

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 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

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 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.