, wise, and excellent course in any one instance? Whereas according to the Bible, and also the common sense of mankind, it takes *nothing* from the honour of any being that through the moral perfection of his nature he necessarily acts with supreme wisdom and holiness; but on the contrary his praise is the greater; this is what makes the height of his glory. . . .

One last remark before I end this section: If it takes nothing from the glory of God to be necessarily determined by superior fitness in *some* things, then it takes nothing from his glory if he is thus determined in *all* things. . . . So we need not be afraid that if we ascribe necessity to God in *all* his doings we'll be detracting from his glory.

[The remaining material in this section was placed by Edwards or the printer at the end of section 8. Everything about it indicates that it belongs here in section 7. Edwards didn't correct the error in subsequent editions because there weren't any during his lifetime.]

Another argument that Watts brings against a necessary determination of God's will by a superior fitness is that such a doctrine takes away from •the freeness of God's grace and goodness in choosing the objects of his favour and bounty, and from •the obligation men have to be thankful for special benefits. I have four things to say in response to this.

(1) It doesn't take more away from God's goodness to suppose that •the exercise of his benevolence is ·necessarily· determined by wisdom than to suppose that •it is ·contingently· determined by chance. In the latter case, his favours are bestowed entirely at random, his will being determined

by nothing but perfect accident, with no end or design whatsoever; which is what must be the case if volitions aren't determined by a prevailing motive. God's goodness and benevolence are expressed in the things he does because of the influence of a wise end; are we to suppose that they would be *better* expressed by things that he did perfectly contingently with no previous inducement or antecedent choice?

(2) Everyone agrees that the freeness and sovereignty of God's grace is not manifested as greatly if •the motive that determines God's will in choosing whom to favour is some exceptional moral quality in the person chosen as it would be if •that motive were not at work. [Everyone? Perhaps not; but that *was* one of the Calvinist doctrines.] But we can suppose •that God has *some* wise end in view when he decides to bestow his favours on one person rather than another without supposing •that the end is to reward exceptional moral merit in the chosen person. . . .

(3) I don't think anyone will deny that in *some* instances God acts from wise design in deciding who is to receive his favours; no-one will say that when God distinguishes by his bounty particular societies or persons, he never *ever* exercises any wisdom in so doing, aiming at some satisfactory consequence. Well, if that is how things stand sometimes, I ask: Is God's goodness manifested less in *these* cases than in ones where he has no aim or end at all? And do the recipients of his favours have less cause for gratitude in the former case than in the latter? If so, who will be grateful for being selected for God's mercy with the enhancing feature that the selection was made without any purpose? How is anyone to know when God is influenced by some wise aim and when he isn't? . . .

(4) The thesis that the acts of God's will are morally necessary doesn't detract from the riches of his grace towards

those he has chosen as objects of his favour. This moral necessity may in many cases arise from God's being good and from *how* good he is. When he chooses person x rather than person y to be an object of his favour, he may do this because x fits better with his (God's) good ends, designs, and inclinations, the reason for this being that x is more sinful—and thus more miserable and in greater need—than y is. The inclinations of infinite mercy and benevolence may be more gratified, and God's gracious design in sending his son into the world may be more abundantly fulfilled, by his extending mercy towards x than by his extending it to y.

Before closing out the topic of the necessity of the acts of God's will, I want to point out that Arminian principles come much closer to making God slavishly subject to fatal necessity than do the doctrines the Arminians oppose. I shall show how. The events that happen in the moral world as a result of the volitions of moral agents are the most important events in the universe, with all others being subordinate to them. Most of the Arminians hold that God has a certain foreknowledge of these events, antecedent to any purposes or decrees of his about them. If that is so, it is settled in advance that those events will occur, independently of any designs or volitions on God's part regarding them; so his volitions must be subject to them—must *take account of* them—when he wisely adjusts his affairs to this settled future state of things in the moral world. Thus, instead of

- a moral necessity of God's will, arising from or consisting in the infinite perfection and blessedness of God,

we have (according to the Arminian position)

- a fixed unalterable future state of things, of which the following things are true: •they are properly *distinct from* and *independent of* the perfect nature of God's mind and the state of his will and designs; •they

are *settled* prior to God's mind and will and designs, which therefore have no hand in them; and •God's will is truly subject to them, because he is obliged to accommodate himself to them in all his purposes and decrees, and in everything he does in his management of the world.

This position that the Arminians are committed to implies that *everything* is in vain that isn't accommodated to the state of the moral world that consists in or depends on the acts and states of the wills of moral agents that have been fixed in the future—by God's foreknowledge of them—from all eternity. (Isn't 'everything' too strong? Can't we at least exclude events in the natural world? No., because the moral world is what the natural world is *for*.) This subjection to necessity would truly indicate an inferiority and servitude that would be unworthy of the supreme being. . . .

### **Section 8: Discussion of further objections against the moral necessity of God's volitions**

As we saw, Watts accepts that •God, being perfectly wise, will constantly and certainly choose what appears most fit, in any case where there *is* an option that is fitter and better than all the others, and that •it isn't possible for him to do otherwise. This is tantamount to agreeing that in cases where there is any real preferableness, it is no dishonour—nothing in any respect unworthy of God—for him to act from necessity. . . . And if that is right, it follows that if in *all* God's choice-situations there is one option that is better and fitter than any of the others, then it would not be dishonorable or in any way unworthy or unsuitable for God's will to be necessarily determined in everything. If this is granted, that's the end of the argument from the premise that such a necessity clashes with the liberty, supremacy,

independence, and glory of God. The argument now has to turn on a completely different question, namely whether there *is* always a best option in all God's choice-situations. Watts denies this; he thinks that in many cases there are two or more different procedures that would further God's plans equally well—equal in their powers to get the result, and equal in this intrinsic fitness. Let us see whether this is evidently so.

The arguments brought to prove it are of two kinds. **(1)** The premise is that in many instances we must suppose that there is absolutely no difference between various possible options that God has in view. **(2)** The premise is that the difference between many options is so inconsiderable, or of such a nature, that it would be unreasonable to think it matters, or to suppose that any of God's wise designs would be answered less well in one way than in the other. Let us see.

**(1)** Are there cases where two options that are presented to God's understanding are perfectly alike, with absolutely no difference between them?

The •wording of this question involves a contradiction; perhaps we should consider whether the •thing it is asking about also involves an inconsistency! The question is: Can't there be •different objects of choice that are absolutely without any •difference? I ask: If they are absolutely without difference, what makes them *different* objects of choice? If there is absolutely no difference in any respect, then there is no variety or distinctness, for it is only through •differences that one thing is •distinct from another. If there is no variety among proposed objects of choice, then there's no room for *various* choices one might make among them, i.e. for *difference* of determination. For there can't be *two* determinations that don't differ in any respect. You'll see in due course that this is not a mere quibble.

There have been two arguments purporting to prove that sometimes God chooses to do one thing rather than another, where the things themselves are completely without difference.

(a) The various parts of infinite time and space, considered in themselves and not through relations to things *in* them, are perfectly alike. So when God determined to create the world in such-and-such a part of infinite time and space, rather than in some other, he determined and preferred one option over another, although there was absolutely no difference. and thus no preferableness, between them. I answer that the temporal part of this argument is based on a groundless fantasy, namely:

An infinite length of time before the world was created, distinguished by successive parts, properly and truly;

or, in other words,

A series of limited and measurable periods of time before the world was created, the series being infinitely long.

No! The eternal duration that was before the world began

was only the eternity of God's existence, and that is nothing but his immediate, perfect, and invariable possession of the whole of his unlimited life, all together and at once. [Edwards then gives this in Latin; it is Boethius's definition of *eternity*.] This is so generally accepted that I needn't stop to demonstrate it.<sup>5</sup>

The spatial part of the argument presupposes an extent of space beyond the limits of the created world, of an infinite length, breadth, and depth, truly and properly distinguished into different measurable parts, each with a beginning and an end, one after another, in an infinite series. This notion of absolute and infinite space is clearly as unreasonable as the just-discussed notion of absolute and infinite time. It is as wrong to think of the immensity and omnipresence of God as being distinguished by a series of miles and leagues, one beyond another, as it is to think of God's infinite duration as distinguished by months and years, one after another. Those two pictures are equally appealing to the imagination; but they are also equally open to arguments showing that our imagination is deceiving us here. It is equally improper

<sup>5</sup> Here is a good argument for it: 'If all created beings were taken away, all possibility of any change, or succession in which one thing takes over from another, would appear to be also removed. Abstract succession in eternity is hardly intelligible. What is the series made of? Minutes, perhaps! . . . But when we imagine this, we are taking minutes to be things that exist on their own. That is the common notion, but it is clearly wrong. Time is nothing but the existence of created things in succession, and eternity is the necessary existence of God. If this necessary being has no change or succession in his nature, his existence must of course be unsuccessive, i.e. must not involve any kind of series. When we think of a pre-world time made up of minutes, we seem to commit two errors. First, we find succession in the necessary nature and existence of God himself, which is wrong if the above reasoning is sound. Then we ascribe this succession to eternity, considered in abstraction from the God, the eternal being, and take it to be some *thing*—who knows *what* thing?—that subsists by itself and flows along, minute after minute. This is the work of pure imagination, and is contrary to the reality of things. It is the source of such common metaphorical expressions as "Time flies" and "Seize the moment". Even philosophers mislead us by their illustrations. They compare eternity to the motion of a point running on for ever, making a traceless infinite line. They take the point to be something actually subsisting, representing the present moment, and then they ascribe motion to it—ascribing motion to a mere nonentity, to illustrate to us a successive eternity made up of finite parts in series. Once we accept that there's an all-perfect mind that always has an eternal, unchangeable, and infinite comprehension of all things (and accept this we must), the distinction between past and future vanishes with respect to such a mind.—In short, if we proceed step by step as I have just done, the eternity or existence of God will appear to be his immediate, perfect, and invariable possession of the whole of his unlimited life, all together and at once, however paradoxical this may have seemed in the past.' Andrew Baxter, *Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul*.

to talk of •months and years of God's existence as it is to talk of •square miles of God; and we equally deceive ourselves when we talk of *where* in infinite time and space the world is positioned. I don't think we know what we mean when we say 'The world might have been located somewhere other than where it actually is in the broad expanse of infinite space' or 'The world might have been differently placed in the long line of eternity'. The arguments based on the pictures we are apt to have of infinite extension or duration are buildings founded on shadows, or castles in the air.

(b) The second argument purporting to prove that God wills one thing rather than another without the chosen option being in any way fitter or better than the alternative, is God's actually placing particles or atoms of matter that are perfectly equal and alike in different parts of the world. Watts writes: 'If we descend to the minute specific particles of which different bodies are composed, we would see abundant reason to think there are thousands of them that are perfectly equal and alike, so that God couldn't have anything to *go by* in deciding where to locate each of them.' He cites the instances of particles of water, and the luminous and fiery particles that compose the body of the sun, as being so numerous that it would be very unreasonable to think that no two of them are exactly equal and alike.

(i) My first answer to this (·I have two·) is as follows. We must suppose matter to be infinitely divisible, which makes it very unlikely that any two of all these particles are *exactly* equal and alike; so unlikely that it's a thousand to one—indeed, an infinite number to one!—that there aren't any such pairs of particles. Although we should accept that the different particles of water or of fire are very alike in their general nature and shape, it is infinitely unlikely that any two of them—however small they are—will have exactly the same size and shape and contain exactly the same amount of matter. ·I now give my reasons for thinking this·.- Suppose there were a great many globes of the same nature as the globe of the earth: it would be very strange if any two of them had *exactly* the same number of particles of dust and water in them. But it would be infinitely stranger if two particles of light should •contain exactly the same quantity of matter. That is because a particle of light, according to the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of matter, is composed of infinitely many more distinct parts than there are particles of dust and water in the globe of the earth. And it is also infinitely

unlikely that any two of these particles of light should be •alike in all other respects—for example in the textures of their surfaces. Return to the idea of there being very many globes of the same kind as our earth: it is (as I remarked before) infinitely unlikely that any two would have exactly the same number of particles of dust, water, and stone in their surfaces; and (·I now add, making the unlikelihood even greater·) that the particles in one would be exactly like corresponding particles in the other, with no differences that could be seen either by the naked eye or the microscope. But even that would be less strange, *infinitely* less strange, than that two particles of light should have exactly the same shape; for there are infinitely more distinct real parts on the surface of a particle of light than there are particles of dust, water, and stone, on the surface of the terrestrial globe.

(ii) I don't deny that God *could* make two bodies perfectly alike, and put them in different places. . . . But that wouldn't involve him in performing two different or distinct acts—or effects of God's power—having exactly the same fitness for the same ends. These two bodies are unlike only in their relational properties—place, time, rest, motion, or some other present or past circumstances or relations—and it is only those differences that make them *two* bodies; for it is difference only, that constitutes distinction [those eight words are exactly Edwards's]. If God makes two bodies that are in themselves exactly alike in respect of all their intrinsic qualities and all their relational properties except *where* they are, then this difference in location is the whole story about their *twoness*. . . . What decision does God make in this case? Just that **this precise shape, size, resistance etc., should be ·instantiated· in two different places**. He has some reason for this determination. There is some purpose for which it is exactly right—better than any choice he might have made instead of this one. This is not a case of

something's being determined without an end, with nothing being the *best* choice for that end. If it pleases God to cause the same resistance, shape, etc. to be instantiated in two different places and situations, it doesn't imply that God makes some determination that is wholly without motive or purpose; any more than a man's speaking the very same words at two different times implies that he makes some determination without any motive or purpose! The difference of place in the former case proves no more than does the difference of time in the other.

Someone might object:

In the former case there *is* something determined without an end—something chosen without a purpose—namely that of those two exactly alike bodies God chose to put *this* one *here* and *that* one *there*. Why didn't God switch them, and put *this* one *there* and *that* one *here*? Each would have done equally well in either place, so that in locating them as he did rather than the other way around, God made a choice that didn't further any purpose that he had.

This presupposes that the two bodies differ and are distinct in some respect other than their place. It has to presuppose this, so that with this distinctness inherent in them they could have been switched at the outset, with each beginning its existence in the place where in fact the other began *its* existence. This presupposition is false, as I shall now show.

For clarity's sake, let us suppose that God made two globes, each of an inch diameter and both of them perfect spheres, perfectly solid, with no pores, and perfectly alike in every respect, and that he placed them near to one another, one towards the right hand and the other towards the left, with absolutely no other differences between them. The question we are faced with is this: 'Why at creation did God place them like that? Why didn't he put on the left the one

that he actually put on the right, and vice versa?' Let us consider whether there is any sense in such a question, and whether it doesn't presuppose something false and absurd. Let us consider what God would have to have done differently—what different act of will he would need to perform—in order to bring about this supposed switch. All he could have done was to make two spheres perfectly alike in the same places where he has made them, without any intrinsic or other relational differences between them; which is to say that all he could have done was exactly what he *did* do! We have stipulated that the two spheres differ only in their locations, so in other respects they are the same. Each has the same roundness; it is not a distinct roundness in any respect other than location. There are also the same dimensions, differing only in location. And similarly with their solidity, and every other quality that they have.

Someone may want to object like this:

There is a difference in another respect, namely that the spheres are not *numerically* the same. And the same holds for all the qualities that they have. Admittedly these are in some respects the same, i.e. they are exactly *alike*, but still they differ numerically. Thus the roundness of one sphere is not the same numerical individual roundness that the other sphere has.

If that is right, then we can ask: Why didn't God will that *this* individual roundness should be on the right and *that* other individual roundness be at the left? Why didn't he put them the other way around?

[Edwards is here following his imagined opponent in using the concept of an *individual property-instance*. Many philosophers accepted this. They held that in addition to

the individual thing, •this sphere and  
the universal property, •roundness, there is also  
the individual property, •the roundness of this sphere.

Edwards is not attacking that notion itself, only this particular use of it in the claim that two items that are qualitatively perfectly alike could be numerically different. The objection was first stated in terms of the numerical differences of •spheres rather than of •instances of roundness, and Edwards's response to it would go through just as well on that basis. Why then did he make the objector switch to instances of roundness? Perhaps to smoothe the way for his argument about the supposed numerical identity of *sounds*.]

Let any rational person consider whether such questions have any meaning! Taking them seriously would be like taking the following seriously [this will be expanded from what Edwards wrote, in ways that •small dots• can't easily signify]:

God caused a whale to utter a hooting sound at noon, and then at 1 p.m. to utter another hooting sound—*exactly* like the earlier one. What reason could God have had for putting the sounds in that chronological order rather than the reverse order? Why didn't he cause the in-fact-at-noon sound to be emitted at 1 p.m. and. . . etc.?

I think everyone must see at once that this 'two sounds' question is ridiculous; all we have here are two sounds repeated with absolutely no difference between them apart from *when* they are uttered. If God sees that some good end will be furthered by the utterance of that sound at those two times, and therefore wills that it should be so, *must* he in this be performing some act of his will—namely, deciding *which* sound was to occur at each time—without any motive or end? •Obviously not! . . . Well, the same thing holds for God's decision about the two spheres.

•For purposes of argument• let us grant that God could have made the two spheres exactly as he actually did except with their locations reversed. We now find a number of other questions arising:

Couldn't God have made and located the left-side sphere exactly as he did, while creating in the right-side location a sphere exactly like *but numerically different from* the sphere that he in fact put there?

Couldn't God have caused those two locations to be occupied by two spheres exactly like *but numerically different from* the ones he actually put there?

From this notion of a 'numerical difference' between bodies that are perfectly equal and alike—the numerical difference being inherent in the bodies themselves, and diverse from the difference of place or time or any circumstance whatsoever—it will follow that there are infinitely many numerically different possible bodies, all perfectly alike, among which God chooses by a self-determining power when he sets out to create bodies.

[Edwards gives examples of this, occupying most of a page. Some involve bodies, others involve individual properties, e.g. 'When God first caused it to thunder, why did he cause that individual sound to be made, rather than another just like it?' He concludes:] If we calmly attend to the matter we shall be convinced that this whole line of objection is based on nothing but the imperfection of our way of conceiving things and the obscureness of language and great lack of clarity and precision in the signification of terms.

If you want to complain against my reasoning that it goes too far into delicate metaphysical subtleties, I answer that the objection I have been responding to is itself a metaphysical subtlety and must be treated accordingly.

(2) It has also been claimed that countless things that are determined by God's will—chosen and done by him—differ in such trivial ways from alternatives that he could have chosen that it would be unreasonable to think that the difference matters, i.e. that God chose *this* rather than *that* because it was better or more appropriate.

I reply that it's impossible for us to decide with any certainty or evidentness that because the difference is very small and appears trivial *to us*, it isn't in any way better—or more conducive to some valuable end—than any alternative that God might have chosen. Watts gives many supposed examples of this. One is there being one atom more or less in the whole universe. But I think it would be unreasonable to suppose that God made one atom in vain, or without any end or motive. The making of any one atom was as much a work of his almighty power as the making of the whole globe of the earth, and requires as much constant exertion of God's power to uphold it; and was made and is upheld with understanding and design, as much as if this atom were the whole of creation. To think that God made this atom without anything really aimed at is as unreasonable as thinking that he made the planet Jupiter without aim or design.

It is possible that the tiniest effects of God's power, the smallest assignable differences amongst the things that God has made, may have very great and important consequences in the whole series of events and the whole extent of their influence. If the laws of motion and gravitation laid down by Sir Isaac Newton hold universally, every single atom—every single *part* of an atom—has influence at every moment throughout the whole material universe, causing every part to be different from how it would have been be if it weren't for that one particular bodily item. Even if the effect is undetectable for the present, it may in due course become great and important.

Here are three illustrations of this. (a) Two bodies are moving in the same direction along straight lines perfectly parallel to one another; then they are diverted from this parallel course and made to move apart by the attraction of one atom at the distance of one of the furthest of the fixed stars from the earth; in the course of time the distance

between the two bodies increases, so that after years of being imperceptible it eventually becomes very great. (b) The influence of a tiny atom slows down or speeds up the revolution of a planet around the sun, or makes its orbit more elliptical or less so. Given enough time, this difference could lead to the planet's performing a whole revolution sooner or later than it would have done otherwise; and that could make a vast difference in millions of important events. (c) The influence of the tiniest particle may, for all we know to the contrary, affect something in the constitution of some human body in such a way as to cause the corresponding mind to have a thought that it otherwise wouldn't have had at that moment; and in the course of time (not very much time!) that thought might lead to a vast alteration through the whole world of mankind. And there are countless other ways for the least assignable alteration to have great consequences. [Edwards here included the material that in this version has been relocated at the end of section 7—see the note on page 113.]

### **Section 9: The objection that the doctrine maintained here implies that God is the author of sin**

The Arminians urge that the doctrine that men's volitions are necessary, i.e. necessarily connected with antecedent events and circumstances, makes God the author of sin, because he has constituted the states of things and the course of events in such a way that sinful volitions become necessary as a result of his decisions. Whitby, in his 'Discourse on the Freedom of the Will' (in his *Five points of Calvinism*) quotes one of the ancients as being on his side about this, declaring that this opinion of the necessity of the will

absolves sinners, as doing nothing evil of their own accord, and throws all the blame for all the wickedness committed in the world onto God and his

providence. . . ., whether he himself necessitated them to do these things or ordered matters in such a way that they were constrained by some other cause to do them.

And Whitby says later on:

In the nature of the thing and in the opinion of the philosophers, in things necessary the deficient cause must be reduced to the efficient. [That is Whitby's translation of the Latin sentence that he first offers. The meaning seems to be: if the occurrence of something is necessary, then •a negative cause of it is just as relevant as a positive one, or •allowing it to happen is just as significant as making it happen.] And in this case it is easy to see why. It is because the not doing what is required, or not avoiding what is forbidden, being a defect, must follow from the position of the necessary cause of that deficiency. [That 'because' clause is exactly as Whitby wrote it.]

Concerning this I have four main things to say.

**(1)** If there is any difficulty here, it is not only the Calvinists who have it. We don't have here a problem that gives Calvinism a difficulty or disadvantage that Arminianism doesn't share; so it isn't something the Arminians can reasonably use in argument.

Whitby holds that if sin necessarily follows from God's withholding assistance, i.e. if God withholds the help that is absolutely necessary for the avoidance of evil, then in the nature of the thing God counts as the author of that evil, just as strictly as if he were its efficient cause. From this it follows that God must be the real author of the complete and unrestrained wickedness of the devils and damned spirits; he must be the efficient cause of •the great pride of the devils, of •their complete malignity against God, Christ, his saints, and all that is good, and of •the insatiable cruelty of

their disposition. For he allows that God has so forsaken them, and withheld his assistance from them, that they are incapacitated from doing good and are determined only to evil. Our Calvinist doctrine doesn't imply that God is the author of men's sin in this world any more or any differently from how Whitby's doctrine makes God the author of the hellish pride and malice of the devils. And no doubt the devilish effect is as odious as the human one. Again, if God's being the author of sin follows at all from what I have maintained regarding a sure and infallible connection between antecedents and consequents, it follows because: •for God to be the author or orderer of things that he knows beforehand will certainly have consequence C is the same thing, in effect, as •for him to be the author of C. But if that is right, it's just as much a difficulty for the Arminians themselves, or at least for those of them who allow God's certain foreknowledge of all outcomes. For, on the supposition of such foreknowledge, the following holds for every sin that is ever committed:

•God knew that if he ordered and brought to pass such-and-such events, such-and-such sins would certainly follow.

[Edwards then cites the life and death and damnation of Judas, as events that God foreknew would occur 'if he ordered things so'.] Therefore, this supposed difficulty ought not to be brought as an objection against the system I have defended, as disagreeing with the Arminian system, because it is a difficulty for the Arminians too. It isn't reasonable to object to our differing from them on the grounds of a difficulty that we wouldn't escape or avoid if we agreed with them! And therefore. . .

**(2)** Those who object that the Calvinist doctrine makes God the 'author of sin' ought to explain clearly what they mean by that phrase. I know that the phrase in its common meaning signifies something very bad. If 'the author of sin' is

being used to signify the sinner, the agent, the performer of the sin, the doer of the wicked thing, it would be a reproach and a blasphemy, to suppose God to be the author of sin. I utterly deny that God is the author of sin in this sense, rejecting such an accusation against him as something to be infinitely to be abhorred; and I deny that any such thing follows from what I have said. But if ‘the author of sin’ means

- the permitter of sin, one who ·could but· doesn’t hinder sin, and, at the same time
- one who—for wise, holy, and most excellent ends and purposes—arranges states of affairs in such a way that sin will most certainly and infallibly follow if it is permitted, i.e. not hindered,

I don’t deny that God is the ‘author of sin’ in *that* sense (though I dislike and reject the phrase, because use and custom make it likely to carry another sense). It is no reproach for God to be in that sense the author of sin. It doesn’t involve him in performing any sin; on the contrary, it involves him in performing holiness. What he does in this is holy, and is a glorious exercise of the infinite excellency of his nature. I agree that God’s being in *that* sense ‘the author of sin’ follows from what I have laid down; and I assert that it follows just as much from the doctrine maintained by most of the Arminian theologians.

That it most certainly *is* the case that God is in *that* manner the disposer and orderer of sin, is evident to anyone who puts any credit in the Bible, as well as being evident because it is impossible in the nature of things that it should be otherwise. [Edwards follows this with about four pages of Old Testament quotations, all about God’s foreseeing and/or arranging for various instances of bad behaviour by men. One example should suffice. Having recounted at some length God’s dealings with Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, Edwards continues:] God speaks of Nebuchadnezzar’s

terribly ravaging and wasting the nations, and cruelly destroying all sorts of people without distinction of sex or age, as the weapon in God’s hand and the instrument of his indignation, used by God to fulfill his own purposes and carry out his own vengeance. . . .

It is certain that God—for excellent, holy, gracious ends—arranged for the acts of those who were concerned in Christ’s death, and that in acting thus they fulfilled God’s designs. I hope no Christian will deny that it was the design of God that Christ should be crucified, and that it was for this that he came into the world. . . . Thus it is certain and demonstrable, from •the holy scriptures as well as •the nature of things and •the principles of Arminians, that God permits sin and at the same time orders things in his providence in such a way that sin certainly and infallibly will happen, in consequence of his allowing it.

(3) There is a big difference between these:

- God is involved in—by *allowing*—an outcome and an act which is a sin in the person who performs it (although the sin inevitably follows from God’s allowing or not hindering it),

and

- God is involved in sin by *producing* it and performing the sinful act.

The difference is that between allowing and making, between not-preventing and actually-producing. And I maintain this despite what Whitby offers as a saying of philosophers, that a negative cause, if it results in the outcome’s being necessary is on a par with a positive one. There’s a vast difference between the sun’s being the •cause of the brightness and warmth of the atmosphere, and the sparkle of gold and diamonds, through its presence and positive influence, and its being the •occasion of darkness and frost in the night, through its motion of descending below the horizon. The

motion of the sun is the occasion of the darkness etc., but it is not the efficient cause or producer of them, though they are necessarily consequent on that motion of the setting sun. [On the difference between 'cause' and 'occasion', see the note on page 23.] In the same way, no action of God's is the cause of the evil of men's wills. If the sun were the proper cause of cold and darkness, it would be the source of these things, as it is the source of light and heat; and, if it were, one might argue from the nature of cold and darkness to the conclusion that there is something cold and dark about the sun. But from its being the cause of cold and darkness only by going away, nothing like that can be inferred; on the contrary, we can fairly argue that the more regularly and necessarily the setting of the sun results in cold and darkness, the more strongly this confirms that the sun is a source of light and heat. Similarly, given that sin is not the result of any positive agency or influence on God's part, but on the contrary arises from the withholding of his action and energy, and in certain circumstances necessarily follows the lack of his influence, this is no basis for arguing that God is sinful, or that his works are evil, or that he has anything in the nature of evil about him. On the contrary, we have a basis for arguing that God and his agency are altogether good and holy, and that he is the source of all holiness. This argument:

- Men never commit sin except when God leaves them to themselves, and they necessarily sin when he does so; *therefore* their sin doesn't come from themselves, but from God, so God must be a sinful being

is as weird as this one:

- It is always dark when the sun is gone, and never dark when the sun is present; *therefore* all darkness comes from the sun, whose disk and beams must be black.

(4) It is part of the exclusive role of the supreme and absolute governor of the universe to order all important events within his dominion, by his wisdom; and the events in the moral world—such as the moral actions of thinking creatures, and their consequences—are of the most important kind. These events are bound to be ordered by something. Either they will be dealt with by wisdom or they will be dealt with by chance (i.e. blind unpurposeful causes, if that were possible, and if it could be called a dealing-with). Think about these two stories about the source of the good and evil that occur in God's world.

- They are ordered, regulated, bounded, and determined by the good pleasure of an infinitely wise being, whose understanding completely grasps and constantly views the universe as a whole, in all its extent and duration, and sees all the influence of every event, with respect to every individual thing and circumstance, throughout the grand system and the whole of the eternal series of consequences.
- They happen by chance, being determined by causes that have no understanding or aim.

Isn't the former better than the latter? For these important events there are, no doubt, better and worse times for them to happen, and better and worse subjects, locations, ways of happening, and circumstances; I mean better and worse with regard to their influence on the state of affairs and the course of events. And if that is right, it is certainly best that they should be fixed at the time, place, etc. that is best. So it is inherently appropriate that wisdom and not chance should order these things. And therefore it is for the being who has infinite wisdom, and is the creator and owner of the whole system of created existences, and has the care of all—it is for *him* to take care of this matter; and he wouldn't be doing what is proper for him if he neglected it. Thus,

far from its being unholy in him to undertake this affair, it would be unholy in him to *neglect* it. . . .

So there can be no doubt that the sovereignty of God extends to this matter; especially when we consider that if it didn't—i.e. if God left men's volitions and all other moral events to the determination of blind unmeaning causes, or left them to happen without any cause whatsoever—this would be no more consistent with liberty (on any notion of liberty, including the Arminian one) than if. . . .the will of man were determined by circumstances that are ordered and disposed by God's wisdom. . . . But it is evident that this providential determining of men's moral actions, though it implies that the actions are morally necessary, doesn't interfere in the slightest with the real liberty of mankind—the only liberty that common sense says is needed for moral agency, the liberty that I have shown to be consistent with moral necessity.

[The remaining eight pages of this section are notably repetitive and otherwise prolix, as though Edwards hoped to clear up the difficulty that he is obviously in by sluicing it away with a torrent of words. In this version, those pages are greatly abbreviated.] Summing up: It is clear that God can (in the way I have described) arrange for an event that is a moral evil in relation to its inherent nature and to the person who does it, without this being a moral evil on God's part. . . . It can be that sin is an evil thing while it is good that God arranges for it to happen. [Edwards cites the examples of Joseph's being sold into slavery by his brothers, and of] the crucifixion of Christ, which

- considered in the light of all the facts about his murderers,. . . .was in many respects the most horrid of all acts;

and yet

- considered as something willed and ordered by God. . . .was the most admirable and glorious of all events.

[Edwards now addresses a criticism that Arminians have aimed at 'many Calvinists' who have said that God has a 'secret will' and a 'revealed will'. Without advocating acceptance of this distinction, Edwards defends its Calvinist defenders, saying that they haven't meant that God's secret will may actually conflict with his revealed will. When God's secret will approves the crucifixion of Christ while his revealed will opposes it, 'these dissimilar exercises of God's will may in some respects relate to the same things, but strictly speaking they have different and contrary objects, one evil and the other good'. His development of this point speaks not of 'different objects' but rather of different ways of 'considering' a single object which he calls by one name throughout, namely 'the crucifixion of Christ'. He continues:]

There is no inconsistency in supposing that God may hate a thing as it is *in itself and considered simply as evil*, although it is his will that it should come about *considering all consequences*. I don't think that any person of good understanding will venture to say with confidence that it is impossible for the existence of moral evil in the world to be part of the best total state of affairs, taking in the whole compass and extent of existence and all consequences in the endless series of events.<sup>6</sup> And if that is how things stand, then such a choice is not evil, but rather is a wise and holy choice. . . . Men do will sin as sin, and so are the authors and agents of it; they love it *as sin*, and for evil ends and purposes. God does not will sin as sin, or for the sake of

<sup>6</sup> [Edwards inserts here a page-long footnote quoting passages from George Turnbull's *Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy*, expressing the view that Edwards is defending. He selects Turnbull for this purpose precisely because he was a vocal opponent of Calvinism. Incidentally, Edwards describes this British philosopher as being 'of our nation'; he was writing twenty years before the start of the American war of independence.]

anything evil. . . . His willing to order things so that evil will come to pass for the sake of the contrary good •doesn't show that he doesn't hate evil as evil, and therefore •isn't a reason for him not to forbid evil as evil, and to punish it as evil.

The Arminians themselves can't avoid allowing something that is tantamount to what the Calvinists call the distinction between a secret and a revealed will of God. They must distinguish

- things that are agreeable to God's will in arranging the world, because he thinks it would be best—considering all circumstances and consequences—if they existed,

from

- things that are agreeable to God's nature in themselves, things that he loves.

[He gives the example of the wickedness of the devils in hell; and remarks that the general point he is making here has been accepted by Whitby. He then embarks on a fresh argument:]

The following things may be laid down as maxims of plain truth, and indisputably evident:

- (1) God is a *perfectly happy* being, in the most absolute and highest sense possible.
- (2) It follows from (1) that God is free from everything that is contrary to happiness—i.e. that strictly speaking there is no pain, grief, or trouble in God.
- (3) When any thinking being is really crossed and disappointed, and things are contrary to what he truly desires, his pleasure and happiness are diminished, and he suffers something that is disagreeable to him, i.e. he is the subject of something that is of a nature contrary to joy and happiness, even pain

and grief.<sup>7</sup>Certainly, it is at least as absurd and unreasonable to talk of •God's will and desires as being truly and properly crossed without his suffering any anything grievous or disagreeable as it is to talk of •his having a so-called revealed will that can in some respect *oppose* some secret purpose that he has.

From axiom (3) it follows that if we don't distinguish •God's hatred of sin from •his attitude to the existence of sin from the standpoint of what is over-all best for the world, then we'll be forced to hold that every individual act of sin is truly, all things considered, contrary to God's will, and that his will is really crossed in it to the extent that he hates it. Because sin is infinitely contrary to his holy nature, his hatred of it is infinite; so his will is infinitely crossed in every act of sin that happens. Which amounts to saying that every act of sin that he sees committed is infinitely disagreeable to him, which implies that he endures, truly and really, infinite grief or pain from every sin. So he must be infinitely crossed and suffer infinite pain trillions of times every day. . . .and thus be infinitely the most miserable of all beings.

You may want to object that what all this amounts to is *God's doing evil so that good may come*, which is rightly thought immoral and sinful when men do it, and so can rightly be thought inconsistent with the moral perfections of God. I answer that what I have been speaking of is not God's doing evil so that good may come, because it isn't his *doing evil* at all. Nothing is morally evil unless one of these three is true of it:

- It is unfit and unsuitable in its own nature.
- It has a bad tendency.
- It comes from an evil disposition, and is done for an evil end.

But none of these is true of God's ordering and permitting, for good ends, such events as the immoral acts of creatures. [Edwards ends the section by briskly dealing with the second and third of the three. Before that, he deals more extensively with the first:] It is not unfit in its own nature that God should do this. For it is in its own nature fitting that the arrangements for moral good and evil in the world should be made by infinite wisdom rather than by blind chance. And it is fitting that the being who has infinite wisdom, and is the maker, owner, and supreme governor of the world should take care of that matter; so there is no unfitness or unsuitableness in his doing it. It may be unfitting and therefore immoral for any *other* being to try doing this, because they don't have a wisdom that equips them for it; and in other ways too they are not fit to be trusted with this affair; and anyway it isn't up to them to do this, because they aren't the owners and lords of the universe.

We need not be afraid to affirm this:

If a wise and good man knew with absolute certainty that it would be best, all things considered, for there to be such a thing as moral evil in the world, it would not be contrary to his •wisdom and •goodness for him to choose that it should be so.

It isn't •evil to desire good, and to desire what is best, all things considered. And it isn't •unwise to choose. . . .the existence of something that he knows it would be best to have exist, this being something that is most worthy to be chosen. On the contrary, it would be a plain defect in his •wisdom and •goodness if he *didn't* choose it. The reason why he is not permitted to bring it about, if he could, is not that he oughtn't to desire it but rather that this •matter of choosing what is over-all best for the universe• isn't up to him. But it *is* rightly up to God, as the supreme orderer of all things, to order everything in the way that his wisdom

tells him they should be ordered. . . . In doing this, he is not doing evil that good may come.

### Section 10: Sin's first entrance into the world

Things that I have already said may serve to solve or clear away many of the objections that might be raised concerning sin's first coming into the world—I mean objections based on the idea that my views imply that God must be the author of the first sin through his so arranging things that it •necessarily followed from his permission that the •first• sinful act should be committed, and so on. So I needn't go through it all again, repeating what I have already said about such a •necessity's not proving God to be the author of sin in any bad sense or in any sense that would infringe any liberty of man concerned in his moral agency or capacity for blame, guilt, and punishment.

But there is another difficulty •about God's relation to the first sin• that I haven't yet confronted:

Let it be granted that it was right for God, after making man, to order his circumstances in such a way that from these circumstances, together with God's not giving any further help or providing any divine influence, man's sin would infallibly follow. But why wouldn't it have been just as good for God to make man with a fixed prevailing source of sin in his heart, right from the outset?

I answer that if sin was to come into existence and appear in the world, it was appropriate that it should arise—and be seen to arise—from the imperfection of the •sinning• creature as such, so as not to appear to have come from God as its efficient cause. And this couldn't have happened if man had had sin in his heart from the outset. For it to happen, the abiding source and habit of sin must have been first

introduced into the world by an evil act on the part of the creature. If sin hadn't arisen from the imperfection of the creature, it wouldn't have been so visible that it didn't arise from God as its positive cause and real source. But to consider fully all the difficulties that have been raised about sin's first entrance of sin into the world, would take more space than I can give it here.

So, without purporting to deal with all the difficulties, I merely make the general point that the Arminians are not better placed to handle them than the Calvinists are. Nothing that the Arminians say about the contingency or self-determining power of man's will is the least use in explaining how the first sinful volition of mankind could take place and how man could justly be blamed for it. To say that the will was self-determined, or determined by free choice in that sinful volition, is to say that the •first sinful volition was determined by a •previous sinful volition—and that is no solution of the difficulty! Nor is it any better solution to say that the first sinful volition chose and determined and produced *itself*—implying that it existed before it existed. Nor will it help us over the difficulty to say the first sinful volition arose accidentally, without any cause at all. (Like answering the difficult question 'How could the world be made out of nothing?' by saying 'It came into existence out of nothing without any cause'.) And even if we did allow that the first evil volition could have arisen by perfect accident without any cause, that wouldn't lessen the difficulty about God's blaming man for it. . . .

### **Section 11: A supposed inconsistency between these principles and God's moral character**

What I have already said may suffice to answer most of the objections, and silence the loud protests, of Arminians who

have held that Calvinist doctrines are inconsistent with the moral perfections of God as exercised in his government of mankind. I have given special attention to showing that •the doctrine of necessity that I have maintained is consistent with •the fitness and reasonableness of God's commands, promises and threats, rewards and punishments; I have answered the sniping of our opponents in their allegation that our doctrine of necessity makes God the author of sin; I have also met their objection that these principles are inconsistent with God's sincerity in his advice, invitations, and persuasions, by what I have said about the self-consistency of the Calvinists' thesis concerning the •secret will and the •revealed will of God. [From here onwards, as also in a few earlier places, Edwards calls these God's •'disposing' will and his •'perceptive' will, where presumably 'perceptive' = 'perceptible' = 'not secret' = 'revealed'. This version will stay with 'secret' and 'revealed'.]

•However, I shall now amplify a little my previous treatment of that last matter. I have shown that there is no contradiction in supposing that it may be the secret will of God that his ordering and allowing of events should have as a certain consequence that x will never be done, although it is man's duty to do x and is therefore God's revealed will that man do x—which is just to say that God may sincerely command and require him to do it. And if God can be sincere in commanding him to do x, he can for the same reason be sincere in advising, inviting, and persuading him to do x. Advice and invitations are expressions of God's revealed will, i.e. of what God loves and what is—considered in itself and considered as man's act—agreeable to his heart. They do not express his secret will, and what he chooses as a part of his own infinite scheme of things. I have made a special point of showing in Part 3, section 4, that the necessity I have defended is not inconsistent with the propriety and fitness of God's commands; and that for the same reason

it is not inconsistent with the sincerity of invitations and advice (in the corollary at the end of that section [page 76]). Indeed, I showed in Part 3, section 7, corollary 1 [page 87] that this objection of Arminians concerning the sincerity of divine urgings, invitations and advice demonstrably holds against themselves. But I want to revisit that last topic, which involves a difficulty that I haven't so far discussed, namely the difficulty of reconciling the sincerity of advice, invitations, and persuasions with a foreknown fixedness of all future events. This difficulty can't reasonably be brought against Calvinists as an objection to their not being Arminians, because the foreknowledge in question is accepted not only by Calvinists but also by most Arminians, who acknowledge the absolute foreknowledge of God. The main seeming difficulty in the case is this:

When God advises, invites, and persuades, he makes a show of aiming at, seeking, and trying for the thing exhorted and persuaded to. But it's impossible for a thinking being *truly* to seek or try for something that he at that time knows for sure won't happen. . . .

Now, if God knows with utmost certainty and perfection that the upshot in question won't happen, it makes no difference to the problem *how* he gets this knowledge—whether it is from the necessity that he sees in things, or in some other way. Well, the Arminians allow that God has a certain foreknowledge of all men's sinful actions and omissions, so they are in effect allowing that God's inviting and persuading men to do things which he at that time knows for sure that they *won't* do is *not* evidence of insincerity. As well as being implicitly allowed by most Arminians, it must be allowed by anyone who thinks that the scriptures are the word of God. [Edwards backs this up with a page of quotations from the old and new testaments.] So that whatever difficulty there can be in this matter, it can't count against my position as

against that of the Arminians; and any need there is for me to remove this difficulty is equally a need for all those who call themselves Christians and acknowledge the divine authority of the scriptures. I may—God allowing—look into it fully and in detail in some future book on the doctrine of predestination.

Without waiting for that, I want to point out here that while the defenders of the Arminian notion of liberty of will accuse the Calvinist doctrine of tending to make men doubt the moral perfections of God, this charge really holds against their own doctrine, not that of the Calvinists. Why? Well, one of their most fundamental theses is that moral agency is possible only where there is a freedom of will consisting in self-determination without any necessity; and they say this about moral agency as such, not restricting it to the moral agency of humans. So they have implied that God's will is not *necessarily* determined in anything he does as a moral agent. . . . Thus, whenever he acts holily, justly, and truly, he doesn't do this necessarily; that is, his will is not necessarily determined to act holily and justly; because if it were, he wouldn't be a moral agent. They argue against Calvinism like this:

He can't act otherwise; he is at no liberty in the affair; he is determined by unavoidable, invincible necessity; therefore his agency is not moral agency; indeed, it can't properly be called 'agency' at all; a 'necessary agent' is not an agent; because he is passive and subject to necessity, what he does is no act of his but an effect of a necessity prior to any act of his.

That's the sort of thing they say. Well, then, what has become of all our proofs of the moral perfections of God? How can we prove, in any single case, that God will certainly do what is just and holy, given that his will is not determined in the matter by any necessity? Our *only* way of proving that

anything *certainly will* happen is through its being necessary. In a case where we can see no necessity—where the thing may happen but may not—we are unavoidably left at a loss. Our only way of properly and truly demonstrating the moral perfections of God is the way in which Chubb proves them, namely: God must necessarily have complete knowledge of what is most worthy and valuable in itself, that which is in the nature of things best and fittest to be done. His omniscience gives him that knowledge of what it would be best to do, and his self-sufficiency means that he can't have any temptation not to do it; and so he must necessarily will that which is best. Thus, we demonstratively establish God's moral character on the basis of the necessity of his will's being determined to what is good and best. [This is the Thomas Chubb whose account of liberty Edwards has fiercely criticised in Part 2, section 10, starting on page 43.]

Corollary: From things that I have said, it appears that in most of the arguments from scripture that Arminians use to support their system they assume their conclusion at the outset. What they do in these arguments is to start by laying it down that •in the absence of *their* kind of freedom of will men can't be proper moral agents, or the subjects of command, advice, persuasion, invitation, promises, threats, protests, rewards, or punishments; and that •without such freedom it is pointless for men to take any care—or use any diligence, attempts, or means—in order to avoid sin or become holy, escaping punishment or obtaining happiness. And having supposed these things, which are the big issues that the debate is about, they proceed to heap up scriptures containing commands, advice, calls, warnings, persuasions, protests, promises, and threats (which is easy to do—the Bible is packed with them); and then they glory in how much the scripture is on their side, how many more biblical texts favour their system than seem to favour the opposing

position. What they *should* do is first to lay out plainly the things that they suppose and take for granted, show them to be self-consistent, and produce clear evidence of their truth; and *then* they'll have gained their point, as everyone will agree, without bringing in one passage from the Bible. No-one denies that there are commands, advice, promises, threats and so on in the Bible. It's simply pointless to parade these texts unless they first do the things I have demanded.

Anyway, the scriptures that they cite really count against them, not for them. I have demonstrated that it is their system and not ours that is inconsistent with the use of motives and persuasions or any moral means whatsoever to induce men to practise virtue or abstain from wickedness; their principles and not ours rule out moral agency and are inconsistent with moral government. . . .

### **Section 12: A supposed tendency of these principles to atheism and immoral behaviour**

If anyone objects against the position I have defended that it tends to [= 'is likely to lead to'] atheism, I don't know what grounds he could have for this, unless it is that some atheists have held a doctrine of necessity that he thinks is like mine. (I'm sure that the Arminians wouldn't think it fair to accuse *their* notion of freedom and contingency with tending to all the errors that have ever been embraced by people who have held such opinions!) The stoic philosophers whom the Calvinists are accused of agreeing with weren't atheists; of all the heathen philosophers they were the greatest theists, and nearest to Christians in their opinions about the unity and the perfections of God. As for Epicurus, that chief father of atheism: far from maintaining any such doctrine of •necessity, he was the greatest maintainer of •contingency.

The doctrine of necessity—the thesis that all outcomes are

connected with some antecedent ground and reason for their existence—provides the only method we have for proving the existence of God (a proof that is briefly expressed by the apostle Paul in Romans 1:20). And the contrary doctrine of contingency deprives us of any proof of God's existence. That holds even for the Arminian form of the doctrine, which certainly implies that things can come into existence without depending on anything earlier that was their cause, ground, or reason. . . . So it's the doctrine of the Arminians, not that of the Calvinists, that can fairly be accused of tending to atheism, because it is built on a foundation that completely undercuts every demonstrative argument for the existence of God, as I showed in Part 2, section 3 [starting on page 22].

It has often been said that the Calvinist doctrine of necessity undermines all religion and virtue, and tends to the greatest immorality of behaviour; but this objection is based on the claim that our doctrine renders vain—pointless—any attempts we might make to be virtuous and religious. I have dealt with this claim in detail in section 5 [starting on page 105], where I have demonstrated that this doctrine has no such tendency, but that the Arminian doctrine *can* fairly be accused of it, because the notion of contingency implied by their doctrine overthrows all connection—weak or strong—between attempt and outcome, means and end.

Furthermore, if we take into account many other things that I have shown to be clearly implied by •the Arminian doctrine, we'll find good reason to think that •it must tend to licentiousness. That doctrine excuses all evil inclinations that men find to be natural, because when a man acts from such an inclination he is not self-determined (because such inclinations aren't produced by any choice or determination of his own will). And that leads men to regard themselves as entirely guiltless in all their wicked actions that arise from volitions caused by natural inclinations. Indeed, the

idea that moral necessity and inability are inconsistent with blame or moral obligation will directly lead men to think themselves guiltless in the vilest acts and practices arising from the strength of their wicked inclinations of all sorts, because strong inclinations create moral necessity. Worse: they will excuse themselves for every evil inclination—weak or strong—that has evidently prevailed and determined their wills, because to the extent that the antecedent inclination determined the will, to that extent the will lacked the liberty of indifference and self-determination. So it comes down to this: men will think themselves guiltless in respect of all the wickedness they commit. I have already pointed out that this system greatly diminishes the guilt of sin and the difference between the greatest and smallest offences (Part 3, section 6 [starting on page 81], and that if it is applied thoroughly will it leave no room in the world for any such thing as virtue or vice, blame or praise (Part 3, sections 6, 7; Part 4, section 1; Part 3, section 3, corollary 1 in item **(1)**.) And then again how naturally this notion of the sovereign self-determining power of the will in all things virtuous or vicious. . . .tends to encourage men to postpone the work of religion and virtue and turning from sin to God; because they have a sovereign power to determine themselves to that work whenever they please; or if they haven't this power, they are wholly excusable for going on in sin because they are unable to do anything else.

This may be said: 'That the •Calvinist• doctrine of necessity tends to produce immoral behaviour can be seen in the way many people these days *use* it to justify themselves in their dissolute ways of life.' I don't deny that some men do unreasonably *misuse* this doctrine, as they misuse many other things that are true and excellent in themselves; but I deny that this shows the doctrine itself to have any tendency to immorality. If we are going to estimate the tendency of

doctrines on the basis of what now appears in the world, and in our nation in particular, I think the best way to do this is to compare the states of affairs when the principles of Arminians held sway with the states of affairs when Calvinist doctrines prevailed. Suppose it is true, as it is claimed, that

Calvinist doctrines undermine the very foundation of all religion and morality, and weaken and cancel all rational motives to holy and virtuous conduct; whereas the opposing Arminian doctrines give their proper force to inducements to virtue and goodness, and present religion in a rational light that tends to recommend it to the reason of mankind and to enforce it in a manner that is agreeable to their natural notions of things.

[From here to the end of the paragraph, Edwards is writing in a tone of bitter sarcasm.] If that is how things stand, it is remarkable that •virtue and religious conduct have prevailed most when the Calvinist doctrines that are so inconsistent with •them have prevailed almost universally; and that during the time when the Arminian doctrines—that so satisfactorily agree with •them and have such an tendency to promote •them—have been gradually prevailing, there has been a corresponding *increase* in vice, profaneness, luxury, and wickedness of all sorts, and contempt of all religion and of every kind of seriousness and strictness of conversation. The free inquiries and superior sense and wisdom of this age have led to the discovery of Arminianism, a splendid remedy for the pernicious effects of Calvinism, which is so inconsistent with religion and tends so much to banish all virtue from the earth. It is remarkable, then, that •such a long try-out has had no good effect; that •the consequence of the prevalence of Arminianism• has been the *opposite* of recovery from the ills caused by Calvinism; that •the more thoroughly the remedy has been administered, the

more the disease has prevailed; and that •there has been the highest degree of just precisely the dismal effects that Calvinist doctrines are supposed to encourage—all the way to the banishing of religion and virtue and the prevalence of unrestricted immorality of conduct. If that is the state of affairs, it is a good topic for further research!

### **Section 13: The objection that the arguments for Calvinism are metaphysical and abstruse**

It has often been objected against the defenders of Calvinist principles that in their reasonings they engage in scholastic hair-splitting and abstruse metaphysical subtleties, setting these up in opposition to common sense. In the spirit of this, the arguments by which I have tried to refute the Arminian system of liberty and moral agency may be accused of being very abstract and metaphysical. I have three main things to say about this.

(1) Whether or not it is true that my reasoning has been metaphysical, or can be reduced to the science of metaphysics, it's absurd to make this an *objection*. If my reasoning is good, the question 'What science can it be reduced to?' is as frivolous as 'What language is it written in?' And to try to confute someone's arguments by telling him that they are metaphysical would be as weak as to tell him that his arguments can't be much good because they were written in French or Latin. The right question to ask is not

Do those arguments belong to metaphysics, physics, logic, or mathematics? or

Are those arguments written in Latin, French, English, or Mohawk?

What should be asked is

Is the reasoning good? Are the arguments truly conclusive?

The arguments I have used are no more metaphysical than the ones we use against the Papists to disprove their doctrine of transubstantiation, when we allege that it is inconsistent with the notion of bodily identity that one body should be in ten thousand places at the same time. We need metaphysical arguments to prove that the rational soul is not corporeal; that lead or sand can't think; that thoughts are not square or round, and don't weigh a pound. The arguments by which we prove the existence of God, if presented sharply and in detail so as to show their clear and demonstrative evidentness, must be metaphysically treated. Only by metaphysics can we demonstrate •that God is not limited to any place, •that he isn't changeable, •that he isn't ignorant or forgetful, •that it is impossible for him to lie or be unjust, and that •there is only one God rather than hundreds or thousands. Indeed, outside mathematics we have no strict demonstration of *anything* except through metaphysics. Without metaphysics we can't have a properly demonstrative proof of any single proposition relating to the existence and nature of God, his creation of the world, the dependence of all things on him, the nature of bodies and spirits, the nature of our own souls, or any of the great truths of morality and natural religion. I am willing to have my arguments subjected to the test of the strictest and soundest reasoning, and I accept an insistence that I give the terms I use clear, distinct and determinate meanings. But don't let the whole thing be rejected as though tacking the label 'metaphysical' onto it were tantamount to a refutation.

(2) If my reasoning is in some sense metaphysical, it doesn't follow that therefore it has to be abstruse, unintelligible, akin to the jargon of the scholastics. If I may say so, I think that the reasoning I have used—at least as

regards the things that matter most in it—has not depended on •any abstruse definitions or distinctions, or •terms that are meaningless or very ambiguous, or •any turns in the argument that are so abstract and subtle that they would be likely to cloud the mind of anyone who attended to them. No *very* refined and abstruse theorizing is involved in deciding that

- A thing doesn't exist before it exists, and so it can't be the cause of itself; or that
- The first act of free choice isn't caused and directed by a preceding act of choice; or that
- No choice is made while the mind remains in a state of absolute indifference; or that
- Preference and equilibrium never co-exist; and that therefore
- No choice is made in a state of liberty consisting in indifference; and that
- To the extent that the will is determined by motives operating before the act of the will, to that extent it isn't determined by the act of the will itself; or that
- Nothing can come into existence without a cause or some antecedent ground or reason why it comes into existence at that time; or that
- Effects depend on their causes and are connected with them; or that
- Virtue is not made less good and sin is not made less bad by the strength of inclination with which it is practised and the resulting difficulty of doing otherwise; or that
- When it is already infallibly known that something will be the case, its coming to be the case is no longer a contingent matter. . . .

And the same can be said of many other items belonging to the reasoning that I have presented. There may still

be someone who holds that my reasoning is nothing but metaphysical sophistry, and that the seeming force of the arguments must all depend on some fallacy and trick that is hidden in the obscurity that always comes with a high level of metaphysical abstraction and refinement; someone who is ready to say:

Here is indeed something that tends to confound the mind but not to satisfy it. For who can be satisfied with its thesis that men are rightly blamed or commended, punished or rewarded, for volitions that are not from themselves and of whose existence they are not the causes? Men may refine as much as they please, and advance their abstract notions,

and find out in their opponents' views a thousand seeming contradictions to puzzle our understandings; but there can be no satisfaction in such a doctrine as this; the human mind's natural sense will always resist it.<sup>8</sup>

I humbly suggest that if this objector has enough capacity and humility and calmness of spirit to examine himself impartially and thoroughly, he will find that he really doesn't know what he is getting at. Anyway, his 'difficulty' is nothing but a mere prejudice from an innocent habit of using certain words in meanings that aren't clearly understood or carefully thought about. If the objector has enough honesty and patience, and isn't above taking the trouble to give

<sup>8</sup> 1 A certain noted contemporary author [Turnbull—see page 39 and footnote on page 125] says that the arguments for necessity are nothing but quibbling or word-play, using words without a meaning, or begging the question. [Edwards is using that last phrase in what was until recently its only meaning, namely 'assuming the truth of the conclusion in the course of the argument'.] I don't know what kind of necessity is advocated by any of the authors he may have in mind, or how well or badly they have managed their arguments. As for the arguments that I have used: if they are quibbles they can be shown to be; such knots can be untied, and the trick and cheat can be detected and laid bare. If this is fairly done with respect to the arguments I have relied on, I shall need from then on to be silent, if not to be ashamed of my arguments. I am willing for my proofs to be thoroughly examined; and if they turn out to contain nothing but question-begging and word-play, let that be made clear; let it be shown how the seeming strength of my arguments depends on my using words without a meaning, or arises from the ambiguity of terms or my using some word in an indeterminate and unsteady manner, and shown that the weight of my reasons rests mainly on those weak foundations. When that is done, then either I shall be ready to retract what I have presented, and to thank the man who has done me this kindness, or I shall be justly exposed for my obstinacy.

That same author makes a great deal of his appeal in this affair from what he calls word-play and sophistry to experience. A person can experience only what happens in his own mind; but we can well suppose that all men have the same human faculties, so that a man may well argue from his own experience to that of others in matters that show the nature of those faculties and how they work. In that case, though, each of us has as good a right as anyone else to point to *his* experience. Well, as for my own experience: I find that in countless cases I can do as I will; that the motions of my body in many respects instantaneously follow the acts of my will concerning those motions; that my will has some command of my thoughts; and that the acts of my will are my own, i.e. they are acts of *my* will, the volitions of *my* mind; or in other words that what I will, I will. And I presume that's the sum of what others experience in this affair. But as for finding by experience that my will is originally determined by itself; or that the first determination of my will in any affair involves my performing a volition after first choosing what volition to perform; or that any volition occurs in my mind contingently—I declare that experience hasn't taught me *anything* like this about myself; and nothing that I ever experienced carries the faintest hint of any such thing. . . . It is true that I find myself possessed of my volitions before I can see the effectual power of any cause to produce them (for what is seen is just the effect, not the power and efficacy of the cause); and for all I know this experience may make some people imagine that a volition has no cause, or that it produces itself. But I have no more reason to draw either of those conclusions from that experience than I have to infer, from the experienced fact that I found myself in existence before I had any knowledge of what caused me, that I caused my own existence or that I came into existence accidentally and without a cause.

the matter close attention, let him reflect again. He wants a man's volition to be *from himself*. Well, let it be from himself in the most basic and fundamental conceivable way, namely by being from his own choice; how will *that* help with the matter of praise and blame unless that choice itself is blameworthy or praiseworthy? And how is that choice itself (a bad choice, say) blameworthy according to these principles unless it too was *from himself* in the same way, namely from his own choice? But the original and *first*-determining choice in the affair wasn't caused by any choice of his. And if it is *from himself* in some other way—not from his choice—surely that won't help either. If it isn't from himself by choice, then it isn't from himself voluntarily; and in that case he is surely no more to blame than if it weren't from himself at all. It is futile to act as though a sufficient answer to this is to dismiss it as nothing but metaphysical refinement and subtlety and therefore full of obscurity and uncertainty.

If the natural sense of our minds says that what is blameworthy in a man must be *from himself*, then it doubtless also says that it must be from something bad in himself, a bad choice or bad disposition. But then our natural sense says that this bad choice or disposition is evil in itself, and the man is blameworthy for it on its own account, not bringing into our notion of its blameworthiness some previous bad choice or disposition from which this has arisen; for that is a ridiculous absurdity, running us into an immediate contradiction that our natural sense of blameworthiness has nothing to do with, and that never comes into our minds and isn't presupposed in the judgment we naturally make of the affair. As I demonstrated earlier, natural sense doesn't place the moral evil of volitions and dispositions in their •cause but in their •nature. Our basic notion of blameworthiness doesn't involve an evil thing's being *from* a man or *from* some previous act or state of his; what it does involve is an evil

thing's being *the choice of his heart*. If you want evidence for this, consider: If something is from me but not from my choice, it doesn't have what our natural sense regards as the nature of blameworthiness or ill-desert. When something bad is 'from' a man in the sense of being from his will or choice, he *is* to blame for it because his will is *in it*; blame is in it just so far as—and no further than—the will is in it. And our notion of blame doesn't probe further, asking whether the bad will is *from* a bad will; there is no consideration of the origin of that bad will, because according to our natural sense blame basically consists in *it*—i.e. in the bad will first mentioned. In the notion of blame or ill-desert, therefore, a thing's being *from* a man is a secondary consideration. Why is it a consideration *at all*? Because the aspects of our external actions that are most properly said to be 'from us' are ones that come from our choice; and they—or the bad ones amongst them—are the only ones that have the nature of blame. Though what makes them blameworthy is not really that *they are from us* as much as that *we are in them*, i.e. our wills are in them. . . .

However, because all these external actions really are from us as their cause, and because we are so used in ordinary speech and everyday life to apply the terms of praise and blame, good or ill desert, to men's actions that we see and that affect human society, it has come about that philosophers have carelessly taken all their measures of good and evil, praise and blame, from the dictates of common sense about these *overt* acts of men; which has plunged everything into the most lamentable and dreadful confusion. And so:

**(3)** The accusation has been this: The arguments for the doctrine that I have been defending depend on certain abstruse, unintelligible, metaphysical terms and notions, whereas the Arminian system has no need for such clouds

and darkness for its defence because it is supported by the plain dictates of common sense. But the real truth of the matter—it is certainly true, and *very* true—is the exact reverse of that. It is really the Arminians who have confounded things with metaphysical, unintelligible, notions and phrases. . . . Their purported demonstrations depend very much on such unintelligible, metaphysical phrases as ‘self-determination’ and ‘sovereignty of the will’; and the metaphysical meanings they give to such terms as ‘necessity’, ‘contingency’, ‘action’, ‘agency’ and so on are quite different from what they mean in common speech.

Those expressions in *their* use of them have no consistent meaning, no distinct consistent ideas—indeed they are as far from that as are any of the abstruse terms and bewildering phrases of the Aristotelian philosophers or the most unintelligible jargon of the scholastics or the ravings of the wildest fanatics. . . . Instead of the plain ordinary notion of liberty that has been possessed by all mankind in every part of the face of the earth and in all ages—namely, the notion of *having the opportunity to do as one pleases*—they have introduced a new strange liberty that consists in indifference, contingency, and self-determination. . . . So instead of locating virtue and vice where common sense mostly locates them, namely in fixed bias and inclination, and locating *greater* virtue and vice in *stronger* and *more established* inclination, the Arminians are led by their refinings and abstruse notions suppose that what’s essential to all virtue and vice is a liberty consisting in indifference. So they

have reasoned themselves—not by metaphysical distinctions but by metaphysical confusion—into many principles about moral agency, blame, praise, reward, and punishment that are, as I have shown, flatly contrary to the common sense of mankind, and perhaps to the Arminians’ own way of thinking about these things in their everyday lives.

## CONCLUSION

Whether my criticisms of Arminianism can be answered decently—through calm, intelligible, strict reasoning—I must leave others to judge. But I am aware that they are open to one sort of answer. It is likely enough that some people who pride themselves on the supposedly rational and liberal principles of modern fashionable theology will be indignant and contemptuous when they see this work of mine and realize what things I claim to prove in it. And if they think it worth reading and worth commenting on, they will probably renew, with additional fierceness and contempt, the usual protests about the fate of the heathen, Hobbes’s necessity, and making men mere machines; piling up the terrible epithets ‘fatal’, ‘unstoppable’, ‘inevitable’, ‘irresistible’, and so on, perhaps adding ‘horrid’ and ‘blasphemous’ to the heap. They may also use much skill in presenting my views in colours that will shock the imaginations and stir up the passions of those who don’t seriously and carefully look into the whole matter for themselves—either because they can’t, or because they are too sure of the opinions they

<sup>9</sup> A contemporary writer whom I have several times had occasion to mention [Turnbull again] says several times that those who hold the doctrine of necessity hardly deserve to be called ‘philosophers’. I don’t know whether he had any particular notion of necessity in mind or, if he had, what notion it was. It’s not important here to discuss whether I merit the name ‘philosopher’. Even if hosts of people said that I don’t, I wouldn’t think it worthwhile to debate the question with them; though I might look for some answer to my arguments better than merely ‘You are not a philosopher!’; and I might also reasonably ask my critics to entertain the thought that those who *are* truly worthy of being called ‘philosophers’ should be aware that there is a difference between argument and contempt—and, indeed, a difference between the inconclusiveness of an argument and the contemptibleness of the person who offers it.

have imbibed, or because they have too much contempt for the contrary view.<sup>9</sup> Or they may raise and insist on difficulties that don't belong to this controversy because any force they have against Calvinism they have against Arminianism too. Or they may pick out in my doctrines some particular things that they think will sound strangest to the general reader, parading these to the accompaniment of sharp and contemptuous words, moving from them to a general attitude of gloating and insult.

·DEFENCE AND COUNTER-ATTACK·

It's easy to see that the outcome of most of the points at issue between Calvinists and Arminians depends on the outcome of the big debate over the freedom of the will that is required for moral agency. When the Calvinist doctrine is in the clear on this point, that will remove the main arguments for Arminianism and against Calvinism. It will make it clear that God's moral government over mankind—his treating them as moral agents and directing towards them his commands, advice, calls, warnings, protests, promises, threats, rewards, and punishments—is not inconsistent with his deterministically arranging all events of every kind throughout the universe, either positively making them happen or ·negatively· allowing them to happen. Indeed, such a universal determining providence implies *some* kind of necessity of all events—a necessity implying that every outcome is infallibly fixed in advance—but so far as the volitions of thinking agents are concerned, the only necessity that is needed is *moral* necessity. That fixes the future outcome as well as any other necessity does. And I have demonstrated that moral necessity does not clash at all with moral agency or with a reasonable use of commands, calls, rewards, punishments, and so on. Indeed, not only have I removed objections of this kind against the doctrine of a universal determining providence—i.e. the thesis that *everything* that

is the case is deliberately made to be the case by God—but from what I have said the truth of that doctrine can be demonstrated. [This is **1** the first of four instances in this Conclusion of a certain pattern: having argued that (E) his doctrine of necessity etc. is *consistent with* (D) a particular theological doctrine, Edwards then goes on to argue that E *positively implies* D.] I have demonstrated that •the settled-in-advance status of all future outcomes is established by previous necessity, either natural or moral; and from this I can infer that •the sovereign creator and arranger of the world has ordered this necessity by ordering his own conduct—either in purposively making things happen or purposively allowing them to happen. ·I now proceed to demonstrate that inference·. **(1)** The world's existence comes from God, so **(2)** the circumstances in which it had its being at first, both negative and positive, must be ordered by him (either by making or by allowing), and **(3)** all the necessary consequences of these circumstances must ·also· be ordered by him. [In the present version, Edwards's word 'circumstances' has usually been changed to 'relations' or 'relational properties', but here he seems to be saying here that in bringing the world into existence God must also have brought about all the *states of affairs* that obtain in it—not just positive state of affairs such as that *there were animals* but also negative ones such as that *there were not any species intermediate between men and chimpanzees*.] Furthermore, **(4)** God's active and positive interventions after the world was created must all be determined according to his pleasure, as must also every instance of his refraining from intervening; and **(5)** the same holds for the consequences of these interventions and refrainings. [The rest of this paragraph is expanded from what Edwards wrote, in ways that the ·small dots· convention can't easily indicate.] The move from **(1)** to **(2)** is valid because bringing something into existence *is* bringing it into existence in all its detail. And **(4)** is true, because God's particular interventions and refrainings-from-intervening are *acts* of his, things he

does voluntarily or ‘at his pleasure’. And **(3)** and **(5)** are based on the thesis that God would never cause something to be the case without taking into account all its consequences, about which he knows everything. From **(2)**, **(3)** and **(5)** together we get the thesis **(6)** that every outcome that is a consequence of something else—every outcome that is connected with some preceding thing or circumstance (whether positive or negative) as the ground or reason for its existence—must be ordered by God, either through a purposive effectiveness and intervention or through a purposive non-intervention. But I have already proved that **(7)** every single outcome is necessarily connected with something previous to it (either positive or negative) which is the ground of its existence. And from that together with **(6)** we get the thesis **(8)** that the whole series of outcomes is connected with something in the state of things (either positive or negative) that is *original* in the series, i.e. something that is connected with no earlier item except God’s own immediate conduct, either his acting or refraining from acting. And from **(8)** we at last reach the conclusion **(9)**: Because God purposively orders his own conduct and its connected consequences, it must necessarily be the case that he purposively orders everything.

- Things that I have said dispose of some of the Arminians’ chief objections to the Calvinist doctrine according to which:

Man’s nature is totally depraved and corrupt, so that his heart is wholly under the power of sin and he is utterly unable—without the intervention of sovereign grace—savingly to love God, believe in Christ, or do anything that is truly good and acceptable in God’s sight.

The main objection to this is that **(1)** it is inconsistent with the freedom of man’s will (with this understood as consisting in equilibrium and self-determining power), because it supposes that •man is under a necessity of sinning, and that •if

he is to avoid eternal damnation he must do things—required of him by God—that he *can’t* do; and that **(2)** this doctrine is wholly inconsistent with the sincerity of advice, invitations, and so on. Well, now, the only ‘necessity of sinning’ that this doctrine supposes is *moral* necessity, and I have shown that *that* •doesn’t at all excuse sin. . . . or any failure to perform a good action, and •doesn’t make it inappropriate to address to men commands, advice, and invitations. As for the ‘freedom of will’ that is supposed to dislodge this doctrine of original sin, ‘freedom’ consisting in equilibrium and self-determination, I have shown that •such a freedom doesn’t and can’t ever exist or even be coherently thought of, and that •no such freedom is necessary for the punishment of sin to be just.

- Things that I have said also deal with the Arminians’ main objections to the doctrine of effective grace, and at the same time prove that whenever a sinner’s conversion involves God’s grace or influence, this grace is effective. Indeed, it is downright *irresistible*—by which I mean that it brings with it a moral necessity that can’t possibly be violated by any resistance. [In what follows, Edwards doesn’t use ‘you’ as an example; he is made to do so in this version in the interests of clarity.] The main Arminian objection to this doctrine is that •it is inconsistent with their ‘self-determining freedom of will’; and that •the nature of virtue doesn’t allow it to be brought about in your heart by the determining effectiveness and power of someone else rather than arising from your own self-moving power—the point being that if it did come from someone else, namely God, the good that was done would not be your virtue but rather God’s, because it would not be you but God who was the determining author of it. But I have dealt with the assumptions on which these objections are based, and have demonstrated •that the liberty of moral agents does *not* consist in self-determining power, and that there’s

no need for any such liberty in order for there to be virtue. Also, a state or act of your will can constitute a virtue of yours without coming from self-determination, as long as it is determined by an intrinsic cause that makes the state or act morally necessary to you.

**2** Let us assemble some of the results that we now have in hand. I have proved (a) that nothing in the state or acts of the will of man is contingent, and that on the contrary every event of this kind is morally necessary; and I have also just recently demonstrated (b) that from **(7)** the doctrine of necessity that I proved earlier we can infer **(9)** the doctrine of a universal determining providence [the numerals are those used on page 137], implying (c) that God in his providence does decisively order all the volitions of moral agents, either by positive influence or permission (i.e. by making or allowing). And everyone agrees (d) that God's contribution to a man's *virtuous* volitions—whether the contribution be large or small—is done through some positive influence and not by mere negative allowing, as in the case of a sinful volition. If we put (a) through (d) together, it follows (e) that God's assistance with or influence on virtuous volitions must be determining and decisive, i.e. must be accompanied by a moral necessity of the outcome. event; and thus (f) that God gives virtue, holiness, and conversion to sinners by an influence that determines the effect in such a way that it will infallibly follow, by a moral necessity; which is what Calvinists mean by 'effective and irresistible grace'.

• Things that I have said also answer the chief objections against the doctrine of God's universal and absolute decree, and yield an infallible proof of this doctrine and of the doctrine of absolute eternal personal election in particular. The main objections against these doctrines are that they imply that the volitions of moral agents, and their future moral states and acts, are necessary, and that this **(1)** isn't

consistent with the eternal rewards and punishments that are connected with conversion and impenitence, and **(2)** can't be reconciled with the reasonableness and sincerity of the precepts, calls, advice, warnings, and protests of the word of God, or **(3)** with the various methods and means of grace that God uses with sinners to bring them to repentance, or **(4)** with the whole moral government that God exercises towards mankind; and **(5)** that they imply that God's secret will conflicts with his revealed will, and make God the author of sin. But I have dealt with all these objections in the course of this book. **3** And the certain truth of these doctrines concerning God's eternal purposes follows from what I recently proved concerning God's universal providence—namely that from previously established results it follows infallibly that God orders all events, including the volitions of moral agents, by such a decisive procedure that the events are infallibly connected with what he does. And he knows what he is doing. God doesn't do what he does or order what he orders accidentally and unawares, while intending something different or not intending anything. . . . And as it has been shown that nothing is new to God in any respect, but all things are perfectly and equally in his view from eternity, it follows that his designs or purposes are not things formed anew on the basis of any new views or appearances, but are—all of them—eternal purposes. And as I have now shown how the doctrine of determining effective grace certainly follows from things I have proved in this book, the doctrine of particular eternal absolute election necessarily follows too. For if

- men are made true saints only as God makes them so and picks them out from others by an effective power and influence that decides and fixes the event, and
- God has a design or purpose in making some men saints and not others, and

•none of God's designs are new (as I have just remarked),  
it follows that

•Anyone who ever becomes a true saint has been picked out for this by God's eternal design or decree. I could also show how God's certain foreknowledge presupposes an absolute decree. . . .but I shall leave that aside here, because my book is already long enough.

From these things it inevitably follows that even if Christ can be said in some sense to have died for all—to have redeemed by his death all visible Christians and indeed the whole world—the plan for his death must have involved some particular reference to those who he intended should actually be saved by his death. It now appears, from what I have shown, that God's own absolute design aims at the actual salvation or redemption of only a certain number of people [he means: 'of only certain particular people']. . . . In giving Christ to die, God pursues the salvation of those who have been chosen, and of no-one else, strictly speaking. [Edwards goes on to insist in various ways that it isn't strictly accurate to say that Christ died to save all mankind. He adds the point that this limiting account of what God's 'proper' design was follows *also* from the fact that God foreknows everything that happens: he can't design or aim to make something happen that he *knows* isn't going to happen.]

•Things that I have proved remove some of the main objections against the doctrine of the infallible and necessary perseverance of saints, and indeed to establish some of the main foundations of this doctrine. [This is the doctrine that anyone whom God has brought into a state of virtue will necessarily remain in that state for ever.] The main prejudices of Arminians against this doctrine seem to go like this:

Such a necessary perseverance conflicts with the freedom of the will: a man first becomes virtuous and holy through his own self-determining power, and *that* is what must decide whether he perseveres in virtue and holiness. If his perseverance were necessary rather than contingent, it wouldn't be his virtue, and wouldn't be in the least praiseworthy and rewardable; and it couldn't properly be something that God could command, advise, or make promises about, nor would it be proper to warn or issue threats against falling away from it. Whereas scripture reports God as doing all those things. . . .

But I have removed the foundation for these objections, by showing that moral necessity and infallible certainty of outcomes is *not* inconsistent with these things; and by showing that for there to be virtue and appropriate rewards, commands, advice, and so on there's no need for that (non-existent!) freedom of will that consists in the will's power to determine itself.

**4** And just as the doctrines of •effective grace and •absolute election do certainly follow from things I have proved in this book, so also do some of the main foundations of the doctrine of •perseverance. If the beginning of true faith and holiness and a man's first becoming a true saint doesn't depend on the self-determining power of his will but on the determining effective grace of God, we might well argue that the same holds for his continuing to be a saint, persevering in faith and holiness. I have clearly brought out that the conversion of a sinner is due not to his self-determination but to God's determination and eternal election. . . . As well as being clear from things that I have said here, it is also very evident from the scriptures that the eternal election of saints to •faith and holiness is also an election of them to •eternal salvation; so their appointment to salvation must

also be absolute, and not at the mercy of their contingent self-determining will. And from all this it follows that it is absolutely fixed in God's decree that all true saints shall persevere to actual eternal salvation.

·THE MANNERS AND MORALS OF THE CRITICS·

But I must leave all this now to be considered by the fair and impartial reader. After you have maturely weighed them, I suggest that you think about this: Many of the first reformers and others who followed them, whom God in their day made the chief pillars of his church and greatest instruments of their deliverance from error and darkness and of the promotion of piety among them, have been insulted by the contempt with which they have been treated by many recent writers for their teaching and maintaining the doctrines that are commonly called Calvinist. Indeed, some of these new writers, while representing the doctrines of these earlier eminent theologians as utterly ridiculous and contrary to common sense, have put on a show of very generous charity in allowing that •the first Calvinists were honest well-meaning men. Some of these critics, indeed, go so far in generosity and compassion as to allow that •they did pretty well, considering when they lived and considering the great disadvantages they laboured under; while speaking of •them in a way that naturally and plainly suggest to the minds of their readers something like this:

The early Calvinists were not very intelligent, their minds were shackled and their thoughts confined by intense bigotry, and they lived in the gloomy caves of superstition. Because of all this, they stupidly accepted and zealously taught the most absurd, silly, and monstrous opinions—

opinions which (these later writers imply) deserve the greatest contempt of gentlemen who have the noble and generous freedom of thought that fortunately prevails in this age of

light and inquiry! If we wanted to, we •Calvinists• could reply to all this by giving as good as we get, and with much more justification. And really it wouldn't be arrogant or conceited of us to challenge all the Arminians on earth to make their principles—the ones that mainly separate them from their fathers, whom they so much despise—consistent with common sense. We might indeed challenge them to produce any doctrine that was ever accepted by the blindest bigot of the Church of Rome, or the most ignorant Moslem, or the wildest fanatic, that could be more conclusively shown to be self-contradictory and in conflict with common sense than *theirs* can be—though the inconsistencies of the Roman Catholic or Moslem or fanatic may not be buried so deeply, or masked so skillfully by deceitfully ambiguous words and phrases with no determinate meanings. I won't deny that many of these •anti-Calvinist• gentlemen •have great abilities, •have been helped to higher attainments in *philosophy* than those earlier theologians, and •have done great service to the church of God in some respects; but in my humble opinion it isn't superior wisdom that leads them to differ from their fathers with such lordly assurance on these theological matters.

It may also be worthwhile to think about this: In our nation and some other parts of the Protestant world, the state of things has been greatly altered in our time and that of the preceding generation by the widespread explosive rejection of Calvinist doctrines—a rejection that is often spoken of as a matter for great rejoicing by the friends of truth, learning, and virtue, and as an instance of the great increase of light in the Christian church. It may be worth thinking about whether this really is a good change caused by an increase of true knowledge and understanding in religious matters, or whether there isn't some reason to fear that it has been caused by something worse than that.

Think also about the *boldness* of some writers who don't shrink from saying that if such-and-such things are true, then God is unjust and cruel and guilty of outright deceit and double-dealing and so on—although the 'such-and-such things' seem to be demonstrable dictates of reason as well as certain dictates from the mouth of God. •Some, indeed, have gone so far as to assert confidently that if any book that claims to be scripture teaches such doctrines—as those of Calvinism—that alone entitles us to reject it as something that can't be the word of God. •Others, not going as far as that, have said that if the Bible *seems* to teach any such doctrines that are so contrary to reason, we ought to look for some other interpretation of the passages where such Calvinist doctrines seem to be expressed. •Yet others stop short even of that: they express a delicacy and religious fear lest they should accept and teach anything that seems to reflect on God's moral character or to disparage his methods of administration in his moral government; so they express themselves as not daring to accept certain doctrines although they seem to be presented in scripture according to the most obvious and natural construction of the words. This is better than either of the other two groups, but it would show a truer modesty and humility if they instead relied entirely on the wisdom and discernment of God. *He* •knows infinitely better than we do what conforms with his own perfections; he •never intended to leave these matters to the decision of the wisdom and discernment of men; his plan was always to use his own unerring instruction to settle for us what the truth is, because he knows how untrustworthy our judgment is, and how extremely prone vain and blind men are to err in such matters.

If the Bible really *did* clearly teach the doctrines opposite to the ones that people are stumbling over so much—i.e. did teach the Arminian doctrine of free will, and other doctrines depending on it—that would be the greatest of all difficulties

regarding the scriptures. It would create incomparably much more trouble than any that comes from its containing any, even the most mysterious, Calvinist doctrines (those doctrines of the first reformers, which our recent free-thinkers have so superciliously exploded). It is in fact a glorious argument for the divinity of the holy scriptures that they teach doctrines such that, although this is true of them:

•At various times in history, through the blindness of men's minds and the strong prejudices of their hearts, they are rejected as most absurd and unreasonable by the 'wise and great' men of the world;

this is also true of them:

•When they are most carefully and strictly examined, they turn out to be perfectly in conformity with the most demonstrable, certain, and natural dictates of reason.

It seems from this that the 'foolishness' of God is wiser than men, and that God does what he is said to do in 1 Corinthians 1:19-20:

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world!

And this will probably continue to be the case in the future, as it is written there (27-9):

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.

Amen.