

Freedom of the Will

by

Jonathan Edwards

(1703-1758)

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British spelling has been retained.
Scripture citations have been Anglicized and corrected.
The original *Index of Scripture* is not included.
Latin Terms are translated *in situ* rather than indexed.

Additional material has been included:

- W.T. Tchividjian's *Reflections*
- Edwards' original *Preface*
- Excerpts from Dr. Whitby's book

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Editor's Comments

Jonathan Edwards was a brilliant man, a Renaissance man. His interests involved every aspect of the human condition, and every area of science. He had little patience with metaphysics, and yet this is a metaphysical work – but it is also a pioneering work. Perry Miller writes, “not until Jonathan Edwards was there a mind capable of sustained independent speculation.”¹ His Puritan forebears were not original thinkers; “their intellectual energies were devoted to learning what others had taught, or at best to make novel combinations of ideas already enunciated.”² But Edwards was an innovative and profound thinker, not hesitating to ‘clarify’ the ideas of John Locke, Isaac Watts, and Thomas Hobbes. He is justifiably famous for his contributions to theology.³ But even the secular world recognizes him for his contributions to religious psychology, which this book exemplifies.

The first 56 pages or so may seem repetitive, wordy, and abstruse. But Edwards is identifying and refuting a number of subtle logical errors in Arminian theology, reducing them all to the same self-contradiction. To help the reader follow his argument, I have italicized distinguishing words in sentences that might otherwise sound identical. I have annotated and critiqued some of Edwards’ propositions, and provided additional information and examples. I hope they are more helpful than annoying. Edwards’ language dates from the early 18th century, so it is expectedly archaic and difficult to understand; but it is also technical. This was written to the Academy, not to laymen. Add to this, the challenge that his personal style of writing is complex, and parenthetical, with a penchant for double and triple negatives. I modified the language to make it more accessible to a modern, and perhaps wider, audience.

Previous editors replaced some archaic words and syntax. But this present edition is probably closer to a paraphrase. Words have been substituted and added; parallelism has been employed to complete sentences or ideas; run-on sentences have been broken into several sentences; and pronouns with no reference are now referenced. Unnecessary and duplicative words that obscured the meaning and the impact of Edwards’ observations have been removed. The syntax has been simplified by putting parenthetical statements in actual parentheses, and by rearranging subordinate clauses. Modern punctuation is used, mostly substituting dashes, colons, and semi-colons as appropriate, and by removing extra commas. However, his entire treatise is here. Of course, you are welcome to read his original treatise if a paraphrase seems somehow irreverent. I pray that no substantive errors in this edition undermine my intent to remain faithful to the original work. I also pray that you come to understand how God’s sovereignty and your free will can act in concert. Both are at once fully operative, existing in tension, rather than with contradiction: *God is fully sovereign; and man is fully responsible.*

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William H. Gross
November 2013

¹ Miller, Perry, *The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge 1939, 1982), p. 48.

² Ibid.

³ McClymond and McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2012) – these authors identify five areas of theology in which Edwards made a major contribution: trinitarian communication, creaturely participation, necessitarian dispositionalism, divine priority, and harmonious constitutionalism.

REFLECTIONS on Jonathan Edwards' View of Free Will

by W. Tullian Tchividjian

Introduction

Is the human will bound or free? Can man choose freely between each and every option presented to him? Is man's will neutral or has it been internally affected in such a way so as to influence his choices? How far did man fall when he sinned? Was it a mere stumble, or was it total? If it was total and we are unable to incline ourselves toward anything righteous, then how can we be responsible for our unrighteousness? In my opinion, there is no better theological contribution to this issue than that of Jonathan Edwards. His rigorous yet clear articulation of the issue sheds tremendous light on a thorny and controversial topic. It is his contribution that I want to briefly reflect on. But before I do, I want to take a brief look at how this issue first arose in its most prominent form.

A Brief History

There does not seem to be any record of a major controversy concerning man's freedom in the decision-making process prior to the Pelagian controversy of the 5th century. To be sure, there were debates concerning "free will" prior to the Pelagian controversy (Chrysostom, Origen, Jerome, and others opposed determinism), but none that took center stage the way the Pelagian controversy did.

Pelagius, a British-born monk who resided in Rome before it fell in 410, was "roused to anger by an inert Christendom, that excused itself by pleading the frailty of the flesh and the impossibility of fulfilling the grievous commandments of God. [Pelagius] preached that God commanded nothing impossible—that man possessed the power of doing the good if only he willed—and that the weakness of the flesh was merely a pretext".¹ This frustration with the church of his day led Pelagius to the conclusion that man's chief problem is not his inability to do what God commands in and of himself, but rather his refusal to do that which he is capable of doing, namely, righteous works. Man can achieve in and of himself, according to Pelagius, whatever is required of him in morality and religion. Human nature remains uncorrupted and the natural will free to do all good. He was unable to see how responsibility could reside in us without free will. In fact, for Pelagius, there is no need for a Redeemer-Christ, for what is it that we need redemption from if we can do all things righteous on our own? This position led Pelagius to eventually deny the universality of sin, for which he was condemned in 418 AD at the Council of Carthage.

It was St. Augustine who, at this time, rose to challenge the position of Pelagius and argued fiercely for the bondage of the will. Augustine was undoubtedly Pelagius' most outspoken opponent and he stressed that grace is an absolute necessity from beginning to end. Sin has, according to Augustine, so affected our nature that we are naturally inclined toward sin and sin only. "It was by the evil use of his free will that man destroyed both it and himself", said Augustine. Man is truly "dead in his trespasses and sins", and in a desperate situation. Apart from grace, according to Augustine, no one can be saved, much less, do that which is righteous before God. For Augustine, it was an undermining of the gospel to say that man has the power in and of himself to incline himself godward. Justification is entirely of God.

In defending these views, it was Augustine who won the day, but the issue did not go away. It comes up again and again throughout church history. In 1525, Martin Luther wrote *Bondage of*

¹ Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, part 2, book 2 trans. Jas. Millar (1898; New York: Dover, 1961), pg. 174.

the Will in response to Erasmus' book entitled *Diatribes Concerning Free Will*. Luther echoed Augustine by asserting that if one holds to a view that sees the will as completely free and able, in and of itself, to choose that which is righteous, then man is able to take partial credit for his salvation. Does God get all the glory or just some of it? Luther vehemently argues that unless sovereign grace intervenes we can do nothing righteous before God in and of ourselves. We are hopeless!

The other Reformers (Calvin, Zwingli, Bucer, Knox) were one with Luther in these convictions and went on themselves to articulate it further, most notably Calvin in his *Institutes*. And while many of the Puritans, one and two hundred years later, agreed with and held to the view that man's will is bound by sin so that sin affects his decisions, there was none who articulated it better than Jonathan Edwards.

Jonathan Edwards' Background

Born in 1703 into a pioneer family on the frontier of East Windsor, Connecticut, Jonathan Edwards was the only son of twelve children. His father, Timothy, was a pastor. At the age of thirteen, Edwards went to Yale College and graduated in 1720. After a few years of teaching in New York and at Yale, he became an assistant pastor to his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, at a Congregational Church in Northampton. After Stoddard died, Edwards became the pastor. A series of conversions took place at his church, which coincided with the conversions taking place under the preaching of George Whitefield, an English evangelist, in the same area. Conversions began to sweep the area and a spiritual revival like none other took place. We know it today as the First Great Awakening.

It has been said of Jonathan Edwards that he produced one of the most thorough and compelling bodies of theological writing in the history of America. More commonly asserted is the statement that Edwards was "the greatest intellect that America has ever produced". Perhaps this is seen best in his book *Freedom of the Will*.

Freedom of the Will

A glancing at the title might lead some to think that Edwards and Luther differed. This is not so, essentially. The title illustrates Edwards' thesis that *we are free to choose that which we most desire*. The truth, though, according to Edwards, is that because by nature we are dead in our trespasses and sins, we desire only sin. Our natural inclination is not toward righteousness, but toward sin. All mankind, according to Edwards, are "by nature in a state of total ruin, both with respect to the moral evil of which they are the subjects, and the afflictive evil to which they are exposed, the one as the consequence and punishment of the other".¹

According to Edwards, proof of original sin is easily demonstrated. Aside from the supernatural biblical proof found in Romans 1, 3, 5 and Ephesians 2, there is plenty of natural proof as well: All people sin! All of human history testifies to this. And we have more proof today, following two World Wars and one Cold War, than Edwards had in his day. Because we are free to choose that which we most desire, and because what we most desire is to destroy ourselves, *it is our freedom that turns out to be our greatest enemy*.

The Will as the Mind Choosing

Edwards defines the will as "the mind choosing". This is unique for the simple reason that up until this point, nobody had bothered to refine a careful definition of the will. Everyone assumed that "will" was self-defining. Our choices, according to Edwards, are not determined by the will itself but by the mind. Our choices are *determined by what we think is most*

¹ Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*, in Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 10th ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh/Carlisle, Penn: Banner of Truth, 1979, 1:1).

desirable at any given moment. But why does the mind choose one thing over another? This is where Edwards introduces the idea of “motives”. We choose one thing over another because our mind chooses what it thinks is best. John Gerstner sums up Edwards’ point well:

Your choices as a rational person are always based on various considerations or motives that are before you at the time. Those motives have a certain weight with you, and the motives for and against reading a book, for example, are weighed in the balance of your mind; the motives that outweigh all others are what you, indeed, choose to follow. You, being a rational person, will always choose what seems to you to be the right thing, the wise thing, the most advisable thing to do. If you choose not to do the right thing, the advisable thing, the thing that you are inclined to do, you would, of course, be insane. You would be choosing something that you did not choose. You would find something preferable that you did not prefer. But you, being a rational and sane person choose something because it seems to you the right, proper, good, advantageous thing to do.¹

This is precisely the point that Edwards makes with regard to motives. We choose according to that which we desire most. The problem, however, as we noted earlier, is that because the fall was total and not partial, and as a result we are all dead in our trespasses and sins desiring only sin by nature, what seems to us to be right, proper, and good is often wrong, improper, and bad. Sin has made us God-haters at the core of our souls so that we are all by nature at enmity with God. In order for us to do what God would have us to do, we need to be who God wants us to be. And in order for us to be who God wants us to be, we need new natures. And because we cannot change our own nature, no more than we can push a bus while we are riding in it, we are in need of the sovereign hand of grace to change it for us. *We cannot do what pleases God because we will not do what pleases God. And the reason we will not is because we don’t want to.*

“Natural Inability” and “Moral Inability”

We remember that what plagued Pelagius was the paradox of human responsibility to follow God’s holy commands and human inability. According to Pelagius, the fact that God commands us to obey him implies that we are able to obey him. If inability reigns, then God would be unjust to command our obedience. This problem, as we have seen, eventually led Pelagius to deny the universality of sin. He was unable to deal with the paradox. Edwards’ contribution to this issue is perhaps his most profound. Edwards distinguished between what he referred to as “natural inability” and “moral inability”. “We are said to be naturally unable to do something, when we can’t do it if we will, because what is most commonly called nature doesn’t allow it... Moral inability consists in the opposition or want of inclination”.² In other words, I am said to be naturally unable to do something, no matter how hard I desire it, if nature doesn’t allow it, such as flying or walking on water. In this sense, we are all naturally able to do what is right. After all, we have all of the natural capacities to understand the law of God. We have a mouth that is physically capable of uttering praises to God. We have a will that enables us to choose to do what we want to do. *Original sin does not eradicate our humanity or ability to make choices.* The natural ability remains intact. God has endowed us with the natural ability to do what he requires of us. What we lack, however, is the moral ability. What was lost in the fall is the want or inclination to do that which is righteous. We have no desire to obey God. We have, in fact, no desire for God at all. *Fallen man has the natural ability to choose God but he lacks the moral ability to do so.* For this reason, God can justly command our obedience (because we have the necessary faculties of choice), and at the same time hold us responsible for the choices

¹ John H. Gerstner, *A Primer on Free Will* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1982) pp.4-5.

² Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, pg.159 as quoted in Sproul, *Willing to Believe*, pg.162.

we make. A.W. Pink says, “By nature [man] possesses natural ability but lacks moral and spiritual ability. The fact that he does not possess the latter does not destroy his responsibility, because his responsibility rests upon the fact that he does possess the former”.¹ Without a righteous inclination to do good, no one can choose good. Our decisions follow our inclinations. Sin has rendered us hopeless, according to Edwards, but this is precisely what makes the gospel so great.

The Greatness of the Gospel

“For Edwards, the greatness of the gospel is visible only when viewed against the backdrop of the greatness of the ruin into which we have been plunged by the fall. The greatness of the disease requires the greatness of the remedy”.² As someone once said, “The worst word about us as sinners is not the last word”. It was the gospel that Edwards was interested in, not some theoretical debate. He knew that what made good news good was that it was preceded by bad news. Our fallen nature due to sin is bad news. Our natural inclination to sin is bad news. Our inability to incline ourselves godward is bad news. Our self-destruction as a result of our sin is bad news. The grace of God in redeeming man from this desperate state and changing his nature so that he will be free to serve God is not just good news, it’s great news.

Conclusion

In summary of Edwards’ view of free will, he believes that man is free in that he can and does choose according to his strongest inclinations — his desires. But because of original sin and the resulting corruption of humanity, no one is naturally inclined godward. In fact, we hate God by nature. We have the natural ability to please him but we lack the moral ability. Our nature has to be changed if we are to seek God and do what he pleases. And only God can liberate the sinner from his captivity to that which is destroying him, namely, his freedom! This is nothing more and nothing less than the gospel that Edwards so committed his life to.

Source of REFLECTIONS:

<http://www.thirdmill.org/files/english/html/th/TH.h.Tchividjian.Edwards%20and%20Free%20Will.html>
[IIIM Magazine Online](#), Volume 3, Number 51, December 17 to December 23, 2001

¹ A.W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984) pg. 154.

² R.C. Sproul, *Willing to Believe: The Controversy Over Free Will* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1997) pg. 148

OF THAT

FREEDOM OF WILL

WHICH IS SUPPOSED TO BE ESSENTIAL TO MORAL AGENCY,
VIRTUE AND VICE, REWARD AND PUNISHMENT, PRAISE AND BLAME.

Rom. 9.16 it is not him that wills.

PREFACE ¹

Many find great fault with calling professing Christians who differ one from another in some matters of opinion, by distinct *names*. And especially calling them by the names of particular men, who have distinguished themselves as supporters and promoters of those opinions. For example, calling some professing Christians *Arminians*, from Arminius; others *Arians*, from Arius; others *Socinians*, from Socinus, etc. They think it is unjust in itself, because it supposes and suggests that the persons marked by these names received those doctrines which they entertain, out of regard *to*, and reliance *on*, those men after whom they are named—as though they made them their rule. Yet, in the same way, the followers of Christ are called *Christians* after his name, the one whom they regard and depend on as their great Head and Rule. That is acceptable—whereas, this is an unjust and groundless imputation on those that go under the aforementioned denominations.

Thus, they say, there is not the least ground to suppose that the chief divines who embrace the scheme of doctrine which is called *Arminianism* by many, believe it all the more, because Arminius believed it. And there is not the least ground to believe, nor the least reason to think otherwise, than that they sincerely and impartially study the Holy Scriptures, and inquire after the mind of Christ, with as much judgment and sincerity as any of those who call them these names. For they seek after truth, and do not care whether they think exactly as *Arminius* did; indeed, in some things, they actually differ from him.

This practice of labelling others is also considered injurious because it supposedly and naturally leads the multitude to imagine that the difference between persons thus labelled, and others, is greater than it actually is. It is so great, in fact, that it is as if they were another species of being. And they also object to it as arising from an uncharitable, narrow, contracted spirit which, they say, commonly inclines persons to confine all that is good to themselves, and their own party, and to make a wide distinction between themselves and others; and to stigmatize those who differ from them with odious names. They say, moreover, that keeping up such a distinction of names, has a direct tendency to maintain distance and disaffection, and to sustain mutual hatred among Christians who should all be united in friendship and charity, even though they cannot think alike in all things.

I confess, these things are very plausible; and I will not deny that there are some unhappy consequences of this distinction of names, and that men's infirmities and evil dispositions often make an ill use of it. Yet, I humbly conceive that these objections are carried far beyond reason. The generality of mankind are disposed enough, and a great deal too much, to uncharitableness, and to be censorious and bitter towards those who differ from them in religious opinions. This evil temper of mind will take occasion to exert itself from many things that are in themselves innocent, useful, and necessary. Yet there is no need to suppose that distinguishing persons of different opinions by different names, arises mainly from an uncharitable spirit. It may arise from the disposition that exists in mankind (whom God has distinguished with an ability and inclination for speech) to improve the benefit of language, in the proper use and design of names, given to things about which they often have occasion to

¹ This Preface is taken from *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume One*, Bath Press, Avon 1834, p. 514.

speak. This enables them to express their ideas with ease and expedition, without being encumbered with an obscure and difficult circumlocution.¹ And thus distinguishing persons of different opinions in religious matters may not imply any more than that there is a *difference*; a difference of which we find we often have occasion to take notice of. And it is always a defect in language, in such cases, to be obliged to make use of a description instead of a name. Thus we often have occasion to speak of those who are the descendants of the ancient inhabitants of *France*, in distinction from the descendants of the inhabitants of *Spain*. We find great convenience in those distinguishing words, *French* and *Spaniard*. By using these words, the significance to our mind is quick and easy, and our speech is delivered from the burden of a continual reiteration of diffuse descriptions, with which it must otherwise be embarrassed.

There is often occasion to speak concerning the difference between those who, in their general scheme of divinity, agree with these two noted men: Calvin and Arminius. *Arminianism* is the matter that the latter group confesses. And *Calvinism* is what those who often, in their discourses and writings, take note of as the supposedly absurd and pernicious opinions of the former. Therefore, making use of different names in this case cannot reasonably be objected to as something which must come from so bad a cause as they assign. It is easy to account for, without supposing it to arise from any other source than the exigency of the moment. It is the way mankind refers to those things which they frequently mention, by employing certain distinguishing names for them. It is an effect, similar to what we see in countless cases, where the cause is not at all blameworthy.

Nevertheless, at first, I had thoughts of carefully avoiding the use of the appellation, *Arminian*, in this Treatise. But I soon found I would be put into great difficulty by it; and my discourse would be too encumbered with circumlocution, instead of using a name which would better express the thing I intended. Therefore I must ask to be excused by those who are apt to be offended by things of this nature, because that I have so freely used the term *Arminian* in the following Discourse. I profess it is without any design to stigmatize persons of any sort with a name of reproach, or at all to make them appear more odious. If, when I had occasion to speak of those divines who are commonly called by this name, instead of styling them *Arminians*, I had called them “*these men*” as Dr. Whitby calls *Calvinistic* divines, it probably would not have been taken any better, nor would it be thought to show a better temper, or better manners. I have done as I would be done by in this matter.

However the term *Calvinistic* is, in these days, among most, a term of greater reproach than the term *Arminian*; yet I would not take it at all amiss to be called a *Calvinist* for distinction’s sake. Though I utterly disclaim a dependence on Calvin for believing the doctrines which I hold, just because he believed and taught them too; and I cannot justly be charged with believing in everything he taught, just as he taught them.

But, lest I really be an occasion for injury to some persons, I would give notice here, that though I generally speak of that doctrine concerning free-will and moral agency—which I oppose as *Arminian* doctrine—yet I would not be understood as asserting that every divine or author whom I have occasion to mention as maintaining that doctrine, was properly an *Arminian*, or was one of that sort which is commonly called by that name. Some of them went far beyond the *Arminians*; and I would by no means charge *Arminians* in general with all the corrupt doctrine which these men maintained.

Thus, for instance, it would be very injurious, if I were to rank *Arminian* divines, in general, with such authors as Mr. Chubb. I do not doubt that many of them find some of his doctrines abhorrent; though he agrees, for the most part, with *Arminians* in his notion of the Freedom of the Will. And, on the other hand, though I suppose this notion is a leading article in the

¹ A style that involves indirect ways of expressing things.

Arminian scheme—which if pursued in its consequences, will truly infer or naturally lead to all the rest—yet I do not charge all those who have held this doctrine, with being *Arminians*. For whatever may be the consequences of the doctrine really, yet some who hold this doctrine, may not own nor see these consequences. It would be unjust, in many instances, to charge every author with believing and maintaining all the real consequences of his avowed doctrines. And I desire that it may be particularly noted that, although I have occasion in the following Discourse to frequently mention the author of the book entitled, *An Essay on the Freedom of the Will in God and the Creature*,¹ as holding that notion of Freedom of Will which I oppose; yet I do not mean to call him an *Arminian*. However, in that doctrine he agrees with *Arminians*, and he departs from the current and general opinion of *Calvinists*.

If the author of that Essay is the same as it is commonly ascribed to, then he doubtless was not someone that ought to bear that name. But however good a divine he was, in many respects, yet that particular *Arminian* doctrine which he maintained, is never the better for being held by such a person. Nor is there less need to oppose it on that account, but rather more. This is because it will likely have all the more pernicious influence for being taught by a divine of his name and character—supposing of course that the doctrine is wrong, and in itself it has an ill tendency.

I have nothing further to say by way of preface; but only to bespeak the reader's candour, and calm attention to what I have written. The subject is of such importance as to *demand* attention, and the most thorough consideration. Of all the kinds of knowledge that we can ever obtain, the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves, are the most important. Religion is the great business for which we are created, and on which our happiness depends; and religion consists in an intercourse between ourselves and our Maker. And so it has its foundation in God's nature and ours, and in the relation in which God and we stand to each other; therefore a true knowledge of *both* must be necessary to true religion. But the knowledge of ourselves consists chiefly in right apprehensions concerning those two chief faculties of our nature: the *understanding* and the *will*. Both are very important. And yet the science of the will must be confessed to be of greatest moment, inasmuch as all virtue and religion have their seat more immediately in the will, and consist more especially in the right acts and habits of this faculty.

The grand question about the Freedom of the Will, is the main point that belongs to the science of the Will. Therefore, I say that the importance of the subject greatly *demands* the attention of Christians, and especially of divines. But as to my *manner* of handling the subject, I would be far from presuming to say that it *demands* the attention of the reader to what I have written. I am ready to admit that, in this matter, I depend on the reader's courtesy. But only in this: I may have some basis for asking that, if the reader is disposed to censure what I have written, I may first be fully and patiently heard, and well attended to, before I am condemned. However, this is what I would humbly *ask* of my readers, together with the prayers of all sincere lovers of truth: that I may have much of that Spirit which Christ promised his disciples, and which guides into all truth—and also that the blessed and powerful influences of this Spirit would make truth victorious in the world.

¹ Isaac Watts, *An Essay on the Freedom of Will in God and in Creatures* (London, 1732).

PART I. Various Terms Defined.

Section I. Concerning the *Nature* of the Will.

IT may possibly be thought that there is no great need to go about defining or describing the Will; this word is as generally well understood as any other words we can use to explain it. And so perhaps it would be—if the philosophers, metaphysicians, and polemic divines had not made the matter obscure by the things they’ve said about it. But since that is the case, I think it may be of some use, and it will tend to bring clearness to the following discourse, if I say a few things concerning it.

Therefore, I observe that the Will (without any metaphysical refining) is what the mind uses to *choose* anything. The faculty of the will is that *power*, or *principle of mind*, by which it is capable of choosing. And so an *act of the will* is the same as an *act of choosing*, or choice.

If anyone thinks it is a more perfect definition of the will to say that it is that by which the *soul* either chooses or refuses, I am content with that; though I think it is enough to say that it is that by which the soul chooses. For in every act of will, whatever it may be, the mind chooses one thing rather than another; it chooses something rather than the contrary, or rather than the lack or absence of that thing. So in every act of refusal, the mind chooses the absence of the thing refused: the positive and the negative are set before the mind for its choice, and it chooses the negative—the mind making its choice in that case, is properly an act of the Will. When the Will determines between the two, it is voluntary; but that is the same thing as making a choice. So that, by whatever names we call the act of the Will—whether choosing, refusing, approving, disapproving, liking, disliking, embracing, rejecting, determining, directing, commanding, forbidding, inclining, being averse, being pleased or displeased with—all of these may be reduced to this capacity to choose. For the soul to act *voluntarily*, is always to act *electively*. Mr. Locke says,

(1) “The Will signifies nothing but a power or an ability to prefer or choose.”¹ And, in the foregoing page, he says, “The word *preferring* seems best to express the act of volition;” but he adds that “it does not express it precisely; for though a man would prefer flying to walking, yet who can say he ever *wills* it?” But the instance he mentions does not prove that there is anything else in willing besides merely preferring. For it should be considered what the immediate object of the will is, with respect to a man’s walking, or with any other external action. It is not actually being removed from one place to another—whether on the earth or through the air. These are more remote objects of preference. Rather, such or such a thing is an immediate *exertion* of himself. The thing next *chosen*, or *preferred*, when a man *wills* to walk, is not his being removed to such a place where he wills to be, but such an exertion and motion of his legs and feet, etc., that will get him there. And his *willing* such an alteration in his body in the present moment, is nothing more than choosing or preferring such an alteration in his body at that a moment; or his liking it better than not doing it. God has so made and established the human nature, and the soul is so united to the body, that when the soul prefers or chooses such an immediate exertion or alteration of the body, it instantaneously follows. There is nothing else in the actions of my mind that I am conscious of while I walk, except my preferring or choosing to walk, through successive moments. And [in so choosing], such alterations of my external sensations and motions, combine with my expectation that it will be so. I have always found by experience, that on such an immediate preference, these sensations and motions do actually, instantaneously, and constantly arise.²

¹ John Locke, *On Human Understanding* (London 1690) chap. xxii ‘Power’, par. 17.

² This is why it is so startling for a paraplegic, that the *will* to move is there, but the *body* doesn’t respond.

But it is not so in the case of flying. Though a man may be said, remotely, to choose or to prefer flying, he does not prefer, or desire, under the circumstances in view, any immediate exertion of the members of his body in order to achieve it. This is because he has no expectation that he could obtain the desired end by any such exertion. Thus he does not prefer, or incline to, any bodily exertion in this circumstance—apprehending that it would be wholly in vain. So if we carefully distinguish the proper objects of the several acts of the will, it will not appear by this, or any similar instances, that there is any difference between *volition* and *preference*—or that a man's choosing, or liking best, or being pleased with something, are not the same as his *willing* that thing. Thus an act of the will is commonly expressed as being *pleased* to do this or that. And so a man doing as he *wills*, and doing as he *pleases*, are the same thing in common speech.

Mr. Locke says,

(2) "The Will is entirely distinguished from desire;¹ which in the very same action may have a quite contrary tendency from what our will sets us upon." He says,

"A man whom I must obey, may oblige me to persuade another man using arguments which, at the same time I am speaking them, I may wish to fail. In this case, it is plain that my *Will* and my *Desire* run counter to each other." (Essay II.21.30)

I do not assume that Will and Desire are words of precisely the same meaning: *Will* seems to be a word of more general meaning, extending to things both present and absent. While Desire respects something absent. I may prefer my present situation and posture—suppose it is sitting still, or having my eyes open—and so I may *will* it. Yet I cannot think they are so entirely distinct that they can ever be properly said to run counter to each other. A man never, in any instance, wills anything contrary to his desires, or desires anything contrary to his will.² The aforementioned instance which Mr. Locke produces, is no proof that he ever does. He may, on some consideration or other, will to utter speeches which have a tendency to persuade someone, and he may still desire that they do *not* persuade him. Yet his Will and his Desire do not run counter at all: the thing which he wills, is the very same thing he desires; and he does not will something, and desire a contrary thing, in any particular.

In this instance, it is not carefully observed what is willed, and what is desired. If it were, it would be found that Will and Desire do not clash in the least. The thing willed on some consideration, is to utter such words; and certainly, the same consideration so influences him, that he does not desire the contrary; all things considered, he *chooses* to utter such words, and he does *not* desire NOT to utter them. And so what Mr. Locke speaks of as *desired*—that the words intended to persuade, should not indeed persuade—is not contrary to his Will. For he does not *will* that they should be effectual, but rather he *wills* that they should *not* be effectual, just as he desires.³ In order to prove that the Will and Desire may run counter to each other, it should be shown that they may be contrary to one another *in the same thing*, or with respect to *the very same object* of the Will or Desire. But in this instance, there are two objects; and in each object, taken by itself, the Will and Desire agree. It is no wonder that they do not agree in different things, though little distinguished in their nature. The Will may not agree with the

¹ Locke, *ibid.* par. 30.

² *Is Edwards correct?* A police officer may not desire to take a criminal's life, and yet choose to do so. His desire to preserve his own life, or the life of another, surmounts his desire *not* to take the criminal's life – it is the *will* that *chooses* one over the other. What of sin? If the desire of the flesh is to sin, and the desire of the Spirit is *not* to sin, is it not our *will* that *chooses* between these competing desires, because the flesh wars against the soul? (Rom 7.23; 1Pet 2.11)

³ If the man's Will was *not* to persuade, then either he would *not* speak, or he would choose to speak different words. What prevents him from doing so is *coercion*. The person he *must* obey is forcing him to act *against* his will, and *against* his desire. So his Will and his Desire are the same, yet he *chooses* to act against them, as he is *obliged* to do. This is a *logical contradiction*, unless he had no actual choice. That's perhaps a more direct solution than Edward's, which says that two different *objects* of desire, are two different desires.

Will, nor Desire agree with Desire, in *different* things. In this very instance which Mr. Locke mentions, a person may, on some consideration, desire to use persuasions, and at the same time, he may desire them *not* to prevail; yet nobody will say that Desire runs counter to Desire in this; or that this proves that Desire is a perfectly distinct thing from Desire. The same might be observed about the other instance which Mr. Locke produces: a man's desire to be eased of pain, etc.

But, not to dwell any longer on this, whether Desire and Will, and whether Preference and Volition are precisely the same things, I trust it will be allowed by all that, in every act of *Will*, there is an act of *choice*; that in every volition there is a preference, or a prevailing inclination of the soul, which at that instant is not perfectly indifferent with respect to the direct object of the volition. So that, in every act or exercise of the Will; there is some preponderance of the mind, one way or another—and the soul would have or do one thing rather than another, or *not* have or do that thing. Where there is no absolute *preference* or choice of one thing over another, but a perfect, continuing equilibrium, there is no *volition*.

Section II. Concerning the *Determination of the Will*.

BY “determining the Will,” if the phrase has any meaning, it must be *causing the act of the Will, or choice, to be this way and not another*. The Will is said to be determined when, in consequence of some action or influence, its choice is directed to, and fixed on a particular *object*. Just as when we speak of the *determination of motion*, we mean causing the motion of the body to be in a particular direction, rather than another.

The Determination of the Will supposes an *effect*, which must have a *cause*. If the Will is determined, then there is a Determiner. This must be assumed to be intended even by those who say that the Will determines itself. If it is so, then the Will is both Determiner and determined; it is a *cause* that acts and produces *effects* on itself, and it is the *object* of its own influence and action.

With respect to that grand inquiry, “What determines the Will?” It would be very tedious and unnecessary at present to examine all the various opinions which have been advanced concerning this matter; nor is it necessary to enter into a particular discussion of all the points debated in disputes on that other question, “Whether the Will always follows the final dictate of the understanding?” It is sufficient for my present purpose to say that the Determiner of the Will is that motive which is the strongest as it stands in view of the mind. But it may be necessary to explain my meaning a little.

By *motive*, I mean the whole of whatever moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition (to make a choice), whether that is one thing alone, or many things in conjunction. Many particular things may concur and unite their strength to induce the mind; and when this is true, all of them together are one complex motive. And when I speak of the *strongest* motive, I refer to the strength of the *whole* that operates to induce a particular act of volition, whether that is the strength of one thing alone, or of many things together.

Whatever is objectively a motive, in this sense, must be something that is extant in the view or apprehension of the understanding, or the perceiving faculty. Nothing can induce or invite the mind to will or act anything, any further than it is *perceived*, or is in some way or other in the mind's *view*; for what is wholly unperceived and perfectly out of the mind's view, cannot affect the mind at all. It is obvious that nothing is in the mind, or reaches the mind, or takes hold of it, in any way other than as it is perceived or thought of.

And I think it must also be allowed by all, that everything that is properly called a motive, excitement, or inducement to a perceiving and willing agent, has some sort and degree of tendency or advantage to move or to excite the Will, *previous* to the effect or act of the will that

has been excited. This previous tendency of the motive is what I call the *strength* of the motive. That motive which has a lesser degree of previous advantage or tendency to move the Will, or which appears “less inviting” as it stands in the view of the mind, is What I call a *weaker* motive. And that which appears most inviting, as it appears to the understanding or apprehension, has the greatest degree of previous tendency to excite and induce the choice; and that is what I call the *strongest* motive. In this sense, I suppose the will is always determined by the strongest motive.

Things that exist in the view of the mind have their strength, tendency, or advantage to move or to excite its Will, from many things pertaining to (1) the nature and circumstances of the thing viewed, (2) the nature and circumstances of the mind that views it, and (3) the degree and manner of its view—all of which it would perhaps be hard to number exactly. But I think so much may be determined in general, without any controversy, that we can safely say that whatever is perceived or apprehended by an intelligent and voluntary agent, which has the nature and influence of a motive for making some volition or choice, is considered or viewed as *good*. Nor does it have any tendency to engage the election of the soul to any further degree than it appears to engage it. To say otherwise would be to say that whatever appears to the mind, somehow has a tendency, by its appearance, to engage the mind to elect it for some other reason than appearing to be eligible—which is absurd. Therefore it must be true, in some sense, that the *will* is always as the greatest apparent good is.¹ But to rightly understand this, two things must be well and distinctly observed.

1. It must be observed in what sense I use the term *good*; namely, of the same import as *agreeable*. To appear good to the mind, as I use the phrase, is the same as to appear agreeable, or to seem pleasing to the mind. Certainly, nothing appears inviting and eligible to the mind, or tends to engage its inclination and choice, that appears evil or disagreeable; nor does anything appear inviting if the mind is indifferent to it—it is neither agreeable nor disagreeable. But if it tends to draw the inclination, and to move the Will, then it must be under the notion that it suits the mind. Therefore, what must have the greatest tendency to attract and engage the will, as it stands in the mind’s view, is what suits it best, and pleases it most; and in that sense, it is the greatest apparent good. To say otherwise is little short of a direct and plain contradiction.

The word *good*, in this sense, includes in its meaning, the removal or avoiding of evil, or of what is disagreeable and uneasy. It is agreeable and pleasing to avoid what is disagreeable and displeasing, and to have uneasiness removed. So here is included what Mr. Locke supposes determines the will. For when he speaks of *uneasiness* as determining the will, he must be understood as supposing that the end or the aim which governs the volition or act of preference, is to avoid or remove that uneasiness—and that is the same thing as choosing and seeking what is easier and more agreeable.

2. When I say that the will is, as the greatest apparent good is—or (as I explained it) that volition always has for its object the thing which appears most agreeable to it—it must be carefully observed (to avoid confusion and needless objection) that I speak of the direct and immediate object of the act of volition; and not some object to which the act of will has only an indirect and remote respect. Many acts of volition have some remote relation to an object that is different from the thing most immediately willed and chosen. Thus, when a drunkard has his liquor before him, and he must choose whether to drink it or not, the immediate objects of his present volition (between which he must now make a choice) are his own acts, in drinking the liquor, or letting it alone. This will certainly be done according to what is most agreeable to him

¹ In other words, we *always* choose what appears to be best for us – i.e., “the greatest apparent good.” And yet Paul laments, “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I *will* to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do... ¹⁹ For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, *that* I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (Rom 7:15, 19, 20 ^{NKJ})

in the present view of his mind, taken as a whole. If he chooses to drink it and not let it alone, then this action (as it stands in the view of his mind, with all that belongs to its appearance there) is more agreeable and pleasing to him than letting it alone.

But the objects to which this act of volition may relate more remotely (and which his choice may determine more indirectly), are the present pleasure the man expects by drinking, and the future misery which he judges will be the consequence of it. He may judge that this future misery when it comes, will be more disagreeable and unpleasant than refraining from drinking now. But these two things are *not* the proper objects that the act of volition is next concerned with. For the act of Will that was spoken of, concerns present drinking or forbearing to drink. If he *wills* to drink, then drinking is the proper object of the act of his Will—i.e. drinking for some reason or other, now appears most agreeable to him; it suits him best. If he chooses to refrain from drinking, then refraining is the immediate object of his Will, and *it* is most pleasing to him. If by the choice he makes, he prefers a present pleasure to a future advantage (an advantage which he judges will be greater when it comes), then a lesser present pleasure appears more agreeable to him than a greater but more distant advantage. But if a future advantage is preferred, then *that* is what appears most agreeable, and that is what suits him best. So still, the present volition is, as the greatest apparent good is, *at the present time*.

I have chosen to express myself this way: “that the Will is always as the greatest apparent good is, or it is as what appears most agreeable,” rather than saying “that the will is *determined* by the greatest apparent good,” or “by what seems most agreeable”—because what appears most agreeable to the mind, and what the mind prefers, seem scarcely distinct. If strict propriety of speech is insisted on, it may be said more properly that the *voluntary action*, which is the immediate consequence of the mind’s choice, is determined by what appears most agreeable, rather than saying that the choice itself is determined by it. Volition itself is always determined by what is in or about the mind’s view of the object, which causes it to appear most agreeable. I say “in or about the mind’s view of the object,” because what has influence to render an object in view agreeable, is not only what appears in the object that is viewed, but also the *manner* of the view, and the state and circumstances of the mind as it views that object. To specifically enumerate all the things pertaining to the mind’s view of the objects of volition which have influence by appearing agreeable to the mind, would be a matter of no small difficulty; it might require a treatise by itself, and besides, it is not necessary to my present purpose. Therefore, I shall only mention some things in general.

I. One thing that makes an object that is proposed to our choice *agreeable*, is the apparent nature and circumstances of the object. And there are various things of this sort that have influence in rendering the object more or less agreeable, such as

1. What appears in the object which renders it *beautiful and pleasant* to the mind, *or deformed and irksome*—viewing it as it is, in itself (it’s inherent).
2. The apparent *degree of pleasure or trouble* attending the object—the **consequence** of it. Such concomitants and consequences are viewed as circumstances of the object, and they should be considered as belonging to it—as it were, they are parts of it, as it stands in the mind’s view as a proposed object of choice.
3. The apparent *state of the pleasure or trouble* that appears, regarding its **timeliness**, being either nearer or further off. Timeliness, in itself, is agreeable to the mind—it is pleasurable if it is speedy, and disagreeable if it is delayed. So that, if there are two equal degrees of pleasure that are set in the mind’s view, and all other things are equal, but one is seen as imminent, and the other postponed, the nearer one will appear most agreeable, and *that* will be chosen. Though the agreeableness of the objects are exactly equal (as viewed in

themselves), they are not viewed as equal in their circumstances; for one of them has as an added benefit: the circumstance of being nearer in time.¹

II. Another thing that contributes to the agreeableness of an object of choice as it stands in the mind's view, is the *manner* of the view. If the object is something which appears connected with future pleasure, not only will the *degree* of apparent pleasure influence the choice (see I.2 above), but also the *manner* of the view, in two respects especially:

1. With respect to the *degree of assent*, with which the mind judges the pleasure to be future. It is more agreeable to have a *certain* happiness, than an *uncertain* one—and pleasure that is viewed as more probable (all other things being equal) is thus more agreeable to the mind than pleasure that is viewed as less probable.
2. With respect to the *degree of the idea or apprehension* of the future pleasure. With regard to things which are subject to our thoughts, either past, present, or future, we have much more of an idea or apprehension of some things than of others; that is, our idea of them is much clearer, livelier, and stronger. Thus the ideas we have of tangible things by immediate sensation, are usually much livelier than those we have by mere imagination, or by contemplating them when they are absent. My idea of the sun when I *look* at it is more vivid than when I only *think* of it. Our idea of the sweet relish of a delicious fruit is usually stronger when we taste it, than when we only imagine it. And sometimes, the idea we have of things by contemplation, is much stronger and clearer, than it is at other times. Thus, a man at one time has a much stronger idea of the pleasure which is to be enjoyed in eating some sort of food that he loves, than at another time.

Now the strength of the idea, or the sense that men have of future good or evil, is one thing that has great influence on their minds to excite volition. When two kinds of future pleasure are presented for choice, even if both are assumed exactly equal by the judgment, and even if both are equally certain, yet the mind will have a far more lively sense of one than of the other. The one with this livelier sense has the greatest advantage by far to affect and attract the mind, and to move the will. It is now more agreeable to the mind to choose the pleasure of the one of which it has a strong and lively sense, than to choose the one of which it has only a faint idea. The view of the former is attended by the strongest appetite, and by the greatest uneasiness attending its absence. It is agreeable to the mind to have that uneasiness removed, and to have its appetite gratified.

If several future enjoyments are presented together, as competitors for the choice of the mind—some of them will be judged greater, and others will be judged less; the mind has a livelier idea of the good of some, and less so of others; some are viewed as having a greater certainty or probability than others—and those enjoyments that appear most agreeable in one of these respects, will appear least so in other respects. In this case, all other things being equal, the agreeableness of a proposed object of choice will in some way or degree be compounded by (1) the degree of good that is presumed by the judgment, (2) the degree of apparent probability or certainty of that good, and (3) the degree of the liveliness of the idea that the mind has of that good. All of these concur together to constitute the degree to which the object appears agreeable at present; and volition will be determined accordingly.

I might further observe, that the state of the mind which views a proposed object of choice, is another thing that contributes to the agreeableness or disagreeableness of that object—the particular temper which the mind has by nature, or that has been introduced and established by education, example, custom, or some other means; or the frame or state that the mind is in on a particular occasion. That object which appears agreeable to one, does not appear

¹ “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” And “sooner is better than later.”

agreeable to another. And the same object does not always appear likewise agreeable to the same person at different times. It is most agreeable to some men to follow their reason; and to others it is most agreeable to follow their appetites: to some men, it is more agreeable to deny a vicious inclination,¹ than to gratify it; others it suits best to gratify the vilest appetites. It is more disagreeable to some men than others, to counteract a former resolution. In these respects, and many others which might be mentioned, different things will be most agreeable to different persons; and not only so, but to the same persons at different times.

But it may be needless to mention the “state of the mind” as a ground of the agreeableness of objects, as distinct from the other two grounds mentioned before: (1) The apparent nature and circumstances of the objects viewed, and (2) the manner of the view. Perhaps, if we strictly consider the matter, the different temper and state of the mind makes no alteration as to the agreeableness of objects, in any way other than as it makes the objects themselves appear differently beautiful or deformed, as having apparent pleasure or pain attending them; and as it occasions the manner of the view to be different, and occasions the idea of its beauty or deformity, its pleasure or uneasiness, to be more or less lively. However, I think so much is certain, that volition, in no instance that can be mentioned, is other than as the greatest apparent good is, in the way it has been explained.

The choice of the mind, all things considered, never departs from what, at the time, and respecting the direct and immediate objects of its decision, appears most agreeable and pleasing to it. If the immediate objects of the will are a man’s own actions, then he *wills* those actions which appear most agreeable to him. If it is now most agreeable to him to walk, all things considered, then he now *wills* to walk. If it is now most agreeable for him to speak, based on the whole of what appears to him at present, then he chooses to speak—or if it suits him best to keep silence, then he chooses to keep silence. There is scarcely a plainer and more universal dictate of the sense and experience of mankind than this: when men act voluntarily, and do what they please, then they do what suits them best, or what is most agreeable to them. To say that they do what pleases them, yet not what is agreeable to them, is the same as saying they do what they please, but do not act according to their pleasure; or that they do what they please, and yet do *not* do what they please.

It appears from these things, that in some sense, the *Will* always follows the last dictate of the *understanding*. But then the understanding must be taken in a large sense, as including the whole faculty of perception or apprehension, and not merely what is called reason or judgment. If the “dictate of the understanding” means *what reason declares best*, or what most tends to the person’s happiness, taking in the whole of its duration, then it is *not* true that the *Will* always follows the last dictate of the understanding. Such a dictate of reason is quite a different matter from things which appear most agreeable at present, all things being put together which pertain to the mind’s present perceptions in any respect. Although, when that dictate of reason does take place, it has a part in the compound influence which moves the Will. Therefore it should be considered in estimating the degree of that appearance of good which the Will always follows. It will either have its influence added to other things, or taken from them. When such dictate of reason *concur*s with other things, then its weight is *added* to them, as if put into the same scale; but when it is *against* them, its weight is put in the opposite scale, resisting the influence of other things. Yet its resistance is often overcome by the greater weight of those other things, and so the act of the Will is determined in opposition to them.

I hope these things serve in some measure to illustrate and confirm the position laid down in the beginning of this section—“That *the Will is always determined by the strongest motive*,” or by that view of the mind which has the greatest degree of previous tendency to excite volition.

¹ That is, an inclination to vice (as opposed to inflicting pain).

But whether I have rightly explained the thing in which the strength of motives consists or not, my failing in this will not overthrow the position itself which carries much of its own evidence with it. It is a point of chief importance to the purpose of the ensuing discourse. The truth of it will, I hope, appear with great clearness, before I have finished what I have to say on the subject of human liberty.

Section III. Concerning the terms *Necessity*, *Impossibility*, *Inability*, etc.

THE words *necessary*, *impossible*, etc. are abundantly used in controversies about Free-Will and Moral Agency. Therefore, the sense in which they are used should be clearly understood.

Here I might say that something is said to be *necessary* when it *must* be, and *cannot* be otherwise. But this would not be a proper definition of *Necessity*, any more than I can explain the word “*must*” by using the phrase, “there is a *Necessity*.” The words *must*, *can*, and *cannot*, need explication as much as the words *necessary*, and *impossible*; except that the former are words we more commonly use in earliest life.

The word *necessary*, as used in common speech, is a relative term. It relates to some supposed opposition made to the existence of something, and that opposition is overcome, or it proves insufficient to hinder or alter the thing. This is what “*necessary*” means in its original and proper sense, notwithstanding all supposed opposition to it. To say that something is *necessary*, is the same as saying that it is *impossible* for it not to be. But the word *impossible* is clearly a relative term as well; it refers to supposed power exerted to bring something to pass, which is insufficient for the effect—just as the word “*unable*” is relative and is related to an ability or endeavor which is insufficient. The word “*irresistible*” is also relative; it always refers to resistance which is made (or might be made) to some force or power tending to produce an effect—that resistance is insufficient to withstand the power, or hinder the effect. The common notion of *Necessity* and *Impossibility* implies something that frustrates an endeavor or desire. Several things are to be noted here:

1. Things are said to be *necessary* (in general) which are, or will be, despite any supposed opposition from whatever quarter. But things are said to be *necessary to us*, which are or will be despite all supposed opposition *from us* in the case. The same may be observed of the word *impossible*, and other similar terms.
2. These terms *necessary*, *impossible*, *irresistible*, etc. more especially belong to controversies about liberty and moral agency, as used in the latter of the two senses now mentioned—as being either *necessary to us*, or *impossible for us*, with relation to any supposed opposition or endeavor of ours.
3. Just as the word *Necessity* is relative in its common use, and always refers to some supposed but insufficient opposition, so when we speak of anything as being *necessary to us*, it is related to some supposed opposition of our Wills, or some voluntary exertion or effort of ours to the contrary. For we do not properly oppose an event other than by voluntarily opposing it. Things regarding ourselves are said to “be what must be,” or “necessarily are,” when they are, or will be, even though we desire or endeavor to have the contrary, or when we try to prevent or remove their existence—but our opposition always consists in, or implies, the opposition of our wills.

It is obvious that all such words and phrases, as commonly used, are understood this way. Something is said to be *necessary* when we cannot help it,¹ do whatever we *will*. So anything is said to be *impossible* for us, when we would do it, or would have it brought to pass, and

¹ That is, when it is indispensable to our needs – there is no other help for it.

endeavor to have it—or at least we desire and seek it—but all our desires and endeavors either are, or would be, in vain. And what overcomes all our opposition, resistance, and endeavor to the contrary, is said to be *irresistible*. And we are said to be *unable* to do something when our desires and endeavors are insufficient to attain it.

We are accustomed, in the common use of language, to apply and understand these phrases this way: we grow up habitually using them thus. And by the daily use of these terms from our childhood, it becomes fixed and settled. So the idea of something being related to any supposed will, desire, and endeavor of ours, is strongly connected with these terms. Such ideas, and these words, are so associated, that they unavoidably go together—one suggests the other, and it can never be easily separated as long as we live. Even though we use the words as terms of art in another sense,¹ yet, unless we are exceedingly circumspect, we will unwarily slide into their common use, and thus apply the words inconsistently, which will deceive and confound us in our reasonings and discourses, even when we intend to use them as terms of art.

4. It follows from what has been observed, that when these terms *necessary*, *impossible*, *irresistible*, *unable*, etc. are used in cases in which the will is not assumed to be insufficient, but the very nature of the case excludes any opposition, will, or endeavor, then these words are not used in their proper meaning. Obviously we cannot use the words to refer to any supposed opposition, will, or endeavor if there is none. Therefore if anyone uses these terms in such cases, he either uses them nonsensically, or else he uses them in some new sense, that differs from their original and proper meaning. For instance; if anyone were to affirm that it is *necessary* for a man to choose virtue rather than vice, when he *prefers* virtue to vice, and that having any other choice is *impossible* and *irresistible* for him, then these terms must be used in some new sense, different from their common use. This is because their common use, as observed, supposes there is some opposition, unwillingness, and resistance; whereas here, the very supposition excludes and denies any such thing—for the case supposes that he is willing, and choosing.

5. It appears from what has been said, that these terms *necessary*, *impossible*, etc. are often used by philosophers and metaphysicians in a sense quite different from their common and original meaning; for they apply them to many cases in which no opposition is supposed. Thus they use them with respect to God's existence before the creation of the world, when there was no other being. They use them with regard to many of the dispositions and acts of the divine Being, such as loving himself, loving righteousness, hating sin, etc. So they apply them to many cases of the inclinations and actions of created intelligent beings in which all opposition of the Will is excluded in the very supposition of the case.

Metaphysical or philosophical Necessity is no different than certainty. I am not speaking of the certainty of knowledge, but the certainty that is in things themselves, which is the foundation of the certainty of the knowledge, or that thing in which lies the ground of the infallibility of the proposition which affirms them.

What is sometimes given as the definition of "philosophical Necessity" is this: *that by which a thing can only be, or by which it cannot be otherwise*. But this fails to properly explain it on two accounts: **First**, the words *can* or *cannot* need to be explained as much as the word *Necessity*; and the words *can* or *cannot* may be explained by the latter, just as well as the latter may be explained by the former. Thus, if anyone asked us what we mean when we say something can only be, we might explain by saying that it must necessarily be so. And we can just as well explain *Necessity* by saying, *it is that by which something can only be*. **Secondly**, this definition is liable to the aforementioned great inconvenience; the words *cannot* or *unable*, are properly relative terms; they are related to power that is exerted, or that may be exerted, in

¹ In other words, "even if we use them in a specific technical sense, and not in their ordinary sense..."

order to attain what is spoken of. As I observed, the word *Necessity*, as used by philosophers, has no reference to that.

Philosophical Necessity is really nothing else than the FULL AND FIXED CONNECTION BETWEEN THE THINGS SIGNIFIED BY THE **SUBJECT** AND THE **PREDICATE** OF A PROPOSITION that affirms something to be true.¹ When there is such a connection, then the thing affirmed in the proposition is necessary in a *philosophical* sense (whether any opposition or contrary effort is supposed, or not).

When the subject and predicate of a proposition that affirms the existence of anything (either its substance, quality, act, or circumstance)—when these have a full and CERTAIN CONNECTION, then the existence of that thing is said to be necessary in a *metaphysical* sense. And it is in this sense that I use the word *necessity* in the following discourse, as I endeavor to prove that *necessity* is not inconsistent with *liberty*.

The subject and predicate of a proposition which affirms the existence of something,² may have a full, fixed, and certain connection in several ways.

(1.) The subject and predicate may have a full and perfect connection in and of themselves, because it may imply a contradiction, or a gross absurdity, to suppose that they are *not* connected. Thus many things are necessary in their own nature. So the eternal existence of being (generally considered), is necessary in itself: because it would be the greatest absurdity to deny the existence of being in general, or to say that there was absolute and universal nothingness.³ This would be the sum of all contradictions; as might be shown if this were the proper place to do that. So God's infinity and other attributes are *necessary*—just as it is necessary, by its own nature, that two plus two should be four; and just as it is necessary that all right lines drawn from the center of a circle to the circumference should be equal in length. It is necessary—it is fitting and suitable—that men should do to others, as they would have others do to them. Thus innumerable metaphysical and mathematical truths are necessary in and of themselves: the subject and predicate of the propositions which affirm them are perfectly CONNECTED of themselves.

(2.) The connection of the subject and predicate of a proposition which affirms the *existence* of something, may be fixed and made certain, if the existence of that thing has *already come to pass*. It either now is, or it has been, and so it has, as it were, made its existence sure. Therefore, by this means, the proposition which affirms the present and past existence of this thing, may be made certain, and be made necessarily and unalterably true. The past event has fixed and decided the matter of its existence, and made it impossible for its *non-existence* to be a predicate of it. Thus the existence of whatever has already come to pass, has now become *necessary*; and it has become *impossible* for it to be otherwise than true that such a thing has been.

(3.) The subject and predicate of a proposition which affirms something to exist, may have a real and certain connection *consequently*—and so the existence of the thing may be *consequently necessary* as it may be surely and firmly connected with something else that is necessary in one of the former respects. As it is either fully and thoroughly connected with what is absolutely necessary *in its own nature*, or it is fully connected with something that has *already* received and made its existence sure. This Necessity lies in, or it may be explained by, the connection of two or more propositions, one with another. Things which are perfectly

¹ In logic, a *subject* is what we make an assertion about, and a *predicate* is what we assert about the subject. So in the proposition “Socrates is mortal”, Socrates is the *subject*, and mortal is the *predicate*.

² Therefore what follows will concern the necessity of the *existence* of something, in its *metaphysical* sense.

³ The person making such a proposition must exist to make it; hence it is an inherent contradiction.

connected with other things that are necessary, are themselves necessary, by a *Necessity of consequence*.

And here it may be observed that all things which are future, or which will later come into being, and which can be said to be necessary, are necessary *only* in this last way (by being fully connected with other things that are necessary). Their existence is not necessary *in themselves*; for if this were so, they would *always* have existed. Nor has their existence become necessary by having *already* come to pass. Therefore, the only way that anything is or can be necessary, which will come to pass later, is by a connection with something that is necessary in its own nature, or something that already is, or already has been—so that the one thing being supposed necessary, the other certainly follows as a necessity. This is also the only way that all past things (except those which existed from eternity) could be necessary *before* they come to pass. Therefore, this is the only way in which any effect, or any event, or anything whatever, that has had or will ever have a beginning, has *necessarily* come into being, or will necessarily come into being *later*. Therefore *this* is the Necessity which especially belongs to controversies about the acts of the will.

It may be of some use in these controversies to further observe concerning *metaphysical* Necessity (noting again that Necessity is often commonly understood), that things which exist may be said to be *necessary*, either in a general or in a particular sense. The existence of something may be said to be generally necessary when, all things considered, there is a foundation for the certainty of its existence—or when, in the most general and universal view of things, the subject and predicate of the proposition which affirms its existence, appear to have an infallible connection.¹

An event, or the existence of something, may be said to be necessary with a *particular* Necessity, when nothing that can be taken into consideration (in or about a person, thing, or time) alters the case at all—as to the certainty of an event or the existence of something—nor can it be of any account at all in determining the infallibility of the connection of the subject and predicate in the proposition which affirms the existence of that thing. So that it is all one, as to that person or thing—or at least, it is all one *at that time*—as if the existence were necessary with a Necessity that is most universal and absolute. Thus there are many things that happen to particular persons, in which the will of these persons has no concern as to the existence of these things—at least, not at that time. This is true whether they are necessary or not with regard to *things in general*; yet they are *necessary* to these persons, with regard to any volition of theirs at that time, because these things prevent all acts of the will about the affair in question. I will have occasion to apply this observation to particular instances in the following discourse. Whether the same things that are necessary with a *particular* Necessity, are not also necessary with a *general* Necessity, may be a matter of future consideration. Let that be as it will, it does not alter the case as to the use of this distinction between the kinds of Necessity.

These things may be sufficient to explain the terms *necessary* and *Necessity*, as terms of art, and as they are often used by metaphysicians and controversial writers in divinity: in a sense that is different from, and more extensive than, their original meaning in common language, as explained before.

What has been said to show the meaning of the terms *necessary* and *Necessity*, may be sufficient to explain the opposite terms, *impossible* and *Impossibility*. For there is no difference between them, except that the latter terms are negative, and the former terms are

¹ For example, “living mammals breathe.” “Breathing” (the predicate) and the class of “living mammals” (the subject) are infallibly connected. Not to breathe is not to live, where mammals are concerned. “Living bacteria breathe” has no such infallible connection – no bacteria have lungs (define ‘breathe’), and some are anaerobic.

positive. Impossibility is the same as negative necessity, or the Necessity that something should *not* be. And it is used as a term of art in a similar variance from the original and common meaning of Necessity.

The same may be observed concerning the words *unable* and *Inability*. It was observed that these terms, in their original and common use, relate to *will* and *endeavor* as supposedly insufficient to bring to pass the thing willed and endeavored. But as these terms are often used by philosophers and divines, especially by writers on controversies about Free Will, they are used in a quite different and far more extensive sense. They are applied to many cases in which no will or endeavor to bring the thing to pass *is* or *can be* supposed.

Just as the words *necessary*, *impossible*, *unable*, etc. are used by polemic writers in a sense that is different from their common meaning, similar has happened to the term *contingent*. In the original meaning of such words, something is said to be contingent, or come to pass by chance or accident, when its connection with its causes or antecedents is not discerned according to established expectations; and so *contingent* is what we have no means of foreseeing. It is especially contingent or accidental when it comes to pass without our foreknowledge, and outside our plans and scope.

But the word *contingent* is abundantly used in a very different sense—not referring to something connected with a series of things that we cannot discern or foresee, but something which has absolutely no previous basis or reason with which its existence has a fixed and certain connection.¹

Section IV. Distinctions between natural and moral Necessity, and Inability.

That Necessity which has been explained—consisting in an infallible connection of the things signified by the subject and predicate of a proposition, with intelligent beings as the subjects—is differentiated into *moral* and *natural* Necessity.

I will not inquire at this point whether this distinction is a proper and perfect distinction; but I will only explain how these two sorts of Necessity are understood, both as the terms are sometimes used, and as they are used in the following discourse.

The phrase, *moral Necessity*, is used variously. Sometimes it is used for the Necessity of *moral obligation*. So we say a man is under Necessity when he is under bonds of duty and conscience from which he cannot be discharged. Again, the word Necessity is often used for a great obligation in some point of interest. Sometimes moral Necessity means that apparent connection of things which is the ground of *moral evidence*. And so it is distinguished from *absolute* Necessity, or that sure connection of things that is a foundation for *infallible certainty*. In this sense, moral Necessity means much the same as that high degree of probability which ordinarily satisfies mankind in their conduct and behavior in the world, when they are considering their own safety and interest, or would treat others properly as members of society. And sometimes moral Necessity means the necessary connection and consequence which arises from *moral causes*, such as the strength of our inclination, or

¹ Defining *contingent* as having “no *previous* basis or reason,” is unusual. In philosophy and logic, *contingency* is the status of propositions that are neither true under every possible valuation (*tautologies*), nor false under every possible valuation (*contradictions*). A contingent proposition is neither necessarily true, nor necessarily false. That may be a better way to approach Edwards’ proposition, because here he is looking at free will in the context of necessity. Is free will determined by necessity? He will now define *necessity*. Hobbes concluded that our Will can be free, and yet be determined by necessity; it is impelled to freely choose A over B. This is called *compatibilism*, or *soft determinism*. Edwards will get to Hobbes’ proposition on page 132.

motives, and the connection in many cases between these and certain volitions and actions. And it is in this sense, that I use the phrase, *moral necessity*, in the following discourse.

By *natural necessity*, as applied to men, I mean the Necessity men are under through the force of *natural* causes, as distinguished from what are called *moral* causes—such as habits and dispositions of the heart, and moral motives and inducements. Thus men who are placed in certain circumstances are, by Necessity, the subjects of particular sensations. They feel pain when their bodies are wounded, or they see the objects presented to them in a clear light when their eyes are opened. They assent to the truth of certain propositions as soon as the terms are understood, such as two plus two make four, that black is not white, or that two parallel lines can never cross each another. So too, by *natural Necessity*, men's bodies move downwards when there is nothing to support them.¹

But here several things may be noted concerning these two kinds of Necessity.

1. *Moral Necessity* may be as absolute as *natural Necessity*. That is, its effect may be as perfectly connected with its *moral* cause, as a natural, necessary effect is connected with its *natural* cause. The questions arise whether the Will is necessarily determined in every case by the strongest motive, or whether the Will ever resists such a motive, or can ever oppose the strongest present inclination or not. If that matter were to be disproved, I suppose none would deny that, in some cases, a previous bias and inclination, or the motive presented, may be so powerful, that the act of the will may be certainly and indissolubly connected with it. When motives or previous bias are very strong, all will admit that there is some difficulty in going against them. And if they were even stronger, the difficulty would be still greater. Therefore, if still more were still added to their strength, it would reach a degree at which the difficulty would be so great, that it would be wholly impossible to surmount it. For this plain reason, because whatever power men may have to surmount difficulties, that power is not infinite; and so it does not go beyond certain limits. A man might surmount ten degrees of difficulty of this kind with twenty degrees of strength, because the degrees of strength exceed the degrees of difficulty. Yet if the difficulty is increased to thirty, or a hundred, or a thousand degrees, and his strength is not also increased, then his strength will be wholly insufficient to surmount the difficulty. Therefore it must be allowed that there may be such a thing as a sure and perfect connection between *moral causes* and *moral effects*.² This only is what I call *moral Necessity*.

2. When I use this distinction between *moral* and *natural* Necessity, I should not be understood to suppose, that if anything comes to pass by *moral* Necessity, that the *nature* of things is not involved. I do not mean to say that, when a *moral* habit or motive is so strong that the act of the Will infallibly follows it, this is not attributable to the *nature* of things. But *natural* and *moral* are terms by which these two kinds of Necessity have usually been called and distinguished, for there is a difference between them that is very important in its consequences. This difference, however, does not lie so much in the *nature* of the connection, as in the two *terms* that are connected. The *cause* with which the effect is connected is of a particular kind: it has a *moral* nature; either some previous habitual disposition, or some motive that is exhibited to the understanding. And the *effect* is also of a particular kind: it is likewise of a moral nature, consisting in some inclination or volition of the soul, or a voluntary action.

¹ Isaac Newton (1642-1727) published his landmark “Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy”, in 1687; it laid the foundations for classical mechanics, and gravitation in particular. Newton was a contemporary of Edwards. This ‘conversation’ on Freedom of the Will must be understood in that context, as a *scientific* examination of the laws of the mind, and the principles of knowledge. Ultimately, Edwards asserts that Natural (i.e. physical) Philosophy and Meta-physical Philosophy are alike governed by a set of principles that issue from the Mind of God; thus our *will* is governed by God (not *dictated*), as He is our “Moral Governor” (see p. 18).

² In other words, it is feasible that a moral cause can be so strong that it cannot be resisted, and has its effect.

I suppose a Necessity which is called *natural*, as distinct from *moral*, is so-called because mere nature, as the word is commonly used, is not concerned with choice. The word nature is often used in opposition to choice; this is not because nature never has any hand in our choice, but probably because we first get our notion of *nature* from that obvious course of events which we observe in many things where our choice has no concern. This is especially so in the material world which, in many parts, we easily perceive it is a settled course—the stated order, and manner of succession, are very apparent. But where we do not readily discern the rule and the connection between things (though there truly is a connection according to an established law), we describe the manner of that event using some other name. Even in many things which are seen in the material and inanimate world, which do not obviously follow any settled course, men do not call it by the nature of it, but by names such as accident, chance, contingency, etc. So men make a distinction between nature and choice; as if they were completely and universally distinct. Though I suppose that none will deny that choice, in many cases, arises from nature, just as truly as with other events. But the connection between acts of choice and their causes, according to established laws, is *not* so obvious. And so we are led to observe that choice is, as it were, a new principle of motion and action, which is different from that established order of things which is most obvious, and may be *seen*, especially in corporeal things. Choice often interposes, interrupts, and alters the chain of events in these external objects, and it causes them to proceed otherwise than they would have done if they were left alone. Hence, choice is spoken of as if it were a principle of *motion*, entirely distinct from *nature*—as if it were properly set in opposition to it. Thus names are commonly assigned to things according to what is most obvious—suggested merely by what appears to the senses—without reflection and research.

3. It must be observed that, in what has been explained about the meaning of the name *moral Necessity*, the word *Necessity* is not used with the original intent and meaning of the word. For as observed before, terms such as *necessary*, *impossible*, *irresistible*, etc. as used in common speech, and in their most proper sense, are always *relative*; referring to some supposed voluntary but insufficient opposition or endeavour. However, no such opposition or contrary *will* and endeavour is supposed in the case of *moral Necessity*; there is a certainty of the inclination and the *will* itself, which does not allow supposing there is a *will* to oppose and resist it. For it is absurd to suppose that the same individual *will* opposes itself in its present act; or to suppose that the present *choice* opposes and resists the present choice. This is as absurd as talking about two contrary motions in the same moving body, at the same time.¹ Therefore, the very case supposed never allows for a test whether an opposing or resisting will can overcome this Necessity.

What has been said about natural and moral *Necessity*, may serve to explain what is intended by natural and moral *Inability*. We are said to be naturally *unable* to do something if we *will* to do it, but we *cannot* do it because what is commonly called *nature* does not allow it, or because of some impeding defect or obstacle that is extrinsic to the Will—either in the Faculty of understanding, the constitution of the body, or in external objects.² *Moral Inability*, however, does not consist in any of these things; rather it consists in the lack of inclination; or the strength of a contrary inclination; or the lack of sufficient motives in view to induce and excite an act of the Will, or in the strength of motives to the contrary. Both these may be resolved into one—it may be said in one word, that *moral Inability* consists in the opposition to, or the lack of, inclination. For when a person is unable to will or choose something through a defect of motives, or through the prevalence of contrary motives, it is the same as being unable because of a lack of inclination, or the prevalence of a contrary inclination, under the circumstances.

¹ i.e. for the same fixed object to go both up and down, or forward and back, at the same instant in time.

² For example, we may *will* to bodily fly, but having no wings or other natural ability to do it, we are *unable*.

Here are some examples of this *moral Inability*. A woman of great honour and chastity may have a moral Inability to prostitute herself to her slave. A child of great love and duty to his parents, may thus be unable to kill his father. A very lascivious man, in case of certain opportunities and temptations, and in the absence of any restraints, may be unable to forbear gratifying his lust. A drunkard, under certain circumstances, may be unable to forbear taking strong drink. A very malicious man may be unable to exert benevolent acts toward an enemy, or to desire his enemy's prosperity; indeed, some may be so under the power of a vile disposition, that they may be unable to love those who are most worthy of their esteem and affection. A strong habit of virtue, and a great degree of holiness, may cause a moral Inability to love wickedness in general, and it may render a man unable to be complacent about wicked persons or things; or to choose a wicked life in preference to a virtuous life. On the other hand, a great degree of habitual wickedness may lay a man under an Inability to love or to choose holiness; it may render him utterly unable to love an infinitely holy Being, or to choose and cling to him as his highest good.

Here it may be useful to observe a distinction in moral Inability, between what is *general and habitual*, and what is *particular and occasional*. By a *general and habitual* moral Inability, I mean an Inability in the heart to all exercises or acts of will of a moral kind, through a fixed and habitual inclination, or a habitual and stated defect, or a lack of a certain kind of inclination. Thus a very ill-natured man may be unable to exert such acts of benevolence as another man who is full of good nature commonly exerts. A man whose heart is habitually void of gratitude, may be unable to exert grateful acts through that defect of not having a grateful inclination. By *particular and occasional* moral Inability, I mean an Inability of the will or heart to commit a particular act on *this* occasion, through the strength or defect of present motives, or through inducements that are presented to the view of the understanding. —If it is true that the Will is always determined by the strongest motive, then it must always have an Inability, in this latter sense, to act other than as it does. It is not possible, in any case, for the Will to go against the motive which now has the greatest advantage to induce it to act, all things considered.

General and habitual moral inability is most commonly called *Inability*, because in its most proper and original meaning, the word applies to some stated defect. It is especially called *Inability* for another reason: because, as observed before, the word *Inability* in its original and most common use, is a *relative* term—it relates to *will* and *endeavor*, as being insufficient to bring to pass the thing desired and endeavored. Now there may be more of an appearance and shadow of this inability, with respect to the acts which arise from a fixed and strong habit, than there is with other acts that arise only from transient occasions and causes. Indeed, willing and endeavouring against (acting different from) present acts of the Will, are in no case supposed—whether those acts are occasional or habitual. For that would suppose that the Will, at present, is otherwise inclined than it is at present. Yet there may be *will* and *endeavour* against *future* acts of the Will, or against volitions that are likely to take place as viewed at a distance. It is no contradiction, to suppose that the acts of the Will at one time, may be against the acts of the Will at another time; and there may be desires and endeavors to prevent or excite future acts of the will. But such desires and endeavors are, in many cases, rendered insufficient and vain through fixed habits—that is, when the occasion returns, the strength of habit overcomes and baffles all such opposition. In this respect, a man may presently be in miserable slavery and bondage to a strong habit. But it may be comparatively easy to make an alteration with respect to *future* acts which are only occasional and transient. This is because the occasion or transient cause, if it is foreseen, may often easily be prevented or avoided.¹ For this reason, the moral Inability that accompanies fixed habits, is especially called *Inability*. And then, just as the will may remotely and indirectly resist itself, and resist itself in vain in the case of strong habits, so

¹ A drunkard in a drunken state, may choose to avoid bars and liquor stores to prevent future drunkenness.

reason may resist present acts of the Will, and its resistance be insufficient. This is more commonly the case, also, when the acts arise from strong habit.

But it must be observed concerning moral Inability, in each of its kinds, that the word *Inability* is used in a sense that is very different from its original intent. Properly used, the word means only a *natural* Inability, and it is only applied to cases in which a present will or inclination to something is supposed, and with respect to which a person is said to be unable. It cannot be truly said, according to the ordinary use of language, that a malicious man, however malicious, cannot hold his hand from striking, or that he is not able to show his neighbor kindness; or that a drunkard, however strong his appetite, cannot keep the cup from his mouth. In the strictest propriety of speech, a man has something in his *power*, if he has it in his *choice*, or at his *election*. And a man cannot be truly said to be unable to do something, when he *can* do it, if he *wills* to do it.

And it is improperly said that a person *cannot* perform those external actions which are dependent on the act of the Will, and which would be easily performed if the act of the Will were present. And if it is improperly said that he cannot perform those external voluntary actions which depend on the Will, then in some respect it is even more improperly said that he is unable to exert the *acts of the Will* themselves. This is because it is more evidently false (with respect to these doable external acts) that he *cannot* if he *wills*. For to say so is a downright contradiction—it is to say that he *cannot* will, if he *does* will. And in this case, not only is it true that it is easy for a man to do something if he wills to do it, but willing is itself the doing. Once he has willed, the thing is performed; and nothing else remains to be done. Therefore, it is not right in these things, to ascribe non-performance to the lack of power or ability; because the only thing lacking is not ability, but willingness. There are faculties of mind, and a capacity of nature, and everything else sufficient to do it, except a disposition: nothing is lacking but a will.

Section V. Concerning the notion of Liberty, and of moral Agency.

The plain and obvious meaning of the words *Freedom* and *Liberty*, in common speech, is the power, opportunity, or advantage that anyone has to do as he pleases. Or in other words, being free from hindrance or impediment in the way of doing or conducting something, in any respect, as he wills.

And the contrary to Liberty, whatever name we call it by, is a person's being hindered or unable to conduct something as he will, or being required to do otherwise.

If this is the meaning of the word *Liberty*, in the ordinary use of language (as I trust none will deny who has ever learned to talk, and is unprejudiced), then it follows that, in proper speech, neither *Liberty* nor its contrary can properly be ascribed to any being or any thing, unless it has such a faculty, power, or property called *will*. For what has no will, cannot have any power or opportunity to do something according to its will, nor can it be required to act contrary to its will, nor can it be restrained from acting agreeably to it. Therefore, to say that Liberty, or its contrary, belongs to the Will itself, is not speaking good sense. For the Will itself is not an *Agent* that has a will. And the power of choosing, itself, does not have a power to choose. What has the power of volition is the man, or the soul, and not the power of volition itself. Someone who has the Liberty to do according to his will, is the Agent who possesses the Will; and not the Will which he possesses. We properly say that a bird let loose has the power and liberty to fly; not that the bird's liberty has the power to fly. To be free is the property of an Agent who is possessed of certain powers and faculties, just he is cunning, valiant, bountiful, or zealous. But these qualities are the properties of persons, and not the properties of properties.

There are two things contrary to what is called Liberty in common speech. One is *constraint* (otherwise called force, compulsion, and coercion¹)—which is being required to do something contrary to a person's will. The other is *restraint*—which is being hindered, and not having the *power* to do something according to his will. But what has no will, cannot be subject to constraint or restraint. I need say little on this topic, for Mr. Locke has presented the same thing with great clarity in his *Essay on the Human Understanding*.

But one thing more I would observe concerning what is commonly called *Liberty*; namely, that power and opportunity for one to do and conduct as he will, or according to his choice, is all that is meant by it. It does not take into the meaning of the word anything about the *cause* of that choice, or how the person came to have such a volition—whether it was caused by some external motive, or internal habitual bias; whether it was determined by some internal antecedent volition, or whether it happened without a cause; whether it was necessarily connected with something foregoing, or not connected. Let the person come by his choice however he may. If he is able, and there is nothing in the way to hinder his pursuing and executing his will, then the man is perfectly free, according to the primary and common notion of freedom.

What has been said may be sufficient to show what is meant by Liberty, according to the common notions of mankind, and in the usual and primary acceptance of the word. But the word, as used by Arminians, Pelagians, and others, who oppose the Calvinists, has an entirely different meaning. Several things belong to their notion of Liberty.

1. That it consists in a self-determining power in the Will, or a certain sovereignty that the Will has over itself and its own acts, by which it determines its own volitions so as not to be dependent in its determinations on any cause outside of itself; nor is it determined by anything prior to its own acts.
2. In their notion, Liberty includes *indifference*, meaning that the mind is in *equilibrio*² prior to the act of volition.
3. Contingence is another thing that belongs to and is essential to Liberty—not in the common acceptance of the word, as already explained, but as opposed to all necessity, or any fixed and certain connection with some prior ground or reason for its existence. They suppose that the essence of Liberty so consists in these things, that unless the will of man is free in *this* sense, he has no real freedom, however much he may be at Liberty to act according to his will.

A *Moral Agent* is a being that is capable of those actions that have a moral quality, and which can properly be designated good or evil in a moral sense—whether virtuous or vicious, commendable or faulty. To moral Agency belongs a moral *faculty*, or a sense of moral good and evil, or of such a thing as merit or worthiness, praise or blame, reward or punishments. And a moral agent has a capacity to be influenced in his actions by moral inducements or motives, exhibited to the view of his understanding and reason, that engage him to conduct himself in a way that is agreeable to the moral faculty.

The sun is excellent and beneficial in its action and influence on the earth, in warming and causing it to bring forth its fruit; but it is not a moral agent. Its action, though good, is not virtuous or meritorious. Fire that breaks out in a city, and consumes a great part of it, is mischievous in its operation; but is not a moral Agent. What it does is not faulty or sinful, or deserving of any punishment. Brute creatures are not moral Agents. The actions of some of them are profitable and pleasant; others are hurtful. Yet seeing they have no moral faculty, or sense of merit, and they do not act from choice that is guided by understanding, or with a

¹ Act of working jointly; effort that is *cooperative*, or *synergistic*.

² In *equilibrium* – it is unbiased; without prior inclination or tendency.

capacity to reason and reflect, but only from instinct, they are not capable of being influenced by moral inducements. Their actions are not properly sinful or virtuous; nor are they properly the subjects of moral treatment for what they do, as moral Agents are treated for their faults or good deeds.

Here it may be noted, that there is a circumstantial difference between the moral Agency of a *ruler* and a *subject*. I call it circumstantial, because it lies only in the difference of moral inducements by which they are capable of being influenced, and which arise from the difference in their circumstances. A *ruler*, acting only in that capacity, is not capable of being influenced by a moral law and its sanctions of threats and promises, rewards and punishments, as a *subject* is influenced by them—even though both may be influenced by a knowledge of moral good and evil. Therefore, the moral Agency of the Supreme Being, who acts only in the capacity of a ruler towards his creatures, and never as a subject, differs in that respect from the moral Agency of created intelligent beings.

God's actions, and particularly those which he exerts as a *Moral Governor*, have moral qualifications, and are morally good in the highest degree. They are most perfectly holy and righteous. And we must conceive of Him as influenced in the highest degree by that which, above all others, is a proper moral inducement; namely, the moral good which He sees in certain things. Therefore He is, in the most proper sense, a *moral Agent*, the source of all moral ability and Agency, the fountain and rule of all virtue and moral good; though being supreme over all, it is not possible for Him to be under the influence of law or command, promises or threats, rewards or punishments, counsels or warnings. The essential qualities of a moral Agent are in God, in the greatest possible perfection—such as understanding, in order to perceive the difference between moral good and evil; a capacity to discern that moral worthiness and demerit by which some things are praiseworthy, and others are deserving of blame and punishment; a capacity to choose, guided by understanding, and a power to act according to his choice or pleasure; and being capable of doing those things which are in the highest sense praiseworthy. And in this very much consists that image of God in which he made man (which we read about in Gen. 1:26, 27, and chap. 9:6), and by which God distinguished man from the beasts—in those faculties and principles of nature by which he is capable of moral Agency. In this very much consists the *natural* image of God; whereas the *spiritual* and *moral* image in which man was made at first, consisted in that moral excellence with which God was endowed.

PART II. Is the Arminian notion of freedom of will, the liberty of *all* moral agents?

Section I. The inconsistency of the Arminian notion of Liberty of Will, consisting in the Will's self-determining Power.

I have noted those things which may be necessary to observe concerning the meaning of the principal terms and phrases made use of in controversies concerning human liberty. I have particularly observed what Liberty is, according to the common language and general apprehension of mankind, and how it is understood and maintained by Arminians. I now proceed to consider the Arminian notion of the Freedom of the Will, and the supposed necessity of it in order for moral agency, or in order for anyone to be capable of virtue or vice, and thus be the proper subject of command or counsel, praise or blame, promises or threats, rewards or punishments. I will further consider whether what has been described as the thing meant by Liberty in common speech is sufficient, and if it is the only Liberty which makes, or can make, anyone a moral agent—and so is the proper subject of these things. In this Part, I will consider whether the Freedom of Will which Arminians insist on is possible or conceivable; and in the next part I will inquire whether any such Liberty is necessary to moral agency, etc.

First of all, I will consider the notion of a self-determining Power in the Will; according to the Arminians, the freedom of the Will most essentially consists in this. And I will particularly inquire whether it is plainly absurd, and an obvious inconsistency, to suppose that the Will itself determines all the free acts of the will.

Here I will not insist on the great impropriety of speaking of the Will as determining itself; because actions are to be ascribed to agents, and not to the powers of agents. This improper way of speaking leads to many mistakes, and much confusion, as Mr. Locke observes. But I suppose that the Arminians, when they speak of the Will determining itself, mean by the *Will*, the *soul willing*. I will take it for granted that when they speak of the will as the determiner, they mean the soul exercising a power of willing, or acting voluntarily. I will suppose this is their meaning, because nothing else can be meant without the grossest and plainest absurdity. In all cases when we speak of the powers or principles of acting, or of doing such things, we mean that the agents who *have* these Powers of acting, do them in the *exercise* of those Powers. So where we say that valor fights courageously, we mean that the man who is under the influence of valor fights courageously. Where we say, love seeks the object that is loved, we mean that the person loving, seeks that object. When we say that the understanding discerns, we mean the soul exercises that faculty of understanding. And so when it is said that the will decides or determines, this must mean the person in the exercise of the Power of willing and choosing, or the soul, in acting voluntarily, determines.

Therefore, if the Will determines all of its own free acts, then the soul determines them in the exercise of a Power of willing and choosing; or, what is the same thing, it determines them by choice: it *determines* its own acts, by *choosing* its own acts. If the Will determines the Will, then choice orders and determines the choice; and acts of choice are subject to the decision, and they follow the conduct of other acts of choice. Therefore, if the Will determines all of its own free acts, then every free act of choice is determined by a preceding act of choice, in choosing that act. And if that preceding act of the will is also a free act, then by these principles, and in this act too, the will is self-determined. That is, in like manner, this is an act that the soul voluntarily chooses; or what is the same thing, it is an act determined still by a preceding act of the will, in choosing it. Which brings us directly to a contradiction. For it supposes an act of the Will preceding the first act in the whole train of acts, that directs and determines the

rest; or it is a free act of the Will, that precedes the first free act of the Will. Otherwise we must come at last to an act of the will, that determines the consequent acts, in which the Will is *not* self-determined. And so it is not a free act in this notion of freedom. But if the first act in the train, which determines and fixes the rest, is *not* free, then none of them can be free. This is obvious at first view, but it will be demonstrated shortly.

If the Will, which we find governs the members of the body, and determines their motions, also governs itself, and determines its own actions, then it doubtless determines them the same way: specifically, by antecedent volitions. The Will determines which way the hands and feet will move by an act of choice. And there is no other way for the Will to determine, direct, or command anything at all. Whatever the will commands, it commands by an *act* of the Will. And if it has itself under its command, and determines itself in its own actions, then it doubtless does it the same way that it determines other things under its command. So that if the freedom of the will consists in this—that it has itself and its own actions under its command and direction, and its own volitions are determined by itself, it will follow, that every free volition arises from another antecedent volition, directing and commanding that. And if that directing volition is also free, then the will is also determined in that. That is to say, that directing volition is determined by another directing volition going before it, and so on, till we come to the first volition in the whole series. And if that first volition is free, and the will is self-determined in it, then that too must be determined by another volition which preceded it. *But this is a contradiction*; because by this supposition, it can have no volition before it, to direct or determine it, because it is the first in the train.

But if that first volition is *not* determined by any preceding act of the Will, then that act is not determined by the Will itself, and so it is not free in the Arminian notion of freedom, which consists in the Will's self-determination. And if that first act of the will is not free, which determines and fixes the subsequent acts, then none of the following acts which are determined by it can be free either. If we suppose there are five acts in the train of acts, the fifth and last act is determined by the fourth, and the fourth by the third, the third by the second, and the second by the first—then if the first act is not determined by the Will, and so it is not free, then *none* of them are truly determined by the Will. That is, each of them is as it is, and not otherwise—not first attributable to the will, but to the determination of the first act in the series, which is not dependent on the will. Rather, it is that which the will has no hand in determining. This being what decides the rest, and determines their existence, the first determination of their existence is *not* from the Will. The case is the same if instead of a chain of five acts of the Will, we supposed a succession of ten, or a hundred, or ten thousand. If the first act is not free, being determined by something outside the will, and this is what determines the next, and that the next, and so on—then none of them are free, but all originally depend on, and are determined by, some cause outside of the Will. And so all freedom is excluded in this case, and no act of the will can be free according to this notion of freedom. If we supposed a long chain of ten thousand links that was so connected that if the first link moves, it moves the next, and that the next, and so the whole chain is determined to move. And it moves in the direction of its motion, by the motion of the first link; and that is moved by something else. In this case, though all the links but one are moved by other parts of the same chain, it still appears that the motion of no one link, nor the direction of that link's motion, is from any self-moving or self-determining power in the chain itself—any more than if every link were immediately moved by something that did not belong to the chain.

If the Will is not free in the first act, which causes the next, then neither is it free in the next, which is caused by that first act; for though indeed the Will caused it, it did not cause it *freely* because the preceding act, by which it was caused, was not free. And again, if the Will is not free in the second act, so neither can it be in the third, which is caused by that; because in the same way, that third was determined by an act of the Will that was not free. And so we may go

on to the next act, and from that to the next; and however long the succession of acts is, it is all one. If the first act on which the whole chain depends, and which determines all the rest, is not a free act, the Will is not free in causing or determining any one of those acts; because the act by which it determines them all is not a free act. And therefore, the Will is no more free in determining them than if it did not cause them at all. Thus this Arminian notion of Liberty of the Will which consists in the Self-determination of the will, is repugnant to itself, and it shuts itself wholly out of the world.

Section II. Several supposed ways to evade the foregoing reasoning.

If to evade the force of what has been observed, it should be said that when the Arminians speak of the Will determining its own acts, they do not mean that the Will determines them by any preceding act, or that one act of the will determines another—but only that the faculty or power of Will, or the soul in the use of that power, determines its own volitions; and that it does it without any act going before the act determined. Such an evasion would be full of the grossest absurdity. I confess, it is an evasion of my own inventing; and I may wrong the Arminians in supposing that any of them would make use of it. But, it being as good a one as I can invent, I would observe a few things about it.

First, If the power of the will determines an act of volition, or if the soul in the use or exercise of that power determines it, then that is the same thing as the soul determining volition by an act of will. For an *exercise* of the power of will, and an *act* of that power, are the same thing. Therefore, to say that the power of will or of the soul in the use or exercise of that power determines volition, without an act of will preceding the volition that is determined, is a contradiction.

Secondly, If a *power* of will determines the *act* of the Will, then a power of choosing is what determines it. For, as was observed before, in every act of will there is choice; and a power of willing is a power of choosing. But if a power of choosing determines the act of volition, then it determines that act by choosing it. For it is most absurd to say that a power of choosing determines one thing rather than another, yet without choosing anything. But if a power of choosing determines volition by choosing it, then here is the act of volition which is determined by an antecedent choice: choosing that volition.

Thirdly, To say that the faculty or the soul determines its own volition, but not by any act, is a contradiction. Because, for the soul to direct, decide, or determine anything, is to act. And this is supposed: the soul is here spoken about as being a *cause* in this affair, of *doing* something—or what amounts to the same thing—*exerting* itself in order to produce an effect. That effect is the determination of volition, or the particular kind and manner of an act of will. But certainly, this action is not the same as the effect, which the action produced—it must be something prior to it.

The advocates for this notion of the freedom of the Will, speak of a certain sovereignty in the will, by which it has power to determine its own volition. Therefore the determination of volition must itself be an act of the will; for otherwise it cannot be an exercise of that supposed power and sovereignty. Again, if the Will determines itself, then either the will is active in determining its volitions, or it is not. If it is active, then the determination is an act of the will; and so there is one act of the will determining another. But if the Will is not active in the determination, then how does it exercise any liberty in it? These gentlemen suppose that the thing in which the Will exercises liberty, is in its determining its own acts. But how can this be, if it is not *active* in that determining? Certainly the will, or the soul, cannot exercise any liberty in which it does not act, or in which it does not exercise itself. So if either part of this dilemma is accepted, then this scheme of liberty, consisting in self-determining power, is overthrown. If there is an act of the Will in determining all its own free acts, then one free act of the Will is

determined by another; and so we have the absurdity of every free act, even the very first act, determined by a foregoing free act. But if there is no act or exercise of the Will in determining its own acts, then no liberty is exercised in determining them. From this it follows that no liberty consists in the power of the Will to determine its own acts; or what amounts to the same thing, there is no such thing as liberty consisting in a self-determining power of the Will.

Say someone agreed that it is true that if the soul determines its own volitions, then it must be active in doing so, and also that this determination itself must be an act—and yet this person insisted that there is no need to suppose that this act occurs prior to the volition that is determined; rather (they might assert), the will or the soul determines the act of the Will in willing; and it determines its own volition, in the very act of volition; and in exerting the act, it directs and limits the act of the will, causing it to be one way and not another—and all of this occurs without any preceding act. *If anyone were to say this*, they must mean one of three things: either, (1.) That the determining act, though it is before the act determined in the order of *nature*, yet is not before the act in order of *time*; or, (2.) That the determining act is *not* before the act determined, either in the order of time *or* in the order of nature, nor is it truly distinct from it; but the soul's *determining* the act of volition is the same as its *exerting* the act of volition: i.e., the mind's exerting such a particular act, is its causing and determining of the act; or, (3.) that volition has *no cause*, and is *no effect*, but comes into existence with such a particular determination, without any ground or reason for its existence and determination. I shall consider these distinctly.

(1.) If all that is meant, is that the determining act is not before the act determined in order of *time*, it will not help the case at all, even if it were allowed. If it is before the determined act in the order of *nature* (being the cause or ground of its existence), this proves it is distinct from and independent of it, as much as if it were before it in the order of time. As the cause of the particular motion of a natural body in a certain direction may have no distance as to time, the cause cannot thus be the same as the motion effected by it¹—and so the cause must be as distinct from the motion as any other cause that precedes its effect in time—just as the architect is distinct from the house which he builds, or the father is distinct from the son he begets. If the act of the Will in determining an act, is distinct from the act that is determined, and it occurs before it in the order of nature, then we can go back from one to another, till we come to the first in the series acts, which has no act of the will preceding it in the order of nature, and determining it. Consequently it is an act *not* determined by the will; and so it is not a free act, in this notion of freedom. And because this is the act which determines all the rest, *none* of them are free acts. As when there is a chain of many links, only the first of which is taken hold of and drawn by hand; all the rest may follow and be moved at the same instant, without any distance of time; yet the motion of one link precedes that of another in the order of nature. The last is moved by the next, and that by the next, and so on till we come to the first—which not being moved by any other link, but by something which is distinct from the whole chain. This proves that no part is moved by any self-moving power in the chain, as much as if the motion of one link followed that of another in the order of time.

(2.) Someone might say that the determining act does not precede the determined act, either in the order of time, or of nature, nor is it distinct from it—but the *exertion* of that act determines the act; i.e. when the soul exerts a particular volition, it causes and determines that act of volition. I would observe about this, that the thing in question seems to be forgotten, or masked in dark and unintelligible speech; unless such an objector means to contradict himself. The very act of volition itself is doubtless a determination of mind. That is, volition is the mind

¹ Imagine a steel ball on a chain that is swung at a candle on a table. When the ball hits the candle, it will move it. But prior to striking it, the cause has been set into action. The candle is not yet moving, yet the cause of its moving is at work. Thus the cause (the moving ball) and the effect (the candle moving) are not the same.

drawing a conclusion, or coming to a choice between two or more things that are proposed to it. But determining among external *objects* of choice is not the same as determining the *act of choice* itself, among various possible acts of choice. The question is, What influences, directs, or determines the mind or Will to come to the conclusion or choice that it does? Or, what is the cause, ground, or reason, why it concludes this way, and not another? Now it must be answered, according to the Arminian notion of freedom, that the Will influences, orders, and determines itself to act this way. And if it does, I say, then it must come by some antecedent act. To say that it is caused, influenced, and determined by something, and yet to say that it is not determined by anything *antecedent*, either in order of time or nature, *is a contradiction*. For that is precisely what is meant by something being prior in the order of nature: that in some way it is the cause or reason for the thing, with respect to which it is said to be *prior*.

If the particular act or exertion of will which comes into existence is anything properly determined at all, then it has some cause of its existing, and of existing in such a particular and determinate manner, and not another; it has some cause, whose influence decides the matter. This cause is distinct from the effect, and occurred prior to it. But to say, that the Will or mind orders, influences, and determines itself to exert an act by the very exertion itself, is to make the exertion both the cause and the effect; or it makes exerting such an act as to be a cause of that exerting. For the question is, What is the cause and reason of the soul exerting such an act? The answer is (under this notion) that the soul exerts an act, and that act is the cause of the exerting. And so, by this reasoning, the exertion must be *distinct* from itself, and in the order of nature, it must be *prior* to itself!

(3.) If the meaning is that the soul's exertion of such a particular act of will, is something that comes to pass by itself, without any cause, and there is absolutely no reason for the soul being determined to exert such a volition, and to make such a choice rather than another—I say, if this is the meaning of Arminians when they contend so earnestly for the Will determining its own acts, and for the liberty of Will consisting in self-determining power—then they do nothing but confound themselves and others by using words without any meaning. The question is asked, What determines the will? And their answer is that the Will determines itself. And in all the dispute which follows from that answer, it seems to be taken for granted that something determines the Will. And the controversy on this topic is not *whether* the determination of the Will has any cause or foundation at all; but *where* the foundation of that determination lies—whether in the will itself, or somewhere else. But if the thing intended is what is mentioned above, then nothing at all determines the Will. For volition has absolutely no cause or foundation of its existence, either within or without itself. There is a great noise made about self-determining power as the source of all free acts of the Will. But when the matter comes to be explained, the meaning is that no power at all is the source of these acts: neither self-determining power, nor any other power. They arise from nothing; no cause, no power, no influence, is at all concerned in the matter.

However, this very thing (that free acts of the Will are events which come to pass without a cause) is certainly implied in the Arminian notion of liberty of Will—though it is very inconsistent with many other things in their scheme, and it is repugnant to some things implied in their notion of liberty. Their opinion implies that the particular determination of volition has no cause, because they hold that the free acts of the will are contingent events; and contingency is essential to freedom in their notion of it. But certainly, those things which have a prior ground and reason of their particular existence—a cause which antecedently determines them to be, and which determines them to be just as they are—do not happen contingently. If, by a casual influence and connection, something that is foregoing precisely determines and

fixes its coming to pass, and the manner of it, then it does not remain a contingent thing whether they come to pass or not.¹

And because it is a question that in many respects is very important in this controversy (Whether the free acts of the Will are events which come to pass without a cause), I will be particular in examining this point in the two following sections.

Section III. Whether any event, and Volition in particular, can come to pass without a Cause of its existence.

BEFORE I enter any argument on this subject, I will explain how I should be understood when I use the word *Cause* in this discourse—since, for lack of a better word, I will have occasion to use it in a sense which is more extensive than that in which it is sometimes used. The word is often used in so restrained a sense as to signify only that which has a positive efficiency or influence to produce something, or bring it to pass. But there are many things which have no such positive productive influence, and yet which are *Causes* in this respect: that they truly have the nature of a reason why *some* things are, rather than *others*; or why they are *this* way, rather than another way. Thus the absence of the sun at night is not the Cause of dew falling at that time, not in the same way that its beams cause vapors to ascend in day-time. And the sun's withdrawal in the winter does not Cause waters to freeze in the same way that its approach in the spring causes their thawing.² Yet the withdrawal or absence of the sun is an *antecedent*, connected with these effects in the night and winter, and on which they depend. It is one thing that belongs to the ground and reason why they come to pass at that time, rather than at other times; though the absence of the sun is nothing positive, nor does it have any positive influence.

It may be further observed that when I speak of the connection of Causes and effects, I refer to *moral* Causes, as well as to those that are called *natural* in distinction from them. Moral Causes may be Causes in as proper a sense as any other Causes; and they may have as real an influence, and may as truly be the ground and reason of an Event coming to pass.

Therefore, I sometimes use the word *Cause* in this inquiry to mean *any* antecedent, natural or moral, positive or negative, on which an Event so depends (whether that event is a thing, or the way and circumstance of a thing), that it is the ground and reason, in whole or part, as to why it is, rather than not is; or why it is *as it is*, rather than otherwise. In other words, Cause is any antecedent with which a consequent event is so connected, that it truly belongs to the reason why the proposition which affirms that Event is true, whether it has any positive influence or not. And in agreement with this, I sometimes use the word *effect* for the *consequence* of another thing, which is perhaps more an *occasion* than a *Cause*, properly speaking.

I am very careful to thus explain my meaning, so that I may cut off occasions for anyone to cavil and object against some things I say concerning the dependence of all things which come to pass on some Cause, and concerning their connection with their Cause.

Having thus explained what I mean by *Cause*, I assert, that *nothing* ever comes to pass without a Cause. What is self-existent must be from eternity, and must be unchangeable: but as to all things that have a beginning, they are not self-existent; and therefore they must have some foundation of their existence outside themselves. Whatever begins to be, must have a Cause why it then begins to exist. This seems to be the first dictate of common and natural sense,

¹ A bullet that is fired out of a revolver travels at a certain speed, for a certain distance, with a certain mass, none of which is contingent on pulling the trigger. These qualities are inherent in the bullet itself. But the release of the bullet from the chamber of the revolver is contingent on pulling the trigger.

² The sun's heat directly causes evaporation or melting, but its absence only indirectly causes dew or freezing —i.e., when the sun is absent, it cannot *prevent* dew or frost; but its absence doesn't actually *cause* them.

which God has implanted in the minds of all mankind. And it is the main foundation of all our reasonings about the existence of things past, present, or future.

And this dictate of common sense equally regards *substances* and *modes* (or *things* and the manner and *circumstances* of things). Thus, if we see a body which has previously been at rest, start out of its state of rest and begin to move, we naturally and necessarily suppose there is some Cause or reason for this new mode of existence, just we would with the existence of a body itself which had previously not existed. And so, if a body which had previously moved in a certain direction, suddenly changed the direction of its motion; or if it put off its old form, and took on a new one; or changed its color—the beginning of these new modes is a new *Event*, and the human mind necessarily supposes that there is some Cause or reason for them.

If this grand principle of common sense is taken away, all arguing from effects to causes ceases; all knowledge of *any* existence ceases, except for what we have by the most direct and immediate intuition—particularly, all our proof for the being of God ceases. We argue God’s existence from our own existence, and from the existence of other things which we sense did not exist at one time, but have begun to exist. We argue God’s existence from the existence of the world, with all its constituent parts, and the manner of their existence; all of which we see plainly are not necessary in their own nature, and so they do not self-exist; therefore, they must have a Cause. But if things that are not necessary in themselves,¹ may begin to exist without a Cause, then all this arguing is vain.

Indeed, I will not affirm that there is, in the nature of things, no foundation for the knowledge of the Being of God apart from the evidence of his works. I *do suppose* there is a great absurdity in denying Being in general, and imagining an eternal, absolute, universal nothing. And therefore I suppose that there would be, in the nature of things, a foundation of intuitive evidence that there must be an eternal, infinite, most perfect Being—if only we had strength and the comprehension of mind that are sufficient to have a clear idea of a general and universal Being. But then we would not properly come to the knowledge of the Being of God by arguing—our evidence would be intuitive. We would see it, as we see other things that are necessary in themselves, the contraries of which are, in their *own* nature, absurd and contradictory. Such as, we see that twice two is four; and we see that a circle has no angles. If we had as clear an idea of a universal and infinite entity, as we have of these other things, then I suppose we would most intuitively see the absurdity of supposing that such a Being does not exist. We would immediately see there is no room for the question whether it is possible that Being [existence], in the most general and abstracted notion of it, could not be. But we do not have that strength and extent of mind to know this certainly, in this intuitive and independent manner. Rather, the way that mankind comes to the knowledge of the Being of God, is what the apostle speaks of in Rom. 1:20. “The invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen; being understood by the things that are made; even his eternal power and Godhead.” We first ascend, and prove *a posteriori*, or from effects, that there must be an eternal Cause; and then secondly, we prove by argumentation (not intuition) that this Being must necessarily exist; and then third, from the proved necessity of his existence, we may descend, and prove many of his perfections *a priori*.²

But once this grand principle of common sense is given up (that what is not necessary in itself, must have a Cause), we begin to maintain that things which up to now have not been, may come into existence, and begin to be *of themselves*, without any cause. At that point, all our means of ascending in argument from the creature to the Creator, and all our evidence of the Being of God, is cut off with one blow. In this case, we cannot prove that there is a God, either

¹ Things that are “necessary in themselves” might include the laws of physics & chemistry, matter & energy, etc.

² *a priori*: Derived by logic, without observed facts (self-evident).

from the Being of the world, and the creatures in it, or from the manner of their Being (their order, beauty, and use). For if things may come into existence without any Cause at all, then they doubtless may come into existence without any Cause corresponding to the effect. Our minds alike naturally suppose and determine both these things: namely, that what begins to be has a Cause for being, and also that it has a Cause that is proportionate to the effect.

The same principle which leads us to determine that nothing can come to pass without a Cause, leads us to determine that there cannot be more in the effect than in the Cause.

Indeed, once it is allowed that things may come to pass without a Cause, we not only have no proof of the Being of God, but we are without evidence of the existence of anything at all, except our own immediately present ideas and consciousness. For we have no way to prove anything else, except by arguing from effects to Causes—from the ideas now immediately in view, we argue other things that are not immediately in view; from sensations that are now excited in us, we infer the existence of things outside ourselves as the Causes of these sensations; and from the existence of these things, we argue other things on which they depend, such as effects depending on Causes. We infer the past existence of ourselves (or anything else) by memory; only as we argue that the ideas which are *now* in our minds, are the consequences of *past* ideas and sensations. We can immediately perceive nothing but the ideas which are at this moment extant in our minds. We perceive or know other things only by means of these, as necessarily *connected* with others, and as *dependent* on them. But if things may exist without Causes, all this necessary connection and dependence is dissolved, and so all means of our knowledge is gone. If there is no absurdity or difficulty in supposing that one thing starts out of non-existence into being, of itself and without Cause, then there is no absurdity or difficulty in supposing the same of millions of millions of things. For nothing (or no difficulty) multiplied, is still nothing; nothing multiplied by nothing, does not increase the sum.

And indeed, according to the hypothesis which I am opposing (that acts of the Will come to pass without a Cause), it is the cause, in fact, that millions of millions of Events are continually coming into existence *contingently*, without any Cause or reason why they do so, all over the world, every day and hour, through all ages. So this process is likewise in constant succession in every moral agent. This contingency, this efficient *nothingness*, this effectual *No-Cause*, is always at hand, ready to produce these effects, as long as the agent exists, and as often as he has occasion to operate.

If this were so, that things only of one kind—acts of the Will—come to pass by themselves; and if this was an Event that was continual, and happened in course wherever subjects capable of such Events were found; then this very thing would demonstrate that there *was* some Cause for them, which made such a difference between this Event and others, that they did not really happen contingently. For contingency is blind, and does not pick and choose a particular sort of Events. *Nothingness* has no choice. This *No-Cause*, which causes no existence, cannot cause the existence which comes to pass, to be of one particular sort only, as distinguished from all others. Thus, if only one sort of matter drops out of the heavens (say, *water*) and this comes so often, so constantly, and so plentifully, all over the world, in all ages, this shows that there is some Cause or reason for water falling out of the heavens; it shows that something besides mere contingency has a hand in the matter.¹

¹ Remember that *contingence*, as a term of art, means something which has absolutely no previous basis or reason with which its existence has a fixed and certain connection. That doesn't seem to be the sense in which Edwards uses it here. He appears to use it in its common sense: *contingent* is what we have no means of foreseeing. It is especially contingent or accidental when it comes to pass without our foreknowledge, and outside our plans and scope. (see p. 12). Rain is not *contingent* in that sense; it can be expected and planned for.

If we supposed that *Non-entity* was about to bring forth some entity, and that things were coming into existence without any Cause or antecedent on which the existence, kind, or manner of their existence depends—or anything which could at all determine whether the things should be stones, stars, beasts, angels, human bodies, or souls; or some new motion or form in natural bodies; or some new sensations in animals, or new ideas in the human understanding, or new volitions in the Will—or any thing else of all the infinite number of possibilities—then certainly it should not be expected that they would all be of only one particular kind. And although many millions of millions of things were coming into existence in this way, all over the face of the earth, it should not be expected that it would be this way in *all ages*; and that this sort of existence would never fail to come to pass where there is room for them, or a subject capable of them—and that this occurs constantly, whenever there is occasion for it.

Someone might imagine there is something in the sort of Event that renders it possible for it to come into existence without a Cause, and might say that the free acts of the Will are existences of an exceedingly different nature from other things. And for this reason, they may come into existence without any previous ground or reason, even though other things cannot. If they make this objection in good earnest, it would be evidence of their strangely forgetting themselves; for they would be giving an account of some ground of the existence of something, at the same time that they maintain there is no ground of its existence. Therefore I would observe that the particular nature of existence, however diverse from others, can lay no foundation for that thing coming into existence without a Cause—because to suppose this, would be to suppose that the particular nature of existence is something prior to its existence; and so it is something which makes way for existence, without being a cause or reason of existence. But what in any respect makes way for something to come into being, or for any manner or circumstance of its first existence, must exist *prior* to the existence. The distinguishing *nature* of the effect, which belongs to the effect, cannot influence backward, so as to act before it exists. The peculiar nature of that thing called *Volition*, can do nothing—it can have no influence—while it is not. And afterwards, it is too late for its influence: for then the thing has made sure of its existence already, without Volition's help.

So it is indeed just as repugnant to our reason, to suppose that an act of the Will could come into existence without a Cause, as to suppose that the human soul, or an angel, or the globe of the earth, or the whole universe, could come into existence without a Cause. And once we allow that an effect, such as a Volition, may come to pass without a Cause, how do we know that many other sorts of effects may not do so too? It is not the particular *kind* of effect that makes it absurd to suppose it exists without a Cause, but it is absurd to suppose it of something that is common to *all* things that come into being—things that are not self-existent, or necessary in the nature of things.

Section IV. Whether Volition can arise without a Cause, through the activity of the nature of the soul.

[Isaac Watts,] the author of the *Essay on the Freedom of the Will in God and the Creatures* (1732), in answer to an objection against his doctrine of a self-determining power in the will (p. 68-69.)¹—specifically, that nothing is, or comes to pass, without a sufficient reason why it is, and why it is in this manner rather than another—allows that it is this way in corporeal things, which are properly and philosophically speaking, *passive* in their being. But he denies that it is this way in spirits which are beings of an *active* nature, who have the spring of action within

¹ Edwards cites page numbers instead of chapter and section. I was able to find the 1816 third edition of Dr. Whitby's *Discourse on the Five Points*, which Edwards cites, but not the specific printing he used in 1754; and so the page numbers don't match. Therefore I annotated the chapter and section where possible.

themselves, and can determine for themselves. He plainly supposed that such an event as an act of the Will may come to pass in a spirit, without a sufficient reason *why* it comes to pass, or *why* it is in this manner rather than another. But certainly [Dr. Watts] must be unwary and inadvertent in his answer on this matter. For,

1. The objection or difficulty proposed by him seems to be forgotten in his answer or solution. The very difficulty, as he himself proposes it, is this: How can an event come to pass without a sufficient reason why it is, or why it is in this manner rather than another? Instead of solving this difficulty with regard to Volition (as he proposes), he forgets himself, and answers another quite different question: What is a sufficient reason why it is, and why it is in this manner rather than another? He assigns the active being's own determination as the Cause, and as a Cause that is sufficient for the effect. But he leaves all the difficulty unresolved: How did the soul's own determination come to exist, and be what it is, without a Cause? The activity of the soul may enable it to be the *Cause* of effects; but it does not at all enable it to be *subject* to effects which have no Cause—this is what [Dr. Watts] supposes concerning acts of the Will. Activity of nature no more enables a being to produce effects and determine the manner of their existence, within itself and without a Cause, than it enables it outside itself in some other being. But if an active being, through its activity, were to produce and determine an effect in some external object, it would be absurd to say that the effect was produced without a Cause!

2. The question is not so much, How a spirit endowed with activity comes to act, as the question is why it exerts one particular act, and not another—or why it acts with such a particular determination? If an activity of nature is the Cause why a spirit (the soul of man, for instance) acts, and does not lie still, that alone is not the Cause why its action is limited, directed, and determined. Active nature is a *general* thing; it is an ability or tendency of nature toward action generally taken. This may be a Cause why the soul acts as occasion or reason is given; but this alone cannot be a sufficient Cause why the soul exerts such a particular act, at such a time, rather than other acts at other times. In order for this, there must be something besides a *general* tendency to action; there must also be a *particular* tendency to that individual action. If it were asked, why the soul of man uses its activity in the manner it does, and it were answered that the soul uses its activity this way rather than another because it has *activity*—would such an answer satisfy a rational man? Would it not rather be looked at as an impertinent¹ answer?

3. An active being can bring no effects to pass by his activity, except what are consequent to his acting: he produces nothing by his activity in any way other than by the exercise of his activity, and so he produces nothing but the fruits of its exercise—he brings nothing to pass by dormant activity. But the exercise of his activity is *action*; and so his action, or exercise of his activity, must occur prior to the effects of his activity. If an active being produces an effect in another being, to which his activity is interrelated, and the effect of which is the fruit of his activity, then his activity must first be exercised or exerted, and its effect must follow. So it must be (with equal reason) if the active being is his own object, and his activity is conducted by himself, to produce and determine some effect in himself. Still, the exercise of his activity must go before the effect which he brings to pass and determines by his activity. Therefore his activity cannot be the Cause of the *determination* of the first action, or of the exercise of activity itself, from which the effects of his activity arise. For that would imply a contradiction; it would be saying that the first exercise of activity comes before the first exercise of activity, and that it is the Cause of it.

4. The soul, though an active substance, cannot diversify its own acts, except by first acting; nor can it be a determining Cause of different acts, or any different effects (sometimes of one kind,

¹ That is, not pertinent; immaterial to the question asked.

and sometimes of another) in any other way than as a consequence of its own diverse acts. This is manifest by this: that if it could, then the *same* Cause, the *same* causal influence, without variation in any respect, would produce *different* effects at *different* times. For the same substance of the soul *before* it acts, and the same active nature of the soul *before* it is exerted (i.e. before it in the order of nature), would be the Cause of different effects—different Volitions, at different times. But the substance of the soul *before* it acts, and its active nature *before* it is exerted, are the same *without variation*. For it is some act that makes the first variation in the Cause, as to any causal exertion, force, or influence. But if it is so—that the soul has no different causality or different causal influence in producing these varying effects—then it is evident that the soul has no influence in the difference of the effect; and that the difference of the effect cannot be attributed to anything in the soul—or what is the same thing, the soul does not determine the diversity of the effect, which is contrary to the supposition. It is true, the substance of the soul *before* it acts, and *before* there is any difference in that respect, may be in a different state and different circumstances. But those whom I oppose, will not allow the different circumstances of the soul to be the determining Causes of the acts of the will, because these are contrary to their notion of self-determination.

5. Let us suppose as these Arminian divines do, that strictly speaking, there are no acts of the soul, but only free Volitions. Then it will follow that the soul is an *active* being in nothing further than it is a *voluntary* or *elective* being. And whenever the soul *actively* produces effects, it *voluntarily* and *electively* produces those effects. But to produce effects this way is the same as producing effects as a consequence of, and according to, its own *choice*. And if that is so, then surely the soul does not, by its activity, produce all its own acts of will or choice; for this would be to produce all its free acts of choice *voluntarily* and *electively*, or in *consequence* of, its own free acts of choice. That brings the matter directly back to the aforementioned contradiction, of having a free act of choice *before* the first free act of choice. According to their own notion of *action*, if a Volition arises in the mind without a free act of the Will to produce it, then the mind is not the voluntary Cause of that Volition. This is because it does not arise from, nor is regulated by, choice or design. And therefore it cannot be that the mind should be the active, voluntary, and determining Cause of the first and leading Volition that relates to the affair. The mind being a *designing* Cause, only enables it to produce effects in *consequence* of its design; that will not enable it to be the designing Cause of all its own designs. The mind being an *elective* Cause, will enable it to produce effects only in *consequence* of its elections, and according to them; but that cannot enable it to be the elective Cause of all its own elections; because that supposes an election before the first election. So too, the mind being an *active* Cause enables it to produce effects in *consequence* of its own acts; but that cannot enable it to be the determining Cause of all its own acts, for that is, in the same way, a contradiction. It supposes a determining act that is conducted in relation to the first act, and prior to it, having a causal influence on its existence, and the manner of its existence.

I can conceive of nothing else that can be meant by the soul having power to cause and determine its own Volitions, as a being to whom God has given a power to act, except this: that God has given power to the soul, sometimes at least, to excite Volitions at its pleasure, or as it chooses.

And this certainly supposes, in all such cases, a choice that precedes all Volitions which are thus caused, even the first of them. This runs into the aforementioned absurdity.

Therefore, the activity of the nature of the soul affords no relief from the difficulties with which the notion of a self-determining power in the Will is attended; nor will it help, in the least, to remove its absurdities and inconsistencies.

Section V. If the things asserted were true, they would still be irrelevant; thus Arminian arguments are inconsistent.

WHAT was last observed in the preceding section, may show that the active nature of the soul cannot be a reason why an act of the Will is, or why it is in this manner rather than another. It also showed that if it *could* be proved that volitions are contingent events (that is, that their being and manner of being is not fixed or determined by any cause or anything antecedent), it still would not at all serve the purpose of Arminians, which is to establish their notion of freedom, as consisting in the Will determining itself. This supposes that every free act of the Will is determined by some prior act of the will. To say the *Will* determines something, is the same as saying the *soul* determines something by *willing*. There is no way that the Will can determine an *act* of the Will, except by *willing* that act of the Will—which is the same as *choosing* it. So in this case, there must be two acts of the Will: one going before the other, one conducted in relation to the other, and the latter is the *object* of the former, and it is *chosen* by the former. If the Will does not cause and determine the act by *choice*, then it does not cause or determine it at all. For what is not determined by choice, is not determined voluntarily or willingly. Thus, to say that the Will determines something which the soul does *not determine willingly*, is as much as saying that something is done by the will, which the soul does *not* do with its Will.¹

So that if Arminian *liberty of will* is maintained (which consists in the Will determining its own acts), then the old absurdity and contradiction must be maintained that every free act of Will is caused and determined by a foregoing free act of will. This is not consistent with free acts arising without any cause, and being so contingent as not to be fixed by anything foregoing. Thus this evasion must be given up as not at all sustaining this notion of liberty, but directly destroying it.

And if it should be supposed, that the soul determines its own acts of Will some other way than by a foregoing act of Will, it will still not help their cause. If the soul determines these acts of will by an act of the understanding, or by some other power, then the Will does not determine itself; and so the self-determining power of the will is surrendered. According to their own opinion of liberty, what liberty is exercised by the soul if it is determined by something besides its own choice? It is true that the acts of the Will may be directed, and effectually determined and fixed—but it is not done by the soul's own Will and pleasure. This is because there is no exercise of choice or Will at all in producing the effect. And if Will and choice are not exercised in it, then how is the liberty of the Will exercised in it?

Let Arminians turn whichever way they please with their notion of liberty, consisting in the Will determining its own acts—their notion destroys itself. If they hold that every free act of the Will is determined by the soul's own free choice, or by foregoing a free act of Will (foregoing it either in the order of time or nature), then it implies a gross contradiction that the first free act belonging to the affair, is determined by a free act which occurs before it. Or if they say, that the free acts of the Will are determined by some other act of the soul, and not by an act of will or choice, then this *also* destroys their notion of liberty consisting in the acts of the Will being determined by the will itself. Or if they hold that the acts of the Will are determined by nothing at all that occurs prior to them, but that the acts of the Will are contingent in that sense (that they are determined and fixed by no cause at all), then this also destroys their notion of liberty, consisting in the Will determining its own acts.

This being the true state of the Arminian notion of liberty, the writers who defend it are forced into gross inconsistencies in what they say about this subject. To give an instance, in Dr.

¹ This is self-contradictory. The soul cannot be so divorced from the Will that the Will operates independently from the soul. Saying that the soul *wills* something, assumes that the *Will* is inherent in the soul.

Whitby's discourse on the freedom of the Will,¹ he opposes the opinion of the Calvinists (who place a man's liberty only in a power to do what he wills), as plainly agreeing with Mr. Hobbes.² And yet he himself mentions the very same notion of liberty, as the dictate of the sense and common reason of mankind, and a rule laid down by the light of nature—that liberty is a power to act on our own, or *DOING WHAT WE WILL*. This is indeed, as he says, something that agrees with the sense and common reason of mankind; and therefore it is not so much to be wondered at that he acknowledges it against himself, unawares. For if liberty does not consist in this, then what else can be devised that it should consist in? If it is said, as Dr. Whitby insists elsewhere, that it not only consists in the liberty to do what we will, but also in a liberty to *will* without necessity,³ the question still remains: what does that liberty to “will without necessity” consist in, if not the power to will as we please, without being impeded by a contrary necessity? Or to ask it another way, if not in a liberty for the soul—in its willing—to act according to its own choice? Indeed, Dr. Whitby seems to allow this very thing, and he supposes it again and again through the use he makes of the sayings of the fathers whom he quotes as his vouchers. Thus he cites the words of Origen, which he produces as a testimony on his side: “The soul acts by *HER OWN CHOICE*, and it is free for her to incline to whatever part *SHE WILL*.” And the words of Justin Martyr: “The doctrine of the Christians is this, that nothing is done or suffered according to fate, but that every man does good or evil *ACCORDING TO HIS OWN FREE CHOICE*.” And from Eusebius, he quotes these words: “If fate is established, then philosophy and piety are overthrown. All these things depend on the necessity introduced by the stars, not upon meditation and exercise *PROCEEDING FROM OUR OWN FREE CHOICE*.” And again, the words of MACCARIUS: “God, to preserve the liberty of man's Will, allowed their bodies to die, that it might be *IN THEIR CHOICE* to turn to good or evil. Those who are moved by the Holy Spirit, are not held under any necessity, but have liberty to turn themselves, and *DO WHAT THEY WILL* in this life.”

Thus, the Doctor in effect comes into that very notion of liberty which the Calvinists have; and which he condemns at the same time he agrees with the opinion of Mr. Hobbes: namely, “that the soul acts by its own choice; men do good or evil according to their own free choice; they are in that exercise which proceeds from their own free choice; they have it in their choice to turn to good or evil, and to do what they will.” So if men exercise this liberty in the acts of the will themselves, then it must be in exerting acts of Will according to their own free choice; or, they are exerting acts of will that proceed from their choice. And if this is so, then let everyone judge whether this does not suppose either a free choice that goes before the free act of will, or an act of choice that does *not* go before that act of the will which proceeds from it. If it is this way with all free acts of the Will, then let everyone judge whether it does not follow that there is a free choice that goes *before* the first free act of the Will exerted in this case! And finally, let everyone judge whether in the scheme of these writers, there is any possibility of avoiding these absurdities.

If liberty consists, as Dr. Whitby himself says, in a man's doing what he will; and a man exercises this liberty, not only in external actions, but in the acts of the will themselves—then so far as liberty is exercised in the acts of the will, it consists in a man willing what he wills. And if any say so, then one of these two things must be meant; either,

- (1.) A man has power to will, as he does will; because what he wills, he wills; and therefore he has power to will what he has power to will. If this is their meaning, then all this mighty controversy about freedom of the Will and self-determining power, comes wholly to nothing. All that is contended for is this: that the mind of man does what it does, and it is

¹ See footnote on page 45.

² See footnote on page 132.

³ Discourse I, chap. I, sec. III.(ii).

subject to whatever it is subject to—or in other words, what is, is; which no one has any controversy with. Or else,

(2.) The meaning must be that a man has power to will as he chooses to will. That is, he has the power, by one act of choice, to choose another act; by an *antecedent* act of Will, he has the power to choose a *consequent* act, and to execute his own choice in this.

And if this is their meaning, then it is nothing but shuffling with those they dispute with, and baffling their own reason. For the question still remains, In what does man's liberty lie in that antecedent act of will which chose the consequent act? The answer according to the same principles must be this: that his liberty in this also lies in his willing as he would, or as he chose, or agrees with another act of choice preceding that. And so the question returns *ad infinitum*;¹ and the same answer must be made *ad infinitum* in order to support their opinion that there must be no beginning. Instead, they say, free acts of Will must have been chosen by foregoing free acts of will in the soul of every man, without any beginning.

Section VI. The Will determines things which are indifferent in the mind.

A Great argument for self-determining power is the supposed experience we universally have, of an ability to determine our Wills in cases in which no prevailing motive is presented. The Will, it is supposed, has its choice to make between two or more things that are perfectly equal in the view of the mind; and apparently the Will is entirely indifferent as to which—yet we have no difficulty coming to a choice. The Will can instantly determine itself toward one, by a sovereign power which it has over itself, without being moved by any preponderating inducement.

Thus the aforementioned author of an *Essay on the Freedom of the Will*, etc. (p. 25-27)² supposes

“that there are many instances in which the will is determined neither by present uneasiness, nor by the greatest apparent good, nor by the last dictate of the understanding, nor by anything else—but merely by *itself*, as a sovereign self-determining power of the soul. It supposes that the soul does not *will* this or that action by any influence, other than it *wills* it itself.”

Thus, he says,

“I can turn my face to the south, or the north; I can point with my finger upward, or downward. And thus, in some cases, the will determines itself in a very sovereign manner, because it wills without a reason that has been borrowed from the understanding. And hereby the Will discovers its own perfect power of choice, rising from within itself, and free from all influence or restraint of any kind.”

And (pp. 66, 70, 73, 74)³ this author very expressly supposes that the will in many cases is determined by no motive at all, acting altogether *without* motive, or any ground of preference. Here I would observe:

1. The very supposition which is made here, directly contradicts and overthrows itself. For the thing supposed, in which this grand argument consists, is that among several things, the Will actually chooses one over another, at the same time that it is perfectly indifferent to all. This is the same thing as saying that the mind *has* a preference, at the same time that it has *no* preference. What is meant cannot be: that the mind is indifferent before it comes to have a choice, or until it has a preference; for certainly this author did not imagine he had a

¹ To infinity; repeatedly forever.

² Watts, *ibid.*, sec. 2.

³ Watts, *ibid.*, sec. 6. *Difficulties, etc.*

controversy with anyone in supposing this. Besides, it appears in fact, that the thing which he supposes, is *not* that the Will chooses one thing over another, both of which it is indifferent toward before it chooses, but that the Will is indifferent *when* it chooses; and that it is not indifferent only *afterwards*, as a consequence of its choice. The reason the chosen thing appears preferable, and more agreeable than another, arises from its choice that has already been made. His words are (p. 30),¹

“Where the objects which are proposed appear equally fit or good, the will is left without a guide or director; and therefore it must take its own choice, by its own determination, being properly a self-determining power. And in such cases the Will, as it were, makes a good for itself by its own choice, i.e. it creates its own pleasure or delight in this self-chosen good. It is like a man who, by seizing a spot of unoccupied land in an uninhabited country, makes it his own possession and property, and as such, he rejoices in it. Where things were indifferent before, the Will finds nothing to make them more agreeable, considered merely in themselves; but the pleasure it feels arises from its own choice, and its perseverance in it. We love many things which we have chosen, and purely *because* we chose them.”

This is as much as to say, that we first begin to prefer many things, purely because we have preferred and chosen them before. These things must have been spoken inconsiderately by this author. Choice or preference *cannot* be before itself in the same instance, either in the order of time or nature: It cannot be the foundation of itself, or the consequence of itself. The very act of choosing one thing rather than another is *preferring* that thing, and that is setting a higher value on that thing. But the mind setting a higher value on one thing rather than another is not, in the first place, the *fruit* of its setting a higher value on that thing.

This author says (p. 36),² “The Will may be perfectly indifferent, and yet the Will may determine itself to choose one or the other.” And again, on the same page, “I am entirely indifferent to either; and yet my Will may determine itself to choose.” And again, “Which one I choose must be determined by the mere act of my will.” If the choice is determined by a mere act of *Will*, then the choice is determined by a mere act of *choice*. And concerning this matter—that the act of the Will itself is determined by an act of choice—this writer is express (p. 72).³ Speaking of the case in which there is no superior fitness in the objects presented, he has these words: “There it must act by its own choice, and determine itself as it PLEASES”—it is supposed that the very determination which is the ground and spring of the will’s act, is an act of choice and pleasure, in which one act is more agreeable than another; and this preference and superior pleasure is the ground of all it does in the case.

If this is so, then the mind is not indifferent when it determines itself, but it would rather determine itself one way than another. Therefore the Will does *not* act at all indifferently, not even so much as in the first step it takes. If it is even possible for the understanding to act in indifference, yet surely the will never does. This is because the Will, beginning to *act*, is the very same thing as beginning to *choose* or *prefer*. And if in the very first act of the Will, the mind *prefers* something, then the idea of that thing is preferred, it preponderates at that time, or it prevails in the mind—or, which is the same thing, the idea of it has a prevailing influence on the Will. So this wholly destroys the thing supposed—that the mind can, by a sovereign power, choose one of two or more things which, in the view of the mind, are in every respect perfectly equal—one of which does not at all preponderate, nor does it have any prevailing influence on the mind above another.

So that this author, in his grand argument for the ability of the Will to choose one of two or more things, concerning which it is perfectly indifferent, at the same time, in effect, denies the

¹ Ibid. sec. 3. prop. III. *Self-determining Power*.

² Ibid. sec. 3. prop. VIII. *Self-determining Power*.

³ Ibid. sec. 6. Ans. 2, *Objections answered*.

thing he supposes (that the Will, in choosing, is subject to no prevailing influence of the thing chosen). Indeed, it is impossible to make this argument without overthrowing it; the thing supposed in it, is what denies it. To suppose that the Will acts at all in a state of perfect indifference, is to assert that the mind chooses without choosing. To say that when it is indifferent, it can do as it pleases, is to say that it can follow its pleasure, when it has no pleasure to follow. And therefore if there is any difficulty in the instances of two cakes, or two eggs, etc. which are exactly alike, one as good as another—concerning which this author supposes the mind in fact has a choice, and so in effect he supposes that it has a preference—it as much concerned him to solve the difficulty, as it concerns those whom he opposes. For if these instances prove anything to his purpose, they prove that a man chooses without choice. And yet this is *not* to his purpose; because if this is what he asserts, then his own words are as much against him, and they as much contradict him, as the words of those he disputes against.

2. There is no great difficulty in showing, in such alleged instances, not only that the mind must be influenced in its choice by something that has a preponderating influence on it, but also how it is so. A little attention to our own experience, and a distinct consideration of the acts of our own minds in such cases, will be sufficient to clear up the matter.

Thus, suppose I have a chess-board before me; and because I am required by a superior, or desired by a friend, or for some other consideration, I am determined to touch one of the squares on the board with my finger. Not being limited or directed in the first proposal to any square in particular; and there being nothing in the squares themselves that recommends any one of the sixty-four more than another—in this case, my mind determines to give itself up to what is commonly called an *accident*, by determining to touch that square which happens to be most in view, one which I especially have my eye on at that moment, or which happens then to be most in my mind, or which I am directed to by some other such accident. Here are several steps of the mind in procession (though all of the steps may be done in a moment).

- The first step is the mind's general determination that it will touch one of the squares.
- The next step is another general determination to give itself up to accident in some way, such as to touch one that is most in the eye or mind at that time, or to give itself up to some other such accident.
- The third and last step is a particular determination to touch a certain individual square—that square which, by accident, the mind has set itself on, and which has actually “offered itself” as beyond others in its attractiveness.

Now it is apparent that in none of these several steps does the mind proceed in absolute indifference. Rather, in each of them, the mind is influenced by a preponderating inducement. So it is in the first step, in the mind's general determination to touch one of the sixty-four spots: the mind is not absolutely indifferent whether it touches it or not. It is *induced* to touch it, for the sake of making some experiment, or by the desire of a friend, or by some other motive that prevails.

So it is in the second step, the mind determines to give itself up to accident, by touching what is most in the eye, or which idea is most prevalent in the mind, etc. The mind is not absolutely indifferent whether it proceeds by this rule or not. It chooses it, because it appears at that time to be a convenient and requisite expedient in order to fulfil the general purpose.

And so it is in the third and last step, which is determining to touch that individual square which actually does prevail in the mind's view. The mind is not indifferent concerning this either. It is influenced by a prevailing inducement and a reason, which is that this will prosecute the preceding determination, which was requisite and fixed in the second step.

In such a case, *Accident* ever serves a man without hindering him a moment. Among a number of objects in view, one will prevail in the eye, or in an idea, beyond all others. When we have

our eyes open in the clear sunshine, many objects strike the eye at once, and innumerable images may instantly be painted in it by the rays of light. But the attention of the mind is not equal to several of them at once; or if it is, it does not continue so for any time. And so it is with respect to the ideas of the mind in general: several ideas are not at once in equal strength in the mind's view and notice; or at least, they do not remain so for any noticeable continuance. There is nothing in the world more constantly varying than the ideas of the mind. They do not remain in precisely the same state for the least perceivable space of time, as is evident by this: all time is perceived by the mind only by the successive changes of its own ideas. Therefore, while the perceptions of the mind remain in precisely the same state, there will be no perceivable length of time, because there is no noticeable succession at all.

As the acts of the Will, in each step of the aforementioned procedure, do not come to pass without a particular cause, but every act is attributable to a prevailing *inducement*, so the accident (as I have called it), or what happens in the unsearchable course of things to which the mind yields itself, and by which it is guided, is not something that comes to pass without a cause. The mind in determining to be guided by accident, is not determined by something that has no cause, any more than if it is determined to be guided by a lot, or the casting of a die. For though the die falling in such a way is accidental to the one who casts it, none will suppose there is no cause why it falls as it does. The involuntary changes in the succession of our ideas, though the cause may not be observed, have as much a cause as the changeable motions of the particles that float in the air, or the continual, infinitely various, successive changes of the uneven surface of the water.

There are two things especially, which are probably the occasions of confusion in the minds of those who insist that the Will acts with indifference, and without being moved by any inducement in its determinations, as in those cases which have been mentioned.

1. They seem to mistake the question, or at least they do not keep it distinctly in view. The question they *dispute* is, Whether the mind is indifferent about the objects presented to it, one of which is to be taken, touched, pointed to, etc. such as two eggs, or two cakes, which appear equally good. Whereas the question to be *considered* is, Whether the person is indifferent with respect to his own actions—whether he does not, on some consideration or other, prefer one act over another with respect to these objects presented. The mind in its determination and choice in these cases is *not* immediately and directly concerned with the *objects* presented; but with the *acts* which are to be done concerning these objects. The objects may appear equal, and the mind may never properly make any choice between them—but the next act of the Will concerns the *external actions to be performed*, whether taking, touching, etc. These actions may *not* appear equal; one may properly be chosen over another. In each step of the mind's progress, the determination is *not* about the objects (unless it is made indirectly and improperly); it is about the actions which it chooses for reasons other than any preference for one of the objects, and for reasons that are not taken at all from the objects themselves.

There is no need to suppose that the mind ever properly chooses one of the objects over another, either before it has taken it, or afterwards. Indeed, the man does choose to take or touch one object rather than another; but it is *not* because the mind chooses the thing that is taken or touched, but because of outside considerations. The case may be that, of two things offered to him, a man may, for certain reasons, prefer taking the one he undervalues, and choose to neglect the one his mind prefers. In such a case, choosing the thing taken, and choosing to take, are different things. And so they are in a case where the things presented are equal in the mind's esteem, and neither of them preferred. All that fact and experience can make evident, is that the mind chooses one action rather than another. And therefore the arguments which they bring to suit their purpose, should prove that the mind chooses the *action* in perfect indifference, with respect only to that action; and not try to prove that the

mind chooses the action in perfect indifference with respect to the *object*. This is quite possible; yet the Will does not act at all without some prevalent inducement, and proper preponderance.

2. Another reason for confusion and difficulty in this matter, seems to be not distinguishing between a *general* indifference (or an indifference with respect to what is to be done, in a more distant and general view of it), and a *particular* indifference (or an indifference with respect to the next immediate act, viewed with its particular and present circumstances).¹ A man may be perfectly indifferent with respect to his own actions, in the former respect; and yet not in the latter. Thus in the foregoing instance of touching one of the squares of a chess-board—when it is *first* proposed to touch one of them, I may be perfectly indifferent which one I touch; because as yet I view the matter remotely and generally. I am only in the first step of the mind's progress in the affair. I already determined that I would touch the one which happens to be most in my eye or mind. And my mind is now fixed on touching a particular one. Yet, when I actually come to the last step, and the very next thing to be determined is the act of touching that one, it is considered *immediately*, in these particular and present circumstances, and my mind is no longer perfectly indifferent about it.

Section VII. The Notion of Liberty of Will, consisting in Indifference.

What has been said in the foregone section, has a tendency in some measure to evince the absurdity of the opinion of those who place Liberty in Indifference, or in that equilibrium by which the will has no antecedent bias to make it go this way rather than that—the opinion that the determination of the Will to either side may be entirely from itself, and attributable only to its own power, and to the sovereignty which it has over itself.

But because this argument is of such long standing, and has been so generally received, and so much insisted on by Pelagians, Semi-Pelagians, Jesuits, Socinians, Arminians, and others, it may deserve a fuller consideration. Therefore I now proceed to a more particular and thorough inquiry into this notion.

Lest someone supposes that I do not understand those who place Liberty in Indifference, or would charge me with misrepresenting their opinion, I would make several things known. I am sensible that there are some who, when they talk about Liberty of the Will as consisting in Indifference, they speak as though they do not mean the Indifference of the inclination or the tendency of the *Will*, but an Indifference of the *soul's* power of willing; nor that the will, with respect to its power or ability to choose, is indifferent, or that it can go either way indifferently, either to the right hand or left; it can either act or forbear from acting, one as well as the other. This indeed seems to be a refining of some particular writers only, and it is newly invented. It will by no means consist with the manner of expression used by the defenders of Liberty of Indifference in general. I wish such refiners would thoroughly consider whether they distinctly know their own meaning when they make a distinction between an Indifference of the soul as to its power or ability to choose, and the soul's Indifference as to the preference or choice *itself*. I wonder whether they are not deceiving themselves in imagining that they have any distinct meaning at all. The Indifference of the soul as to its ability or power to will, *must* be the same thing as the Indifference of the state of the power or the faculty of the will; or the indifference of the state in which the soul itself (which has that power or faculty) remains up to now, as to the exercise of that power in the choice it will make at some point in the future.

But let me no longer insist on the inexplicable abstruseness of this distinction. Whatever the meaning may be of those who use it, this much at least must be intended by Arminians when

¹ A young man in his first year of college may be indifferent about what to do after graduation; he may also be indifferent about whether to eat cereal or pancakes for breakfast. It's about the *imminence* of an action.

they talk of Indifference as essential to Liberty of Will: That it is such an Indifference that it leaves the Will not already determined, but so far free from actual possession, and vacant of such predetermination, that there may be room to exercise the self-determining power of the Will; and that the Will's freedom consists in (or depends upon) this vacancy and opportunity that is left for the will, to determine the act that is to be the "free act."

And here I would observe in the first place, that to make this scheme of Liberty work, the Indifference must be perfect and absolute. There must be a perfect freedom from all antecedent preponderance or inclination. Because if the Will is already inclined, before it exerts its own sovereign power on itself, then its inclination is not wholly attributable to itself. If when two opposites are proposed to the soul for its choice, the proposal does not find the soul wholly in a state of Indifference, then the soul is not found in a state of Liberty for mere self-determination. The least degree of an antecedent bias must be inconsistent with their notion of liberty. For so long as a prior inclination possesses the will, and is not removed, the former binds the latter, so that it is utterly impossible for the Will to act other than agreeably to that inclination. Surely the Will cannot act or choose contrary to a remaining prevailing inclination of the Will. To suppose otherwise, would be the same as supposing that the Will is inclined contrary to its present prevailing inclination, or contrary to what it is inclined to. All things considered, the Will preponderates and inclines to what it prefers. It is equally impossible for the Will to choose contrary to its own remaining and present preponderating inclination, as it is to prefer something that is contrary to its own present preference, or to choose contrary to its own present choice. The Will, therefore, so long as it is under the influence of an old preponderating inclination, is not at Liberty for a new free act, or for any present act of self-determination. A self-determined free act must be one which the will determines while it is in the possession and use of a unique sort of liberty; such a liberty consists in freedom from anything that would make it possible for the Will, at that time, to deviate from its tendency.

Someone might say that there is no need for the Indifference to be perfect. Even though a former inclination still remains, if it is not very strong, then possibly the strength of the Will may oppose and overcome it. This is grossly absurd; for however great the strength of the Will may be, it gives the Will no such sovereignty and command as to cause itself to prefer and not to prefer at the same time, or to choose contrary to its own present choice.

Therefore, if there is the least degree of antecedent preponderance of the Will, it must be perfectly abolished before the Will can be at liberty to determine itself the *contrary* way. And if the Will determines itself the *same* way, it was not a free determination, because the Will is not wholly at liberty to do so. Its determination is not altogether from itself, but it was partly determined before, in its prior inclination. And all the freedom which the will exercises in the case, is in an increase of inclination which it gives to itself, *added* to what it already had by a foregoing bias. So much is from itself, and so much is from absolute indifference. For though the Will had a *previous* tendency that way, it had no tendency to that *additional* degree of inclination. Therefore the previous tendency has no consideration with respect to the act in which the Will is free. It comes to the same thing which was said at first, that as to the act of the Will, in which the Will is free, there must be absolute indifference, or equilibrium.

To illustrate this: suppose there is a sovereign self-moving power in a natural body; but that the body is in motion already by an antecedent bias; for instance, gravitation pulls it towards the centre of the earth, and it has one degree of motion by virtue of that previous tendency. But by its self-moving power, it adds one degree more to its motion, and moves so much more swiftly towards the centre of the earth than it would do by gravity alone. All that can be attributed to a self-moving power in this case, is the additional degree of motion; and the other degree which it had from gravity, is of no consideration in the case. The effect is just the same

as if the body had received from itself one degree of motion from a state of perfect rest. So too, if we suppose that a self-moving power is given to the scale of a balance, which has a weight one degree beyond the opposite scale; and if we ascribe to it an ability to add to itself another degree of force in the same way, by its self-moving power —this is the same as ascribing to it a power to give itself one degree of preponderance from a perfect equilibrium. However much power the scale has to give itself an over-balance from a perfect equipoise, that is how much self-moving self-preponderating power it has, and no more. So that its free power is always to be measured from perfect equilibrium.

I need say no more to prove that if Indifference is essential to liberty, then it must be *absolute* Indifference; so far as the will is destitute of this, it is destitute of that freedom by which it has the capacity to be its own determiner in its motions and determinations, without being at all passive, or subject to the power and sway of something else.

Having observed these things, let us now test whether this notion of the Liberty of Will—which consists in Indifference and equilibrium—and the Will's self-determination in such a state of Indifference, is not absurd and inconsistent.

Here I would lay down this as an axiom of undoubted truth: that every free act is done *IN* a state of freedom, and not only *AFTER* such a state. If an act of the Will is an act in which the soul is free, then it must be exerted in a *state* of freedom, and in the *time* of freedom. It will not suffice that the act immediately *follows* a state of liberty. Liberty must still continue and co-exist with the act, the soul remaining in possession of Liberty. Because that is the notion of a free act of the soul: an act in which the soul uses or exercises Liberty. But if the soul is not in *possession* of Liberty at the time of the act, then it cannot *use* it at that time.

The question is, whether the soul of man ever produces an act of Will while it still remains in a state of Liberty (implying a state of Indifference); or whether the soul ever exerts an act of preference, while at that very time the Will is in a perfect state of equilibrium (not inclining one way more than another). Just asking the question is sufficient to show the absurdity of an affirmative answer. For how ridiculous it would be for anybody to insist that the soul chooses one thing over another, when at the very same instant it is perfectly indifferent with respect to each! This is the same as saying that the soul prefers one thing to another, at the very same time that it has no preference. Choice and preference can no more be in a state of Indifference, than motion can be in a state of rest, or than the tipping of the scale of a balance can be in a state of equilibrium. Motion may occur the next moment after rest, but it cannot co-exist with it in the least part. So choice may occur immediately after a state of Indifference, but it cannot co-exist with it; even the very beginning of that choice is not in a state of Indifference.

Therefore, if this is Liberty, then no act of the Will, in any degree, is ever performed in a *state* of Liberty, or in the *time* of Liberty. Volition and Liberty are so far from agreeing with each other, and being essential to one another, that they are *contrary* to one another. One excludes and destroys the other, as much as motion and rest, light and darkness, or life and death. So that the Will does not act at all—it does not so much as *begin* to act—in the time of such Liberty. Freedom has ceased to be at the first moment of action; and therefore Liberty cannot reach the action to affect or qualify it, or give it a description, any more than if it had ceased to be twenty years before the action began. The moment Liberty ceases to be, it ceases to qualify anything. If light and darkness succeed one another instantaneously, light qualifies nothing after it has gone out, so as to make anything illuminated or bright—no more at the first moment of perfect darkness, than months or years later. Life denominates nothing vital, at the first moment of perfect death. So too freedom, if it consists in or implies Indifference, can denominate nothing as free, from the first moment of preference or preponderance. Therefore it is manifest that no Liberty which the soul possesses, or ever uses, in any of its acts of volition,

consists in Indifference; and the opinion of those who suppose that Indifference belongs to the very essence of Liberty, is to the highest degree absurd and contradictory.

This manner of arguing is nothing but a trick and a delusion; it evades reasoning. It asserts that the thing in which the Will exercises its Liberty, is not in the *act* of choosing or preponderating itself, but in determining for itself a certain choice or preference; that the act of the Will in which it is free, and uses its own sovereignty, consists in causing or determining the change or transition from a state of indifference to a certain preference; or determining to give a certain turn to the balance, which up till then had been even; and that the Will exerts this act in a state of Liberty, or while the Will still remains in equilibrium, and is a perfect master of itself. I say, if anyone chooses to express his notion of Liberty in this way, or in some similar manner, let us see if he can succeed any better than before.

What is asserted is that the Will, while it still remains in perfect equilibrium, without preference, determines to change itself from that state, and excite in itself a certain choice or preference. Now let us see whether this does not result in the same absurdity we had before. If it is so, that the Will, while it still remains perfectly indifferent, determines to put itself out of that state, and to give itself a certain preponderance—then I would inquire, whether the soul does not determine this by choice; or whether the *Will* coming to a determination to do so, is not the same as the *soul* coming to a choice to do so. If the soul does not determine this by choice, or in the exercise of choice, then it does not determine it voluntarily. And if the soul does not determine it voluntarily, or of its own will, then in what sense does its Will determine it? And if the Will does not determine it, then how is the Liberty of the Will exercised in the determination? What sort of Liberty is exercised by the soul in those determinations, in which there is no exercise of choice, and which are not voluntary, and in which the Will is not concerned? But if it is allowed that this determination is an act of choice, and it is insisted that the soul, while it still remains in a state of perfect Indifference, chooses to put itself *out* of that state, and to turn itself one particular way; then the soul has already come to a choice; it *chooses* that way. And so we have the very same absurdity which we had before.

Here is the soul in a state of choice, and in a state of equilibrium, both at the same time. The soul has already chosen one way, while it remains in a state of perfect Indifference, and has made no choice one way or the other. Indeed, though this manner of talking may partly hide the absurdity in the obscurity of its expression, it increases the inconsistency. To say that the free act of the Will, or the act which the will exerts in a state of freedom and Indifference, does not imply any preference in it, but is what the will does in order to *cause* or *produce* a preference, is as much as saying that the soul chooses without choice (for to will something and to choose it are the same thing), and that it prefers without preference in order to *cause* or *produce* the beginning of a preference, or the first choice. And that is to say that the first choice is exerted without choice, in order to produce itself!

In order to evade these things, someone might admit that a state of liberty and a state of Indifference are *not* the same thing, and that the former may exist without the latter. But if this person were to say that Indifference is still *essential* to freedom, going immediately before it—because it is essential to the freedom of an act of Will, that it directly and immediately arises out of a state of Indifference—still this will not help the cause of Arminian Liberty, nor make it consistent with itself. For if the act springs immediately out of a state of Indifference, then it does not arise from antecedent choice or preference. But if the act arises directly out of a state of Indifference, without any intervening choice to determine it, then because the act is not being determined by *choice*, it is not determined by the *will*. The mind exercises no free choice in the affair, and free choice and free will have no hand in the determination of the act. This is entirely inconsistent with their notion of the freedom of volition.

Someone might suppose that these absurdities may be avoided by saying that the Liberty of the mind consists in a power to *suspend* the act of the will, and thus keep it in a state of Indifference until there has been opportunity for consideration. And so Indifference is not essential to Liberty in such a way that the mind *must* make its choice in a state of Indifference; but this is an inconsistency. Or he might say that the act of Will must spring immediately out of Indifference; yet, he says, Indifference may be essential to the Liberty of acts of the Will only in this respect: Liberty consists in a power of the mind to forbear or suspend the act of volition, and to keep the mind in a state of Indifference for the present, until there has been opportunity for proper deliberation. I say that if anyone imagines that this helps the matter, it is a great mistake. It reconciles no inconsistency, and it relieves no difficulty. For here the following things must be observed:

1. This suspending of volition, if there is any such thing, is itself an act of volition. If the mind determines to suspend its act, it determines it voluntarily; it chooses, on some consideration, to suspend it. And this choice or determination, is an act of the Will. And indeed it is supposed to be so in the very hypothesis; for it is supposed that the Liberty of the Will consists in its power to do this, and that doing it is the very thing in which the Will exercises its Liberty. But how can the Will exercise Liberty in this, if it is not an act of the Will? The Liberty of the Will is not exercised in anything except what the Will *does*.

2. This determining to suspend acting is not only an act of the will, but it is supposed to be the *only* free act of the Will; because it is said, that this is the thing in which the Liberty of the Will consists. If this is so, then this is all the act of Will that we have to consider in this controversy. And now, the former question returns to us—In what does the freedom of the will consist, in those acts in which it is free? And if this act of determining a suspension is the *only* act in which the Will is free, then in what does the Will's freedom consist with respect to this act of suspension? And how is Indifference essential to this act? The answer must be, according to what is supposed in the evasion under consideration, that the liberty of the Will, in this act of suspension, consists in a power to suspend even this act, until there has been opportunity for thorough deliberation. But this plunges directly into the grossest nonsense: for it is the act of suspension itself that we are speaking about. And there is no room for a space of deliberation and suspension in order to determine whether we will suspend it or not. For that supposes that even suspension itself may be deferred, which is absurd. For the very deferring of the determination of suspension, in order to consider whether we will suspend or not, will actually *be* suspending. For during the space of the suspension, to consider whether to suspend, the act is *ipso facto* suspended. There is no medium between suspending to act, and immediately acting; therefore there is no possibility of avoiding either one or the other for even a moment.

And besides, this is attended with ridiculous absurdity another way. For now, it seems, Liberty consists wholly in the mind having the power to suspend its determination of whether to suspend or not, so that there may be time to consider whether it is best to suspend. And if Liberty consists only in this, then this is the Liberty under consideration. We now have to inquire how Liberty, with respect to this act of suspending a determination of suspension, consists in Indifference, or how Indifference is essential to it. The answer, according to the hypothesis we are on, must be that it consists in a power of suspending even this last-mentioned act, to have time to consider whether to suspend that act. And then the same difficulties and inquiries return again with respect to that, and so on forever. If this would show anything, it would show only that there is no such thing as a free act. It drives the exercise of freedom back *ad infinitum*; and that is to drive it out of the world.

And besides all this, there is a delusion, and a latent gross contradiction in the affair another way; in explaining how, or in what respect, the Will is free with regard to a particular act of volition, it is said that its Liberty consists in a power to determine to suspend that act which

places Liberty—not in that act of volition which the inquiry is about— but altogether in another antecedent act. This contradicts the thing supposed in both the question and the answer. The question is, In what does the mind's liberty in any particular act of volition consist? And the answer in effect says, It does not lie in that act at all, but in another—in a volition to *suspend* that act. And therefore the answer is both contradictory, and altogether impertinent and beside the purpose. For it does not show that the Liberty of the Will consists in the act in question; instead, it supposes it does *not* consist in that act at all, but in another act distinct from it, specifically, a volition to suspend that act, and to take time to consider it. And no account is pretended to be given in which the mind is free with respect to that act—in which this answer supposes the Liberty of the mind indeed consists—which is the act of suspension, or of determining the suspension.

On the whole, it is obvious that the Liberty of the mind does not consist in Indifference, and that Indifference is not essential or necessary to it, nor does it at all belong to it as the Arminians suppose; that opinion is full of nothing but self-contradiction.

Section VIII. The supposed Liberty of the will, as opposite to all Necessity.

In this controversy, Arminians chiefly insist that it is most important and essential in human Liberty, that volitions (or the acts of the will) are *contingent* events. Arminians understand contingency as opposite not only to *constraint*, but also to *Necessity*. Therefore I wish to particularly consider this matter.

First I would ask if there is or can be any such thing as a volition which is contingent not only without any Necessity of constraint or coercion, but also without a Necessity of consequence, or an infallible connection with anything foregoing?

Secondly I would ask, if this were possible, would it at all help the cause of Liberty?

I will now consider whether volition is something that ever does or can occur contingently. And here it must be remembered, that it has been already shown, that nothing can ever come to pass without a cause or a reason why it exists in this manner rather than another; the evidence of this has been particularly applied to the acts of the will. Now if this is so, then it demonstrably follows that the acts of the will are never contingent (or without necessity) in the sense spoken of. Those things which have a cause, or a reason for their existence, must be *connected* with their cause. This becomes apparent by the following considerations.

1. For an event to have a cause and ground of its existence, and yet not to be connected with its cause, is an inconsistency. For if the event is not connected with the cause, then it is not dependent on the cause. Its existence is, as it were, loose from its influence; and so it may or may not attend it—it is a mere contingency whether it will follow or attend the influence of the cause or not. And that is the same thing as not to be dependent on it. And to say that the event is not dependent on its cause is absurd. It is the same as saying it is not its cause, nor is the event the effect of it. For dependence on the influence of a cause is the very notion of an effect. If there is no such relation between one thing and another, consisting in the connection and dependence of one thing on the influence of another, then it is certain that there is no such relation between them as is meant by the terms *cause* and *effect*. So far as an event is dependent on a cause, and is connected with it, so much is there *causality* in the case, and no more. The cause does, or brings to pass, no more in any event than is dependent on that cause. If we say that the connection and dependence is not total, but partial, and that the effect, though it has some connection and dependence, is not *entirely* dependent on it—then that is the same as saying that not all that is in the event is an effect of that cause, but only part of it arises from there, and part of it arises some other way.

2. If there are some events which are not necessarily connected with their causes, then it will follow that there are some things which come to pass without *any* cause, which is contrary to the supposition. For if there is any event which was not necessarily connected with the influence of the cause under such circumstances, then it was contingent whether it would attend or follow the influence of the cause or not—it might have followed, or it might not, though the cause was the same, its influence was the same, and it occurred under the same circumstances. And if this is so, then why did it follow, rather than not follow? There is no cause or reason for this. Therefore, here is something without any cause or reason why the effect followed the influence of the cause with which it was not necessarily connected. If there is no necessary connection of the effect on anything that is antecedent, then we may suppose that sometimes the event will follow the cause, and sometimes it will not, when the cause is the same, and it occurs in the same state and circumstances in every respect. What then can be the cause and reason for this strange phenomenon, this difference, that in one instance the effect should follow, and in another it does not? It is evident by the supposition that this is wholly without any cause or ground. Here is something in the present manner of the existence of things, and the state of the world, that is absolutely without a cause. This is contrary to the supposition, and it is contrary to what has been demonstrated before.

3. To suppose that there are some events which have a cause and ground of their existence, and yet are not necessarily *connected* with their cause, is to suppose that they have a cause which is *not* their cause. Thus, if the effect is not necessarily connected with the cause (with its influence and influential circumstances) then as I observed before, it is supposed that the cause may sometimes exert the same influence, under the same circumstances, and yet the effect will not follow. If this actually happens in any instance, then this instance is a proof, in fact, that the influence of the cause is not sufficient to produce the effect. For if it had been sufficient, it would have done it. And yet, by this same supposition, in another instance, the same cause, with the same exact influence (when all circumstances which have any influence are the same), the effect did indeed follow. It is manifest by this difference, that the effect in this last instance was not attributable to the influence of the cause, but must have come to pass some other way. For it was proved before that the influence of the cause was not sufficient to produce the effect. And if it was not sufficient to produce it, then its production could not be attributable to that influence, but must be attributable to something else, or it is attributable to nothing at all. And if the effect be not attributable to the influence of the cause, then it is not the cause. This brings us to the contradiction of a cause, and no cause—of something being the ground and reason of the existence of something, and at the same time it NOT being the ground and reason of its existence.

If the matter is not already so plain as to render any further reasoning impertinent, I would say that, in the supposed case, what seems to be the cause, can be no cause; its power and influence have proved insufficient to produce such an effect: and if it is *not sufficient* to produce it, then it *does not* produce it. To say otherwise is to say that there is power to do what there is not power to do. If there is sufficient power exerted in a cause, and circumstances are sufficient to produce an effect, and the effect can actually be produced at any *one* time—then if all these things concur, they will produce the effect at *all* times. And so we may turn it the other way: what does not prove sufficient at one time, cannot be sufficient at another, with precisely the same influential circumstances. Therefore, if the effect does follow, then it is not attributable to that cause, unless the different time is a circumstance which has influenced it.¹ But that is contrary to the supposition; for it is supposed that *all* circumstances which have any influence,

¹ For example, sunrise and sunset vary with the season and the latitude.

are the *same*. And besides, this would suppose the time is the cause; which is contrary to the supposition of the other thing being the cause. But if mere difference in time has no influence, then it obviously it would be just as absurd to say that the cause was sufficient to produce the effect at one time and not at another, as it would be to say that it is sufficient to produce the effect at one time and yet *not* sufficient to produce the *same* effect at the *same* time.

On the whole, it is clearly manifest that every effect has a necessary connection with its cause, or with what is the true ground and reason of its existence. Therefore, if there is no event without a cause, as was proved before, then no event whatsoever is contingent in the way that Arminians suppose the free acts of the will are contingent.

Section IX. The Connection of the Acts of the Will with the Dictates of the Understanding.

IT is obvious that no Acts of the Will are contingent in such a sense as to be without any necessity, or so as not to have a necessary consequence and Connection. This is because every Act of the Will is in some way connected with the Understanding, and every act of the Will is just as the greatest apparent good is—namely, that the soul always wills or chooses that which, on the whole, and in the present view of the mind, appears most agreeable to it. This is because, as observed before, it is evident that when men act voluntarily, and do what they please, they do what appears most agreeable to them. To say otherwise would be to affirm that men do *not* choose what appears to suit them best, or what seems most pleasing to them—or they do not choose what they prefer. This would be a contradiction.

It is evident in itself, that the Acts of the will have some connection with the dictates or views of the understanding. This is allowed by some of the chief of the Arminian writers, particularly by Dr. Whitby and Dr. Samuel Clark. Dr. Turnbull, though a great enemy to the doctrine of necessity, allows the same thing. In his *Christian Philosophy* (p. 196.),¹ he cites with much approval another philosopher of the same mind, in these words:

“No man (says an excellent philosopher) sets himself about anything, unless it is upon some view or other which serves him as a reason for what he does. And whatever faculties he employs, the Understanding constantly leads with whatever light it has, whether well or ill-formed; and all her operative powers are directed by that light, whether true or false. The Will itself, however absolute and incontrollable it may be thought, never fails in its obedience to the dictates of the understanding. Temples have their sacred images, and we see what influence they have always had over a great part of mankind. But in truth, the ideas and images in men’s minds are the invisible powers that constantly govern them; and to these they all pay, universally, a ready submission.”

I now desire to impartially consider whether this is justly consistent with their own notions of liberty. Dr. Whitby plainly supposes, that the acts and determinations of the Will always follow the Understanding’s view of the greatest good to be obtained, or the greatest evil to be avoided; in other words, that the determinations of the Will constantly and infallibly follow these two things in the Understanding:

1. The degree of good to be obtained, and the evil to be avoided, as proposed to the understanding, and apprehended, viewed, and taken notice of by it.
2. The degree of the understanding’s apprehension of that good or that evil, which is increased by attention and consideration.

This is an opinion in which he is overly peremptory (as he is in every opinion which he maintains in his controversy with the Calvinists) with disdain of the contrary opinion as being

¹ George Turnbull (1698-1748), *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy*, 1740.

absurd and self-contradictory. This will appear by the following words, in his *Discourse on the Five Points*.¹

“Now, it is certain that what naturally makes the Understanding perceive, is evidence that is proposed and apprehended, considered or adverted to: for nothing else can be required to make us come to the knowledge of the truth. Again, what makes the Will choose is something that is approved by the Understanding, and consequently appears to the soul as *good*. And whatever it refuses, is something represented by the Understanding, and so it appears to the Will, as evil. For this reason, all that God requires of us is and can be only this: to refuse evil, and choose good. Therefore, to say that evidence proposed, apprehended, and considered is not sufficient to make the Understanding approve it; or that the greatest good proposed, and the greatest evil threatened, when equally believed and reflected on, is not sufficient to engage the Will to choose the good and refuse the evil, is in effect to say, that which alone moves the Will to choose or to refuse, is not sufficient to engage it to do so. Being contradictory to itself, this must of necessity be false. Be it that is so, that we naturally have an aversion to the truths proposed to us in the gospel, that can only make us indisposed to attend to them, but it cannot hinder our conviction when we do apprehend and attend to them. If there is also in us a resistance to the good that we are to choose, that only can indispose us to believe it is good, or to approve it as our highest good. Because we are prone to the evil that we should decline, that only can render it more difficult for us to believe it is the worst of evils. Yet, what we do really believe to be our highest good, will still be chosen; and what we apprehend to be the worst of evils, while we continue under that conviction, will still be refused by us. Therefore, it can be only requisite, in order to attain these ends, that the Good Spirit should so illuminate our Understandings, that attending to and considering what lies before us, we should apprehend and be convinced of our duty; and that the blessings of the gospel should be so propounded to us that we may discern them to be our highest good; and the gospel threatens miseries, so that we may be convinced that they are the worst of evils—that we may choose the one, and refuse the other.”

Notice how plainly and peremptorily it is asserted that the greatest good proposed, and the greatest evil threatened, when equally believed and reflected on, is sufficient to engage the will to choose the good, and refuse the evil—that it is *that alone* which somehow moves the Will to choose or to refuse—and it would be self-contradictory to suppose otherwise; therefore such a supposition must necessarily be false. Then it is supposed that what we really do believe to be our highest good, will still be chosen; and what we apprehend to be the worst of evils, will be refused by us. Nothing could have been said that is more to the purpose, or signifies more fully, that the determinations of the Will must always follow the illumination, conviction, and notice of the Understanding with regard to the greatest good and evil proposed—reckoning both the degree of good and evil that is understood, and the degree of understanding, notice, and conviction of that proposed good and evil. It is necessarily so, and cannot be otherwise in any instance, because, it is asserted, to suppose otherwise would imply a contradiction.

I am sensible that the Doctor’s aim in these assertions is against the Calvinist. It is to show, in opposition to them, that there is no need for any physical operation of the Spirit of God on the Will, in order to change and determine that to a good choice; rather, God’s operation and assistance is only *moral*, by suggesting ideas to the Understanding. He supposes that this is enough, if those ideas are taken to heart, to infallibly obtain the end. But whatever his design was, nothing can more directly and fully prove that every determination of the Will is necessary in choosing and refusing. This is directly contrary to his own notion of the liberty of the Will. For if the determination of the Will always follows the light, conviction, and view of the Understanding in this way, concerning the greatest good and evil, and if this alone is what moves the Will—and it is a contradiction to suppose otherwise—then the Will necessarily follows this light or view of the understanding, not only in *some* of its acts, but in *every* act of choosing and refusing. So that the Will does not determine itself in any one of its own acts;

¹ Daniel Whitby (1638–1726) Arminian priest in the Church of England, known as strongly anti-Calvinistic and later showed strong Arian and Unitarian tendencies. This work, *Discourse on the Five Points*, was written 1710.

rather, every act of choice and refusal depends on, and is necessarily connected with, some antecedent cause. This cause is not the Will itself, nor any act of its own, nor anything pertaining to that faculty, but something belonging to *another* faculty, whose acts go before the will, in all its acts, and which govern and determine them.

Here, this might be the reply:

Although it is true, according to the Doctor, that the final determination of the Will always depends on, and is infallibly connected with, the Understanding's conviction and notice of the greatest good—yet the Acts of the will are not necessary. This is because that conviction of the Understanding is first dependent on a preceding Act of the Will in determining to take notice of the evidence that is exhibited to it. This is the means by which the mind obtains that degree of conviction which is sufficient and effectual to determine the consequent and ultimate choice of the Will. And the Will, with regard to that preceding act by which it determines whether to attend to it or not, is not necessary. The liberty of the Will consists in this: that when God presents sufficient objective light, the Will is at liberty whether to command the attention of the mind or not.

Nothing can be weaker and more inconsiderate than such a reply as this. For that preceding Act of the Will, in determining to attend to and consider it, is still an Act of the Will. Thus, if the Liberty of the Will consists in this, as it is supposed, *as if* it is an Act of the Will, then *it* is an act of choice or refusal. And therefore, if what the Doctor asserts is true, it is determined by some antecedent light in the Understanding concerning the greatest apparent good or evil. For he asserts that it is that light alone which moves the will to choose or refuse. And therefore the Will must be moved by that, in choosing to attend to the objective light that is offered, in order to produce another consequent act of choice—so that *this* act is no less necessary than the *other*. And if we suppose another Act of the will, still precedes both these mentioned, to determine both of them, still that must also be an Act of the *Will*, an act of *choice*; and so it must, by the same principles, be infallibly determined by some certain degree of light in the Understanding concerning the greatest good. Let us suppose as many Acts of the Will as we please, one preceding another, yet every one of them is necessarily determined by a certain degree of light in the understanding concerning the greatest and most eligible good in that case. And so not one of them is free according to Dr. Whitby's notion of freedom.

And if it is said that the reason why men do not attend to the light that is held forth, is because of ill habits contracted by evil acts committed beforehand, by which their minds are indisposed to consider the truth held forth to them, the difficulty is not avoided at all. The question still remains, What determined the Will in those preceding evil acts? It must, by Dr. Whitby's principles, still be the view of the Understanding concerning the greatest good and evil. If this view of the Understanding alone is that which moves the Will to choose or refuse, as the Doctor asserts, then every act of choice or refusal, from a man's first existence, is moved and determined by this view. And this view of the Understanding as exciting and governing the act, must *precede* the act. Therefore the Will is necessarily determined in every one of its acts, from a man's first existence, by a cause outside the will—a cause that does not proceed from or depend on any act of the Will at all. This at once utterly abolishes the Doctor's whole scheme of Liberty of Will. In one stroke, he has cut the sinews of all his arguments from the goodness, righteousness, faithfulness, and sincerity of God, in his commands, promises, threats, calls, invitations, and expostulations, which he makes use of under the topics of reprobation, election, universal redemption, sufficient and effectual grace, and also the freedom of the will of man. And he has made vain all his exclamations against the doctrine of the Calvinists, that this doctrine charges God with manifest unrighteousness, unfaithfulness, hypocrisy, fallaciousness, and cruelty.

Dr. Samuel Clark, in his *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*,¹ to evade the argument that proves the necessity of volition from its necessary Connection with the last Dictate of the Understanding—supposes that the latter is not different from the Act of the will itself. But if this is so, it will not alter the case as to the necessity of the Act. If the Dictate of the Understanding is the same as the determination of the Will, as Dr. Clark supposes, then this determination is not a fruit or effect of choice; and if not, then no liberty of choice has any hand in it—it is *necessary*; that is, choice cannot prevent it. If the last Dictate of the Understanding is the same as the determination of volition itself, then the existence of that determination must be necessary to volition; in as much as volition has no opportunity to determine whether it will exist or not, for it exists before volition has an opportunity to determine anything. Understanding is itself the very rise and existence of volition. But after something exists, it has no opportunity to determine its own existence; it is too late for that.

If liberty consists in what Arminians suppose—in the will determining its own acts, and having free opportunity and being without any necessity—then this is the same as saying that liberty consists in the soul having the power and the opportunity to have whatever determinations of the will it pleases. And if the determinations of the Will, and the last Dictates of the Understanding, are the same thing, then liberty consists in the mind having power and opportunity to choose its own Dictates of understanding. But this is *absurd*; for it makes the determination of choice *prior* to the Dictate of Understanding, and choice becomes the ground of Understanding; which cannot be consistent with the Dictate of the Understanding being the determination of choice itself.

There is no alternative here, but to recur to the old absurdity of one determination coming before another, and being the cause of it; and another before that, determining that one, and so on *ad infinitum*. If the last Dictate of the Understanding is the determination of the Will itself, and the soul is free with regard to that Dictate (in the Arminian notion of freedom), then the soul, before that dictate of its Understanding exists, voluntarily and according to its own choice, determines in every case what that Dictate of the Understanding will be. Otherwise, that Dictate as to the Will is necessary; and the acts determined by it must also be necessary. So that there is a determination of the mind *prior* to that Dictate of the Understanding; there is an act of choice going before it, choosing and determining what that Dictate of the Understanding will be. This preceding act of choice, being a free Act of Will, must be the same as another “last” Dictate of the Understanding. And if the mind is also free in *that* Dictate of Understanding, then that Dictate must be determined still by another; and so on forever.

Besides, if the Dictate of the Understanding, and the determination of the will are the same, this confounds the Understanding and the Will, and makes them the same. Whether they be the same or not, I will not dispute right now. But I only would observe, that if it is, and the Arminian notion of liberty consists in a self-determining power in the Understanding, which is free of all necessity—being independent and undetermined by anything prior to its own acts and determinations; and the more the Understanding is thus independent, and sovereign over its own determinations, the more free it is—then the freedom of the soul, as a moral agent, must consist in the *independence* of the Understanding on any evidence or appearance of things, or anything whatever that stands out to the view of the mind, prior to the Understanding’s determination. And what a liberty this is! It consists in an ability, freedom, and easiness of judging, either according to evidence or against it; it has a sovereign command over itself at all times to judge, either agreeably or disagreeably to what is plainly exhibited to its own view. Certainly, this is no kind of liberty that would render persons the proper subjects

¹ Samuel Clarke (1675-1729); an English philosopher and Anglican clergyman. He is considered the major British figure in philosophy between John Locke and George Berkeley. This treatise was taken from sixteen sermons he preached in the cathedral-church of St. Paul, in the years 1704-5.

of persuasive reasoning, arguments, expostulations, and similar moral means and inducements. And yet the use of such persuasive reasoning with mankind is a main argument of the Arminians, to defend their notion of liberty without any necessity. For according to this argument, the more free men are, the less they are governed by such means; the less they are subject to the power of evidence and reason; and the more independent they are from such influence in their determinations.

Whether the Understanding and Will are the same, as Dr. Clark seems to suppose, yet in order to maintain the Arminian notion of liberty without necessity, the free Will is not determined by the Understanding, nor is it necessarily connected with the Understanding. And the further these two are from such Connection, the greater the freedom. And when the liberty is full and complete, the determinations of the will have no Connection *at all* with the Dictates of the Understanding. And if this is so, then all the applications to the Understanding are in vain, to induce any free and virtuous act; and all instructions, counsels, invitations, expostulations, and all arguments and persuasions whatever are in vain—for these are only applications to the Understanding, and they are a clear and lively exhibition of the objects of choice to the mind's view. But if, after all, the will must be *self-determined*, and *independent* on the Understanding, then what purpose is there in things being thus represented to the Understanding, in order to determine a choice about them?

Section X. Volition is necessarily connected with the influence of Motives.

It is evident that every act of the Will has some cause, and consequently (as already proved) it has a necessary *connection* with its cause. And so it is necessary by a necessity of both *connection* and *consequence*. And every act of the Will is excited by some *motive*. This is obvious because, if the mind, in willing the way it does, is excited by *no* motive or inducement, then it has no end for itself, nor does it pursue it—it aims at nothing, and it seeks nothing. And if it seeks nothing, then it does not go after anything, nor exert any inclination or preference towards anything. This makes the matter a contradiction—because for the mind to *will* something, and for it to go *after* something by an act of preference and inclination, are the same thing.

But if every act of the Will is excited by a motive, then that Motive is the cause of the act. If the acts of the Will are excited by motives, then Motives are the *cause* of their being excited, or the cause of their existence, which is the same thing. And if so, the existence of the acts of the Will is properly the *effect* of their motives. Motives do nothing, as motives or inducements, except by their influence; and what is done by their influence, is their effect. For that is the notion of an effect: it is something that is brought to pass by the influence of something else.

And if volitions are properly the effects of their Motives, then they are necessarily *connected* with their Motives. Every effect and event (as proved before) is necessarily connected with what is the proper ground and reason of its existence. Thus it is manifest that volition is *necessary*; and it is *not* from any self-determining power in the will. The volition which is caused by a previous motive and inducement, is *not* caused by the will exercising a sovereign power over itself to determine, cause, and excite volitions in itself. This would not be consistent with the will acting in a state of indifference and equilibrium to determine a preference. For the way Motives operate is by *biasing* the Will, and giving it a certain inclination or preponderance one way rather than another.

Here it may be proper to observe that Mr. Chubb in his *Collection of Tracts on Various Subjects*,¹ has advanced a scheme of liberty which is greatly divided against itself, and thoroughly subversive of itself, in many ways.

I. He abundantly asserts that in all its acts, the Will, is influenced by Motive and excitement; this is the previous ground and reason of all its acts, and it is never otherwise in any instance. He says (p. 262.), “No action can take place without some Motive to excite it.” And (p. 263), “Volition cannot take place without SOME PREVIOUS reason or motive to induce it. And (p. 310), “Action would not take place without some reason or motive to induce it; it would be absurd to suppose that the active faculty would be exerted without some PREVIOUS reason to dispose the mind to action” (So also p. 257). And he speaks of these things as what we may be absolutely certain of; they are the foundation, the *only* foundation, we have of certainty respecting God’s moral perfections (p. 252-255, 261-264.)

And yet, at the same time, by his scheme, the influence of Motives upon us to excite us to action, and to actually be a ground of volition, is consequent on the volition or choice of the mind. For he very greatly insists that in all free actions, before the mind is subject to those volitions (which motives excite), it *chooses* to be excited. It *chooses* whether it will comply with the Motive, which presents itself in view, or not. And when various Motives are presented, it chooses which one it will yield to, and which one it will reject. (p. 256), “Every man has the power to act, or to refrain from acting, agreeably with or contrary to, any Motive that presents itself.” (p. 257),

“Every man is at liberty to act or to refrain from acting, agreeably with or contrary to, what each of these motives, considered singly, would excite him to do. Man has the power, and is as much at liberty, to reject the Motive that prevails, as he has the power, and is at liberty, to reject those Motives that do not.”

And so (p. 310-311), “In order to constitute a moral agent, it is necessary, that a man should have the power to act, or to refrain from acting, on such moral motives as he pleases.” And this is said to similar purpose in many other places. According to these things, the *Will* acts first, and it chooses or refuses to comply with the Motive that is presented, before it falls under its prevailing influence. It is first determined by the mind’s pleasure or choice, which Motives it will be induced by, *before* it is actually induced by them.

Now, how can these things hang together? How can the mind first act, and by its act of volition and choice determine what motives shall be the ground and reason of its volition and choice? For this supposes that the choice is already made, *before* the Motive has its effect; and it supposes that the volition is already exerted, *before* the Motive prevails, so as to actually be the ground of the volition—and to make the prevailing of the *Motive*, into the *consequence* of the volition, of which it is yet the *ground*. If the mind has already chosen to comply with a motive, and to yield to its excitement, then the excitement comes in too late, and is needless afterwards. If the mind has already chosen to yield to a Motive which invites it to something, that implies (and in fact *is*) a choosing of the thing it is incited to. And the very act of choice comes before the influence of the motive which induces it, and which is the ground of the choice—the son exists before the father begets him; the choice is supposed to be the ground of that influence of the Motive which is supposed to be the ground of the choice. And so vice versa: the choice is supposed to be the *consequence* of the influence of the Motive, which is itself the consequence of that very choice.

And besides, if the Will acts first towards the motive, before it falls under its influence, and the Motive prevails on it to induce it to act and choose, then it is the fruit and consequence of its act and choice. How then is the Motive “a PREVIOUS ground and reason of the act and choice?

¹ Chubb, Thomas (1679-1747) *Collection*, vol.3, 1741: <https://archive.org/details/collectiontracts03chubuoft>

So that, in the nature of the things, volition cannot take place without some PREVIOUS reason and Motive to induce it;" and this act is consequent to and follows the Motive. Mr. Chubb often asserts these things as certain and undoubted truth. So that the very same Motive is both previous and consequent, both before and after, both the ground and the fruit of the very same thing!

II. Mr. Chubb frequently calls Motives and excitements, "the passive ground or reason of the action of the will." This agrees with the aforementioned inconsistent notion of the Will first acting towards the motive—choosing whether it will comply with it in order for it to become a ground of the Will's acting—before any act of volition can take place. This is a remarkable phrase; I presume there is none more unintelligible than this (and void of any distinct and consistent meaning) in all the writings of Duns Scotus or Thomas Aquinas.¹ When Mr. Chubb represents the Motive volition as passive, he must mean passive in that *affair* or with respect to that *action* which he speaks about. Otherwise it adds nothing to the design of his argument. He must mean (if it can be called a meaning) that the Motive to volition is first acted upon by the volition: choosing to *yield* to it, making it a ground of action, or determining to fetch its influence from there—and thus to make it a previous ground of its own excitation and existence. This is the same absurdity as saying that the soul of man, prior to its existence, chose what cause by which it would come into existence; and then acted on that cause, to fetch influence from there, in order to bring it into being; and so its cause was a passive ground of its own existence!

Mr. Chubb very plainly supposes that motive or excitement is the ground of the being of volition. He speaks of it as the ground or reason of the EXERTION of an act of the will (pp. 391-392), and he expressly says that "volition cannot TAKE PLACE without some previous ground or Motive to induce it" (p. 363). And he speaks of the act as "FROM the motive, and FROM THE INFLUENCE of the motive" (p. 352), "and from the influence that the Motive has on the man, for the PRODUCTION of an action" (p. 317). Certainly there is no need to multiply words about this; it is easily judged whether motive can be the ground of volition taking place, so that its very production is from the influence of the motive; and yet the Motive, before it becomes the ground of the volition, is passive, or acted upon by the volition. But I will say this, that a man who insists so much on clearness of meaning in others, and so much blames their confusion and inconsistency, ought (if he was able) to have explained his meaning in this phrase of "passive ground of action," so as to show it is not confused and inconsistent.

If anyone were to suppose that Mr. Chubb, when he speaks of motive as a "passive ground of action," does not mean passive with regard to that *volition* which it is the ground of, but some other antecedent volition (though his purpose and argument, and whole discourse, will by no means allow such a supposition)—yet it would not help the matter in the least. For (1.) If we suppose an act, by which the soul chooses to yield to the invitation of a Motive to another volition; both these supposed volitions are in effect the very same. A volition to yield to the force of a motive inviting us to choose something, comes to just the same thing as choosing the thing which the motive invites us to, as I observed before. So that there can be no room to help the matter by distinguishing two volitions. (2.) If the Motive is passive—not with respect to the same volition to which the motive excites, but to one truly distinct and prior—yet, by Mr. Chubb, that prior volition cannot take place without a Motive or excitement, as a previous ground of its existence. For he insists that "it is absurd to suppose any volition should take place without some previous motive to induce it." So that at last it comes to just the same absurdity: for if every volition must have a previous motive, then the very first in the whole

¹ Two writers whose works were notoriously obscure. They were "schoolmen" (*Scholasticism* 1100–1700). The *scholastics* included Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard, Alexander of Hales, Albertus Magnus, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas.

series must be excited by a previous Motive; and yet the Motive to that first volition is passive; but it cannot be passive with regard to another antecedent volition because, by the supposition, it is the very first. Therefore if it is passive with respect to any volition, it must be passive with regard to that very volition of which it is the ground and by which it is excited.

III. Though Mr. Chubb asserts, as above, that every volition has some motive, and that “in the nature of the thing, no volition can take place without some motive to induce it;” yet he asserts, that volition does not always follow the strongest Motive. In other words, it is not governed by any superior strength of the motive that is followed, beyond Motives to the contrary, that arise previous to the volition itself. His own words (p. 258) are as follow:

Though with regard to *physical* causes, that which is strongest always prevails; yet it is otherwise with regard to *moral* causes. Of these, sometimes the stronger, sometimes the weaker, prevails. And the ground of this difference is evident: namely, that what we call moral causes, strictly speaking, are no causes at all, but barely passive reasons for, or excitements to, the action—or to refraining from the action. These excitements we have power, or we are at liberty, to comply with or reject, as I showed above.

And so throughout the paragraph, in a variety of phrases, he insists that the Will is not always determined by the strongest Motive—unless by “strongest” we preposterously mean actually prevailing in the event. Prevailing is not in the *Motive*, but in the *Will*. But the *will* is not always determined by the strongest Motive, *i.e.* by any strength previous to the volition itself. Elsewhere he abundantly asserts that the will is determined by no superior strength or advantage that Motives have from any constitution or state of things, or from any circumstances whatever, which are prior to the actual determination of the will. Indeed his whole discourse on human liberty implies it; his whole scheme is founded upon it.

But these things cannot stand together. Prior to the choice itself, there is a difference of strength in Motives for that choice. Mr. Chubb himself supposes that they previously invite, induce, excite, and dispose the mind to action. This implies that they have something *in themselves* that is inviting—some tendency to induce and dispose to volition—prior to volition itself. If they have this nature and tendency *in themselves*, doubtless they have it in certain limited degrees, which are capable of differences: some have it in greater degrees, others in less. Those that have most of this tendency (considered with all their nature and circumstances) prior to volition, are the *strongest* Motives; and those that have least, are the *weakest* Motives.

Now if volition sometimes does not follow the motive which is strongest, or which most has a previous tendency or advantage to induce or excite it, all things considered, but instead follows the weakest, or that which (as it stands previously in the mind’s view) has least tendency to induce it—then the will apparently acts wholly without Motive in this; it acts without any previous reason to dispose the mind to it, contrary to what this same author supposes. The act in which the will must proceed without a previous motive inducing it to proceed, is the act of preferring the weakest Motive. For how absurd it would be to say that the mind sees a previous reason in the Motive, to prefer that Motive over another, and yet at the same time say that there is nothing in the motive (in its nature, state, or any circumstance of it whatever), as it stands in the previous view of the mind, that gives it any preference. On the contrary, this supposes that the other Motive that competes with it in all these respects, most possesses what is inviting and moving, and most has a tendency toward a given choice and preference. This is certainly the same as saying there is previous ground and reason in the Motive for the act of preference, and yet there is no previous reason for it. By this supposition, all that is in the two rival Motives which tends toward a preference, previous to the *act* of preference, is *not* what is preferred, but the preference is wholly in the other. Yet Mr. Chubb supposes that the *act* of preference is from a previous ground and reason, in the *motive* which is preferred. But are

these things consistent? Can there be previous ground in something for an event that takes place, and yet there is no previous tendency in it to that event? If one thing follows another, without any previous tendency to its following, then I should think it is very plain that it follows it without any manner of previous reason why it should follow.¹

Indeed, in this case Mr. Chubb supposes that the event follows an antecedent as the ground of its existence. Yet the antecedent not only has no tendency to the event, but is a *contrary* tendency. The event is the preference which the mind gives to that Motive which is weaker, as it stands in the view of the mind previous to the event; the immediate antecedent is the view the mind has of the two rival motives conjunctly. In this previous view of the mind, all the preferableness, or all the previous tendency to preference, is supposed to be on the other side, in the contrary Motive. And all the unworthiness of preference (and so the previous tendency to comparative neglect or undervaluing of the object) is on that side which is preferred. Yet this view of the mind is supposed to be the previous ground or reason of this act of preference; it is what excites and disposes the mind to it. I leave the reader to judge whether this is absurd or not. If it is not, then it is also not absurd to say that the previous tendency of an antecedent to a consequent, is the ground and reason why that consequent does *not* follow from it; and the lack of a previous tendency to an event, indeed a tendency to the contrary, is the *true* ground and reason why that event follows.

An act of choice or preference is a comparative act in which the mind acts with reference to two or more things that are compared, and that stand in competition with each other in the mind's view. If the mind, in this comparative act, prefers what appears to be inferior in the comparison, then in this the mind acts absolutely without motive, or inducement—or any temptation whatever. So then, if a hungry man is offered two sorts of food, both of which he has an appetite for, but he has a stronger appetite for one than the other—and if there are no circumstances or excitements whatever in this case that would induce him to take either one or the other, but only his appetite induces him; and if he chooses the one for which he has least the appetite, and refuses the one for which he has the strongest appetite—then this is a choice made absolutely without a previous Motive, Excitement, Reason, or Temptation. It is as if he had no appetite at all for either one; because his volition in this case is a *comparative* act, following a *comparative* view of the food which he chooses. In this view, his preference has absolutely no previous ground; indeed, his preference is against all previous ground and motive. And if there is any principle in man from which an act of choice may arise in this way, then from this same principle, volition may arise wholly without motive on either side. If the mind in its volition can go *beyond* Motive, then it can go *without* Motive. For when it is beyond the Motive, it is out of the reach of the Motive—out of the limits of its influence—and so it is without Motive. If this is so, it demonstrates the independence of volition from Motive; and no reason can be given for what Mr. Chubb so often asserts: that “in the nature of things, volition cannot take place without a motive to induce it.”

If the Most High endowed a balance with an agency such that, when unequal weights are put into its scales, this agency caused the scale with the least weight to descend, and the scale with the greater weight to rise, this would clearly demonstrate that the motion of the balance does not depend on the weights in the scales. This demonstration is no less clear if the balance were to move itself when there is no weight in *either* scale. The agency or activity of the balance which is sufficient to move itself against the greater weight, must certainly be more than sufficient to move it when there is no weight at all.

Mr. Chubb supposes that the Will cannot stir at all without some Motive. And he also supposes that if there is a Motive to one thing, and none to the contrary, then volition will infallibly

¹ That is, if a lesser motive supersedes a greater motive, then the choice is not based on the motive or preference itself; the act allegedly provoked by this motive or preference has no actual connection to it.

follow that motive. This is virtually to suppose that the Will is entirely *dependent* on Motives. If it were *not* wholly dependent on them, then it could surely help itself a little *without* a Motive; or it could help itself a little *against* a Motive—without any help from the strength and weight of a contrary Motive. And yet at the same time, he supposes that when the Will has various opposing Motives before it, it can use them as it pleases: it can choose its own influence from them; it can even neglect the strongest motive and follow the weakest. This supposes that the Will is wholly *independent* of Motives.

It further appears, on Mr. Chubb's hypothesis, that volition must be without any previous ground in any motive. Thus, if it is as he supposes—that the will is not determined by any previous superior strength of the motive, but determines and chooses its own Motive—then when the rival Motives are exactly equal in all respects, it may follow either one; and it may, in such a case, sometimes follow one, and sometimes follow the other. And if *this* is so, then the difference which appears between the various acts of the Will is plainly without any previous ground in *either* of the Motives. For it is supposed that everything previous in the Motives is precisely and perfectly the same, without any difference whatever. Now perfect identity in all that is previous in the antecedent, cannot be the ground and reason of the difference in the consequent. If there is perfect identity in the ground of each Motive, then it cannot be the reason why the same consequence [the choice or act] does not follow from each. Therefore the source of this different consequence must be sought elsewhere.

And lastly it may be observed that, however much Mr. Chubb contrarily insists, no volition can take place without some Motive to induce it, which previously disposes the mind to it. He also insists that the mind, without reference to any superior strength of motives, picks and chooses the Motive to follow. Yet in this he plainly supposes that, with regard to the mind's preference for one Motive over another, it is not the *motive* that disposes the *Will*, but the *Will* that disposes itself to follow the *Motive*.

IV. Mr. Chubb supposes that *necessity* is utterly inconsistent with *agency*; and that to suppose someone can be an agent in doing what is necessary, is a plain contradiction, p. 311. Throughout his discourses on the subject of Liberty, he supposes that necessity cannot be consistent with agency or freedom; and to suppose otherwise is to make Liberty and Necessity, Activity and passivity,¹ the same thing. And so he seems to suppose that there is no action, strictly speaking, except volition. As to the effects of volition on body or mind, considered in themselves, they are said to be free only as they are the effects of an act that is *not* necessary.

And yet, according to him, volition itself is the *effect* of volition. Indeed, every *act* of free volition is the *effect* of volition. Therefore, by what has now been observed from him, every act of free volition must be necessary. On p. 341, he says,

“If a man is such a creature as I have proved him to be, that is, if he has in him a power of Liberty to do either good or evil, and either of these is subject to his own free choice, then IF HE HAD PLEASED, he might have CHOSEN and done the contrary.”

Here he supposes all that is good or evil in man is the effect of his choice; so that his good or evil choice is itself the effect of his pleasure or choice, in these words, “he might, if he had PLEASED, have CHOSEN the contrary.” So on p. 356, “Though it is highly reasonable, that a man should always choose the greater good, yet he may, if he PLEASES, CHOOSE otherwise.” Which is the same as saying, “he may, if He chooses, choose otherwise.” And then he goes on, “that is, he may, if he pleases, choose what is good for himself,” etc. And again on the same page, “The Will is not confined by the understanding, to any particular sort of good, whether greater or less; but it is at liberty to choose what kind of good it pleases.” —If there is any meaning in the last

¹ Originally, “action and passion” – Edwards means *activity* and *passivity* (rather than *emotional* passion); he also uses “activeness” and “passiveness”. I use “active and passive acts” on occasion. – WHG

words, it must be this: that the Will is at liberty to choose what kind of good it chooses to choose; supposing the act of choice itself is determined by an antecedent choice. The Liberty Mr. Chubb speaks of, is not only a man's power to move his body, according to an antecedent act of choice, but to use or exert the faculties of his soul. Thus, speaking of the faculties of the mind (p. 379), he says, "Man has power, and is at liberty to neglect these faculties, to use them aright, or to abuse them, as he pleases." It is very plain on p. 283 that he supposes an act of choice (or an exercise of pleasure) is properly distinct from and antecedent to those acts thus chosen, directing, commanding, and producing the *chosen acts*—and even the *acts of choice* themselves: "He can command his actions; and his Liberty consists in this: he can give or deny himself that pleasure, as he pleases." And p. 377.

"If the actions of men are not the produce of free choice, or election, but spring from a necessity of nature, then he cannot in reason be the object of reward or punishment on their account. Whereas, if action in man, whether good or evil, is the produce of will or free choice—so that a man in either case had it in his power, and was at liberty to have CHOSEN the contrary—then he is the proper object of reward or punishment, according to how he chooses to behave himself."

Here, in these last words, he speaks of Liberty as choosing according to how he chooses. So that the behavior which he speaks of, being subject to his choice, is his choice itself, as well as his external conduct that is a consequent of his choice. Therefore, when he speaks of all free actions as the PRODUCE of free choice, it is evident that he means not only *external actions*, but the *acts of choice* themselves. This is abundantly evident in what he says elsewhere (pp. 372-373).

Now these things imply a prominent twofold inconsistency.

1. To suppose, as Mr. Chubb plainly does, that every free act of choice is commanded by and is the product of free choice, is to suppose that the first free act of choice belonging to the case, indeed, the first free act of choice that man ever exerted, is the product of an antecedent act of choice. But I hope I do not need to labor at all to convince my readers, that it is absurd to say, the very first act is the product of another act that went before it.

2. If it were both possible and real, as Mr. Chubb insists, that every free act of choice is the product or effect of a free act of choice—even then, according to his principles—no one act of choice would be *free*. Instead, every act would be *necessary*, because every act of choice would be the effect of a foregoing act, and thus every act would be necessarily connected with that foregoing cause. Mr. Chubb himself says (p. 389), "When the self-moving power is exerted, it becomes the necessary cause of its effects."—So that his notion of a free act, that is rewardable or punishable, is a heap of contradictions. It is a free act and yet, by his own notion of freedom, it is necessary; therefore it is a contradiction to suppose it is free.

According to him, every free act is the product of a free act; so that there must be an infinite number of free acts in succession, without any beginning, in an agent that *has* a beginning. Therefore here is an infinite number of free acts—every one of them free—and yet none of them is free; every act in the whole infinite chain is a necessary effect of a prior act. All the actions are rewardable or punishable, and yet the agent cannot reasonably be the object of reward or punishment, on account of any one of these actions. He is active in them all, and passive in none; and yet he is active in none, but passive in all, etc.

V. Mr. Chubb most strenuously denies that Motives are the causes of the acts of the Will; or that the moving principle in man is moved, or caused to be exerted, by motives. His words are (pp. 388-389),

"If the moving principle in man is Moved, or caused to be Exerted, by something external to man, which all Motives are, then it would not be a self-moving principle, seeing it would be moved by a

principle external to itself. To say that a self-moving principle is moved, or caused to be exerted, by a cause external to itself, is absurd and a contradiction,” etc.

On the next page, he particularly and largely insists that motives are causes in *no* case; “they are merely *passive* in the production of action, and have no *causality* in the production of it”—*no causality* is the *cause* of the exertion of the will.

Now I desire to consider how this can possibly be consistent with what he says in other places. Let it be noted here,

1. Mr. Chubb abundantly speaks of Motives as excitements of the acts of the Will. He says that motives *excite* volition, and *induce* it, and are *necessary* to this end; that in the reason and nature of things, volition cannot take place without motives to excite it. But now, if Motives excite the will, then they *move* it. And yet he says, it is absurd to say that the Will is moved by motives. Again (if language has any significance at all), if Motives excite volition, then they are the *cause* of its being excited; and to *cause* volition to be excited, is to cause it to be pushed or excited. Indeed, Mr. Chubb says himself (p. 317) motive is necessary to the exertion of the active faculty. To excite is to positively *do* something; and certainly what *does* something, is the *cause* of the thing done by it. To *create* is to *cause* to be created; to *make*, is to *cause* to be made; to *kill*, is to *cause* to be killed; to *quicken*, is to *cause* to be quickened; and to *excite*, is to *cause* to be excited. To excite, is to be a *cause* (in the most proper sense); it is not merely a negative occasion for it, but a ground of existence by positive influence. The notion of exciting, is exerting influence to cause the effect to arise or to come forth into existence.

2. Mr. Chubb himself (p. 317) speaks of Motives as the ground and reason of action BY INFLUENCE, and BY PREVAILING INFLUENCE. Now, what else can be meant by a cause but something that is the ground and reason of something by its influence—an influence that is prevalent and effectual?

3. This author not only speaks of Motives as the ground and reason of action by prevailing influence; but he expressly speaks of their influence as prevailing for the production of an action (p. 317), which makes the inconsistency still more palpable and notorious. The *production* of an effect is certainly the *causing* of an effect; and *productive* influence is *causal* influence. Whatever has this influence prevalently, so as to become the *ground* of another thing, is a *cause* of that thing, if there is any such thing as a cause. Mr. Chubb says Motives have this influence to *produce* an action; and yet he says it is absurd and a contradiction to say they are *causes* of an action.

4. On the same page, he once again speaks of motives as *disposing* the Agent to action by their influence. His words are these:

“Just as Motive, which takes place in the understanding and which is the product of intelligence, is NECESSARY to action—that is, to the EXERTION of the active faculty, because that faculty would not be exerted without some PREVIOUS REASON TO DISPOSE the mind to action—so from this it plainly appears that when a man is said to be disposed to one action rather than another, this properly signifies the PREVAILING INFLUENCE that one motive has upon a man FOR THE PRODUCTION of an action, or for being at rest, above all other Motives that would produce the contrary. For just as motive is the ground and reason of any action, so the Motive that *prevails*, disposes the agent to *perform* that action.”

Now, if motives dispose the mind to action, then they cause the mind to be disposed; and to cause the mind to be disposed is to cause it to be willing; and to cause it to be willing is to cause it to will; and that is the same as being the cause of an act of the Will. Yet this same Mr. Chubb holds that it is absurd to suppose that motive causes the act of the Will.

And if we compare these things together, we again have a whole heap of inconsistencies. Motives are the previous ground and reason of the acts of the Will; indeed, they are the

necessary ground and reason of their exertion, without which they will *not* be exerted, and *cannot*, in the nature of things, take place. They excite these acts of the Will, and they do this by a prevailing influence; indeed, it is an influence which prevails to produce the act of the Will, and to dispose the mind to it. And yet it is somehow absurd to suppose that Motive is a cause of an act of the Will, or that a principle of Will is moved or caused to be exerted by Motive, or that Motive has any causality in the production of it, or any causality in the exertion of the Will.

Mr. Chubb's notion of Liberty—consisting in the Will's power of self-determination, void of all necessity—united with that dictate of common sense that there can be no volition without a Motive, drove him into strange inconsistencies. A due consideration of these things which he has advanced, may be sufficient to convince us that it is utterly impossible to ever make that notion of Liberty consistent with the influence of motives in volition. In a way, it is self-evident that there can be no act of Will, or preference of the mind, without some motive or inducement—something in the mind's view which it aims at, and goes after. Thus it becomes most obvious that there is no such Liberty in the universe as Arminians insist on; nor is any such thing possible or conceivable.

Section XI. The evidence of God's certain Foreknowledge of the volitions of moral Agents.

The acts of the Wills of moral Agents are not contingent events in such a sense as to be without any necessity. This appears by God's certain Foreknowledge of such events.

In handling this argument, I would prove in the first place that God has a certain Foreknowledge of the voluntary acts of moral Agents; and secondly, I would show that the consequence (or how it follows from this) that the Volitions of moral Agents are not contingent so as to be without a necessary connection and consequence.

First, I am to prove, that God has an absolute and certain Foreknowledge of the free actions of moral Agents.

One would think it is wholly unnecessary to make such an argument with anyone that professes to be a Christian. But so it is: God's certain Foreknowledge of the free acts of moral Agents is denied, especially lately, by some who pretend to believe the Scriptures are the Word of God. I will therefore consider the evidence of such a prescience in the Most High, as fully as the designed limits of this essay will allow. And I assume in this that I am dealing with those who admit the truth of the Bible.

ARGUMENT I. My first argument shall be taken from God's prediction of such events. Here, in the first place, I would lay down these two things as axioms:

1. If God does not *foreknow*, then He cannot *foretell* such events; that is, He cannot peremptorily¹ and certainly foretell them. If God has no more than an uncertain guess concerning events of this kind, then he can declare no more than an uncertain guess. Positively, to foretell is to profess to foreknow, or to declare positive Foreknowledge.

If God does not certainly foreknow the future Volitions of moral Agents, then neither can he certainly foreknow those events which are dependent on these Volitions. The *existence* of the one depends on the *existence* of the other, and thus the *knowledge* of the existence of the one depends on the *knowledge* of the existence of the other—the one cannot be more certain than the other.

¹ Imperative and commanding; not allowing for contradiction; it puts an end to any debate about it.

Therefore, however many, however great, and however extensive the consequences of the Volitions of moral Agents may be—even if they were extended to an alteration of the state of things through the universe, and continued in a series of successive events to all eternity, and in the progress of things branched into an infinite number of series, each of them going on in an endless chain of events—God must be as ignorant of all these *consequences*, as he is of the *Volition* from which they first take their rise: the whole state of things depending on them, however important, extensive, and vast, would have to be hidden from him.

These positions being such that I suppose no one would deny them, I now proceed to observe the following things.

1. Men's moral conduct and qualities, their virtues and vices, their wickedness and good practice, things that are rewardable and punishable, have often been foretold by God. Pharaoh's moral conduct in refusing to obey God's command to let his people go, was foretold. God says to Moses, Exod. 3.19. "I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go." Here God professes not to *guess* at, but to *know* Pharaoh's future disobedience. In chap. 7.4. God says, "but Pharaoh shall not listen to you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt," etc. And chap. 9.30. Moses says to Pharaoh, "as for you and your servants, I Know that you will not fear the Lord." See also chap. 11.9. The moral conduct of Josiah in zealously exerting himself to oppose idolatry in particular acts, was foretold over three hundred years before he was born; and the prophecy was sealed by a miracle, and renewed and confirmed by the words of a second prophet as to what surely would not fail, (1Kings 13.1-6, 32). This prophecy was also, in effect, a prediction of the moral conduct of the people, in upholding their schismatic and idolatrous worship until that time, and the idolatry of the priests of the high places whom it was foretold Josiah would offer up on the altar of Bethel. Micah foretold the foolish and sinful conduct of Ahab, in refusing to listen to the word of the Lord by him, and in choosing rather to listen to the false prophets, in going to Ramoth Gilead to his ruin (1Kings 21.20-22). The moral conduct of Hazael was foretold, in that cruelty which he would be guilty of, about which Hazael says, "what, is your servant a dog that he should do this thing!" The prophet speaks of the event as what he *knew*, and not what he *conjectured*, 2Kings 8.12. "I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel: you will dash their children, and rip open their women with child." The moral conduct of Cyrus is foretold, long before he existed, in his mercy to God's people, and in regard to the true God, in turning the captivity of the Jews, and promoting the building of the temple (Isa. 44.28 and 45.13; compare 2Chron. 36.22, 23. and Ezra 1.1-4).

How many instances of the moral conduct of the kings of the North and South, how many particular instances of the wicked behaviour of the kings of Syria and Egypt, are foretold in the 11th chapter of Daniel! Their corruption, violence, robbery, treachery, and lies. And particularly, how much is foretold of the horrid wickedness of Antiochus Epiphanes, called there "a vile person," instead of *Epiphanes*, or illustrious! In that chapter, and also in chap. 8. ver. 9, 14, 23 to the end, are foretold his flattery, deceit, and lies, his having "his heart set to do mischief," and set "against the holy covenant; his destroying and treading underfoot the holy people, in a marvellous manner; his having indignation against the holy covenant, setting his heart against it, and conspiring against it;" his "polluting the sanctuary of strength, treading it under foot, taking away the daily sacrifice, and placing the abomination that makes desolate" (Dan 11.27-31); his great pride, "magnifying himself against God, and uttering marvellous blasphemies against Him," (Dan 11.36) until God in indignation would destroy him. With this, the moral conduct of the Jews on the occasion of his persecution is predicted. It is foretold that "he would corrupt many by flatteries" (Dan. 11.32-34), but that others would behave with a glorious constancy and fortitude in opposition to him (ver. 32). And that some good men should fall and repent (ver. 35). Christ foretold Peter's sin in denying his Lord, along with its circumstances, in a peremptory manner. And so, that great sin of Judas in betraying his

master, and its dreadful and eternal punishment in hell, was foretold in a similar positive manner (Matt. 26.21-25), and in parallel places in the other Evangelists.

2. Many events have been foretold by God, which are dependent on the moral conduct of particular persons, and they were accomplished either by their virtuous or vicious actions. Thus, the children of Israel going down into Egypt to dwell there was foretold to Abraham (Gen. 15.13), which was brought about by the wickedness of Joseph's brethren in selling him, and the wickedness of Potiphar's wife, and his own signal virtue in resisting her temptation. The accomplishment of the thing prefigured in Joseph's dream depended on the same moral conduct. Jotham's parable and prophecy (Judges 9.15-20) was accomplished by the wicked conduct of Abimelech and the men of Shechem. The prophecies against the house of Eli (1Sam. chap. 2 and 3) were accomplished by the wickedness of Doeg the Edomite, in accusing the priests; and by the great impiety, and extreme cruelty of Saul in destroying the priests at Nob (1Sam. 22). Nathan's prophecy against David (2Sam. 12.11-12) was fulfilled by the horrible wickedness of Absalom in rebelling against his father, seeking his life, and lying with his concubines in the sight of the sun. The prophecy against Solomon (1Kings 11.11-13.) was fulfilled by Jeroboam's rebellion and usurpation which are spoken of as his wickedness (2Chron. 13.5-6. compare ver. 18). The prophecy against Jeroboam's family (1Kings 14) was fulfilled by the conspiracy, treason, and cruel murders of Bassha (2Kings 15.27 etc.). The predictions of the prophet Jehu against the house of Bassha (1Kings 16 at the beginning) were fulfilled by the treason and parricide of Zimri (1Kings 16.9-13, 20).

3. How often God has foretold the future moral conduct of nations and people, of numbers, bodies, and successions of men—with God's judicial proceedings, and many other events that are consequent and dependent on their virtues and vices—which could not be foreknown if the Volitions of men, in which they acted as moral Agents, had not been foreseen! The future cruelty of the Egyptians in oppressing Israel, and God's judging and punishing them for it, was foretold long before it came to pass (Gen. 15.13-14). The continuance of the iniquity of the Amorites, and its increase until it would be full and they would be ripe for destruction, was foretold over four hundred years before (Gen. 15.16; Acts 7.6-7). The prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and the land of Judah were absolute (2Kings 20.17-19. chap. 22.15, to the end). It was foretold in Hezekiah's time, and it was abundantly insisted on in the book of the prophet Isaiah, who wrote nothing after Hezekiah's days. It was foretold in Josiah's time, in the beginning of a great reformation (2Kings 22). And it is manifest by innumerable things in the predictions of the prophets relating to this event: its time, circumstances, continuance, and end—the return from the captivity, the restoration of the temple, city, and land, etc. I say these show plainly that the prophecies of this great event were absolute. And yet this event was connected with, and dependent on, two things in men's moral conduct: *first*, the injurious rapine and violence of the king of Babylon and his people, as the efficient cause—which God often speaks of as what He Highly resented and would severely punish; and *secondly*, the final obstinacy of the Jews. That great event is often spoken of as suspended on this (Jer. 4.1 and 5.1, 7.1-7; 11.1-6; 17.24 to the end; 25.1-7; 26.1-8, 13; and 38.17, 18). Therefore this destruction and captivity could not be foreknown, unless that moral conduct of the Chaldeans and Jews had been foreknown. Then it was foretold that the people would be finally obstinate, to the utter desolation of the city and land (Isa. 6.9-11; Jer. 1.18, 19; 7.27-29; Ezek. 3.7; and 24.13, 14).

The final obstinacy of those Jews who were left in the land of Israel, in their idolatry and rejection of the true God, was foretold by him, and the prediction was confirmed with an oath (Jer. 44.26, 27). And God tells the people (Isa. 48.3, 4-8.) that he had predicted those things which would be consequent on their treachery and obstinacy, because he *knew* they would be obstinate; and he had declared these things beforehand, for their conviction of his being the only true God, etc.

The destruction of Babylon, with many of its circumstances, was foretold as the judgment of God for the exceeding pride and haughtiness of the heads of that monarchy—Nebuchadnezzar and his successors—and for their wickedly destroying other nations, and particularly for exalting themselves against the true God and his people, before any of these monarchs existed (Isa. chapters 13, 14, and 47; compare Habak. 2.5, to the end, and Jer. chapters 50. and 51). That Babylon's destruction was to be "a recompense, according to the works of their own hands," appears by Jer. 25.14. The immorality of which the people of Babylon, and particularly her princes and great men, were guilty—on that night the city was destroyed, with their reveling and drunkenness at Belshazzar's idolatrous feast—was foretold (Jer. 51.39, 57).

The return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity is often very particularly foretold, with many circumstances; and the promises of it are very peremptory (Jer. 31.35-40; 32.6-15, 41-44; and 33.24-26.). The very time of their return was prefixed (Jer. 25.11, 12; 29.10, 11. 2Chron. 36.21; Ezek. 4.6; and Dan. 9.2). Yet the prophecies represent their return as being consequent on their repentance. Their repentance itself is expressly and particularly foretold (Jer. 29.12-14; 31.8-9, 18-31; 33.8; 50.4-5; Ezek. 6.8-10; 7.16; 14.22-23; 20.43-44).

It was foretold under the Old Testament that the Messiah would suffer greatly through the malice and cruelty of men; as is largely and fully set forth in Psa. 22, and applied to Christ in the New Testament (Matt. 27.35, 43; Luke 23.34; John 19.24; Heb. 2.12). Likewise is Psa. 69 spoken of Christ, as evidenced by the New Testament (John 15.25; 7.5, etc. and 2.17; Rom. 15.3; Matt. 27.34, 48; Mark 15.23; John 19.29). The same thing is also foretold in Isa. 53; 50.6; and Mic. 5.1. This cruelty of men was their sin, and what they acted out as moral Agents. It was foretold that there would be a union of heathen and Jewish rulers against Christ (Psa. 2.1-2 compared with Acts 4.25-28). It was foretold that the Jew would generally reject and despise the Messiah (Isa. 49.5-7 and 53.1-3; Psa. 22.6-7 and 69.4, 8, 19, 20). And it was foretold, that the body of that nation would be rejected in the Messiah's days, from being God's people, for their obstinacy in sin; (Isa. 49.4-7. and 8.14, 15, 16. compared with Rom. 10.19 and Isa. 65 at the beginning, compared with Rom. 10.20-21.) It was foretold that Christ would be rejected by the chief priests and rulers among the Jews (Psa. 118.22 compared with Matt. 21.42; Acts 4.11; Pet. 2.4, 7).

Christ himself foretold his being delivered into the hands of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and his being cruelly treated by them, and condemned to death; and that he would be delivered to the Gentiles by them; and that he would be mocked, and scourged, and crucified (Matt. 16.21 and 20.17-19; Luke 9.22; John 8.28) and that the people would be involved in and consent to his death (Luke 20.13-18) especially the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Luke 13.33-35). He foretold that the disciples would all be offended because of him (that night in which he was betrayed) and would forsake him (Matt. 26.31; John 16.32). He foretold that he would be rejected by that generation, even by the body of the people, and that they would continue obstinately to their ruin (Matt. 12.45; 21.33-42 and 22.1-7; Luke 13.16, 21, 24; 17.25; 19.14, 27, 41, 44; 20.13-18 and 23.34-39).

As it was foretold in both the Old Testament and the New that the Jews would *reject* the Messiah, so it was foretold that the Gentiles would *receive* him, and so be admitted to the privileges of God's people—this was in too many places to be particularly mentioned now. It was foretold in the Old Testament that the Jews would envy the Gentiles on this account (Deut. 32.21 compared with Rom. 10.19). Christ himself often foretold that the Gentiles would embrace the true religion, and become his followers and people (Matt. 8.10-12; 21.41-43, and 22.8-10; Luke 13.28, 14.16-24, and 20.16; John 10.16). He also foretold the Jews' envy of the Gentiles on this basis (Matt. 20.12-16; Luke 15.26 to the end). He foretold that they would continue in this opposition and envy, and would manifest it in the cruel persecutions of his followers, to their own utter destruction (Matt. 21.33-42, 22.6, and 23.34-39; Luke 11.49-51).

The obstinacy of the Jews is also foretold (Acts 22.18). Christ often foretold the great persecutions his followers would meet with, both from Jews and Gentiles (Matt. 10.16-18, 21, 22, 34-36, and 24.9; Mark 13.9; Luke 10.3; 12.11, 49-53; 21.12, 16, 17; John 15.18-21; 16.1-4, 20-23). He foretold the martyrdom of particular persons (Matt. 20.23; John 13.36, 21.18, 19, 22.) He foretold the great success of the gospel in the city of Samaria as near approaching; afterwards it was fulfilled by the preaching of Philip (John 4.35-38). He foretold the rising of many deceivers after his departure (Matt. 24.4, 5, 11) and the apostasy of many of his professed followers (Matt. 24.10, 12).

The persecutions which the apostle Paul was to meet with in the world were foretold (Acts 9.16; 20.23, and 21.11). The apostle says, to the Christian Ephesians (Acts 20.29-30), “I know that after my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also from among yourselves men shall arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.” The apostle says he knew this—but *he* did not know it, if *God* did not know the future actions of moral Agents.

4. Unless God foreknows the future acts of moral Agents, all the prophecies we have in Scripture concerning the great Antichristian apostasy—the rise, reign, wicked qualities, and deeds of “the man of sin” and of his instruments and adherents; the extent and long continuance of his dominion; his influence on the minds of princes and others to corrupt them and draw them away to idolatry and other foul vices; his great and cruel persecutions; the behaviour of the saints under these great temptations, etc.—I say, unless the Volitions of moral Agents are foreseen, then all these prophecies are uttered without knowing the things foretold.

The predictions relating to this great apostasy are all of a *moral* nature, relating to men’s virtues and vices, and their exercises, fruits, and consequences, and the events depending on them. And they are very particular, most of them often repeated, with many precise characteristics, descriptions, and limitations of qualities, conduct, influence, effects, extent, duration, periods, circumstances, final result, etc. —it would be tedious to mention them particularly. To suppose that all these are predicted by God, without any certain knowledge of the future moral behaviour of free Agents, would be absurd to the utmost degree.

5. Unless God foreknow the future acts of men’s Wills, and their behaviour as moral Agents, all those great things which are foretold both in the Old Testament and the New, concerning the erection, establishment, and universal extent of the kingdom of the Messiah, were predicted and promised while God was in ignorance as to whether any of these things would come to pass or not, and only guessed at them. For that kingdom is not of this world—it does not consist in external things, but it is within men; and it consists in the dominion of virtue in their hearts, in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy ghost. And in these things it is made manifest in practice, to the praise and glory of God. The Messiah came “to save men from their sins” ([Mat 1.21](#)), and deliver them from their spiritual enemies ([Psa 143.9](#)); that they “might serve him in righteousness and holiness before Him;” ([Luk 1.73-75](#)) “he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify for himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” ([Tit 2.14](#)) And therefore his success consists in gaining men’s hearts to virtue, in their being made God’s willing people in the day of his power. His conquest of his enemies consists in his victory over men’s *corruptions* and *vices*. And such a victory, and such a dominion, is often expressly foretold: that his kingdom shall fill the earth; that all people, nations, and languages should serve and obey him; and so that all nations should go up to the mountain of the house of the Lord, that he might teach them his ways, and that they might walk in his paths; and that all men should be drawn to Christ, and the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord (true virtue and religion) as the waters cover the seas; that God’s laws should be put into men’s inward parts, and written in their hearts; and that God’s people should be all righteous, etc. etc.

A very great part of the Old-Testament prophecies is taken up in such predictions as these. And here I would observe that the prophecies of the universal prevalence of the kingdom of the Messiah, and of the true religion of Jesus Christ, are delivered in the most peremptory manner, and confirmed by the oath of God, Isa. 45.22 to the end):

Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I *am* God, and *there is* no other. ²³ I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth *in* righteousness, And shall not return, That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath. ²⁴ He shall say, ‘Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength. To Him *men* shall come...’

But, here, this peremptory declaration and great oath of the Most High are delivered with such mighty solemnity, respecting things which God did not know, if he did not certainly foresee the Volitions of moral Agents.

And all the predictions of Christ and his apostles, to the same point, would have to be without knowledge—such as those predictions of our Saviour comparing the kingdom of God to a grain of mustard-seed, growing exceedingly great from a small beginning; and to leaven, “hidden in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened,” etc. (Mat 13.33) And the prophecies in the epistles concerning the restoration of the Jewish nation to the true church of God, and bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles (Rom 11.25); and the prophecies throughout the Revelation concerning the glorious change in the moral state of the world of mankind attending the destruction of Antichrist, the kingdoms of the world becoming “the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ” (Rev 11.15); and its being granted to the church to be “arrayed in that fine linen, white and clean, which is the righteousness of saints,” etc. (Rev 19.8)

Corollary 1. From this we have that great promise and oath of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so much celebrated in Scripture, both in the Old Testament and the New, namely, “That in their seed all the nations and families of the earth should be blessed” (Gen 22.18; Gal 3.8). It must be made on uncertainties, if God does not certainly foreknow the Volitions of moral Agents. For the fulfilment of this promise consists in that success of Christ in the work of redemption, and setting up his spiritual kingdom over the nations of the world, which was spoken of. Men are “blessed in Christ” in no way other than as they are brought to acknowledge him, trust in him, love and serve him, as represented and predicted in Psa 72.11. “All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve him.” With ver. 17. “Men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed.” This oath to Jacob and Abraham is fulfilled in subduing men’s iniquities, as implied in Micah 7.19-20.¹

Corollary 2. This is also apparent in the first gospel promise ever made to mankind—that great prediction of the salvation of the Messiah and his victory over Satan, which was made to our first parents (Gen. 3.15.). If there is no certain Prescience of the volitions of moral Agents, then this promise must have no better foundation than conjecture. For Christ’s victory over Satan consists in men’s being saved from sin, and in the victory of virtue and holiness over that vice and wickedness which Satan by his temptations has introduced, and in which his kingdom consists.

6. If it is so, that God does not have a Prescience of the future actions of moral Agents, then it will follow that the prophecies of Scripture in general are without Foreknowledge. For Scripture prophecies, almost all of them (if not universally), are either predictions of the acts and behaviours of moral Agents, or of events depending on them or that are in some way connected with them—*judicial dispensations*: judgments on men for their wickedness, or rewards of virtue and righteousness, remarkable manifestations of favour to the righteous, or

¹ NKJ **Micah 7:19** He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. ²⁰ You will give truth to Jacob And mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers From days of old.

manifestations of sovereign mercy to sinners, forgiving their iniquities, and magnifying the riches of divine grace—or *dispensations of Providence* in some respect or other, relating to the conduct of the subjects of God's moral government, wisely adapted to it. These either provide for what should be in a future state of things through the Volitions and voluntary actions of moral Agents, or that are consequent upon them, and regulated and ordered according to them. So that all events that are foretold, are either *moral* events, or other events which are connected with and accommodated to those moral events.

It will further appear that the predictions of Scripture in general must be without knowledge, if God does not foresee the Volitions of men, if it is considered that almost all events belonging to the future state of the world of mankind—the changes and revolutions which come to pass in empires, kingdoms, nations, and in all societies—depend in innumerable ways on the acts of men's Wills. Indeed, they depend on an innumerable multitude of millions of Volitions. Such is the state and course of things in the world of mankind, that one single event, which appears insignificant in itself, may in the progress and series of things, occasion a succession of the greatest and most important and extensive events. It may cause the state of mankind to be vastly different from what it would otherwise have been for all succeeding generations.

For instance, those particular men who have come into existence, and been the great conquerors of the world which, under God, have had the main hand in the consequent state of the world in all subsequent ages—such as Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, Pompey, Julius Caesar, etc.—undoubtedly depended on many millions of acts of the will in their parents. And perhaps most of these Volitions depended on millions of Volitions in their contemporaries of the same generation; and most of these depended on millions of millions of Volitions in preceding generations. As we go back further, the number of Volitions which were in some way the occasion of the event, multiply like the branches of a river, until they come at last, as it were, to an infinite number. This will not seem strange to anyone who well considers the matter.¹ If we recollect what philosophers tell us of the innumerable multitudes of those things which are the *principia*,² or *stamina vitae*,³ concerned in generation—the *animalcula in semine masculo*,⁴ and the ova in the womb of the female; the impregnation or animating of one of these in distinction from all the rest—must depend on things infinitely minute relating to the time and circumstances of the act of the parents, the state of their bodies, etc. which must depend on innumerable foregoing circumstances and occurrences; which must depend in infinite ways on foregoing acts of their wills; which are occasioned by innumerable things that happen in the course of their lives, in which their own and their neighbors' behaviour must have a hand in an infinite number of ways.

And just as the Volitions of others must in so many ways be concerned in the conception and birth of such men, so their Volitions are no less concerned in their preservation, and circumstances of life, their particular determinations and actions, on which depended the great revolutions they were the occasions of. As, for instance, when the conspirators in Persia, against the Magi, were consulting about the succession to the empire, it came into the mind of one of them to propose, that the one whose horse neighed first when they came together the next morning, should be king. Now, such a thing coming into his mind might depend on innumerable incidents, in which the Volitions of mankind had been concerned. But as a result of this accident, Darius, the son of Hystaspes, became king.⁵ If this had not happened, probably his successor would not have been the same, and all the circumstances of the Persian empire

¹ Today we call this “the butterfly effect”; here it applies to the cumulative effect of single choices.

² Principles (of life).

³ The threads of life.

⁴ Animals in the seed of men.

⁵ Darius I (550–486 BC), third king of the Persian Empire. Also called *Darius the Great*.

might have been far otherwise. Then perhaps Alexander might never have conquered that empire; and then probably the circumstances of the world in all succeeding ages might have been vastly different. I might give further instances of those many other occurrences on which Alexander's preservation depended, in the many critical junctures of his life in which a small trifle would have turned the scale against him. I might instance the preservation and success of the Roman people in the infancy of their kingdom and commonwealth, and on which all the succeeding changes in their estate, and the mighty revolutions that afterwards came to pass in the habitable world, depended. But these hints may be sufficient to convince every discerning and considerate person, that the whole state of the world of mankind, in all ages, and the very being of every person who has ever lived in it, in every age since the times of the ancient prophets, has depended on more Volitions, or acts of the Wills of men, than there are sands on the sea-shore.

Therefore, unless God most exactly and perfectly foresees the future acts of men's Wills, all the predictions he ever uttered—concerning David, Hezekiah, Josiah, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, or Alexander—concerning the four monarchies and the revolutions in them—concerning all the wars, commotions, victories, prosperity, and calamities of any kingdom, nation, or community in the world—have all been without knowledge.

So that, according to this notion, if God did not foresee the Volitions and free actions of men, he could foresee nothing pertaining to the state of the world of mankind in future ages—not so much as the birth of one person that would live in it. And he could not foreknow any events, except those he would bring to pass himself by the extraordinary interposition of his immediate power; or those things which would come to pass in the natural material world by the laws of motion and the course of nature—things that are independent of the actions or works of mankind. That is, like a very able mathematician and astronomer, God might with great exactness calculate the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and the greater wheels of the machine of the external creation. And if we closely consider the matter, there will appear reason to convince us that he could not, with any absolute certainty, foresee even these things.

As to the first, namely, things done by the immediate and extraordinary interposition of God's power, these cannot be foreseen unless it can be foreseen when there will be an occasion for such extraordinary interposition. And that cannot be foreseen unless the state of the moral world can be foreseen. For whenever God thus interposes himself, it is with regard to the state of the moral world that requires such divine interposition. Thus God could not certainly foresee the universal deluge, the calling of Abraham, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues on Egypt and Israel's redemption out of it, the expelling of the seven nations of Canaan, and bringing Israel into that land—for these all are represented as connected with things belonging to the state of the moral world. Nor can God foreknow the most proper and convenient time of the Day of Judgment and general conflagration; for that chiefly depends on the course and state of things in the moral World.

Nor, Secondly, can we reasonably think, based on this supposition, that God can certainly foresee what things shall come to pass in the course of things, in the natural and material world, not even those things which in an ordinary state of things might be calculated by a good astronomer. For the moral world is the end of the natural world; and the course of things in the moral world, is undoubtedly subordinate to God's designs with respect to the natural world. Therefore he has seen cause, from regarding the state of things in the *moral* world, to extraordinarily interpose, interrupt, and arrest the course of things in the *natural* world. Unless he can foresee the Volition of men, and thus know something of the future state of the moral world, he cannot know if he may still have as great an occasion to interpose himself this way as he ever had. Nor can he foresee how or when he will have occasion to interpose himself this way.

Corollary 1. It appears from the things observed, that unless God foresees the Volition of moral Agents, what is observed by the apostle James cannot be true (Acts 15.18) “Known to God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”

Corollary 2. It appears that unless God foreknows the Volition of moral Agents, all the prophecies of Scripture have no better foundation than mere conjecture; and that in most instances, it is a conjecture which must have the utmost uncertainty. They depend on an innumerable multitude of Volitions which are all uncertain events, even to God. However, these prophecies are delivered as absolute predictions, and very many of them are declared in the most positive and emphatic manner, some of them with the most solemn oaths.

Corollary 3. It also follows that if this notion of God’s ignorance of future Volitions is true, then Christ said in vain, after uttering many great and important predictions that depend on men’s moral actions (Matt. 24.35), “Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.”

Corollary 4. From the same notion of God’s ignorance, it would follow that he has often spoken in vain of the predictions of his word as evidences of his Foreknowledge; of what is his prerogative as GOD, and of his peculiar glory—greatly distinguishing himself from all other beings (as in Isa. 41.22-26; 43.9-10; 44.8; 45.21; 46.10; and 48.14).

ARGUMENT II. If God does not foreknow the Volitions of moral Agents, then he did not foreknow the fall of man, nor of angels, and so he could not foreknow the great things which are consequents of these events; such as sending his Son into the world to die for sinners, and all things pertaining to the great work of redemption—all the things which were done for four thousand years before Christ came to prepare the way for it; and the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; setting Him at the head of the universe as King of heaven and earth, of angels and men; and setting up his church and kingdom in this world; and appointing him the Judge of the world; and all that Satan would do in the world in opposition to the kingdom of Christ; and the great transactions of the Day of Judgment, etc. And if God was thus ignorant, the following scriptures and others like them must have no meaning, or they are contrary to truth. (Eph. 1.4): “According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.” (1Pet. 1.20): “Who truly was foreordained before the foundation of the world.” (2Tim. 1.9): “who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose, and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” So (Eph. 3.11.) speaking of the wisdom of God in the work of redemption, “according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus.” (Tit. 1.2): “In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” (Rom. 8.29): “Whom he foreknew, those he also predestinated,” etc. (1Pet. 1.2): “Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”

If God did not foreknow the fall of man, the redemption by Jesus Christ, nor the Volitions of man since the Fall, then he did not foreknow the saints in *any* sense—not as particular persons, nor as societies or nations, nor by election, nor by mere foresight of their virtue or good works; nor did he have any foresight of anything about them relating to their salvation; nor of any benefit they would have by Christ; nor of any manner of concern of theirs with a Redeemer.

ARGUMENT III. On the supposition that God is ignorant of the future Volitions of free Agents, it will follow that God must in many cases truly repent of what he has done, so as to properly wish he had done otherwise. This is because the events in those affairs which are most important—the affairs of his moral kingdom—being uncertain and contingent, what often happens is quite otherwise than he was previously aware of. There would be reason to understand that, in the most literal sense (Gen. 6.6), “It repented the Lord, that he had made

man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart,” (and also 1Sam. 15.11 ¹) · This is contrary to Num. 23.19, “God is not the son of Man, that he should repent;” and 1Sam. 15.29, “Also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent.” Indeed, from this notion it would follow that God is liable to continually repent and be grieved at his heart, in a *literal* sense; and that he is always exposed to an infinite number of real disappointments in governing the world, and to manifold, constant, great perplexity and vexation. But this is not consistent with his title, “God over all, blessed forevermore”—which represents him as possessed of perfect, constant, and uninterrupted tranquillity and felicity, as God over the universe; and in his management of the affairs of the world, as supreme and universal ruler. (See Rom. 1.25, 9.5; 2Cor. 11.31; 1Tim. 6.15)

ARGUMENT IV. It will also follow from this notion that, just as God is liable to continually repent of what he has done, so he must be exposed to constantly change his mind and intentions as to his future conduct; to alter his measures, relinquish his old designs, and form new schemes and projects. For his purposes, even as to the main parts of his scheme, those things which belong to the state of his moral kingdom must always be liable to be broken through lack of foresight. He must continually put his system right as it gets out of order through the contingent actions of moral Agents. He must be a Being who, instead of being absolutely immutable, must necessarily be subject to infinitely numerous acts of repentance, and changes of intention, of every other being whatsoever. And it is for this plain reason: that his vastly extensive charge comprehends an infinitely greater number of those things which are contingent and uncertain to him.

In such a situation, he must have little else to do, but to mend broken links as well as he can, and rectify his disjointed frame and disordered movements the best way the case will allow. The Supreme Lord of all things must be under great and miserable disadvantages in governing the world which he has made, and of which he has the care, for he is utterly unable to find out things of highest importance which shall later befall his system—and for which, if he only knew, he might make timely provision. In many cases, there may be great necessity for him to make provision in the way he orders and disposes things, for some great events which are to happen are of vast and extensive influence, and will have endless consequence to the universe. He may see these afterwards, when it is too late, and he may wish in vain that he had known before, so that he might have ordered his affairs accordingly. And thus it is in the power of man, based on these principles, by his own devices, purposes, and actions, to thus disappoint God, break his measures, make him continually change his mind, subject him to frustration, and bring him into confusion.

But how do these things consist with reason, or with the word of God? His word represents that all God’s works, all that he ever has to do, the whole scheme and series of his operations, are perfectly in his view from the beginning. And it declares that whatever devices and designs are in the hearts of men, “the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations,” (Prov. 19.21; Psa. 33.10-11). And what the Lord of hosts has purposed, none shall disannul,” (Isa. 14.27). And he cannot be frustrated in one design or thought (Job 42.2). And “what God does shall be forever, that nothing can be added to it, or taken from it,” (Eccl. 3.14). The stability and perpetuity of God’s counsels are expressly spoken of as connected with his foreknowledge (Isa. 46.10), “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do my pleasure.”—How are these things consistent with what the Scripture says of God’s immutability, which presents him as “without variableness, or shadow of turning;” and speaks of him most particularly as unchangeable with regard to his purposes (Mal. 3.6), “I am the Lord; I do not change; therefore

¹ **1 Samuel 15:11** "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments."

you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” (Exod. 3.14): “I AM THAT I AM.” (Job 23.13, 14): “He is in one mind; and who can turn him? And what his soul desires, even that he does: for he performs the thing that is appointed for me.”

ARGUMENT V. If this notion of God’s ignorance of future Volitions of moral Agents is thoroughly considered in its consequences, it will appear to follow from it that God, after he had made the world, was liable to be wholly frustrated of his end in the creation of it; and so, in like manner, he has been liable to be frustrated of his end in all the great works he had wrought. It is obvious that the moral world is the end of the natural world. The rest of the creation is but a house which God has built with furniture for moral Agents. The good or bad state of the moral world depends on the improvement they make of their natural Agency; and so it depends on their Volitions. Therefore, if these cannot be foreseen by God because they are contingent, and subject to no kind of necessity, then the affairs of the moral world are liable to go wrong to any assignable degree. Indeed, they are liable to be utterly ruined. Based on this scheme, it may well be said literally that when mankind, by the abuse of their mortal Agency, became very corrupt before the flood, that the Lord repented that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. So too, when he made the universe, he did not know that he might be so disappointed in it, that it might grieve him at his heart that he had made it. It actually proved that all mankind became sinful, and a very great part of the angels apostatized—and how could God know beforehand that all of them would not do that? And how could God *not* know that all mankind, notwithstanding the means used to reclaim them—being still left to the freedom of their own Will—would continue in their apostasy, and grow worse and worse, as those of the old world did before the flood?

According to the scheme I am endeavouring to confute, the Fall of neither men nor angels could be foreseen, and God must be greatly disappointed in these events. So too, with the grand contrivance for our redemption, and for destroying the works of the devil by the Messiah, and all the great things God has done in the prosecution of these designs—these can only be the fruits of his own disappointment; they are contrivances to mend as well as he could. His system, which originally was all very good, and perfectly beautiful, was broken and confounded by the free Will of angels and men. And still God must be liable to total disappointment a second time: for he could not know whether he would have his desired success in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of his only-begotten Son, and the other great works accomplished to restore the state of things. He could not know, after all, whether there would actually be any tolerable measure of restoration, for this depended on the free Will of man. There has been a general and great apostasy of almost the whole Christian world to what was worse than heathenism, and which has continued for many ages.¹ How could God, without foreseeing men’s Volitions, know whether Christendom would ever return from this apostasy? And how could he foretell how soon it would begin? The apostle says it began to work in his time;² but how would it be known how far it would proceed in that age? Indeed, how could it be known that the gospel, which was not effectual for the reformation of the Jews, would ever be effectual for turning the heathen nations from their heathen apostasy in which they had been steeped for so many ages?

It is often represented in Scripture that God, who made the world for himself and created it for his pleasure, would infallibly obtain his end in the creation, and in *all* his works—that because all things are *from* him, so they would all be *to* him; and that in the final issue of things, it would appear that he is the first and the last. (Rev. 21.6): “And he said to me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” But these things are not

¹ Alluding to the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church.

² Perhaps referring to 2Thes 2.3: “Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition...*”

consistent with God's liability to be disappointed in all his works, nor indeed with failing to attain his end in anything he has undertaken.

Section XII. God's certain foreknowledge of the future volitions of moral agents is inconsistent with contingent volitions.

Having proved that GOD has a certain and infallible *Prescience* of the voluntary acts of moral agents, I come secondly to show the consequence of it: how it follows from this that these events are *necessary*—having a Necessary connection or consequence.

The chief Arminian divines, so far as I have had an opportunity to observe them, deny this consequence. They affirm that if such Foreknowledge is allowed, it is not evidence of any necessity of the event that is foreknown. Now I desire that this matter may be particularly and thoroughly inquired into. I can only think that on particular and full consideration, it may be perfectly determined whether it is indeed so or not.

In order for a proper consideration of this matter, I would observe the following things.

I. It is evident that, with regard to something whose existence is infallibly and indissolubly connected with something which already exists or has existed, the existence of that thing is *necessary*. Here may be noted the following particulars:

1. I observed before, in explaining the nature of Necessity, that in things which are past, their past existence is now necessary: having already made sure its existence, it is too late for any possibility of altering that; it is now impossible for it to be otherwise than true that the thing has existed.
2. If there is any such thing as divine Foreknowledge of the volitions of free agents, that Foreknowledge, by supposition, is something which already exists and long ago existed; and so its existence is necessary; it is now utterly impossible for it to be otherwise, than that this Foreknowledge should exist or have existed.
3. It is also obvious that things which are indissolubly connected with *other* things that are necessary, are *themselves* necessary. As with a proposition necessarily connected with another proposition that is necessarily true, it is itself necessarily true. To say otherwise would be a contradiction: in effect, it would be saying that the connection is indissoluble, and at the same time saying it is not—that it might be broken. If something is indissolubly connected with something whose existence is now necessary, but its own existence is *not* necessary, then it may possibly not exist, notwithstanding that indissoluble connection of its own existence with the other. Let the reader judge whether the absurdity is not glaring.
4. It is no less evident that if there is a full, certain, and infallible Foreknowledge of the future existence of the volitions of moral agents, then there is a certain, infallible, and indissoluble *connection* between those events and that Foreknowledge. Therefore, by the preceding observations, those events are *necessary* events. They are infallibly and indissolubly connected with that Foreknowledge whose existence already obtains; and so it too is now necessary, and it cannot have been otherwise.

To say that Foreknowledge is *certain* and *infallible*, and yet say that the connection of the event with that Foreknowledge is dissoluble and fallible, is absurd. To affirm it would be the same as affirming that there is no necessary connection between a proposition being infallibly known to be true, and its being true indeed. So it is perfectly demonstrable that, if there is any infallible knowledge of future volitions, then the event is *necessary*. In other words, it is impossible for the event *not* to come to pass. For if it is impossible for it to be otherwise, then it is impossible for a proposition which affirms its future coming to pass, to *not* be true. It is absurd for a proposition to have no truth in it, which is now infallibly known to be true.

II. No future event can be certainly foreknown, whose existence is contingent and without any Necessity. This may be proved thus: it is impossible for something to be *certainly* known to any intellect without *evidence*. To suppose otherwise implies a contradiction—because for something to be certainly *known* to the understanding, it must be *evident* to that understanding. And for something to be evident to the understanding, is the same as the understanding seeing evidence of it. But no understanding, created or uncreated, can see evidence where there is none; for that is the same as seeing what is not. Therefore, if there is any truth which is absolutely without evidence, that truth is absolutely unknowable: it implies a contradiction to suppose that what is unknowable is known.

But if there is any future event whose existence is *contingent*, and *without* any Necessity, the future existence of the event is absolutely without evidence. If there is any evidence of it, then it must be one of two sorts: either self-evidence, or proof. An evident thing must either be evident in itself, or evident in something else (that is, evident by connection with something else). But a future thing, whose existence is without any Necessity, can have neither of these sorts of evidence. *First*, it cannot be self-evident, for if it were, then it may be known *now*, by what is now to be seen in the thing itself—its present existence, or the Necessity of its nature; but both of these are contrary to the supposition. The supposition is that the thing has no present existence to be seen; and also that it is not of such a nature as to necessarily exist in the future—its future existence is not self-evident. *Secondly*, there is no proof or evidence in anything else, nor evidence of a connection with something else that is evident; for this is also contrary to the supposition. It is supposed that there is now nothing existent with which the future existence of the contingent event is connected. For such a connection would destroy its contingency, and suppose a Necessity. Thus it is demonstrated that, in the nature of things, there is absolutely no evidence at all of the future existence of an event which is both contingent, and without any Necessity (if there is any such event); nor is there any self-evidence or proof. Therefore, the thing in reality is not evident; and so it cannot be seen to be evident, nor be known (which is the same thing).

Let us consider this in an example. Suppose that five thousand seven hundred and sixty years ago,¹ there was no other being but the Divine Being; and then this world, or some particular body or spirit, all at once comes into being out of nothing, and takes on itself a particular nature and form—all in absolute Contingence, without any concern of God or any other cause in the matter; without any ground or reason for its existence; and without any dependence on or connection at all with anything foregoing—I say, that if this is supposed, then there was no evidence of that event beforehand. There was no evidence of it to be seen in the thing itself, for the thing itself did not yet exist. And there was no evidence of it to be seen in anything else, for evidence in something else means *connection* with something else—but such a connection is contrary to the supposition. There was no *evidence* before that this thing would happen; for by the supposition, there was no *reason* why this should happen rather than something else, or rather than nothing at all.

And if this is so, then all things before were exactly equal: they were the same with respect to that event and other possible things—there was no preponderance, no superior weight or value—and therefore, there was nothing that could have any weight or value to determine any understanding. The thing was absolutely without evidence, and absolutely unknowable. An increase of understanding, or of the capacity to discern, has no tendency and it makes no advance towards discerning any signs or evidences of it, however much this faculty is increased—even if it were increased infinitely. The increase of the strength of sight may have a tendency to enable a person to discern evidence which is far off, and very much hidden, and deep in clouds and darkness. But this increase in sight has no tendency to enable a person to

¹ Archbishop James Ussher's 17th century chronology of the Bible places Creation at 4004 B.C.

discern evidence where there is none. If sight is infinitely strong, and the capacity of discerning is infinitely great, it will enable a person to see all that there *is*, and to see it perfectly, and with ease—yet it has no tendency at all to enable a person to discern evidence which does *not* exist. On the contrary, it has a tendency to enable that person to discern with great certainty that *there is none*.

III. To suppose the future volitions of moral agents are not *necessary* events, or events which may possibly *fail* to come to pass—and yet to suppose that God certainly foreknows them, and knows all things—is to suppose that God’s knowledge is inconsistent with itself. For to say that God certainly, and without any conjecture, knows that something will *infallibly come to be*, while at the same time knowing that it is so contingent that it may possibly *not come to be*, is to suppose that his knowledge is inconsistent with itself—or that one thing he knows is utterly inconsistent with another thing he knows. It is the same as saying that he now knows a proposition is a certain infallible truth, which he also knows is a contingent uncertain truth. If a future volition is without any Necessity, so that nothing keeps it from *not* being, then any proposition which asserts its future existence, is so uncertain that nothing keeps the truth of it from entirely failing. And if God knows all things, then he knows this proposition is thus uncertain. And that is inconsistent with his knowing that it is infallibly true; and so it is inconsistent with his infallibly knowing that it is true. If the thing is indeed contingent, then God views it so, and he judges it to be contingent if he views things as they are. If the event is not necessary, then it is possible that it may never be. And if it is possible that it may never be, God *knows* it may possibly never be; and *that* is to know that any proposition which affirms its existence, may possibly not be true. And that is to know that the truth of it is *uncertain*, which is surely inconsistent with his knowing it as a *certain truth*. If volitions are *contingent* events in themselves, without any Necessity, then it is no argument of perfect knowledge, in any being, to determine peremptorily that they *will* be. On the contrary, it is an argument of ignorance and mistake, because it would argue that a proposition is certain, which in its own nature (all things considered) is actually uncertain and contingent. To say, in such a case, that God may have ways of knowing contingent events which we cannot conceive of, is ridiculous. It is like saying that God may know contradictions are true, for all we know; or that he may know something is certain, and at the same time know it is *not* certain, though we cannot conceive how; because he has ways of knowing which we cannot comprehend.

Corollary 1. From what has been observed, it is evident that the absolute *decrees* of God are no more inconsistent with human liberty than the absolute *Foreknowledge* of God—this is on account of any *Necessity* of the event which follows from such decrees. The connection between the event and certain Foreknowledge is as infallible and indissoluble as the connection between the event and an absolute decree. That is, it is just as likely that the *event* and the *decree* will not agree, as that the *event* and absolute *Knowledge* will not agree. The connection between the event and Foreknowledge is absolutely perfect, because it is supposed that the certainty and infallibility of the knowledge is absolutely perfect. This being so, *certainty* cannot be increased because *perfection* cannot be increased. Therefore the *connection* between the knowledge of something, and the thing that is known, cannot be increased. So if a decree is added to the Foreknowledge, it does not increase the connection, nor does it make the connection more infallible and indissoluble. If this were not so, the certainty of Knowledge might be increased by adding a decree—but this is contrary to the supposition that the Knowledge is *absolutely perfect*, perfect to the highest possible degree.

It is as likely that the things which are infallibly foreknown *already* exist—or there is as great a Necessity for their *future* existence—as if the event were already written down; and it was known and read by all mankind through all preceding ages; and there was the most indissoluble and perfect connection possible between the writing and the thing written about.

In such a case, it would be as impossible for the event to *fail* to exist, as if it had existed already—and a decree cannot make an event surer or more necessary than this.

Therefore, if there is any such Foreknowledge, as it has been proved there is,¹ then Necessity of connection and consequence is not at all inconsistent with any liberty which man or any other creature enjoys. From this it may be inferred that absolute decrees, which do not at all increase the necessity of an event, are not inconsistent with the liberty which man enjoys on any such account – they do not make the event that was decreed *necessary*, and render it utterly impossible that it should *not* come to pass. Therefore, if absolute decrees are inconsistent with man's liberty as a moral agent, or with his liberty in a state of probation, or whatever liberty he enjoys, it is not on account of any Necessity which absolute decrees infer.

Dr. Whitby supposes that there is a great difference between God's foreknowledge, and his decrees, with regard to the necessity of future events. In his *Discourse on the Five Points*, (p. 474, etc.),² he says God's Prescience has no influence at all on our actions:

Should God, by immediate revelation, give me the knowledge of the event of any man's state or actions, would my knowledge of them have any influence upon his actions? Surely none at all. —Our knowledge does not affect the things we know, to make them more certain, or more fixed, than they could be without it. Now, Foreknowledge in God is knowledge. Therefore, just as Knowledge has no influence on things that are, neither does Foreknowledge have influence on things that will be. And consequently, the Foreknowledge of any action that would be otherwise free, cannot alter or diminish that freedom. By contrast, God's decree of election is powerful and active, and it comprehends the preparation and exhibition of those means which shall unfrustrably produce the end. Hence God's Prescience renders no actions *necessary*.

To this purpose (p. 473), he cites Origen, where he says, "God's Prescience is not the cause of things future, but their being future is the cause of God's Prescience that they will be." And he cites Le Blanc, where he says, "This is the truest resolution of this difficulty—that Prescience is not the cause that things are future; but their being future is the cause that they are foreseen." Dr. Clark speaks in a similar manner in his *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* (p. 95-99). And the author of *The Freedom of the Will, in God and Creation*, speaking with a similar purpose as Dr. Whitby, represents Foreknowledge as having no more influence on things known, to make them *necessary*, than after-knowledge.

To all of this I would say that what is said about knowledge—its not having influence on the thing known to make it necessary—is irrelevant, nor does it in the least affect the foregoing reasoning. Whether Prescience is the thing that makes an event necessary or not, it does not alter the case. Infallible Foreknowledge may prove the *Necessity* of the event that is foreknown, and yet not be the thing which *causes* the Necessity. If the foreknowledge is absolute, this proves that the foreknown event is necessary, or it proves that it is impossible for the event *not* to be by some means or other, whether by a decree or some other way (if there is another way). This is because, as said before, it is absurd to say that a proposition is known to be certainly and infallibly true, which yet may possibly prove *not* to be true.³

¹ Actually, Edwards has only proven that "IF there is any such Foreknowledge," and the event that was foreknown actually occurs, there is an infallible connection between the two. He showed that the specificity of Scripture prophecy is a strong indicator of God's foreknowledge, not a proof of it. And it has not been proved whether that connection is *causative*. A man may discern from trends in the events of his time and the nature of his generation, what may happen in the future. If those events occur, it would affirm that his predictions (his *deductions*) were sound—*not* that he had certain foreknowledge of those events; his estimation of those future events would not *cause* them. The debate between Arminians and Calvinists is not about God's foreknowledge, but about *determinism* – the causal decrees of God; and that is what Edwards addresses next.

² See the [Appendix](#), Whitby's discourse, written 1710.

³ And so Edwards' entire argument hinges on the certainty and infallibility of God's Foreknowledge. Scripture is clear that God's knowledge is indeed certain and infallible. And therefore the subsequent event is *necessary* – it

The whole of the seeming force of this evasion lies in this: that certain Foreknowledge does not *cause* an event to be necessary, as a decree does; therefore certain Foreknowledge does not prove the event is necessary, as a decree does. But there is no force in this argument. It is built wholly on this supposition—that nothing can prove or be evidence that something is necessary, except that which has a *causal influence* to make it so. But this can never be maintained. If certain Foreknowledge of the future existence of an event is not the thing which first makes it impossible for it *not* to exist, it still certainly demonstrates that it is impossible, however that impossibility comes about. If Foreknowledge is not the *cause*, but the *effect* of this impossibility, it still proves that there is such an impossibility, as much as if it were the cause of it. It is as strong an argument from the effect to the cause, as it is from the cause to the effect. It is enough that the existence, which is infallibly foreknown, *cannot* fail—whether that impossibility arises from the Foreknowledge, or occurs prior to it. It is as evident as anything can be, that it is impossible that something which is infallibly known to be true, should prove *not* to be true. Therefore there is a *Necessity* that it should be otherwise than *not-true*; whether the Knowledge is the cause of this Necessity, or the Necessity is the cause of the Knowledge.

All certain knowledge, whether it is Foreknowledge or After-knowledge, or concomitant¹ knowledge, proves the thing foreknown is now necessary, by some means or other—or it proves that it is impossible for it now to be otherwise than true. I freely admit that Foreknowledge does not prove something is necessary any more than After-knowledge. But then, After-knowledge which is certain and infallible, proves that it has now become impossible for the known proposition to not be true. Certain After-knowledge proves that, by some means or other, it has now become impossible for the proposition *not* to be true, which predicates itself on the event that has already occurred. And certain Foreknowledge proves that *now*, at the time of the knowledge, by some means or other, it has become impossible for the proposition *not* to be true, which predicates itself on the future existence of the event. In both cases, the necessity of the truth of the propositions consists in the present impossibility of the non-existence of the affirmed event—this is the immediate ground of the certainty of the Knowledge; there can be no certainty without it.

There must be a certainty in things *themselves*, before they are certainly *known*, or known to be certain. For certainty of knowledge is simply knowing or discerning the certainty that exists in the known things themselves.² Therefore, there must be certainty in the things that are known, in order for them to be the ground of certain knowledge, and to render things capable of being certainly known. And thus the only thing concerned here, is the *necessity* of the truth known—the impossibility of it *not* being true. In other words, our only concern is the firm and infallible *connection* between the subject and predicate of the proposition which contains that truth. All certainty of Knowledge consists in the view of the firmness of that connection. So God's certain foreknowledge of the future existence of any event, is his view of the firm and indissoluble *connection* between the subject and predicate of the proposition that affirms its future existence. The *subject* is the possible event; the *predicate* is its actual future existence. But if future existence itself is firmly and indissolubly connected with that event, then the future existence of that event is *necessary*. If God *certainly* knows the future existence of an event which is wholly *contingent* (it may possibly never occur), then he sees a *firm connection* between a subject and predicate that are *not* firmly connected—which is a contradiction.

I admit what Dr. Whitby says to be true: that mere Knowledge does not affect the thing known, so as to make it more certain or more future. Yet, I say Knowledge supposes and proves the

must come to pass—or else God's Foreknowledge is neither certain nor infallible. Causation, Edwards says, is a separate and unrelated issue.

¹ Following or accompanying as a consequence.

² The certainty of the proposition that "pigs must fly at night" is dependent on the certainty that pigs can fly.

thing to be, *already*, both future and certain—i.e., it is *necessary* in the future. *Knowledge* of futurity, *supposes* futurity; and a *certain* knowledge of futurity, supposes a *certain futurity*, preceding that *certain Knowledge*. But there is no certain futurity of something, antecedent to any certainty of Knowledge, other than a prior impossibility that the thing should prove untrue: that is, the *necessity* of the event.

I would observe one thing further; that if it were as those aforementioned writers suppose it is—that God’s Foreknowledge is not the *cause*, but the *effect* of the existence of the event that is foreknown—this is far from showing that this Foreknowledge does not infer the Necessity of the existence of that event. Rather, it shows the contrary all the more plainly, because it shows that the existence of the event is settled and firm, as if it had already been—in effect, it actually exists already. Its future existence has already had an actual influence and efficiency; it has *produced* an effect—Prescience is the effect; and it exists already. And because the effect supposes the cause, and it depends entirely upon it, it is therefore as if the future event (which is the cause) had existed already. The effect is as firm as possible—having already possessed its existence, it has made sure of it. But the effect cannot be more firm and stable than its cause, ground, and reason for being. The building cannot be firmer than the foundation.

To illustrate this, let us suppose that the appearances and images of things in a mirror—for instance, in a reflecting telescope—are the real effects of heavenly bodies (at a distance, and out of sight) which these images resemble. If it is so, then, as these images in the telescope have had a past actual existence, it has become utterly impossible now for them *not* to have existed. So they are the true *effects* of the heavenly bodies which they resemble. This proves the existence of those heavenly bodies is as real, infallible, firm, and necessary, as the existence of these *effects*; the one is connected with and wholly dependent on the other.¹

Now let us suppose that future existences, some way or other, have influence backward, to produce effects *beforehand*, and cause exact and perfect images of themselves in a glass, a thousand years before they exist; indeed, in *all* preceding ages. Yet these images are real effects of these future existences, perfectly dependent on, and connected with their cause. These effects and images having already had actual existence, render that matter of their existence perfectly firm and stable, and utterly impossible to be otherwise. This proves, as in the other instance, that the existence of the things which are the *causes*, is equally sure, firm, and necessary as their *effects*. It is just as impossible for them *not* to be, as if they had been already—as their effects have been. The case is not altered if, instead of images in a mirror, we suppose that the antecedent effects are perfect ideas of them in the Divine Mind. They have existed there from all eternity, and they are properly *effects* themselves, being truly and properly connected with their *cause*.²

Another thing which has been said by some Arminians, to blunt the force of what is urged from God’s Prescience (that the volitions of moral agents would cease), is this: when we talk of Foreknowledge in God, there is no strict propriety in our use of the term. Although it is true that there is in God the most perfect Knowledge of all events from eternity to eternity, yet there is no such thing as *before* and *after* in God—he sees all things in one perfect unchangeable view, without any succession. To this I answer:

¹ The heavenly bodies *necessarily caused* the images in the telescope, even though this event was contingent on the construction and positioning of the telescope. But these images were “after-knowledge”, not foreknowledge. And the shining heavenly bodies were not mere knowledge, but events in themselves – *efficacious* events—they produced an effect (their light). The question is whether Foreknowledge is likewise efficacious. This illustration does not aid us in that determination, unless Edwards is asserting that God’s certain Foreknowledge is itself an event, like a decree. Does God’s certain and infallible Fore-knowledge constitute Fore-ordination?

² That is, God’s *Mind* – His perfect Knowledge is thus active and causative, not reactive or passive.

1. It has been already shown that all certain Knowledge proves the *Necessity* of the truth that is known; whether it is before, after, or at the same time. Though it is true that there is no succession in God's Knowledge, and the manner of his Knowledge is inconceivable to us, we still know this much concerning it: that there is no event, past, present, or future, that God is ever uncertain of. He never is, never was, and never will be without infallible Knowledge of it. He always sees the existence of it as certain and infallible. And because he always sees things just as they are in truth, there is never in reality anything contingent, in the sense that it may possibly never exist. If, strictly speaking, there is no Foreknowledge in God, it is because those things which are future to us, are as present to God as if they had already come into existence. That is as much as saying that future events are always in God's view as evident, clear, sure, and necessary—as if they already were. If there is never a time in which the existence of the event is not *present* with God, then there is never a time in which it is possible for it to fail—as if its existence were present and had already come to pass.

God views things so perfectly and unchangeably, that there is no succession in his ideas or judgment, but this is not a hindrance. There is properly now, in the mind of God, a certain and perfect Knowledge of the moral actions of men, which to us are a hundred years from now. Indeed, the objection supposes this; and therefore not having a succession in God's mind, certainly does not hinder the *necessity* of our moral actions. By the foregoing arguments, it is now clearly impossible that these moral actions should fail to pass.

We know that God foreknows the future voluntary actions of men, in the sense that he is able to particularly foretell them, and cause them to be recorded, as he has often done. And therefore the necessary connection that exists between God's Knowledge and the known event, as much proves beforehand that the event is necessary, as if the Divine Knowledge were before the event—in the same sense that the prediction or writing is beforehand. If the Knowledge is infallible, then the expression of that knowledge in the written prediction is also infallible. That is, there is an infallible *connection* between that written prediction and the event. If this is so, then it is impossible that the prediction and the event should ever disagree. This is the same as saying that it is impossible for the event *not* to come to pass; and this is the same as saying that its coming to pass is *necessary*. So that it becomes obvious that having no proper succession of events in God's mind, does not alter the *Necessity* of the existence of the events that are known.

2. Indeed, this is so far from weakening the proof given of the impossibility of future events that are foreknown, not coming to pass, that it *establishes* the foregoing arguments, and it shows the clearness of the evidence. For,

(1.) The very reason, why God's Knowledge is without succession, is because it is absolutely *perfect*, to the highest possible degree of clearness and certainty. All things, whether past, present, or future, are viewed with equal evidence and fulness. Future things are seen with as much clearness as if they were present. The view is always in absolute perfection; and absolute and constant perfection allows no alteration, and so no succession. The actual existence of the thing known, does not at all increase or add to the clearness or certainty of the thing that is known. "God calls the things that are not, as though they were" ([Rom 4.17](#)); they are all one to him as if they had already existed. But in this consists the strength of the demonstration given before: that it is as impossible for them to *fail* to exist, as it would be if they existed already. This objection, instead of weakening the argument, sets it in the strongest light—for it supposes that the existence of future events is, in God's view, as sure as if it had already occurred; so that when they do come to actually exist, it does not make the least alteration or variation in his knowledge of them.

(2.) The objection is founded on the immutability of God's knowledge—for it is the immutability of Knowledge that makes it without succession. But this most directly and plainly demonstrates the thing I insist on: that it is utterly impossible for the known events to fail to

exist. For if that were possible, then a change in God's Knowledge and view of things would be possible. For if the known event should not come into being as God expected, then he would see it. And so he would change his mind, and see his former mistake. Thus there would be change and a succession in his knowledge. But as God is immutable, and it is infinitely impossible for His view to be changed, so it is (for the same reason) impossible that the foreknown event should not exist. It would be impossible in the highest degree; and therefore the contrary is necessary – it *must* exist. Nothing is more impossible than that the immutable God should be changed by the succession of time. He comprehends all things, from eternity to eternity, in one most perfect and unalterable view; so that his whole eternal duration is *vitalis interminabilis, tota, simul et perfecta possessio*.¹

On the whole, I need not fear to say that there is no geometrical theorem or proposition whatsoever, that is more capable of strict demonstration than this: God's certain Prescience of the volitions of moral agents is inconsistent with such a Contingency of these events, that they would have no Necessity to occur; and so it is inconsistent with the Arminian notion of liberty.

Corollary 2. Hence the doctrine of the Calvinists, concerning the absolute decrees of God, does not all infer any more fatalism in things than demonstrably follows from the doctrine of most Arminian divines who acknowledge God's omniscience and universal Prescience. Therefore, all objections they make against the doctrine of the Calvinists, as implying Hobbes' doctrine of Necessity, or the stoic doctrine of fate, lie no more against the doctrine of Calvinists than their own doctrine. Therefore it does not become those divines to raise such an outcry against the Calvinists on this account.

Corollary 3. Hence *all the arguments of Arminians* (who admit God's omniscience), urged against the doctrine of the inability of unregenerate men to perform the conditions of salvation, and to perform the commands of God requiring spiritual duties; and also the Calvinistic doctrine of efficacious grace—on the ground that those doctrines, though they do not assume that men are under any constraint or coercion, still suppose this constraint exists under *Necessity—must fall to the ground*. And so must their arguments against the necessity of men's volitions, taken from the reasonableness of God's commands, promises, and threatenings, and the sincerity of his counsels and invitations. And all their objections against any doctrines of the Calvinists as being inconsistent with human liberty, because they infer Necessity—I say, *all their arguments and objections* must justly be esteemed vain and frivolous. They may be leveled against their own doctrine, not just the Calvinists'.

Section XIII. Whether the volitions of moral Agents are connected with antecedents or not, they must be necessary in such a sense as to overthrow Arminian liberty.

Every act of the Will either has a cause, or it does not. If it has a cause, then according to what has already been demonstrated, it is not contingent, but *necessary*—the effect is necessarily dependent and consequent on its cause, whatever that cause may be. If the cause is the Will itself—by antecedent acts choosing and determining—still, the determined caused act must be a necessary *effect* of those choices and determinations. The act (that is, the determined effect of the foregoing act which caused it) cannot prevent the efficiency of its cause—but it must be wholly subject to its determination and command, as much as the motions of the hands and feet. The consequent commanded acts of the Will are as passive and as necessary, with respect to the antecedent determining acts, as the parts of the body are to the volitions which determine and command them. Therefore, if all the free acts of the will are determined *effects*—determined by the will itself, that is, by antecedent choice—then they are all *necessary*.

¹ Life eternal, in its entirety, possessed simultaneously and perfectly.

They are all subject to, and decisively fixed by, the foregoing act which is their cause—even the determining act itself; for that must be determined and fixed by another preceding act (if it is a free and voluntary act); and so it too must be necessary. So that, by this reasoning, all the free acts of the will are necessary acts. They cannot be free unless they *are* necessary—because they cannot be free, according to the Arminian notion of freedom, unless they are determined by the Will; and this means they are determined by an antecedent choice. This being their cause, it proves they are necessary. And yet they say, Necessity is utterly inconsistent with Liberty. So that, by their scheme, the acts of the will cannot be free *unless* they are necessary, and yet they cannot be free if they *are* necessary!

But if the other part of the dilemma is taken—that the free acts of the Will have no cause, and are connected with nothing whatever that goes before and determines them (in order to maintain their proper and absolute Contingence)—and even if we were to admit this is possible, still it will not serve their turn. For if the volition comes to pass by perfect Contingence, without any cause at all, then it is certain that no act of the Will—no prior act of the soul—was the cause of it; no determination or choice of the soul had any hand in it. The will, or the soul, was indeed subject to what happened to it accidentally, but it was not the *cause* of it. According to their notion of activity and passivity, the Will is not active in causing or determining anything; it is purely the passive subject. In this case, Contingence as much *prevents* the determination of the Will, as a proper *cause*. And as for the Will, its determination was *necessary*—it could not have been otherwise. For to suppose that it could have been otherwise (if the Will or soul had pleased), is to suppose that the act is dependent on some prior act of choice or pleasure, contrary to what is now supposed. It is to suppose that it might have been otherwise, if its cause had ordered it otherwise. But this does not agree with it having no cause or orderer at all. What is not dependent on any free act of the soul, must be *necessary* to the soul. But what has no cause, is not dependent on any free act of the soul—because the supposition is that it is *dependent* on nothing, and it is *connected* with nothing. In such a case, the soul is necessarily subjected to whatever accident brings to pass from time to time, as much as the earth that is inactive, is necessarily subjected to whatever falls upon it. But this is not consistent with the Arminian notion of Liberty, which is the Will's power to determine its own acts, and being wholly active in it—without passiveness, and without being subject to any necessity. Thus, Contingence belongs to the Arminian notion of Liberty, and yet is inconsistent with it.

I would here observe, that the author ¹ of the *Essay on the Freedom of the Will, in God and the Creature* (p. 76, 77) says as follows:

“The word *chance* always means something done without design. Chance and design stand in direct opposition to each other: and Chance can never be properly applied to acts of the will, which is the spring of all design, and which designs to choose whatever it chooses, whether there is any superior fitness in the thing which it chooses, or not; and it designs to determine itself to one thing, where two things, perfectly equal, are proposed, merely because it will.”

But herein appears a very great inadvertence. For if the will is the spring of all design, as he says, then certainly it is not always the *effect* of design; and the acts of the will themselves must sometimes come to pass, when they do not spring from design; and consequently they come to pass by chance, according to his own definition of *Chance*. And if the will designs to choose whatever it chooses, and designs to determine itself, as he says, then it designs to determine all its designs. This carries us back from one design to a foregoing design, determining that, and then to another determining that one; and so on *ad infinitum*. The very first design must be the effect of a foregoing design, or else it must be by Chance, in his notion of it.

¹ Isaac Watts, 1732.

Here another alternative may be proposed, relating to the connection of the acts of the Will with some foregoing cause, not unlike the other. Either human liberty may well stand with volitions being necessarily connected with the views of the understanding, and so it is consistent with Necessity—or else it is inconsistent with and contrary to such a connection and Necessity. Consistency with Necessity directly subverts the Arminian notion of Liberty (consisting in freedom from all Necessity). And if it is said that liberty is inconsistent with any such necessary connection, then the Liberty of the soul consists, partly at least, in freedom from restraint, limitation, and government in its actions, by the understanding—in its Liberty and liableness to act *contrary* to the views and dictates of the understanding. Consequently, the more the soul is disengaged in its actions, the more Liberty it has. Now let it be considered to what this brings the noble principle of human Liberty, particularly when such Liberty is possessed and enjoyed in all its perfection. This is a full and perfect freedom and liableness to act completely *at random*, without the least connection with, or restraint, or government by, any dictate of reason—or by anything whatever that is apprehended, considered, or viewed by the understanding. These would be inconsistent with the full and perfect sovereignty of the Will over its own determinations. The notion mankind has conceived of Liberty, is some *dignity* or *privilege*, something worth claiming. But what dignity or privilege is there in being surrendered to such a wild Contingence as this—to be perfectly and constantly liable to act unreasonably—as much without the guidance of understanding as if we had none, or were as destitute of perception as smoke driven by the wind!

PART III. Is the Arminian notion of liberty of will necessary to moral agency, virtue, praise, and dispraise, etc.?

Section I. God's moral Excellency is necessary, yet it is virtuous and praiseworthy.

Having considered the first thing proposed, Whether that freedom of Will which Arminians maintain does, ever did, or ever can exist, I come now to the second thing—Whether any such kind of liberty is requisite to moral agency, virtue and vice, praise and blame, reward and punishment, etc.

I shall begin with some consideration of the virtue and agency of the Supreme moral Agent, and Fountain of all Agency and Virtue.

Dr. Whitby in his *Discourse on the Five Points*, (p. 14.)¹ says,

“If all human actions are necessary, then virtue and vice must be empty names; we are capable of nothing that is blameworthy, or deserves praise—for who can blame a person for doing only what he could not help, or judge that he deserves praise only for what he could not avoid?”²

He speaks to a similar purpose in a number of places, especially in his *Discourse on the freedom of the Will*, constantly maintaining that a freedom not only from *coaction*,³ but from *necessity*, is absolutely requisite in order for actions to be either worthy of blame, or deserving of praise. This agrees, as is well known, with the current doctrine of Arminian writers who, in general, hold that there is no virtue or vice, reward or punishment, nothing to be commended or blamed, without this freedom. And yet Dr. Whitby (p. 300)⁴ admits that God is without this freedom [to do evil]; and Arminians, so far as I have observed, generally acknowledge that God is *necessarily* holy, and his Will is *necessarily* determined toward that which is good.

So let us put these things together. The infinitely holy God always used to be esteemed by God's people not only as virtuous, but as a Being in whom there is all possible virtue. He exists in the most absolute purity and perfection, brightness and amiableness. He has the most perfect pattern of virtue, from whom all the virtue of others is but as beams from the sun. He has been supposed (as represented everywhere in Scripture), on the account of his virtue and holiness, to be infinitely more worthy to be esteemed, loved, honoured, admired, commended, extolled, and praised than *any* creature. This Being, according to this notion of Dr. Whitby and other Arminians, *has no virtue at all!* Virtue, when ascribed to God, is but an empty name; and he is deserving of no commendation or praise; because he is under necessity—he *cannot* avoid being holy and good as he is; therefore no thanks is due to him for it. It seems that the holiness,

¹ Discourse I, chap. I, sec. III.(ii).

² This is the automaton argument: if God is absolutely sovereign over our Will, then we are mere robots and not moral agents; but we are not mere robots; therefore God is not absolutely sovereign over our Will. Paul addresses this issue in *Romans*, “Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?” (Rom 9:19 ^{NIV}) But this was specifically with regard to *salvation*, as distinct from *sanctification*. That distinction, ignored by Edwards, is maintained in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646), chapter 9.3-5:

“By his fall into a state of sin, man has wholly lost all ability to will any spiritual good leading to salvation. So, a natural man, being altogether opposed to that good, and dead in sin, is unable by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself to be converted. When God converts a sinner and brings him into the state of grace, he frees him from his natural bondage under sin. By his grace alone he enables him to freely will and to do what is spiritually good. Yet, because of his remaining corruption, he does not perfectly nor only will what is good; he also wills what is evil. The will of man is made perfectly and unchangeably free to do good alone, only in the state of glory.”

³ That is, without impetus from the Holy Spirit working jointly with our will.

⁴ Discourse IV, chap. I, sec. II, COROLLARY (1.)

justice, faithfulness, etc. of the Most High, must not be considered of the nature of that which is virtuous and praiseworthy. They will not deny that these things in God are good; but then we must understand them to say that these things in God are no more virtuous, or commendable, than the good that is in any other being that is *not* a moral agent—such as the brightness of the sun, and the fertility of the earth; these are good, but they are not virtuous, because these properties are *necessary* to these bodies, and they are not the fruit of self-determining power.¹

No other confutation of this notion is needed for Christians acquainted with the Bible, but only to state and particularly represent it. To bring texts of Scripture, in which God is represented in every respect, and in the highest manner, as virtuous and supremely praiseworthy, would be endless. And it would be altogether unnecessary for those who have been brought up in the light of the gospel.

It could be wished that Dr. Whitby and other divines of the same sort had explained themselves when they asserted that what is *necessary* does not deserve praise. For at the same time that they admit God's perfection is necessary, they have, in effect, represented God as not deserving praise. Certainly, if their words have any meaning at all, they must mean by *praise*, the exercise or testimony of esteem, respect, or honourable regard. And will they then say that men are worthy of that esteem, respect, and honour for their virtue—small and imperfect as it is—and yet God is not worthy of it for his infinite righteousness, holiness, and goodness? If so, there must be some sort of peculiar excellence in the virtuous man, which is his *prerogative*, by which he gains such preference over God. There must be some dignity that is entirely distinguished from any Excellency or amiableness in God. It is not in his dependence, but in his pre-eminence—which therefore he does not receive from God, nor is God the fountain or pattern of it. Nor can God, in that respect, compete with him as the object of our honour and regard. Rather, man may claim a peculiar esteem, commendation, and glory, to which God can have no pretension. Indeed, God has no right, by virtue of his *necessary* holiness, to share in that grateful respect and praise due to the virtuous man, who chooses virtue in the exercise of a freedom *ad utrumque*.² God has no more right to it than a precious stone, which cannot avoid being hard and beautiful.

And if it is so, then let it be explained what that peculiar respect is that is due to the virtuous man, which differs in nature and kind, or in some form of pre-eminence, from all that is due to God. What is the name or description of that peculiar affection? Is it esteem, love, admiration, honour, praise, or gratitude? The Scripture everywhere represents God as the highest object of all these. There we read of the soul magnifying the Lord, of loving him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; of admiring him and his righteous acts and greatly regarding them as marvelous and wonderful; of honouring, glorifying, exalting, extolling, blessing, thanking, and praising him; of giving him all the glory of the good which is done or received, rather than giving it to men; that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that God should be regarded as the Being to whom all glory is due. What then is that respect they speak of? What passion, affection, or exercise is it that Arminians call praise, that is different from all these things, which men are worthy of for their virtue, and which God is not worthy of in any degree?

If that necessity which attends God's moral perfections and actions is inconsistent with being worthy of praise, because it is a *necessity* or *coaction* (as plainly implied or inferred from Dr.

¹ i.e., The Arminian concept of Liberty, when applied to God, denies that God is a moral agent, because He cannot choose evil. This likens God to His inanimate creation, which *of necessity* has certain attributes – God, *of necessity*, has certain attributes, or He would not be God. But Arminians claim that *any necessity* defeats Liberty, negates Free Will, and removes virtue. By this reasoning, Edwards says, God has no Liberty, Free Will, or virtue, contrary to Scripture. Therefore the Arminian concept of Free Will is false, *of necessity*. Edwards then continues his mocking attack, disparaging Arminian logic as unbiblical, and self-idolatrous.

² To do both – here it refers to man being able to choose either good or evil, which God cannot do.

Whitby's discourse), then why should we thank God for his goodness, any more than if he were *forced* to be good, or any more than we should 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, or extrinsic necessity? ¹

Arminians suppose that God is necessarily a good and gracious being; they make this the ground of some of their main arguments against many doctrines maintained by Calvinists. They say these doctrines are certainly false, and it is impossible for them to be true, because they are not consistent with the goodness of God. This supposes that it is impossible for God *not* to be good; if it were possible that he could be otherwise, then the impossibility of the truth of these doctrines ceases, according to their own argument.

If virtue in God is not rewardable, in the most proper sense, it is not for lack of merit in his moral perfections and actions, which are sufficient to deserve rewards from his creatures. It is because he is infinitely above all capacity to receive any reward. He is already infinitely and unchangeably happy, and we cannot be profitable to him. But he is still worthy of our supreme benevolence for his virtue. And he would be worthy of our beneficence (which is the fruit and expression of benevolence), if only our goodness could extend to him. If God deserves to be thanked and praised for his goodness, he would, for the same reason, deserve that we should also requite his kindness, if that were possible. What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? This is the natural language of thankfulness: and so far as it lies in us, it is our duty to render back, according to the benefits received. So that we might have an opportunity for so natural an expression of our gratitude to God, as beneficence—notwithstanding his being infinitely above our reach—he has appointed others to be his receivers, and to stand in his stead as the objects of our beneficence; these are especially our indigent brethren. (*Mat. 25.40*)

Section II. The Acts of the Will of the human soul of Jesus Christ were necessarily holy, yet truly virtuous, praise-worthy, rewardable, etc.

I HAVE already considered how Dr. Whitby insists that a freedom not only from coercion, but also necessity, is requisite either to virtue or vice, praise or dispraise, reward or punishment. He also insists on the same freedom as absolutely requisite to a person being subject to laws, precepts, or prohibitions (in the book mentioned, p. 301, 314, 328, 339, 340, 341, 342, 347, 361, 373, 410);² and to promises and threats (p. 298, 301, 305, 311, 339, 340, 363);³ and requisite to a state of trial (p. 297, etc.).⁴

Now, therefore, with an eye to these things, I would inquire into the moral conduct and practices of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he exhibited in his human nature, in his state of humiliation. *First*, I would show that His holy behaviour was *necessary*; or that it was impossible for him to behave himself other than as holy; and that he should be perfectly holy in each individual act of his life. *Secondly*, that his holy behaviour was properly virtuous and worthy of praise; and that he was subject to law, precept, and commands; that he was subject to promises and rewards; and that he was in a state of trial.

¹ Paul felt a *moral compulsion* to proclaim the Gospel, and therefore, he said, it is not worthy of commendation (1Cor 9.16; 2Cor 5.14) Edwards, however, does not address these passages. Even so, see 117.

² Discourse IV, chap. II, sec. IV, *thirdly*.

³ Discourse III, chap. II, sec. IV, (2.) and (3.)

⁴ Discourse IV, chap. I, sec. II and III.

I. It was impossible for the Acts of the will of Christ's human soul, in any instance, degree, or circumstance, to be other than holy, and agreeable to God's nature and Will.

The following things make this evident.

1. God promised so effectually to preserve and uphold him by his Spirit, under all his temptations, that he could not fail to obtain the end for which he came into the world; but he would have failed had he fallen into sin. We have such a promise (Isa. 42.1-4):

“Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; my Elect, in whom my soul delights: I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles: he shall not cry out, nor raise, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street... He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he has established justice in the earth; and the isles shall await his law.”

This promise of God's Spirit being put upon him, and his not crying out and raising his voice, etc. relates to the time of Christ's appearance on earth. This is manifest from the nature of the promise, and also from its application in the New Testament (Matt. 12.18). And the words imply a promise of his being so upheld by God's Spirit, that he would be preserved from sin, particularly from pride and vain-glory; and from being overcome by any temptations that he would be under to regard the glory of this world, the pomp of an earthly prince, or the applause and praise of men; and that he would be so upheld that he would by no means fail to obtain the end of his coming into the world—of bringing forth judgment unto victory, and establishing his kingdom of grace in the earth. And in the following verses, this promise is confirmed, with the greatest imaginable solemnity.

“Thus says the Lord, Who created the heavens, and stretched them out; Who spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it; Who gives breath to the people upon it, and spirit to those who walk on it: I the Lord have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand; and will keep you, and give you as a Covenant to the people, as a Light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and those who sit in darkness from the prison-house. I am JEHOVAH, that is my name,” etc. (Isa. 42.5-8)

Parallel to these promises is another (Isa. 49.7-9) which also apparently refers to the time of Christ's humiliation on earth.

“Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, to him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to the Servant of rulers: ‘Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship; because of the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, and he has chosen you.’ Thus says the Lord: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will preserve you, and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the earth,’” etc.

And in Isa. 50:5-9. we have the Messiah expressing his assurance that God would help him, by so opening his ear, or inclining his heart to God's commandments, that he would not be rebellious, but would persevere and not apostatize or turn away—so that, through God's help, he would be immovable in his obedience under great trials of reproach and suffering; setting his face like a flint, so that he knew he would not be ashamed, or frustrated in his design; and would be finally approved and justified, as having done his work faithfully.

“The Lord has opened my ear; so that I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away: I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed. He is near who justifies me; who will contend with me? Let us stand together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near me. Behold the Lord God will help me: who is he that will condemn me? Indeed, they will all grow old like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

2. The same thing is evident from all the promises which God made to the Messiah, of his future glory, kingdom, and success in his office and character of a Mediator. This glory could not have been obtained if his holiness had failed, and he had been guilty of sin. God's absolute promise makes the things promised *necessary*, and their failing to take place absolutely impossible. In the same way, it makes those things necessary on which the thing promised depends, and without which it cannot take effect. Therefore it appears that it was utterly impossible that Christ's holiness would fail, from such absolute promises as these (Psa. 110.4): "The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, 'You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek,'" and from every other promise in that psalm, contained in each of its verse. And (Psa. 2.7-8): "I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to me, 'You are my Son, this day have I begotten you. Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance,'" etc. (Psa. 45.3-4): "Gird your sword on your thigh, O most mighty, with your glory and your majesty; and in your majesty ride prosperously..." And so too, everything that is said from there to the end of the psalm. See (Isa. 3.13-15;¹ 53.10-12),² and all those promises which God makes to the Messiah, of success, dominion, and glory in the character of a Redeemer (Isa. chap. 49).

3. It was often promised to the church of God of old, for their comfort, that God would give them a righteous, sinless Saviour. (Jer. 23.5-6):

"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will rise up to David a righteous branch; and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely. And this is the name by which he will be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

So too (Jer. 33.15): "I will cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land." (Isa. 9.6-7): "For unto us a child is born; upon the throne of David and of his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and justice, from that time forward, even forever: the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." (Isa. 11.1-5): "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, ...the spirit of knowledge, and the fear of the Lord: ...with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity: ...Righteousness shall be the belt of his loins, and faithfulness the belt of his waist." (Isa. 52.13): "My servant shall deal prudently." (Isa. 53.9): "Because he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth."

If it is impossible that these promises could fail, and if it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one jot or tittle of these promise to pass away, then it was impossible for Christ to commit any sin. Christ himself signified that it was impossible that the things which were spoken concerning him should not be fulfilled. (Luke 24.44): "That all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me." (Matt. 26.53-54): "But how then shall the scripture be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" (Mark 14.49): "But the scriptures must be fulfilled." And so the apostle says (Acts 1.16): "This scripture had to be fulfilled."

¹ More likely Isa 7.13-15 - Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! *Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also?*" ¹⁴ "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. ¹⁵ "Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good."

² ¹⁰ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in *His* hand. ¹¹ He shall see the labor of *His* soul, *and* be satisfied. By *His* knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out *His* soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors. (Isa 53:10-12 NKJ)

4. All the promises, which were made to the church of old, of the Messiah as a future Saviour, from that promise made to our first parents in paradise, to that which was delivered by the prophet Malachi, show that it is impossible that Christ would not have persevered in perfect holiness. The ancient predictions given to God's church, of the Messiah as a Saviour, were of the nature of promises. This is evident by the predictions themselves, and by the manner of delivering them. But they are expressly and very often called promises in the New Testament (as in Luke 1.54, 55, 72, 73; Acts 13.32, 33. Rom. 1.1-3, 15.8; Heb. 6.13, etc.) These promises were often made with great solemnity, and confirmed with an oath. (Gen. 22.16, 17):

"By myself have I sworn, says the Lord, that in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand on the sea-shore: And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." (Compare Luke 1.72-73 and Gal. 3.8, 15, 16.)

The apostle in Heb. 6.17-18, speaking of this promise to Abraham, says,

"Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two IMMUTABLE things, in which it was IMPOSSIBLE for God to lie, we might have strong consolation."

In these words, the necessity of the accomplishment, or the impossibility of the contrary, is fully declared. So God confirmed the promise of the Messiah's great salvation, made to David by an oath. (Psa. 89.3-4): "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn to David my servant; your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations." There is nothing so abundantly set forth in Scripture, that is as sure and irrefragable as this promise and oath to David. (See Psalm. 89.34-36; 2Sam. 23.5; Isa. 55.3; Acts 2.29-30; 13.34) The Scripture expressly speaks of it as utterly impossible that this promise and oath to David, concerning the everlasting dominion of the Messiah, should fail. (Jer. 33.15, 17):

"In those days, and at that time, I will cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up to David... For thus says the Lord, David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel."

(Ver. 20-21, and also in ver. 25-26):

"If you can break my covenant with the day, and my covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then my covenant may also be broken with David my servant, that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne."

This is how abundantly Scripture represents the impossibility that the promises made of old, concerning the great salvation and kingdom of the Messiah, could fail. This implies it was impossible for this Messiah, the second Adam, the promised seed of Abraham and of David, to fall from his integrity as the first Adam did.

5. Consider all the promises that were made to the church of God under the Old Testament, 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; the increase of her light, liberty, holiness, joy, triumph over her enemies, etc. of which so great a part of the Old Testament consists. These promises are so often repeated, so variously exhibited, so frequently introduced with great pomp and solemnity, and so abundantly sealed with typical and symbolical representations—that it implies the Messiah would perfect the work of redemption. And it implies that he would persevere in the work which the Father appointed to him, being conformed to his Father's Will in all things. These promises were often confirmed by an oath (Isa. 54.9; 62.8). And it is represented as utterly impossible for these promises to fail (Isa. 49.14-16; 54.10; 51.4-8; 40.8.) And therefore it was impossible for the Messiah to fail, or to commit sin.

6. It was impossible for the Messiah to fail to persevere in integrity and holiness, as the first Adam did, because this would have been inconsistent with the promises which God made to the blessed Virgin his mother, and to her husband: that he would save his people from their sins; that God would give him the throne of his father David; that he would reign over the

house of Jacob forever; and that there would be no end of his kingdom.¹ These promises were sure, and it was impossible for them to fail. Therefore the Virgin Mary, trusting fully to these promises, acted reasonably, having an immovable foundation of her faith, as Elizabeth observes (Luk. 1.45): “Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

7. The possibility that Christ would sin, and thus fail in the work of our redemption, does not consist with the eternal purpose and decree of God, revealed in the Scriptures, that he would provide salvation for fallen man in and by Jesus Christ; and that salvation would be offered to sinners through the preaching of the gospel. This much is implied in many scriptures (such as 1Cor. 2.7; Eph. 1. 4-5; 3.9-11; 1Pet. 1.19-20).² Arminians admit that such an absolute decree as this is intended in many texts: the election of nations and societies, the general election of the Christian church, and the conditional election of particular persons imply this. God could not decree before the foundation of the world, to save all who would believe in and obey Christ, unless he had absolutely decreed that salvation would be provided and effectually wrought by Christ. And since (as the Arminians themselves strenuously maintain) a decree of God infers *necessity*, it became necessary that Christ would persevere and actually work out salvation for us, and that he would not fail by committing sin.

8. The possibility that Christ’s holiness would fail is inconsistent with what God promised to his Son before all ages. Salvation would be offered to men, through Christ, and bestowed on all his faithful followers—this is at least implied in that certain and infallible promise which is spoken of by the apostle (Tit. 1.2): “In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began.” This does not seem to be controverted by Arminians.

9. The possibility that Christ would fail to do his Father’s Will is inconsistent with the promise made to the Father by the Son. The Logos was with the Father from the beginning, before he took on human nature, as may be seen in Ps. 40.6-8: “Sacrifices and offering you did not desire; you have opened, (or bored) my ears; burnt-offering and sin-offering you have not required. Then I said, Behold, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; indeed, your law is within my heart.”³ This is an obvious allusion to the covenant which the willing servant, who loved his master’s service, made with his master, to be his servant forever on the day in which he had his ear bored. This covenant was probably inserted in the public records, called the VOLUME OF THE BOOK, by the judges who were called to recognize the transaction (Exod. 21.1). If the *Logos*, who was with the Father before the world, and who made the world, thus engaged in a covenant to do the Will of the Father in his human nature, and the promise was (as it were) recorded, so that it might be made sure, then doubtless it was impossible for it to fail. And so it was impossible for Christ to fail to do the Will of the Father in his human nature.

10. If it was possible for Christ to fail to do the Will of his Father, and thus fail to effectually work out 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. The Messiah, and the redemption which he was to work out by his obedience unto death, was the saving foundation of all who were ever saved. Therefore, when the Old-Testament saints were promised the pardon of their sins, and the favour of God, and salvation was bestowed on them, if it would still have been possible for the Messiah, when he came, to commit sin, then all this was set on a foundation that was not firm and stable, but liable to Evil—it depended on something which, it was possible, might never be. God trusted in what his Son had engaged

¹ Mat. 1.21; Luk. 1.31-33.

² —“before the foundation of the world.”

³ Compare this with the apostle’s interpretation in Heb. 10.5-9.

and promised to do in a future time, and he depended on it so much, that he proceeded to actually save men on its account, as though it had already been done. But if Christ was liable to fail to do his Will, then this trust and dependence of God was leaning on a staff that was weak, and might possibly break. The saints of old trusted on the promises of a future redemption to be wrought and completed by the Messiah, and they built their comfort on it. Abraham saw Christ's day, and rejoiced;¹ and he and the other Patriarchs died in the faith of its promise (Heb. 11.13).² But if this supposition were true, their faith, their comfort, and their salvation, were built on a fallible foundation; Christ was not a "tried stone" to them, a "sure foundation" (Isa. 28.16). David rested entirely on the covenant of God with him concerning the future glorious dominion and salvation of the Messiah; he said it was all his salvation, and all his desire; and he comforts himself that this covenant was an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure (2Sam. 23.5). But if Christ's virtue might fail, then David was mistaken: his great comfort was not built so sure as he thought it was, being founded entirely on the determinations of the Free Will of Christ's human soul—which was not subject to any necessity, and might be determined one way or the other. Also, the dependence of those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and wailed for the consolation of Israel (Luke 2.25-26, 37-38),³ and the confidence of the disciples of Jesus who forsook all and followed him, that they might enjoy the benefits of his future kingdom (Mat. 19.27), were all built on a sandy foundation.

11. The man Christ Jesus, before he had finished his course of obedience, and while in the midst of temptations and trials, was abundant in positively predicting his own future glory in his kingdom, and the enlargement of his church, the salvation of the Gentiles through him, etc. and in promises of the blessings he would bestow on his true disciples in his future kingdom; he required the full dependence of his disciples on these promises (John 14). 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 abounding in such peremptory promises of great things which depended on a mere contingency—the determinations of his Free Will, consisting in a freedom *ad utrumque*,⁴ toward either sin or holiness, standing indifferently and incidentally, in thousands of future instances, to go either one way or the other.

Thus it is evident that it was impossible for the Acts of the will of the human soul of Christ to be other than holy, and conformed to the Will of the Father. In other words, they were *necessarily* conformed this way.

I have been longer in the proof of this matter, because it is denied by some of the greatest Arminians—by Episcopius⁵ in particular. I look at this as a point that clearly and absolutely determines the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, concerning the necessity of such a freedom of Will as Arminians insist on, for moral agency, virtue, command or prohibition, promise or threatening, reward or punishment, praise or dispraise, merit or demerit. Therefore I now proceed.

¹ John 8.56.

² NKJ Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

³ NKJ Luk 2:25-26 "And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man *was* just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

NKJ Luk 2:37-38 "and this woman *was* a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. ³⁸ And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

⁴ Lit. "to both;" ready for either alternative.

⁵ *Simon Episcopius* (1583-1643) – Dutch theologian and Remonstrant who played a significant role at the Synod of Dort in 1618. His name is the Latinized form of his Dutch name, Simon Bischoep.

II. Whether CHRIST, in his holy behaviour on earth, was a moral agent, subject to commands, promises, etc.

Dr. Whitby often speaks of what he calls a freedom *ad utrumlibet*,¹ *without necessity*, as requisite to law and commands. He speaks of necessity as entirely inconsistent with injunctions and prohibitions. Yet we read of Christ being subject to His Father's commands (John 10.18; 15.10). Christ tells us that everything he said or did, complied with the commandments he received from the Father (John 12.49-50; 14.31). We often read of Christ's obedience to his Father's commands (Rom. 5.19; Phil. 2.7-8; Heb. 5.8).

Dr. Whitby asserts that promises offered as motives for a person to do their duty, or being moved and induced by promises, are utterly inconsistent with a state in which persons have a liberty *ad utrumlibet*; instead they are necessarily determined (see particularly p. 298 and 311.) But the thing which this writer asserts is demonstrably false, if the Christian religion is true. If there is any truth in Christianity or in the Holy Scriptures, the man Christ Jesus had his Will infallibly and unalterably *determined* to do good, and that alone; yet he had promises of glorious rewards made to him on condition of his persevering in and perfecting the work which God had appointed him (Isa. 53.10-12; Psalms 2.7-8; Psalm 110; Isaiah 49.7-9). In Luke 22.28-29, Christ says to his disciples, "you have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint to you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed to me." The word most properly signifies to appoint by covenant, or promise. The plain meaning of Christ's words is this: "Because you have partaken of my temptations and trials, and have been steadfast, and have overcome, I promise to make you partakers of my reward, and to give you a kingdom—just as the Father has promised me a kingdom for continuing steadfast and overcoming in those trials." And these words are well-explained by those in Rev. 3.21, "To him that overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and have sat down with my Father on his throne." Christ not only had promises of glorious success and rewards made according to his obedience and sufferings, but the Scriptures plainly present him as using these promises as motives and inducements to obey and to suffer—particularly that promise of a kingdom which the Father had appointed to him, sitting with the Father on his throne, as in (Heb. 12.1-2):

"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God."

How strange would it be to hear any Christian assert that the holy and excellent temper and behaviour of Jesus Christ, and that obedience which he performed under such great trials, were not virtuous or praiseworthy because his Will was not free *ad utrumque*—to either holiness or sin—but was unalterably determined to one. And that on this account, there is no virtue at all in all Christ's humility, meekness, patience, charity, forgiveness of enemies, contempt of the world, heavenly-mindedness, submission to the Will of God, perfect obedience to his commands unto death, even death on the cross; his great compassion to the afflicted; his unparalleled love for mankind; his faithfulness to God and man under such great trials; praying for his enemies even when they were nailing him to the cross—that virtue, when applied to these things, is said to be but an empty name. There was no merit in any of these things—that is, Christ would be worthy of nothing at all on account of them. He would be worthy of no reward, no praise, no honour or respect from God or man, because his will was not indifferent, nor free either to do these things, or do the contrary. Instead, he was under such a strong inclination or bias to do the things that were excellent, that it made it impossible for him to choose the contrary. On this account, to use Dr. Whitby's words, it would be palpably unreasonable that his human nature should be rewarded for any of these things.

¹ Open-ended freedom.

According to this doctrine, that creature who is evidently set forth in Scripture as the first-born of every creature, as having preeminence in all things,¹ and 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.

Scripture represents that Christ took our nature on himself, and dwelt with us in this world in a suffering state, not only to satisfy for our sins, but so that—being in our nature and circumstances, and under our trials—he might be our most fitting and proper example. He came to be our leader and captain in the exercise of glorious and victorious virtue; he is a visible instance of the glorious end and reward of it. It was so that we might see in Him the beauty, amiableness, true honour and glory, and exceeding benefit of that virtue which is proper for us human beings to practice. And it was so that we might thereby learn and be animated to seek a similar glory and honour, and to obtain a similar glorious reward (see Heb. 2.9-14 with 5.8-9 and 12.1-3; John 15.10; Rom. 8.17; 2Tim. 2.11-12; 1Pet. 2.19-21 and 4.1-3). But if there was nothing of any virtue or merit, if there was no worthiness of any reward, glory, praise, or commendation in all that he did, because it was all *necessary* and he could not help it—then how is there anything proper to animate and incite us, as free creatures, by patient continuance in well-doing, to seek honour, glory, and virtue?

God speaks of himself as peculiarly well-pleased with the righteousness of this distinguished servant. (Isa. 42.21): “The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake.” The sacrifices of old are spoken of as a sweet savor to God, but the obedience of Christ as far more acceptable than they.” (Psa. 40.6-8): “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire: my ear you have opened [as your servant who is performing willing obedience;] burnt-offering and sin-offering have you not required. Then I said, Behold, I come [as a servant that cheerfully answers the calls of his master]: I delight to do your will, O my God, and your law is within my heart.” (Matt. 17.5): “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” And Christ tells us expressly that the Father loves Him for that wonderful instance of his obedience—voluntarily yielding himself to death, in compliance with the Father’s command. (John 10.17-18): “Therefore my Father loves me because I lay down my life: No man takes it from me; but I lay it down of myself... This commandment I received from my Father.”

But if there was no merit in Christ’s obedience unto death, if it was not worthy of praise, and worthy of the most glorious rewards, then the heavenly hosts were exceedingly mistaken by the account that is given of them in (Rev. 5.8-12):

“The four beasts, and the twenty-four elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of incense...; and they sang a new song, saying, ‘You are worthy to take the book, and to open its seals; for you were slain...’ And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying 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 which he was to receive, as the reward of his obedience to the Father’s commandments. (John 12.49-50):

“I have not spoken of myself; but the Father who sent me gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak: and I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatever I speak therefore, even as the Father said to me, so I speak.”

God promises to give him a portion with the great, etc. for being his righteous servant, for his glorious virtue under such great trials and afflictions. (Isa. 53.11-12):

¹ Col 1.8.

“He shall see the labor of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant shall justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he has poured out his soul unto death.”

The Scriptures present God as rewarding him far above all his other servants. (Phil. 2.7-9):

“He took the form of a bondservant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; therefore God also has Highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name.”

(Psa. 45.7): “You love righteousness, and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows.”

There is no room to pretend that the glorious benefits bestowed in consequence of Christ’s obedience, are not properly of the nature of a reward. What is a reward (in the most proper sense) if it is not a benefit that is bestowed in consequence of something morally excellent in quality or behaviour? It is given in testimony of well-blessedness in that moral excellence and out of respect and favour on that account. If we consider the nature of a reward most strictly, and add to the things contained in this description, proper merit or worthiness, and bestowing a benefit in consequence of a promise—then it will still be found that nothing belongs to a reward except what the Scripture most expressly ascribes to the glory bestowed on Christ after his sufferings. As it appears from what has already been observed, there was a glorious benefit bestowed in consequence of something morally excellent, called *Righteousness and Obedience*. There was great favour and love in the bestower, who was well-pleased with this righteousness and obedience. There was proper merit of, or worthiness of, the benefit in the obedience. It was bestowed in fulfilment of promises that were made related to that obedience; and it was therefore bestowed because he performed that obedience.

I may add to all these things that Jesus Christ, while here in the flesh, was manifestly in a state of trial. The last Adam, as Christ is called (1Cor. 15.45; Rom. 5.14), taking on human nature, and so taking on the form of a servant, and being under the law to stand and act for us, was put into a state of trial, just as the first Adam was. Dr. Whitby mentions these three things as evidences of persons being in a state of trial (*Discourse on the five Points*, p. 298, 299)— (1) their afflictions being spoken of as their trials or temptations, (2) being the subjects of promises, and (3) being exposed to Satan’s temptations. It is apparent that Christ was subject to each of these. I have spoken already concerning 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 (Luke 22.28): “You are those who have continued with me in my temptations,” or trials. (Heb. 2.18): “Because he himself has suffered, being tempted [or tried], he is able to comfort those who are being tempted.” And (Heb. 4.15): “We do not have a high-priest who cannot sympathize with our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” As to his being tempted by Satan, none will dispute that ([Mat 4.1](#)).

Section III. Those given up by God to sin, and fallen man in general, proves that moral Necessity and Inability are consistent with Blameworthiness.

DR. WHITBY asserts that freedom, not only from coercion but also from Necessity, is essential to anything deserving the name of sin; and essential for an action to be culpable. He uses these words (*Discourse on Five Points*, 3rd edition, p. 348)¹:

If they are thus necessitated, then neither their sins of omission or commission could deserve that name: it is essential to the nature of sin, according to St. Austin’s definition,¹ that it is an action *a*

¹ [Discourse IV, chap. III, sec.IV.](#)

*duo liberum est abstinere.*² Three things seem plainly necessary to make an action or omission culpable; 1. That it be in our power to perform or forbear it: for as Origen and all the fathers say, no man is blameworthy for not doing what he could not do. And elsewhere the Doctor insists that when anyone does evil out of Necessity, what they do is no vice; they are guilty of no fault; they are worthy of no blame, dispraise, or dishonour, but are unblameable.

If these things are true, in Dr. Whitby's sense of Necessity, they prove that all such persons are blameless who are given up by God to sin, in what they commit after they are given up. If the Scripture rightly informs us, then it is certain that there is such a thing as men being judicially given up to sin; this is often mentioned, as in (Psa. 81.12): "So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels." (Acts 7.42): "Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven." (Rom. 1.24): "Therefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves." (Rom 1.26): "For this reason God gave them up to vile affections." (Rom 1.28): "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 fitting."

It is not necessary to particularly inquire what it means that God gives men up to their own hearts' lusts. It is sufficient to observe that it certainly meant God so orders or disposes things in some respect, either by doing or forbearing to do something, that the consequence will be that men continue in their sins. As much as men are given up to sin, so much is the *consequence* of being given up to it, whether less or more. If God does not order things by his action or permission so that sin will be the consequence, then the event proves that they are not given up to that consequence. If good is the consequence, instead of evil, then God's mercy is to be acknowledged in that good; this mercy must be contrary to God's judgment in giving someone up to evil. And if the event proves that they are given up to evil as the consequence, then the persons who are the subjects of this *judgment*, must be the subjects of such an *event*, and therefore the event is *necessary*.³

If not only coaction, but also all Necessity, makes men blameless, then Judas was blameless after Christ had given him over, and had already declared Judas' certain damnation, and that he would surely betray him.⁴ Based on this supposition, Judas was guilty of no sin in betraying his Master, even though his doing so is spoken of by Christ as the most aggravated sin, more heinous than the sin of Pilate in crucifying him.⁵ And the Jews in Egypt in Jeremiah's time would not be guilty of sin in not worshiping the true God, after God had sworn by his great name that his name should no longer be named in the mouth of any man of Judah, in all the land of Egypt (Jer. 44.26).

Dr. Whitby (Discourse on five Points, p. 302, 303)⁶ denies that men in this world are ever so given up by God to sin, that their Wills should be necessarily determined to evil; though he admits that, having a strong bent and powerful inclination toward what is evil, it may become exceedingly difficult for men to do good. But if we were to allow the case to be just as he represents, then the judgment of giving up to sin would no better agree with his notions of that liberty which is essential to praise or blame, than if we were to suppose it rendered avoiding sin

¹ St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), also called "Austin."

² From which the two are free to abstain.

³ That is, if a man is given up to sin, and an event flows from his being given up to sin, then that event is *necessary* – it is an unavoidable consequence of that sin to which he was given up. Edwards is proving that being given over to sin imposes a necessity on sinful action; if sin is necessary, then according to this Arminian proposition, the sinner would not be blameable. He will now go on to show the logical effect of this with Judas.

⁴ John 13.26; 17.12.

⁵ Mat 26.24; John 19.11.

⁶ Discourse III, chap. II, sec. 11.

impossible. For if the impossibility of avoiding sin wholly excuses a man, then for the same reason, the difficulty of avoiding it would excuse him in part, in proportion to the degree of the difficulty. If the influence of *moral* impossibility or inability is the same as that of *natural* inability—excusing persons in not *doing*, or in not *avoiding* anything (which is assumed)—then undoubtedly *moral difficulty* does have the same influence to excuse a neglect as *natural difficulty* would have. But all admit that *natural impossibility* wholly excuses us, and also that *natural difficulty* excuses in part, and makes the act or omission less blameable in proportion to the difficulty. All natural difficulty, according to the plainest dictates of the light of nature, excuses us to some degree, so that the neglect is not as blameable as it would have been if there had been *no* difficulty in the case. And so the greater the difficulty is, the more excusable the sin, in proportion to the increase of the difficulty. And just as natural impossibility wholly excuses, and excludes all blame, so the nearer the difficulty approaches impossibility, the nearer a person is to being blamelessness.

And if the case of *moral* impossibility or Necessity, is the same as *natural* Necessity or coercion—as to its influence to excuse a neglect—then for the same reason, the case of *natural* difficulty does not differ from *moral* difficulty that arises from a strong bias or bent toward evil, in its influence to excuse a neglect. Dr. Whitby admits this is the case of those who are given up to their own hearts' lusts—so that the fault of such persons must be lessened in proportion to the difficulty, and in proportion to the approach to impossibility. If ten degrees of moral difficulty make the action quite impossible, and thus wholly excuse a neglect, then if there are nine degrees of difficulty, the person is in great part excused. And nine degrees in ten is less blameworthy than if there had been no difficulty at all—and so he has but one degree of blameworthiness.¹ Based on Arminian principles, the reason for this is plain: as difficulty is increased by an antecedent bent and bias on the Will, liberty of indifference and self-determination in the Will is diminished. And it is diminished by however much hindrance or impediment there is in the way of the will acting freely, and by mere self-determination. If ten degrees of such hindrance take away all such liberty, then nine degrees, take away nine parts in ten, and leave but one degree of liberty. Therefore there is but one degree of blameworthiness in the neglect; the man is no further blameable in what he does, or neglects to do, than he has liberty in that affair—for (they say) blame or praise arises wholly from a good use, or abuse, of liberty.

From all of this it follows that a strong bent and bias one way, and difficulty in going the other way, never causes a person to be in any way more exposed to sin, or to anything blameable. This is because, as the difficulty is increased, so much less is required and expected. Though in one respect, exposure to sin is increased—by an increase in exposure to evil acts or omissions, it is diminished in another respect, to balance it—because the sinfulness or blameworthiness of the action or omission is diminished in the same proportion. So on the whole, the affair, as to exposure to guilt or blame, is left just as it was.

To illustrate this, let us imagine that a scale in a balance is intelligent, and also a free agent. It is indued with a self-moving power by which it may act and produce effects to a certain degree, e.g. to move itself up or down with a force equal to a weight of ten pounds. And imagine that it might therefore be required, in ordinary circumstances, to move itself down with that amount of force—for which it has power and full liberty—and therefore it would be blameworthy if it failed to do it. But then let us imagine that a weight of ten pounds is put in the opposite scale, which entirely counterbalances its own self-moving power, thus rendering it impossible for it to move down at all, and wholly excusing it from any such motion. But if we suppose there is only nine pounds in the opposite scale, this does not render its motion impossible, but only more difficult—it can now only move down with the force of *one* pound. However, this is all

¹ Because the other nine degrees have been excused.

that is required of the scale under these circumstances. It is wholly excused from nine tenths of its motion. But if the scale, under these circumstances, neglects to move, and instead remains at rest, all that it will be blamed for will be its neglect of that one tenth part of its motion. It had as much liberty and advantage to do this much, as it has for the greater motion in usual circumstances, which in such a case would have been required of it. So this new difficulty does not at all increase its exposure to anything that is blameworthy.

Thus the very supposition that difficulty is in the way of a man's duty, or his proclivity to sin, through being given up to hardness of heart (or indeed by any other means) is an inconsistency under Dr. Whitby's notions of liberty, virtue and vice, blame and praise. Avoiding sin and blame, and doing what is virtuous and praiseworthy, must always be equally easy.

Dr. Whitby's notions of liberty, obligation, virtue, sin, etc. led him into another great inconsistency. He greatly insists that *necessity* is inconsistent with the nature of sin or fault. He says, in the aforementioned treatise (p. 14),¹ "Who can blame a person for doing what he could not help?" And (p. 15),² "It being sensibly unjust to punish any man for doing what it was never in his power to avoid." And (p. 341),³ to confirm his opinion he quotes one of the fathers, saying, "Why does God command, if man does not have free will and power to obey?" And again, on the same and next pages, "Who will not cry out that it is folly to command someone who does not have liberty to do what is commanded; and is it not unjust to condemn someone who does not have it in his power to do what is required?" And (p. 373)⁴ he cites another, saying, "A law is given to him that can turn to both parts" i.e. either to obey or transgress it; "but no Law can lie against someone who is bound by nature."

Yet the same Dr. Whitby asserts that fallen man is not able to perform perfect obedience. On p. 165,⁵ he has these words: "The nature of Adam had power to continue innocent, and without sin; whereas, it is certain our nature never did." But if we do not have power to continue innocent and without sin, then sin is not inconsistent with Necessity, and we may be sinful in what we do not have the power to avoid; and those things which he asserts elsewhere cannot be true, namely, "That if we are required, then neither sins of omission nor commission would deserve that name." (p. 348).⁶ If we do not have it in our power to be innocent, then we do not have it in our power to be blameless; and if this is so, then we are under a Necessity to be blameworthy. How is this consistent with what he so often asserts, that Necessity is inconsistent with blame or praise? If we do not have it in our power to perform perfect obedience to all the commands of God, then we are under a Necessity to break some commands, in some degree, for we have no power to perform what is commanded. And if this is so, then why does he decry the unreasonableness and folly of commanding something that is beyond what men have the power to do?

Arminians in general are inconsistent with themselves in what they say about the Inability of fallen man in this respect. They strenuously maintain that it would be unjust for God to require anything of us that is beyond our present power and ability to perform. And they also hold that we are now unable to perform perfect obedience, and that Christ died to satisfy the imperfections of our obedience; he has made a way, so that our imperfect obedience might be accepted instead of perfect obedience—in this they seem to unwarily run themselves into the grossest inconsistency. For (as I observed elsewhere) they hold that God, in mercy to mankind,

¹ Discourse I, chap. I, sec. 3. *Secondly* (ii).

² *Ibid.* (iii).

³ Discourse IV, chap. II, sec. 4. *Thirdly*.

⁴ Discourse IV, chap. V, sec. 2.6 (*Thirdly*).

⁵ Discourse II, chap. VI, sec. 7. *Secondly*. (2).

⁶ Discourse IV, chap. III, sec. 4.

abolished that rigorous constitution or law that they were under originally; and in its place, he introduced a milder constitution, and put us under a new law, which requires no more than imperfect sincere obedience, in order to accommodate our poor, infirm, and impotent circumstances since the fall. Now how can these things be made consistent? I would ask, what laws are breached by these imperfections of our obedience? If they breach no law that we were ever under, then they are not sins. And if they are not sins, then what need was there for Christ dying to satisfy them? But if they are sins, and they breach some law, then what law is it? They cannot breach their new law, for that requires only imperfect obedience, or obedience with imperfections. Therefore, to have obedience attended by imperfections, is no breach of that law, for such imperfect obedience is all that is required. And they cannot breach their old law for, they say, it is entirely abolished; and we were never under it.

They say it would not be just for God to require perfect obedience from us, because it would not be just to require more than we can perform, or to punish us for failing to perform it. Therefore, by their own scheme, the imperfections of our obedience do not deserve to be punished. Therefore what need is there for Christ dying, to satisfy them? What need is there for his suffering, to satisfy what is not a fault, and in its own nature deserves no suffering? What need is there for Christ dying to purchase acceptance of our imperfect obedience when, according to their scheme, it would be unjust in itself to require any obedience other than imperfect obedience? What need is there for Christ dying to make way for God's acceptance of such obedience, if it would be unjust for him *not* to accept it? Is there any need for Christ dying to prevail with God *not* to do unrighteously? If it is said that Christ died to satisfy that *old law* for us, that so we might not remain under it, but that there might be a place for us under a milder law. Still I would inquire, what need is there for Christ dying, so that we might not be under a law which (by their principles) it would be unjust for us to be under anyway, whether Christ died or not, because in our present state we are not able to keep it?

So the Arminians are inconsistent with themselves, not only in what they say about the need for Christ's satisfaction to atone for those imperfections (which we cannot avoid), but also in what they say about the grace of God, which is granted to enable men to perform the sincere obedience of the new law. I grant indeed (says Dr. Stebbing), that because of original sin, we are utterly disabled from performing the condition, without new grace from God. But I say then, that God gives such new grace to all of us, by which performing the condition is made truly possible—and on this ground he may and does most righteously require it. If Dr. Stebbing intends to speak properly, then by *grace* he must mean that assistance which comes by grace, or from free favour and kindness. Yet in the same place he speaks of it as unreasonable, unjust, and cruel for God to require, as the condition of our pardon, what is made impossible by original sin. If this were so, then what grace is there in giving assistance and ability to perform the condition of that pardon? Or why is it called *grace*, if it is an absolute *debt* which God is bound to bestow, and which it would be unjust and cruel for him to withhold, seeing that he requires something of us, as the condition of our pardon, which we cannot perform without that grace?

Section IV. God's Command and man's Obligation to Obedience, are consistent with man's moral Inability to obey.

Because Arminian writers insist so much that necessity is inconsistent with law or command, and particularly, that it is absurd to suppose that God, by his command, would require something of men which they are unable to do (not allowing for any difference between natural and moral Inability in this case), I will now consider this matter in particular. For greater clearness, I would distinctly lay down the following things.

I. The Will itself, and not only those actions which are the *effects* of the will, is the proper OBJECT of any Precept or Command. That is, a given state or the acts of men's Wills, in many cases, are properly required by *Commands*—they are not only those alterations in the state of their bodies or minds which are the consequences of *volition*. This is most obvious, for only the soul is properly and directly the SUBJECT of Precepts or Commands; only the soul is capable of receiving or perceiving Commands. The motions or state of the *body* are matters of Command, only as they are subject to the *soul*, and are connected with its acts. But now, the soul has no other faculty by which it can, in the most direct and proper sense, consent to, yield to, or comply with any Command, except the faculty of the Will. And it is only by this faculty that the soul can directly disobey, or refuse compliance. For the very notions of consenting, yielding, accepting, complying, refusing, rejecting, etc.—according to the meaning of the terms— are nothing other than acts of the will. Obedience, in its primary nature, is the submission and yielding of the Will of one person, to the will of another. Disobedience is the Will of the commanded *not* consenting to, and *not* complying with, the manifested Will of the commander. Other acts that are not acts of the Will, such as certain motions of the body and alterations in the soul, are only indirectly acts of Obedience or Disobedience, and only as they are connected with the state or the actions of the Will, according to an established law of nature. So it is obvious that the Will itself, and not just the effects of the Will, may be required by God's Command. The presence of a *good Will* is the most proper, direct, and immediate SUBJECT of his Command. If a good Will cannot be prescribed or required by Command or Precept, then nothing else can; for other things can be required only as they depend on, and are the fruits of, a good Will.

Corollary 1. If there are several acts of the Will, or a series of acts, one following another, and one is the effect of another, then the first and determining act is the proper SUBJECT of a Command, and not only the consequent acts which are dependent on it. Indeed, this is more especially that to which a Command or Precept has a proper regard, because it is this act that determines the whole affair. Obedience or Disobedience lies in this act, in a unique way, because the consequent acts are all governed and determined by it. This *governing act* must be the proper OBJECT of a Precept, or none can be the proper object.

Corollary 2. It also follows from what has been observed, that if there is any act or exertion of the soul prior to all free acts of choice in the case—an act which directs and determines what the acts of the Will shall be—then that act of the soul cannot properly be subject to any Command or Precept in any respect whatever, either directly or indirectly, immediately or remotely. Such acts cannot be directly subject to Commands because (by the supposition) they are not acts of the Will, because they occur prior to all other acts of the Will, and they determine and give rise to all its other acts. Therefore, not being acts of the Will, they contain no consent to, or compliance with, any Command. Nor can they be subject to a Command or Precept, indirectly or remotely; for they are not even so much as the sects or consequences of the Will, being *prior* to all its acts. So if there is any Obedience in that original¹ act of the soul, that determines all volitions, then it is an act of Obedience in which the Will has no concern at all—because it precedes every act of Will. Therefore, if the soul either obeys or disobeys in this primary act, then it is wholly *involuntarily*; there is no willing Obedience or rebellion, no compliance or opposition of the Will in the affair. And so, what sort of Obedience or rebellion would this be?

Thus the Arminian notion of the freedom of the will—consisting in the soul determining its own acts of Will—is utterly inconsistent with moral agency, and with men being the subjects of moral government (rather than being essential to them). For if the soul determines all its acts of Will, then it is subject to no Command or moral government (as has been observed). For, by

¹ Not only the very first act, but the *originating* act, in a causative, initiating, or influential sense.

this supposition, its original determining act is not an act of Will or choice, because it occurs prior to every act of Will. And the *soul* cannot be the subject of Command in the act of the Will itself, for it depends on a foregoing determining act, and is itself determined by it—it is *necessary*, because it is the necessary consequence and effect of that prior determining act, which is not voluntary. Nor can the *man* be the subject of Command or government in his external actions, because his actions are all *necessary*, being the necessary effects of the acts of the Will themselves. So that men, according to this scheme, are subjects of God's Command or moral government in *nothing at all*; all their moral agency is entirely excluded, leaving no room for virtue or vice.

Thus, it is the Arminian scheme, and not the Calvinist scheme, which is utterly inconsistent with moral government, and with all use of laws, precepts, prohibitions, promises, or threatenings. Nor is there any way whatever to make their principles consistent with these things. For, if it is said that there is no prior determining act of the *soul* that precedes the acts of the *Will*, but that volitions are events that come to pass by pure ACCIDENT, and without any determining cause, then this is palpably inconsistent with all use of laws and precepts. For nothing is more plain than that laws can be of no use to direct and regulate a complete accident. Yet, the supposition that it is pure accident, means volitions are in no case regulated by anything preceding them; they just happen, this way or that, completely by chance, without any cause or rule.

The perfect uselessness of laws and precepts also follows from the Arminian notion of *indifference*,¹ as being essential to that sort of liberty which is requisite to virtue or vice. For the end of laws is to bind us to one side; and the end of Commands is to turn our Will one way rather than another. Therefore laws and commands are of no use, unless they turn or bias the Will toward that way. But if liberty consists in indifference, then biasing the Will one way only, destroys liberty; as it puts the Will out of equilibrium. So that the will, having a bias, through the influence of binding law that is laid on it, is *not* wholly left to itself, to determine itself whichever way it wills, without external influence.

II. I have shown that the *Will* itself, especially in those acts which are original, leading, and determining in any case, is the proper SUBJECT of Precept and Command—and not merely those alterations in the body, etc. which are the *effects* of the Will.

I now proceed, in the second place, to observe that the very opposition or defect of the Will itself, in its original and determining act in the case, to something that is proposed or commanded—i.e. its failure to comply—implies a moral *inability* to do that thing. In other words, whenever a Command requires a certain state or act of the Will, and the person commanded, notwithstanding the Command and circumstances under which it is exhibited to him, still finds that his will is opposite, or lacking in what belongs to its state or acts (and which is original and determining in the affair), then that man is morally *unable* to obey that Command.

This is obvious from what was observed in [Part I, sec. IV](#), concerning the nature of *moral* Inability, as distinguished from *natural* Inability. There it was observed that a man may then be said to be morally unable to do something, when he is under the influence or prevalence of a contrary inclination, or when he lacks inclination under such circumstances and views. It is also evident, from what has been proved before, that the Will is always, and in every individual act, necessarily determined by the strongest motive. And so it is always unable to go against the motive which, all things considered, now has the greatest strength and advantage to move the Will. But not to further insist on these things, the truth of the position that is now laid down—that when the Will is opposite to, or fails to comply with something, in its original

¹ *Indifference*: unbiased; without prior inclination or tendency one way or another. See page 17.

determination or act, it is not *able* to comply—is made apparent by considering these two things:

1. The Will, at the time of that different or opposite leading act or inclination, when actually under its influence, is not able to exert itself to the contrary; it is not able to make an alteration in order to comply. The inclination is unable to change itself; and that is for this plain reason: that *it is unable to incline to change itself*. Present choice cannot at present choose to be otherwise—for that would be to choose something at present which is different from what is chosen at present. If the will, all things now considered, inclines or chooses to go *that* way, then it cannot choose, all things now considered, to go the *other* way. And so it cannot choose to be *made* to go the other way either. To suppose that the mind is now sincerely inclined to change itself to a different inclination, is to suppose that the mind is now truly inclined otherwise than as it is now inclined. The Will may oppose some *future* remote act that it is exposed to, but not its own *present* act.

2. It is impossible for the Will to comply with the thing commanded, with respect to its leading act, by any act of its own, at the time of that different or opposite leading and original act—or after it has actually come under the influence of that determining choice or inclination. In the same way, it is impossible for it to be determined to comply by any *foregoing* act—for, by the very supposition, there is *no* foregoing act; the opposite or non-complying act is that act which is *original* and *determining* in the case. Therefore it must be, that if this first determining act is found to be non-compliant when the command is proposed to it, then the mind is *morally unable* to obey. For to suppose that the Will was able to obey, is to suppose that it was able to determine and cause its first determining act to be other than as it was. It is to suppose that the Will has the power to better govern and regulate its first governing and regulating act—which is *absurd*. For it is to suppose that there is a prior act of the Will, that determines its first determining act; i.e., that there is an act *prior* to the first act, which leads and governs the original and governing act of all; which is a *contradiction*.

Here, it might be said that, although the mind has no ability to *will* contrary to what it *wills*, for the reasons just given, yet the mind is still able, for the present, to *forbear* proceeding to action, and to take time for deliberation—which may provide an occasion to change the inclination. I answer,

(1.) In this objection, what was observed before seems to be forgotten—that determining to take the matter into consideration, is itself an act of the Will. If this is the entire act in which the mind exercises its ability and freedom, then this, by the supposition, must be all that can be commanded or required of it by precept. And if this act is the commanding act, then all that has been observed concerning the commanding act of the Will remains true: that the very lack of compliance, is a moral Inability to exert it, etc.

(2.) We are speaking about the first and leading act of the will about the affair. If the first and leading act is determining to deliberate—or contrariwise, the first act is to proceed immediately *without* deliberating—or whether it is or not, if there is another act *before* it, which determines it—or whatever the original and leading act may be—*still*, the foregoing proof stands good, that non-compliance with the leading act implies moral Inability to comply.

It might be objected that these things make all moral Inability equal; and they suppose that men are morally unable to will other than as they *actually* will, in all cases, and equally so in every instance. In answer to this objection, I desire that two things may be observed.

First, if *equally unable* means *really unable*, then, so far as the Inability is merely *moral*, it is true: the will, in every instance, acts by moral necessity, and it is morally unable to act otherwise, and this is as truly and properly so in one case as it is in another. As I humbly conceive, this has been perfectly and abundantly demonstrated by what has been said in the

preceding part of this essay. Yet, in some respect, the Inability may be said to be greater in some instances than in others. Though the man may be truly unable (if *moral* inability can truly be called Inability), yet he may be less able to do some things than others—as it is in things which men are *naturally* unable to do. A person, whose strength is sufficient to lift no more than one hundred pounds, is as truly and really unable to lift one hundred and one pounds, as he is unable to lift ten thousand pounds. Yet he is less able to lift the latter weight than the former; and so, according to the common use of speech, he has a greater Inability to do it. So it is in *moral* Inability. A man is truly morally unable to choose contrary to his present inclination, which prevails in the least degree. Or he is truly morally unable to choose contrary to that motive which, all things considered, has the strength and the advantage to now move the Will—that motive which, in the least degree, is superior to all other motives in view. Still, he is *less able* to resist a very strong habit, and a violent and deeply rooted inclination, or a motive that vastly exceeds all others in strength. Again, the Inability may, in some respects, be called greater in some *instances* than in others, just as it may be more general, and extend to all acts of that *kind*. Men may also be said to be unable in a different sense, and to be further from a moral ability, who have that moral Inability which is *general and habitual*, than those who have only that Inability which is *occasional and particular*. It is this way in cases of *natural* inability: someone that is born blind may be said to be unable to see to a different extent than someone else; he is further from being able to see, than someone whose sight is hindered by a transient cloud or mist.

And besides what was observed in the first part of this discourse, concerning the Inability which attends a strong and settled habit, it should be remembered that a *fixed habit* is attended with a specific moral inability, by which it is distinguished from *occasional volition*—namely, any endeavours to avoid future volitions of the kind which agree with such a habit, will much more frequently and commonly prove vain and insufficient. For though it is impossible for there to be any sincere endeavours against a *present* choice, yet there may be sincere endeavours against volitions of that kind, when they are viewed at a distance. A person may desire and use means to prevent future exercises of a certain inclination; and in order to attain that, he may wish that the habit might be removed; but his desires and endeavours may be ineffectual. The man may be said, in some sense, to be unable. Indeed, even as the word *unable* is a relative term, and relates to ineffectual endeavours, yet this is not with regard to present endeavours, but remote endeavours.

Secondly, It must be borne in mind, according to what was observed before, that indeed no Inability which is merely *moral*, is properly called an Inability. Strictly speaking, a man may be said to have something in his *power*, if he has it at his *election*; and he cannot be said to be *unable* to do something when he *can* do it, if he now *pleases* to do it, or whenever he has a proper, direct, and immediate *desire* for it. As to those desires and endeavours that may oppose the exercises of a strong habit—where men may be said to be “unable” to avoid those exercises—they are *remote* desires and endeavours in two respects.

First, as to TIME: they are never against present volitions, but only against volitions of such a kind, when they are viewed at a distance.

Secondly, as to their NATURE: these opposing desires are not directly and properly against the habit and inclination itself, or against the volitions in which the habit is exercised; for these, considered in themselves, are agreeable. Rather, they are against something else that attends them, or is a consequence of them; the opposition of the mind is leveled entirely against this other thing. The volitions themselves are not at all opposed to them directly, for their own sake; instead, they are opposed only indirectly and remotely, on account of something outside them.

III. The opposition of the Will itself, or the lack of Will to do something commanded of it, implies a *moral inability* to do that thing. Yet, as already shown, if the presence of a good Will (a good state or act of will) is something properly required by Command,¹ then in some cases, it may be properly required even though it does not exist at present, and may be lacking *after* it is commanded. Therefore, those things may properly be commanded, for which men have a moral Inability.²

A state or act of the Will that does not already exist, may still be required by Command. For if it is only a volition which already exists that may be commanded, there could be no use of precept. Commands in all cases would be perfectly vain and irrelevant. And not only may such a Will be required which is lacking *before* the Command is given, but also such a Will as may possibly be lacking *afterwards*—as when the exhibition of the Command is not effectual to produce or excite obedience. Otherwise, no such thing as disobedience to a proper and rightful Command is possible in any case; and there is no case possible in which there can be a faulty disobedience. Arminians cannot affirm this consistently with their principle: for this makes obedience to just and proper Commands always *necessary*, and disobedience *impossible*. And so the Arminian would defeat his own argument, yielding the very point we are upon, and which he so strenuously denies—that *Law and Command are consistent with necessity*.

If the sort of Inability that would excuse disobedience, is merely what is implied in the opposition or disinclination that remains after the Command is exhibited, then wickedness always carries within it the very thing that excuses it. The more wickedness there is in a man's heart, the stronger is his inclination to evil, and therefore the more he has of moral Inability to do the good required of him. 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, Inability must be something that is *inconsistent* with wickedness; and the more he has of it, the *further* he is from wickedness.

Therefore, on the whole, it is obvious that moral Inability alone (which consists in disinclination) never renders anything improper, as the subject-matter of a Precept or Command; and thus it can never excuse any person in his disobedience, or in his lack of conformity to a command.

Natural Inability, arising from the lack of natural capacity, or from an external hindrance (which alone may properly be called *Inability*), without a doubt wholly excuses, or makes something improper as the subject-matter of a Command. If men are excused from acting or doing any good thing which has been properly commanded, it must be through some defect or obstacle that is not in the Will itself, but is either in the capacity of understanding, or in the body, or in outward circumstances. Here two or three things may be observed:

1. As to spiritual acts, or any good thing in the state or in the imminent acts of the will itself, or of the affections (which are merely certain modes of the exercise of the Will), if persons are justly excused from them, it must be through lack of capacity in the natural faculty of understanding. Thus the same spiritual duties, or holy affections and exercises of the heart, *cannot* be required of men, as they may be required of angels; for the capacity of men's understanding is so much inferior. So men cannot be required to love those amiable persons whom they have had no opportunity to see, hear of, or know in any way that agrees with the

¹ See bottom of page 93.

² That is, even though someone lacks the good Will that is needed to comply, it may still be required of him; and it can be required without violating his freedom of will, or removing his responsibility. A command, by definition, is a requirement to acquire or take on that good Will which is needed to obey the One who commands us. Without that good Will, obedience remains impossible – for all obedience is necessarily born of a good Will: the *desire* to obey. And the desire to obey is born of a love for Christ, who first loved us; and so it is a *responsive* desire that originates in God, and not in us. Hence God is the First Cause of all things.

natural state and capacity of the human understanding. But the insufficiency of motives will not excuse them from loving, unless their insufficiency arises *not* from the moral state of the Will, or from inclination itself, but from the state of the natural understanding. The great kindness and generosity of another person may be a motive that is insufficient to excite gratitude in the person that receives the kindness, because of his vile and ungrateful temper. In this case, the insufficiency of the motive arises from the state of the Will, or the inclination of his heart, and this does not at all excuse him. But if this generosity is not sufficient to excite his gratitude, being unknown to him, and there being no means of information which is adequate to the state and measure of the person's faculties, then this insufficiency is attended with a *natural* Inability, which entirely excuses his ingratitude.

2. As to such motions of body, or exercises and alterations of mind, which do not consist in the imminent acts or state of the Will itself — but are assumed to be *effects* of the will, in cases in which there is no lack of capacity in understanding—that inability, and that alone, excuses him; and it consists in a lack of connection between them and the Will. If the Will fully complies, and the proposed effect does not prove to be connected with his volition, according to the laws of nature, then the man is perfectly excused; he has a natural Inability to perform the thing required. For the Will itself, as has been observed, is all that can be directly and immediately required by Command; and other things can be required only indirectly, as they are connected with the Will. Therefore, if there is full compliance of the Will, the person has done his duty; and if other things do not prove to be connected with his volition, then that is not criminally attributable to him.

3. Both these kinds of *natural* Inability, and all Inability that *excuses*, may be resolved into one thing: namely, the lack of natural capacity or strength—either the capacity of understanding, or the capacity of external strength. For when there are external defects and obstacles, they would not be obstacles if it were not for the imperfection and limitations of their understanding and strength.

Corollary. If things for which men have a *moral* Inability to perform may be the proper subject-matter of a Precept or Command, then they may be the proper subject-matter of invitation and counsel. Commands and invitations are very much the same thing; the only difference is circumstantial. Commands are as much a manifestation of the will of the one who speaks, as invitations are; and they are as much evidences of his expectation of compliance. The difference between them lies in nothing that touches on the affair in hand. The main difference between Command and invitation consists in the enforcement of the Will of the one who commands or invites. In the one who invites, it is his *kindness*—the goodness from which his Will arises. In the one who commands, it is his *authority*. But whatever may be the ground of Will in the one who speaks, or the enforcement of what he says (seeing that neither his Will, nor his expectation, is any more evident in the one case than in the other), directing a person by *invitation* is therefore no more evidence of insincerity in the one inviting (in manifesting either a Will or an expectation which he does not have), than commanding a person who is known to be morally unable to do what he is directed, is evidence of insincerity in the one commanding. So this entire grand objection of Arminians against the Inability of fallen men to exert faith in Christ, or to perform other spiritual duties, based on the *sincerity* of God's counsels and invitations, is without force.¹

¹ This alludes to the ongoing debate, whether we can make a “sincere offer” of the Gospel to all men if God elects only some to salvation, all others being disabled. It assumes that God is the disabler, and not inherent sin. If all men are naturally sinful and condemned at birth, then liberating some to freely choose Christ is not what disabled all others; it is simply what enabled some. It is not that God has been unfair in failing to save *all*; rather He has been unfair in saving *any*. In Scripture, that alleged “unfairness” is called *grace*: God's unmerited favor. God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy (Rom 9.15). Whether the offer of salvation is sincere or not, depends on whether we are responsible for our sinful condition. If we are responsible, and our sin is what disables us from accepting

Section V. Sincere Desires and Endeavours are supposed to excuse the non-performance of things that are good in themselves.

It is much insisted on by many, that some men, though they are not able to perform spiritual duties, such as repentance from sin, love to God, a cordial acceptance of Christ as exhibited and offered in the gospel, etc. yet they may sincerely desire and endeavor after these things—and therefore they must be excused because it is unreasonable to blame them for omitting those things which they sincerely desire and endeavour to do, but cannot. Concerning this matter, the following things may be observed.

1. What is supposed here is a great mistake, and a gross absurdity: that men may sincerely choose and desire those spiritual duties of love, acceptance, choice, rejection, etc. —consisting in the exercise of the Will itself, or in the disposition and inclination of the heart—and yet not be able to perform or exert them. This is absurd, because it is absurd to suppose that a man would directly, properly, and sincerely incline to have an inclination, which is contrary to his present inclination: for it supposes that he is not inclined to do what he is inclined to do. If a man, in the state and acts of his will and inclination, properly and directly aligns with those duties, he is performing them: for the duties themselves consist in that very thing—they consist in the state and acts of the Will being thus formed and directed. If the soul properly and sincerely aligns with a certain proposed act of Will or choice, the soul is making that choice its own. It is akin to a moving body aligning with a proposed direction of its motion; that is the same thing as moving in that direction.

2. What is called a Desire and Willingness for those inward duties, in those who do *not* perform them, properly speaking, regards these duties only indirectly and remotely. This is not only because (as observed before) it regards those good volitions only in a distant view, and with respect to a future time; but also because it is not these things themselves, but something foreign to them, that is the object which terminates these volitions and Desires.

A drunkard who continues in his drunkenness, is under the power of a violent appetite for strong drink, and has no love for virtue. But he is also extremely covetous and close, and very exercised and grieved at the diminution of his estate, and at the prospect of poverty. He may, in a way, desire the virtue of temperance; and though his present Will is to gratify his extravagant appetite, yet he may wish that he had a heart to forbear future acts of intemperance, and to forsake his excesses through an unwillingness to part with his money; but he still he goes on with his drunkenness—his wishes and endeavours are insufficient and ineffectual. Such a man has no proper, direct, sincere Willingness to forsake this vice, and the vicious deeds which belong to it, for he acts voluntarily in continuing to drink to excess. His Desire is improperly called a *willingness to be temperate*; but it is *not* a true Desire for that virtue; for that virtue is not what terminates his wishes; nor do his wishes have any direct respect for that virtue at all. It is only the desire to save his money, or to avoid poverty, that terminates and exhausts the whole strength of his Desire for strong drink. The virtue of temperance is regarded only indirectly and improperly, as a necessary means to quench the vice of covetousness.

Imagine a man of an exceedingly corrupt and wicked heart, who has no love for God and Jesus Christ, but on the contrary, is very profanely and carnally inclined; he has the greatest distaste for religious things, and hostility towards them. Yet he comes from a family in which, from one generation to another, most have died in youth of hereditary consumption; he has little hope of living long. And he has been instructed in the necessity of a supreme love for Christ, and

Christ, then God can sincerely ask us to repent of it, even though He knows we will not. He respects our free will enough to give us that choice, as He did with Cain. Our Inability is self-induced, and it necessarily results in our *rejection* of Christ – just as God's grace necessarily results in our *acceptance* of Christ. Edwards rightly asserts that such *necessity*, either way, does not negate free will or responsibility.

acceptance of his death and sufferings on his behalf in order to be saved from eternal misery. Through his fear of such eternal torments, and being under these circumstances, he wishes he had such a disposition. But he is wholly without any exercise of that sort of love and gratitude. His profane and carnal heart remains, and he continues in his habitual distaste of and hostility towards God and religion. Doubtless the very devils themselves, notwithstanding all the devilishness of their temper, would wish for a holy heart if they could get out of hell by that means. In this case, there is no sincere willingness to love Christ and choose him as his highest 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 his soul; instead, everything is terminated on deliverance from torment. These graces and pious volitions, notwithstanding this forced consent, are looked upon as undesirable in themselves—as when a sick man desires a dose of medicine that he greatly abhors, in order to save his life.

From these things it appears:

3. That this indirect Willingness is not that exercise of the Will which the command requires; it is entirely a different one; it is volition of a different nature, and is terminated on entirely different objects, wholly falling short of that virtue of Will which the command regards.

4. This other volition, which has only some indirect concern with the duty required, cannot excuse the lack of that good will which is commanded; for it is not the thing which answers and fulfils the command, and it is wholly destitute of the virtue which the command seeks.

To further illustrate this matter: Imagine that a child has a most excellent father that has always treated him with fatherly kindness and tenderness, and has in every way, and in the highest degree, merited the child's love and dutiful regard; and the father is also very wealthy. But the son is of so vile a disposition, that he inveterately hates his father. Yet the son perceives that his hatred of his father is likely to prove his own ruin, by bringing him finally to those abject circumstances which are exceedingly adverse to his avarice and ambition. He therefore *wishes* it were otherwise; yet remaining under the invincible power of his vile and malignant disposition, he still continues in his settled hatred of his father. Now, if such a son's indirect willingness to love and honour his father, at all acquits or excuses him before God, for failing to actually exercise these dispositions towards his father—which God requires—then it must be for one of these two reasons. Either,

(1.) It fully answers and fulfils the command. But this it does not fit the supposition; because the thing commanded is to love and honour his worthy parent. If the command is proper and just, as supposed, then it obliges the thing that is commanded; and so only *that* can meet the obligation. Or,

(2.) It must be, at least, because there is that virtue or goodness in his indirect willingness, that is *equivalent* to the virtue required; and it so balances or countervails it, and makes up for the lack of it. But that also is contrary to the supposition. The willingness the son has merely from a regard for money and personal honour, has no goodness in it to countervail the lack of the pious filial respect that is required.

Sincerity and reality, in that indirect Willingness which has been spoken of, does not make it any better. What is real and heartfelt is often called sincere, whether in virtue or vice. Some persons are sincerely bad; others are sincerely good. Still others may be sincere and heartfelt in things which are indifferent in their own nature; for instance, a man may sincerely desire to eat when he is hungry. But being sincere, heartfelt, and in good earnest, is no virtue unless it is in something that is virtuous. A man may be sincere and heartfelt in joining a crew of pirates, or a gang of robbers. When the devils cried out, and begged Christ not to torment them, it was no mere pretense. They were heartfelt in their desires not to be tormented—but this did not make

their Will or Desire *virtuous*. And if men have sincere Desires, which are no better in their kind and nature than this, it cannot be an excuse for the lack of any required virtue.

Just as a man's Sincerity in such an indirect Desire or willingness to do his duty cannot excuse the lack of performance, as mentioned, so it is with Endeavours that arise from such a Willingness. The Endeavours can have no more goodness in them than the Will of which they are the effect and expression. Therefore, however sincere and real, and however great a person's Endeavours are—indeed, even if they were to the utmost of his ability—unless the Will from which they proceed is truly good and virtuous, they can be of no avail or weight whatever in a moral respect. What is not truly virtuous is, in God's sight, good for nothing; and so it can be of no value or influence in his account to make up for any moral defect. For nothing can counterbalance evil, but good. If evil is put in one scale, and we put a great deal of sincere and earnest Desires, and many great endeavours, into the other, if there is no real *goodness* in it all, there is no *weight* in it; and so it does nothing towards balancing the weight which is in the opposite scale. It is like subtracting a thousand nothings from a real number, which leaves the sum just as it was.

Indeed such Endeavours may have a negatively good influence. Those things which have no positive virtue, have no positive moral influence; yet they may be an occasion for persons to avoid some positive evils. It is as if a man were in the water with a neighbor to whom he had ill will, and who could not swim, holding him by his hand; this neighbor owed him a great deal of money. The man is tempted to let his neighbor sink and drown, but he refuses to comply with the temptation—not from love for his neighbor, but from the love of money, because if his neighbor drowned, he would lose his debt. What he does in preserving his neighbor from drowning, is nothing good in the sight of God. Yet by doing this, he avoids the greater guilt he would have contracted if he intentionally let his neighbor sink and perish. But when Arminians, in their disputes with Calvinists, insist so much on sincere Desires and Endeavours as what must excuse men, and must be accepted by God, etc. it is obvious that they refer to some positive moral weight or influence in those Desires and Endeavours. Accepting, justifying, or excusing on account of “sincere Endeavours” (as they are called), and men doing what they can, etc. is related to some *moral value*, something that is accepted as *good*; and as such, they say, it countervails some defect.

But there is a great and unknown deceit, arising from the ambiguity of the phrase “sincere Endeavours.” Indeed there is a vast indistinctness and indefiniteness in most, or at least in very many of the terms used to express things pertaining to moral and spiritual matters. From this arise innumerable mistakes, strong prejudices, inextricable confusion, and endless controversy. The word *sincere* is most commonly used to signify something that is *good*: men are habituated to understand it as being the same as honest and upright. These terms excite an idea of something good in the strictest and highest sense; good in the sight of him who sees not only the outward appearance, but the heart. And therefore, men think that if a person is *sincere*, he will certainly be *accepted*. If it is said that anyone is sincere in his endeavours, this suggests that his heart is good—that there is no defect of duty as to his virtuous inclination. He honestly and uprightly desires and endeavours to do as he is required. And this leads them to suppose that it would be very hard and unreasonable to punish him, only because he is unsuccessful in his endeavours—the thing he endeavored is beyond his power. But it ought to be observed that the word “sincere” has these different meanings:

1. *Sincerity*, as the word is sometimes used, signifies no more than the reality of will and Endeavour with respect to anything that is professed or pretended—without any consideration of the nature of the *principle* or *aim* from which this real Will and true endeavour arises. If a man has some real Desire to obtain something, either directly or indirectly, or really endeavours after it, he is said to *sincerely* desire or endeavour, without any consideration of

the goodness of the *principle* from which he acts, or any excellence or worthiness of the *end* for which he acts. Thus, a man who is kind to his neighbour's wife, who is sick and languishing, and who is very helpful in her case, makes a show of desiring and endeavouring her restoration to health and vigor. And not only does he make such a show, but there is a reality in his pretense. He heartily and earnestly desires to have her health restored, and he uses his true and utmost Endeavours for it. He is said to *sincerely* desire and endeavour after it, because he does so truly or really—even though perhaps the *true principle* he acts from, is no other than a vile and scandalous passion. Having lived in adultery with her, he earnestly desires to have her health and vigor restored, so that he may return to his criminal pleasures. Or,

2. *Sincerity* means not merely a reality of will and Endeavour of some sort, and arises from some consideration or other, but a *virtuous* Sincerity. That is, in the performance of those particular acts which are the matter of virtue or duty, there is not only the matter itself, but the form and essence of virtue, which consists in the *aim* that governs the act, and the *principle* exercised in it. There is not only the reality of the act—as it were, the *body* of the duty—but also the soul which should properly belong to such a body. In this sense, a man is said to be sincere when he acts with a pure *intention*; not from sinister views. He not only in reality desires and seeks the thing to be done, or the qualification to be obtained (for some end or other), but he wills the thing directly and properly, as neither forced nor bribed. The *virtue* of the thing is the proper OBJECT of the Will.

In the former sense (1.), a man is said to be sincere, in opposition to a mere pretense and show of the particular thing to be done or exhibited, without any real Desire or Endeavour at all. In the latter sense (2.), a man is said to be sincere, in opposition to that show of virtue which exists in merely doing the matter of a duty, without the reality of the virtue itself in his soul. A man may be sincere in the former sense, and yet in the latter sense, he is a vile hypocrite in the sight of God, who searches the heart.

In the latter kind of sincerity only, is there anything truly valuable or acceptable in the sight of God. And this is what is called in Scripture *Sincerity*, uprightness, integrity, “truth in the inward parts,”¹ and heirs of a “perfect heart.”² And if there is such a Sincerity, and such a degree of it as there ought to be, and there is anything further that the man is not able to perform, or which does not prove to be connected with his sincere Desires and Endeavours, then the man is wholly excused and acquitted in the sight of God. His Will³ shall surely be accepted for his deed.⁴ Such a sincere Will and Endeavour is all that in strictness is required of him by any command of God. But as to the other kind of Sincerity of Desires and Endeavours, having no virtue in it (as observed before), it can be of no avail before God in any case to recommend, satisfy, or excuse—it has no positive moral weight or influence whatever.

Corollary 1. From this it may be inferred that nothing in the reason and nature of things appears from the consideration of any moral weight in the former kind of Sincerity—nothing that would lead us to suppose that God has made any positive promises of salvation, grace, or any saving assistance, or any spiritual benefit whatever, for any Desires, prayers, Endeavours, striving, or obedience from those who previously had no true virtue or holiness in their hearts—though we might suppose there is all the Sincerity and utmost degree of Endeavour that is possible to be in a person without holiness.

¹ Psalms 51.6.

² e.g. 1Chr 28.9, 29.19; Isa 38.3.

³ In this case, meaning his *virtuous intention*.

⁴ This seems at odds with Edwards' prior intimation that sincere intentions are not enough; that the deed itself is required: “it obliges the thing that is commanded.” Having distinguished these two kinds of sincerity, his conclusion is that *sincere* intentions may not be enough, but *virtuous* intentions may be, even without the deed.

Some object to God requiring, as the condition of salvation, those holy exercises which are the result of a supernatural renovation—such as a supreme respect to Christ, love to God, loving holiness for its own sake, etc. They object that these inward dispositions and exercises are above men’s power, as they are by nature. Therefore, they say, we may conclude that when men are brought to be sincere in their Endeavours, and do as well as they can, they are accepted by God; and that this must be all that God requires in order to be received as the objects of his favour; and that this must be what God has appointed as the condition of salvation.

Concerning this, I would observe that in saying men are accepted because they are sincere, and because they do as well as they can, there is evidently a supposition that there is some virtue in this, some degree of what is truly good—even though it does not go so far as might be wished. For if men do what they can, unless they are doing it from some good principle, disposition, or exercise of heart, some virtuous inclination or act of the will, doing what they can is, in some respect, not a whit better than if they did nothing at all. In such a case, there is no more positive moral goodness in a man doing what he can, than in a windmill doing what it can—because the action no more proceeds from virtue in the one than in the other. There is nothing in such Sincerity of Endeavour, or in doing what we can, that would render it any more fitting a recommendation for positive favour and acceptance, or meet the condition of any reward or actual benefit, than doing *nothing*; for both the one and the other are nothing, as to having any true moral weight or value.

Corollary 2. From this it also follows that there is nothing that appears in the reason and nature of things, which can justly lead us to determine that God will certainly bestow the necessary means of salvation, or in some way or other bestow true holiness and eternal life, on those heathens who are “sincere” (in the sense explained above) in their Endeavours to discover the Will of the Deity, and to please him, according to their light, so that they may escape his future displeasure and wrath, and obtain happiness in the future state, through God’s favour.

Section VI. Liberty of indifference is not necessary to Virtue, and is utterly inconsistent with it; all habits or inclinations, whether virtuous or vicious, are inconsistent with Arminian notions of Liberty and moral Agency.

To suppose that such a freedom of will as Arminians talk about, is requisite to Virtue and Vice, is in many ways contrary to common sense.

If *Indifference* belongs to *Liberty of Will*, as Arminians suppose, and to be essential to a *virtuous action*, that action must be performed in a *STATE of Liberty*, as they also suppose; then it follows that it is essential to a virtuous action, that it be performed in a *STATE of Indifference*. And if it is performed in a *STATE of indifference*, then doubtless it must be performed in the *TIME of Indifference*. And so it follows, that in order for an act to be Virtuous, the *HEART* must be *indifferent* in the time of the performance of that act—and the more indifferent and cold the heart is in relation to the act performed, so much the better; because the act is performed with that much greater Liberty.

But does this agree with the light of nature? Does it agree with the notions which mankind in all ages has had of Virtue?—that it lies in what is *contrary* to Indifference, even in the tendency and inclination of the heart *towards* virtuous action—that the *stronger* the inclination, and the *further from* Indifference it gets, the more virtuous the heart becomes, and the more praiseworthy the act becomes which proceeds from it.

If we were to suppose (contrary to what has been demonstrated) that there may be an act of will in a state of Indifference—for instance, this act: the will determining to put itself *out of* a

state of Indifference, and to give itself a preponderance one particular way—then it would follow, on Arminian principles, that this act or determination of the will is what alone Virtue consists of, because only this act is performed while the mind remains in a state of *Indifference*, and so in a state of *Liberty*. For, once the mind is put out of its equilibrium, it is no longer in such a state; and therefore all the acts which follow afterwards, proceeding from *bias*, cannot have the nature of either Virtue or Vice. Or if only the thing which the will can do, while still in a state of Indifference (and so in a state of Liberty), is to *suspend* acting, and to determine to take the matter into consideration, then this determination is what alone Virtue consists of, and *not* proceeding to action after the scale is turned by consideration. So it follows from these principles, that whatever is done, by any means, after the mind is out of its equilibrium, arises from an inclination, and so it has nothing of the nature of Virtue or Vice, and it is worthy of neither blame nor praise.

But how plainly contrary this is to the universal sense of mankind, and to the notion they have of sincerely virtuous actions!—which is, that they proceed from a heart well disposed and well inclined. The stronger, the more fixed and determined, the good disposition of the heart becomes, the greater the sincerity of its Virtue, and the more there is of its truth and reality. But if there are any acts which are done in a state of equilibrium, or that spring immediately from perfect Indifference and coldness of heart, they cannot arise from any good principle or disposition in the heart. Consequently, according to common sense, they have no sincere goodness in them, because they have no Virtue of heart in them. To have a virtuous heart, is to have a heart that *favours* Virtue, and is *friendly* to it, and not one that is perfectly cold and indifferent about it.

And besides, the actions that are done in a state of Indifference, or that arise immediately out of such a state, cannot be virtuous because, by the supposition, they are not determined by any preceding choice. For if there is a *preceding* choice, then choice intervenes between the act and the state of Indifference—which is contrary to the supposition of the act arising *immediately* out of Indifference.¹ But those acts which are not determined by preceding choice, cannot be either virtuous or vicious (by Arminian principles), because they are not determined by the Will. So that, neither one way nor the other, can any actions be either virtuous or vicious, according to those principles. If the action is determined by a preceding act of choice, it cannot be virtuous, because the action is not done in a state of Indifference, nor does it immediately arise from such a state; and so is not done in a state of Liberty. And if the action is not determined by a preceding act of choice, then it cannot be virtuous, because then the Will is not self-determined in it. So it is made certain, that neither Virtue nor Vice can ever find any place in the universe!

Moreover, it is contrary to common sense that it is necessary to a virtuous action, that it be performed in a state of Indifference, under the notion that a state of Liberty requires indifference. Common sense dictates that indifference itself, in many cases, is *vicious*, and vicious to a high degree. It is as if, when I see my neighbour, or a near friend, in extreme distress and ready to perish, and he has earned my favor in the highest degree, I find that my heart is Indifferent to anything proposed to be done for his relief, which I could easily do. So too, if it were proposed to me to blaspheme God, or kill my father, or do numberless other things which might be mentioned, being indifferent for even a moment, would be highly vicious and vile.

And it may be further observed that, to suppose this Liberty of Indifference is essential to Virtue and vice, destroys the great difference in degrees of the guilt of different crimes, and it takes away the heinousness of the most atrocious, horrid iniquities—such as adultery,

¹ That is, *directly* out of indifference.

bestiality, murder, perjury, blasphemy, etc. For, according to these principles, there is no harm at all in having the mind in a state of perfect Indifference with respect to these crimes; no, it is absolutely *necessary*, they say, in order to have any Virtue in avoiding them, or any Vice in doing them. But for the mind to be in a state of Indifference with respect to them, is to be next door to *doing* them. The mind is then infinitely near to choosing, and so committing the act: for equilibrium is the next step to a degree of preponderance; and one degree, even the *least* degree, of preponderance (all things considered) is *choice*. And not only so, but for the Will to be in a state of perfect equilibrium with respect to such crimes, is for the mind to be as likely to *choose* them as to *refuse* them, to *do* them as to *omit* them. And if our minds must be in such a state, in which it is as near to choosing as refusing, and in which it must of necessity (according to the nature of things) be as likely to commit them, as to refrain from them—then where is the exceeding heinousness of choosing and committing them? If there is no harm in often being in such a state, where the probability of doing and forbearing are exactly equal (there being an equilibrium), and there is no more tendency towards one than the other—then, according to the nature and laws of such a contingency, it may be expected, as an inevitable consequence of such a disposition of things, that we should *choose* them as often as we *reject* them. It is necessary that it should generally fall out this way, as equality in the *effect* is the natural consequence of the equal tendency of the *cause*, or of the antecedent state of things from which the effect arises. Why then should we be so blameworthy, if it does fall out that way?

It is apparent in many ways that the Arminian scheme of Liberty is utterly inconsistent with there being any such things as either virtuous or vicious habits or dispositions. If Liberty of Indifference is essential to moral Agency, then there can be no Virtue in *any* habitual inclinations of the heart which are contrary to Indifference, and which imply in their nature the very destruction and exclusion of indifference. They suppose nothing can be virtuous in which no Liberty is exercised; but then how absurd it is to talk of exercising Indifference under bias and preponderance!¹

And if self-determining power in the Will is necessary to moral Agency, praise, blame, etc., then nothing done by the will can be praiseworthy or blameworthy any further than the Will is moved, swayed, and determined by itself, and the scales are turned by the sovereign power which the Will has over itself. Therefore, they say, the Will must not be out of its balance; preponderance must not be determined and effected beforehand; nor the self-determining act be anticipated. Thus it also appears that habitual bias is inconsistent with that Liberty which Arminians suppose is necessary to Virtue or Vice; and so it follows, that habitual bias itself cannot be either virtuous or vicious.

The same thing follows from their doctrine concerning the inconsistency of Necessity with Liberty, praise, dispraise, etc. None will deny that bias and inclination may be so strong as to be invincible, and to leave no possibility for the Will to determine anything contrary to it; and so it would be attended with Necessity.

Dr. Whitby allows this concerning the Will of God, angels, and glorified saints, with respect to good; and concerning the Will of devils, with respect to evil. Therefore, if Necessity is inconsistent with Liberty, then when there is such a degree of strength to fixed inclination, it utterly excludes all Virtue, Vice, praise, or blame. And, if this is so, then the nearer habits are to this strength, the more they impede Liberty, and thus diminish praise and blame. If very strong habits destroy Liberty, then lesser habits hinder it proportionately, according to their degree of strength. Therefore, it follows that the most virtuous or vicious act occurs when it is performed without any inclination or habitual bias at all; because then it is performed with the most Liberty.

¹ Liberty is the freedom to choose; choice is exercising a preference; limiting freedom to a state of Indifference (*lack of preference*), means that exercising Indifference requires a preference – which is illogical.

Every prepossessing fixed bias on the mind brings a degree of moral inability for the contrary; because so far as the mind is biased and prepossessed, it is hindered to the contrary. Therefore, if moral inability is inconsistent with moral Agency, or with the nature of Virtue and Vice, then so far as there is any evil disposition of heart, or inclination to habitual depravity—whether covetousness, pride, malice, cruelty, or whatever else—the more excused these persons are; and the less their evil acts have the nature of Vice. And on the other hand, whatever excellent dispositions and inclinations they have, the less virtuous they are.

It is evident that no habitual disposition of heart can in any degree be virtuous or vicious, or the actions which proceed from these habits be at all praiseworthy or blameworthy. This is because, though we might suppose that the habit is not of such a strength as to wholly to take away all moral ability and self-determining power; or that it may be partly from bias, and partly from self-determination; yet, in this case, *all* that proceeds from antecedent bias must be set aside, as having no consideration. And in estimating the degree of Virtue or Vice, no more must be considered than what arises from self-determining power, without any influence of that bias, because Liberty is exercised in nothing more. So that, all that comes from the exercise of habitual inclination is thrown away, as not belonging to the morality of the action. By this it appears that no exercise of these habits, however strong or weak, can ever have anything of the nature of either Virtue or Vice.

Here if anyone were to say that, notwithstanding all these things, there may be the nature of Virtue and Vice in the habits of the mind because these habits may be the *effects* of those acts in which the mind exercised Liberty; that however the aforementioned reasons may prove that no natural habits, born or created with us, can be either virtuous or vicious; yet they will *not* prove this about habits which have been acquired and established by repeated free acts.

To such an objector, I would say that this evasion will not help the matter at all. For if freedom of Will is essential to the very nature of Virtue and Vice, then there is no Virtue or Vice except in that very thing in which this Liberty is exercised. If a man exercises Liberty in one or more things that he does, and then is brought into such circumstances by those acts that his Liberty ceases, and a long series of acts or events follow, that come to pass *necessarily*, then those consequent acts are not virtuous or vicious, rewardable or punishable. They are only the free acts that established this necessity; for the man was free in *them* alone. The subsequent effects that are necessary, no more have the nature of Virtue or Vice than bodily health or sickness have the proper nature of Virtue or Vice; they are the effects of a course of free acts of temperance or intemperance—or than the good qualities of a clock have the nature of Virtue, which are the effects of free acts of the clock-maker—or than the goodness and sweetness of the fruits of a garden are moral Virtues, being the effects of the free and faithful acts of the gardener. If Liberty is absolutely requisite to the morality of actions, and if necessity is wholly inconsistent with it—as Arminians greatly insist—then no necessary effects whatever, however good or bad the cause, can be virtuous or vicious. The Virtue or the Vice must be only in the free cause. Agreeably to this (Dr. Whitby supposes), the necessity that attends the good and evil habits of the saints in heaven, and of the damned in hell, which are the consequence of their free acts in their state of probation, are not rewardable or punishable.

On the whole, it appears that if the notions of Arminians concerning Liberty and moral Agency are true, then it will follow that there is no virtue in any habits or qualities such as humility, meekness, patience, mercy, gratitude, generosity, or heavenly-mindedness; there is 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 toward enemies, or 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, or 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 is no such thing as any virtuous or vicious quality of mind; there is no such thing as inherent virtue and holiness, or vice and sin. And the stronger those habits or dispositions are, which used to be called *virtuous* and *vicious*, the further they are from actually being so. The more violent men's lusts are, the more fixed their pride, envy, ingratitude, and maliciousness, the further are they from being blameworthy. If there is a man that by his own repeated acts, or by any other means, has come to be of the most hellish disposition, desperately inclined to treat his neighbours with injuriousness, contempt, and malignity, the further they should be from any disposition toward being angry with him, or blaming him in the least.

So too, on the other hand, if there is a person who is of a most excellent spirit, strongly inclining him to the most amiable actions, admirably meek, benevolent, etc. he is the further from anything rewardable or commendable. On these principles, the man Jesus Christ was very far from being praiseworthy for those acts of holiness and kindness which he performed—these *propensities* being strong in his heart. Above all, the infinitely holy and gracious God is infinitely remote from anything commendable—his good *inclinations* being infinitely strong, he is therefore at the utmost possible distance from being at Liberty. In all cases, the stronger the inclinations of anyone are to Virtue, and the more they love it, the less virtuous they are; and the more they love wickedness, the less vicious they are. Whether these things agree with Scripture, let every Christian judge, and every man who has read the Bible judge. And whether they agree with common sense, let everyone judge that exercises human understanding.

If we pursue these principles, we will find that Virtue and Vice are wholly excluded from the world; and that there never was, nor ever can be, any such thing as one or the other, whether in God, angels, or men. No propensity, disposition, or habit can be virtuous or vicious, as has been shown, because so far as they take place, they destroy the freedom of the will and the foundation of all moral Agency, and they exclude all capacity of either Virtue or Vice. And if habits and dispositions themselves are not virtuous nor vicious, then neither can the exercise of these dispositions be so. For the exercise of bias is not the exercise of free self-determining will, and so there is no exercise of Liberty in it. Consequently, no man is virtuous or vicious, either in being well disposed or ill disposed, nor in acting from a good or a bad disposition. And whether this bias or disposition is habitual or not, if it exists for but a moment before the act of Will which is its effect, it does not alter the case as to the necessity of the effect. Or if there is no previous disposition at all that determines the act, either habitual or occasional, then it is not choice that determines it. It is therefore a contingency that happens to the man, arising from nothing in him; and it is necessary as to any inclination or choice of his; and therefore, it cannot make him either better or worse, any more than a tree is better than other trees because a nightingale happens to light upon it oftener; nor is a rock more vicious than other rocks because rattle-snakes happen to crawl over it oftener. So that there is no Virtue or vice in good or bad dispositions, either fixed or transient; nor is there any Virtue or Vice in acting from any good or bad previous inclination; nor yet is there any Virtue or Vice in acting wholly without any previous inclination. Where then shall we find room for Virtue or Vice?

Section VII. Arminian notions of moral Agency are inconsistent with all Motivations and Inducement, in either virtuous or vicious actions.

Arminian notions of that liberty which is essential to virtue or vice, are inconsistent with common sense, in being inconsistent with all virtuous or vicious habits and dispositions. And they are no less inconsistent with all influence of motives in moral actions. Previous to the act

of choice, these equally influence against those notions of liberty, whether there is a preponderance of the inclination, or a preponderance of those circumstances which have a tendency to move the inclination. Indeed, it comes to the same thing to say that the circumstances of the mind tend to sway and turn its inclination one way, as to say that under such circumstances, the inclination of the mind tends that way.

Or if anyone thinks it is most proper to say that Motives alter the inclination, and give a net bias to the mind, it will not alter the case as to the present argument. For if Motives operate by giving the mind an inclination, then they operate by destroying the mind's indifference, and laying it under a bias. But to do this, is to destroy the Arminian freedom. It does not leave the will to its own self-determination, but brings it into subjection to the power of something extrinsic, which operates upon it, sways and determines it, previous to its own determination. So that what is done from Motive, cannot be either virtuous or vicious. Besides, if the acts of the will are excited by Motives, then those Motives are the causes of those acts of the Will—which makes the acts of the will *necessary*, just as effects necessarily follow the efficiency of the cause. And if the influence and power of the Motive *causes* the volition, then the influence of the motive *determines* the volition, and volition does not determine itself; and so volition is not free, in the Arminian sense (as largely shown already); and consequently, volition can be neither virtuous nor vicious.

The supposition which has already been noted as an insufficient evasion in other cases, would, in like manner, be irrelevant in this case: namely, the supposition that liberty consists in a power to suspend action for the present, in order to deliberate. If it were said, "Though it is true that the Will is under a necessity to finally follow the strongest Motive, yet for the present, it may forbear to act on the Motive presented till there has been an opportunity to thoroughly consider it, and to compare its real weight with the merit of other Motives," I would answer as follows:

Here again, it must be remembered that if determining to suspend and consider, is the only act of the will in which liberty is exercised, then all virtue and vice must consist in this. Any acts that follow this consideration, are the *effects* of it—and being necessary, they are no more virtuous or vicious than some good or bad events which happen when they are fast asleep; they are the consequences of what they did when they were awake. Therefore, I would observe two things here:

1. To suppose that all virtue and vice, in every case, consists in determining whether to take time for consideration or not, would not agree with common sense. For, according to such a supposition, the most horrid crimes—adultery, murder, sodomy, blasphemy, etc.—do not at all consist in the horrid nature of the things themselves; only in neglecting to thoroughly consider them before they are perpetrated. This minimizes their viciousness, and it makes all crimes equal. And if it is said that neglecting to consider only when such heinous evils are proposed to our choice, is worse than neglecting other cases, I would answer that this is inconsistent. It supposes the very thing to be, at the same time it is *not* supposed to be: it supposes that all moral evil, all viciousness and heinousness, does *not* consist merely in the lack of consideration. Instead, it supposes that some crimes, in themselves, in their own nature, are more heinous than others, *prior* to consideration (or inconsideration); this puts the person under a *prior* obligation to consider more in some cases than in others.
2. If it were so, that all virtue and vice, in every case, consisted only in the act of the will by which it determines whether to consider or not, it would not alter the case in the least, as to the present argument. For still, in *this* act of the Will on *this* determination, it is induced by some Motive, and it necessarily follows the strongest Motive; and so it is *necessary*, even in that act alone in which it is either virtuous or vicious.

One thing more I would observe concerning the inconsistency of Arminian notions of moral Agency, with the Influence of Motives. I suppose none will deny that it is possible for such powerful Motives to be set before the mind, and exhibited in so strong a light, and under such advantageous circumstances, as to be invincible; and such that the mind cannot help but yield to them. In this case, Arminians will doubtless say that liberty is destroyed. And if this is so, then if Motives are exhibited with half as much power, they would hinder liberty in proportion to their strength, and go halfway towards destroying it. If a thousand degrees of Motive abolish all liberty, then five hundred take away half of liberty. If one degree of the influence of motive does not at all infringe or diminish liberty, then two degrees would no more infringe or diminish it; for nothing doubled, is still nothing. And if two degrees do not diminish the Will's liberty, then no more would four, eight, sixteen, or six thousand. For nothing, however multiplied, comes to nothing. If there is nothing in the nature of Motive or moral suasion, that is at all opposite to liberty, then the greatest degree of Motive cannot hurt liberty. But if there is something in the nature of the thing that is against liberty, then the least degree of it hurts liberty to some degree; and consequently it diminishes virtue. If invincible Motives for a good action, take away all the *freedom* of the act—and so all the *virtue* of it—then the more forcible the Motives are, the worse it is, and the less the virtue of it. The weaker the Motives are, the better the virtue; and no Motive is best of all.

Now let it be considered, whether these things agree with common sense. If it were allowed, that there are some instances in which the soul chooses without any motive, then what virtue can there be in such a choice? I am sure there is no prudence or wisdom in it. Such a choice is not made for any good end, because it is made for no end at all. If it were for *any* end, the view of the end would be the motive which excites the act. And if the act is for no good end, and proceeds from no good aim, then there is no good intention in it. Therefore, according to all our natural notions of virtue, there is no more virtue in it than in the motion of smoke which is driven to and fro by the wind, without any aim or end in the thing moved, and which does not know where or why it is moved.

Corollary 1. It appears by these things, that the argument against the *Calvinists*, taken from the use of counsels, exhortations, invitations, exhortations, etc., that is so insisted on by Arminians, is truly against *themselves*. For these things can operate in no other way, to any good effect, than as Motive and Inducement is exhibited in them, tending to excite and determine the acts of the will. But it follows, on their own principles, that the acts of will that are excited by such causes, cannot be virtuous—because, so far as they arise from these, they are not from the Will's self-determining power. Hence it follows that it is not worthwhile to offer any arguments to persuade men to any virtuous volition or voluntary action; it is in vain to set before them the wisdom and amiableness of ways of virtue, or the odiousness and folly of the way of vice. This notion of liberty and moral Agency frustrates all endeavours to draw men to virtue by instruction or persuasion, precept or example. For though these things may induce them to what is *materially* virtuous, yet at the same time they remove the *form* of virtue, because they destroy liberty: by their own power, they put the Will out of its equilibrium, determine and turn the scale, and take the work of self-determining power out of its hands. The clearer the instructions, the more powerful the arguments, and the more moving the persuasions or examples that are given, the more likely they are to frustrate their own design. This is because they have that much greater 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 whatever is praiseworthy.

So it clearly follows, from these principles, that God has no hand in any man's virtue, nor does he at all promote it, either by a physical or moral influence; none of the moral methods he uses with men to promote virtue in the world have any tendency to attain that end—all the instructions he has given men from the beginning of the world to this day, by prophets or

apostles, or by his Son Jesus Christ; all his counsels, invitations, promises, threatenings, warnings, and exhortations; all means he has used with men in ordinances, or providences; indeed, all influences of his Spirit, both ordinary and extraordinary—have had no tendency at all to excite any one virtuous act of the mind, or to promote anything morally good and commendable, in any respect. For there is no way that these or any other means can promote virtue, except one of these three: Either,

(1.) By a *physical* operation on the heart. But the concurring voice of all Arminians is that all effects that are wrought in men in this way have no virtue in them. Or,

(2.) *Morally*, by exhibiting Motives to the understandings, in order to to excite good acts in the Will. But it was demonstrated that volitions that are excited by Motives are *necessary*, and not excited by a self-moving power; therefore, by Arminian principles, there is no virtue in them. Or,

(3.) By merely giving the Will an opportunity to determine itself concerning the objects proposed to it, either to choose or to reject, by its own uncaused, unmoved, uninfluenced self-determination. And if this is all, then all those means do no more to promote virtue than vice. For they do nothing but give the Will an opportunity to determine itself either way, either to good or bad, without biasing it either way: and so there is really as much of an opportunity given to determine in favour of evil, as of good.

Thus that horrid blasphemous consequence which they charge against others, certainly follows from the Arminian doctrine: namely, that God acts inconsistently in using so many counsels, warnings, invitations, entreaties, etc. with sinners, to induce them to forsake sin, and turn to the ways of virtue; and all these are insincere and fallacious. It follows from their doctrine, that God does these things when he knows, at the same time, that they have no tendency to produce the effect he seems to aim at. Indeed, he knows that if they have any influence, this very influence will be inconsistent to produce such an effect, and indeed it will prevent it. What an imputation of insincerity this would fix on God, who is infinitely holy and true! So that *theirs* is the doctrine which, if pursued in its consequences, horribly reflects on the Most High, and fixes on him the charge of hypocrisy. It is not the doctrine of the Calvinist, according to their frequent and vehement exclamations and invectives.

Corollary 2. From what has been observed in this section, it again appears that Arminian principles and notions, when fairly examined and pursued in their demonstrable consequences, evidently exclude all virtue from the world, and make it impossible that there should ever be any such thing, in any case—or that any such thing should ever be conceived of. For, by these principles, the very notion of virtue or vice implies absurdity and contradiction. For it is absurd in itself, and contrary to common sense, to suppose a virtuous act of mind without any good intention or aim; and by their principles, it is absurd to suppose a virtuous act with a good intention or aim. For to act for an end, is to act from a Motive. So that, if we rely on these principles, there can be no virtuous act with a good design and end; and it is self-evident that there can be none without it: consequently there can be no virtuous act at all.

Corollary 3. It is obvious that Arminian notions of moral Agency, and the faculty of Will, cannot coexist. In their view, if there can be any such thing as either a virtuous or a vicious act, it cannot be an act of the Will—no Will can be at all concerned in it. For an act which is performed without inclination, without Motive, and without an end in mind, must be performed without any concern of the Will. But to suppose there can be an act of the Will without these, implies a contradiction. If the soul in its act has no motive or end, then in that act (as observed before) it seeks nothing, goes after nothing, and exerts no inclination to anything; this implies, that in that act it desires nothing, and chooses nothing; so that there is no act of choice in the case. That is the same as saying there is no act of Will in the case. This

effectually excludes all vicious and virtuous acts from the universe, for according to this, there can be no vicious or virtuous act in which the Will is concerned; and according to the plainest dictates of reason, and the light of nature, and the principles of Arminians themselves, there can be no virtuous or vicious act in which the Will is not concerned. And therefore there is no room for any virtuous or vicious acts at all.

Corollary 4. If none of the moral actions of intelligent beings are influenced by either previous inclination or motives, another strange thing follows from it: God not only cannot foreknow any of the future moral actions of his creatures, but he can make no conjecture, and can give no probable guess concerning them. For all conjecture in things of this nature must depend on some discerning or apprehension of these two things: prior Disposition and Motive. And as observed, Arminian notions of moral Agency, in their real consequence, altogether exclude these.

PART IV. The basis of Arminian reasoning in support of their notion of liberty, moral agency, etc.

Section I. The Essence of the Virtue and Vice Of Dispositions of the Heart, and Acts of the Will, does not Lie In Their Cause, but in their Nature.

One main foundation of the reasons which are brought to establish the aforementioned notions of liberty, virtue, vice, etc. is a supposition that the virtuousness of the dispositions, or acts of the will, does not consist in the *nature* of these dispositions or acts, but wholly in the origin or *cause* of them. So that however good the disposition of the mind, or acts of the will, if the *cause* of the disposition or act is not our own virtue, then there is nothing virtuous or praiseworthy in it. On the other hand, however bad the will may be in its inclination or acts, unless it arises from something that is our own vice or fault, there is nothing vicious or blameworthy in it. This is their grand objection and pretended demonstration, or self-evidence, against any virtue and commendableness, or vice and blameworthiness, of any habits or acts of the Will that do not come from some virtuous or vicious determination of the will itself.

Now, if this matter is well considered, it will be apparent that it is altogether a mistake, indeed a gross absurdity; and that it is most certain that if there is any such thing as a virtuous or vicious disposition, or a volition of mind, that the virtuousness or viciousness of it does not consist in the origin or *cause* of these things, but in the *nature* of them.

If the essence of virtuousness or commendableness, and of viciousness or fault, does *not* lie in the NATURE of the dispositions or acts of mind which are said to be our virtue or our fault, but in their CAUSE, then it certainly lies nowhere at all. If the vicious of an act of will does not lie in its nature, but in its cause, its bad nature will not make it at all our fault unless its cause arises from some faulty determination of ours, or from something in us that is our fault. Then the viciousness of that cause does not lie in the nature of the thing itself, but in its cause—something in us that is our fault. And when we have come to this higher cause—even though this cause in us has a bad *nature*—we are not at all to blame on that account, unless it arises from something faulty in us. Nor can our blameworthiness lie in the NATURE of this cause, but in the CAUSE of *that nature*. And thus we must drive faultiness back from step to step, from a lower cause to a higher cause, *ad infinitum*; and that is to thoroughly banish faultiness from the world, allowing it no possibility to exist anywhere in the universality of things.

On these principles, vice or moral evil cannot exist in anything found in an *effect*; because fault does not consist in the NATURE of things, but in their CAUSE; and this is true as well because effects are *necessary*, being unavoidably connected with their cause. Therefore, in this scheme, only the cause is to blame. And so it follows that faultiness can lie only in that cause, which is a cause *only*, and is not an effect of anything else. Nor can it lie in this original cause; for then it must lie in the NATURE of the thing itself—not from any determination of ours, nor from anything faulty in us which is the cause, nor indeed from any cause at all. For, according to the supposition, it is not an effect, and it has no cause. And thus whoever would maintain that it is not the NATURE of habits or acts of will that makes them virtuous or faulty, but the CAUSE, must immediately undermine his own assertion; for in maintaining it, he will unwarily contradict and deny it.

This is certain, that if effects are vicious and faulty, *not* from their nature, or from anything inherent in them, but because they are from a bad *cause*, then it must be on account of the badness of the cause. Therefore, a bad effect in the will must be bad, because the *cause* is bad, or the cause is of an evil *nature*, or it has badness as a quality *inherent* in it. And a good effect in the will must be good, by reason of the goodness of the *cause*, or in its being of a good kind

and *nature*. And if this is what is meant, then the very supposition of fault and praise *not* lying in the NATURE of the thing, but in the CAUSE, then it contradicts itself. It at least resolves the essence of virtue and vice into the *nature* of things—it supposes that it originally consists in that.

And if a caviler¹ has a mind to run from this absurdity by saying, No, the fault of the thing (which is the cause) does not lie in the cause itself being of an evil nature; rather, the cause is evil in the sense that it is from another bad cause—still the absurdity follows. For if it were so, then the prior cause is at once acquitted of its fault, and all the blame must be laid to the higher cause; and it must consist in *that* cause being evil, or being of an evil nature. So now we have come again to lay the blame of the thing that is blameworthy, to the NATURE of the thing, and *not* to the CAUSE. And if anyone is so foolish as to go higher still, and ascend from step to step till has come to the *first cause* concerned in the whole affair, and says all the blame lies in *that* cause, then at last he must be forced to admit that the faultiness of the thing which he supposes is solely blameworthy, lies entirely in the NATURE of the thing, and *not* in the original CAUSE of it. For the supposition is that it has no original cause, then it is determined by no act of ours; it is caused by nothing faulty in us; it is absolutely without *any* cause. And so the race is at an end, but the evader has taken flight!

It agrees with common sense,² that moral evil, with its deserving of dislike and abhorrence, and all its other ill-deservings, consists in a certain deformity in the *nature* of certain dispositions of the heart and acts of the will—not in the deformity of something else that is different from the very thing itself, and which deserves that abhorrence, and is supposed to be the cause of it. That would be absurd, because it would suppose that something which is innocent and not evil, is truly evil and faulty, merely because *another* thing is evil. It implies a contradiction; for it would suppose that the very thing which is morally evil and blameworthy, is innocent and not blameworthy; but that something else, which is its cause, is the only thing to blame. To say that vice does not consist in the thing which is vicious, but in its cause, is the same as saying that vice does not consist in vice, but in what produces it.

It is true that a cause may be to blame for being the cause of vice: it may be wickedness in the cause that it produces wickedness. But it would imply a contradiction to suppose that these two are the identical wickedness. The wicked act of the cause in producing wickedness, is one wickedness; and the wickedness which is produced (if there *is* any produced) is another wickedness. Therefore the wickedness of the latter does not lie in the former, but is distinct from it; and the wickedness of both lies in the evil *nature* of the things which are wicked.

The thing which makes sin hateful, is what makes it deserve punishment—which is the *expression* of hatred. And what renders virtue lovely, is what makes it fit to receive praise and reward—which is the *expressions* of esteem and love. But what makes vice hateful, is its hateful *nature*; and what renders virtue lovely, is its amiable *nature*. It is a certain beauty or deformity, *inherent* in the good or evil Will (which is the soul of virtue and vice, and not just the occasion of it), which is their worthiness of esteem or disesteem, praise or dispraise, according to the common sense of mankind. If the cause or occasion of the rise of a hateful disposition or act of Will is *also* hateful, then suppose there is another antecedent evil will. That would be entirely another sin, and it would deserve punishment by itself, under a distinct consideration. The worthiness of dispraise is found in the *nature* of an evil volition, and not wholly in some foregoing act which is its *cause*; otherwise the evil volition, which is the *effect*,

¹ A disputant who quibbles; someone who raises annoying petty objections.

² Originally, “the natural notions of mankind.”

is not a moral evil—any more than sickness, or some other natural calamity, which arises from a cause, is *morally* evil.¹

Thus, for instance, ingratitude is hateful and worthy of dispraise, according to common sense—not because something as bad or worse than ingratitude was the cause that produced it, but because it is hateful in itself; its deformity is inherent. Likewise, the love of virtue is amiable and worthy of praise, not merely because something else went before this love of virtue in our minds, which caused its praiseworthiness—for instance, our own choice. We don't *choose* to love virtue, and by some method or other, work ourselves into the love of it, because of the amiableness and condescendency of such a disposition and inclination of heart. If that was the case (that we produced that love in ourselves), this choice would be no differently amiable or praiseworthy, than if a love for virtue, or some other amiable inclination, was exercised and implied in the choice. If that choice were amiable at all, it must be on account of some amiable quality in the *nature* of the choice. If we chose to love virtue, not in love for virtue or anything that was good in itself, and if we exercised no sort of good disposition toward the choice, then according to common sense, the choice itself was not virtuous or worthy of any praise, because the choice was not of a good *nature*.

It may be proper here to note something said by an author, that has lately made a mighty noise in America. He says,

“A *necessary* holiness is no holiness. Adam could not be originally created in righteousness and true holiness, because he must *choose* to be righteous, before he can be righteous. And therefore he must exist, he must be created; indeed, he must exercise thought and reflection, *before* he was righteous.”

There is much more to the same effect in that place, and also on pp. 437-440. If these things are so, it will certainly follow that the first choice to be righteous is not a righteous choice; there is no righteousness or holiness in it, because there is no prior choosing to be righteous. For he plainly speaks of choosing to be righteous, as what must go before righteousness. And what follows the choice (its effect) cannot be righteousness or holiness; for an effect is a *necessary* thing, and it cannot prevent the influence or efficacy of its cause. Therefore it is necessarily dependent on the cause—and he says a necessary holiness is no holiness. So that a choice of righteousness, cannot be righteousness or holiness, nor can anything that is a consequent of that choice (i.e. its effect), be righteousness or holiness; nor can anything that is *without* choice, be righteousness or holiness.

So that by this scheme, all righteousness and holiness is at once shut out of the world, and no door is left open by which it can ever possibly enter into the world.

I suppose the way that men came to entertain this absurd, inconsistent notion with respect to internal inclinations and volitions themselves—or notions that imply it, e.g. that the essence of their moral good or evil does not lie in their nature, but in their cause—was that it is indeed a very plain dictate of common sense that applies to all outward actions and sensible motions of the body. The moral good or evil of them does not lie at all in the actions themselves which, taken on their own, have no moral nature. The essence of all the moral good or evil that concerns them, lies in those internal dispositions and volitions which cause them. Now, always being used to determining this without hesitation or dispute concerning *external* actions—which are the things that, in common use, are indicated by such phrases as *men's actions*, or their *doings*—they came to speak of volitions and *internal* exercises of their inclinations, using the same terms for their actions (or what they do). And so they unwarily determined that these

¹ Sickness is an evil, but not a *moral* evil, because there is no choice involved—it is a mere event. But intentionally infecting someone with sickness is morally culpable (as in biological warfare). Yet, although that act is the *cause* of the infection, the act itself is not morally wrong— it too is a mere event. What is morally wrong is the original volition, the *choice* that was made, to knowingly and wrongfully infect others.

internal actions could be treated the same as the external ones—not considering the vast difference in their natures.

If anyone still objects and says, why is it not necessary that the cause be considered in order to determine whether anything is worthy of blame or praise? Does it agree with reason and common sense, that a man be praised or blamed for what he is not the cause or author of, and has no hand in?

I answer: Such phrases as “being the cause,” “being the author,” “having a hand,” etc., are ambiguous. They are most commonly understood as being the designing voluntary cause, or the cause by antecedent choice. And it is most certain that men are not, in this sense, the causes or authors of the first act of their wills in any case. This is as certain as anything is or can be; for nothing can be more certain than that something is *not* before it *is*, nor can something be of the same kind before the *first* thing of that kind; and so there can be no choice before the *first* choice. Just as the phrase “being the author” may be understood not as being the *producer* by an antecedent act of will, but only as a person may be said to be the author of the act of will itself—by being the immediate agent, or the one who is acting, or is in the exercise in that act. If the phrase “being the author” is used to signify this, then doubtless common sense requires that men be the authors of their own acts of will, in order to be esteemed worthy of praise or dispraise on account of those acts. And common sense teaches that they must be the authors of external actions, in the former sense (namely, causing them by an act of will or choice), in order to be justly blamed or praised. But common sense teaches no such thing with respect to the acts of the will *themselves*. This may become more apparent by the things observed in the following section.

Section II. The Metaphysical Notion of Action and Agency held by Arminians, is False and Inconsistent

One thing that is made very much a ground of argument and supposed demonstration by Arminians, in defense of the aforementioned principles concerning moral agency, virtue, vice, etc., is their metaphysical notion of agency and action. They say that unless the soul has a self-determining power, it has no power of action. If its volitions are not caused by itself, but are excited and determined by some extrinsic cause, then they cannot be the soul’s own acts. And the soul cannot be active, but must be wholly passive in those effects of which it is *necessarily* the subject, and not from its own free determination.

Mr. Chubb lays the foundation of his scheme of liberty, and of his arguments to support it, very much in this position: that man is an agent, and capable of action. Doubtless this is true. But self-determination belongs to his notion of action, and it is the very essence of it. From this he infers (1) that it is impossible for a man to act and be acted upon, in the same thing, at the same time; and (2) that nothing that is an action, can be the effect of the action of another. He also insists that a necessary agent, or an agent that is necessarily determined to act, is a plain contradiction.

But those sorts of demonstrations in which men build on the meaning that they arbitrarily affix to a word are precarious; especially when that meaning is abstruse, inconsistent, and entirely different from the original sense of the word in common speech.

It is obvious that the meaning of the word *action*, as Mr. Chubb and many others use it, is utterly unintelligible and inconsistent. This is because in their notion of action, it is something in which there is no passiveness—it is under the power, influence, or action of *no cause*. And this implies that *action* has no cause, and it is not an effect—for being an effect implies passiveness, or being subject to the power and action of its cause. And yet they hold that the mind’s action is the effect of its own determination—in fact, it is the effect of the mind’s free

and voluntary determination, which is the same as *free choice*. So that *action* is the effect of something preceding it—specifically, a preceding act of *choice*. Consequently, in this effect, the mind is passive; it is subject to the power and action of the preceding cause, which is the foregoing choice, and therefore the mind cannot be active. So that, here we have this contradiction: that *action* is always the effect of a foregoing choice, and therefore it *cannot* be action, because it is passive to the power of that preceding causal choice—and the mind cannot be active and passive in the same thing, at the same time.

Again, they say that *necessity* is utterly inconsistent with *action*; that a *necessary action* is a contradiction. So their notion of *action* implies *contingence*, and it excludes all necessity. Therefore, their notion of action implies that it has no necessary dependence or connection with anything foregoing—for such a dependence or connection would exclude contingency, and imply necessity. Yet their notion of action *does* imply necessity, and supposes that it is necessary, and *cannot* be contingent. For they suppose that whatever is properly called *action*, must be determined by the will and free choice. This is the same as saying that it must be *necessary*, because it is dependent on and determined by something foregoing—namely, a foregoing act of choice.

Again, their notion of *action* is something that is a proper and mere *act*—it is the beginning of motion, or of an exertion of power. Yet it is implied in their notion of *action*, that it is *not* the beginning of motion or an exertion of power, but that it is *consequent* and dependent on a preceding exertion of power—the *power of will and choice*. For they say there is no proper action unless it is freely chosen, or in other words, it is determined by a foregoing act of free choice. But if any of them see cause to deny this, and say that they hold no such thing, because every action is chosen or determined by a foregoing choice; and that it is only the very *first* exertion of will, undetermined by any preceding act, that is properly called *action*—then I say, such a man's notion of action implies *necessity*. For what the mind is subject to, without the determination of its own previous choice, it is *necessarily* subject to, as to any part that free choice plays in the affair. The mind is without any ability to prevent it by any will or election of its own because, according to the supposition, it precludes all previous acts of will or choice in the case which might prevent it. So again, in this other way, it is implied in their notion of *act*, that it is both necessary and *not* necessary.

Again, it belongs to their notion of an act, that it is not the effect of a predetermining bias or preponderance, but springs immediately out of *indifference*. And this implies that it cannot proceed from a foregoing choice, which is foregoing preponderating. Even if it is not habitual, but occasional, and yet it *causes* the act, then it is truly previous, efficacious, and determining. And yet, at the same time, it is essential to their notion of the *act*, that it is what the agent is the author of, freely and voluntarily—and that is by previous choice and design.

So that, according to their notion of the *act*, considered with regard to its consequences, these following things are all essential to it—

- that it should be necessary, and not necessary;
- that it should be from a cause, and no cause;
- that it should be the fruit of choice and design, and not the fruit of choice and design;
- that it should be the beginning of motion or exertion, and yet the consequent of a previous exertion;
- that it should exist before it exists;
- that it should spring immediately out of indifference and equilibrium, and yet be the effect of preponderating;
- that it should be self-originated, and also have its origin from something else;

- that it is what the mind causes itself, of its own will, and can produce or prevent, according to its choice or pleasure, and yet what the mind has no power to prevent, precluding all previous choice in the affair.

So that an *act*, according to their metaphysical notion of it, is something of which we have no clear idea. It is nothing but a confusion of the mind, excited by words, without any distinct meaning. It is an absolute non-entity in two respects: (1) there is nothing in the world that ever was, is, or can, correspond to the things which must belong to its description, according to what they suppose to be essential to it. And (2) there neither is, nor ever was, nor can be, any notion or idea corresponding to the word as they use and explain it. For, if we were to suppose any such notion, it would in many ways destroy itself. But it is impossible for any idea or notion to subsist in the mind, whose very nature and essence, which constitute it, destroys it. If some learned philosopher who had been abroad, in giving an account of the curious observations he had made in his travels, were to say that he had been in Terra del Fuego, and had seen an animal there which he calls by a certain name, that reproduced itself, and yet had a sire and dam that were distinct from itself; that it had an appetite, and was hungry before it ever existed; that his master, who led him and governed him at his pleasure, was always governed and driven by the animal wherever he pleased; that when he moved, he always took a step before the first step; that he went with his head first, and yet always went tail foremost, and did this even though he had neither tail nor head—then it would be no impudence at all to tell such a traveler that, although he was a learned man, he himself had no notion or idea of any such animal as he gave an account of, and never had one, nor ever could have one.

Just as the aforementioned notion of *action* is very inconsistent, so it is wholly different from the original meaning of the word. The more usual meaning of it, in common speech, seems to be some motion or exertion of power, that is voluntary, or that is the effect of the will. It is used in the same sense as *doing*; and most commonly it is used to signify *outward* actions. So *thinking* is often distinguished from *acting*, and *desiring* and *willing* are distinguished from *doing*.

Besides this more usual and proper meaning of the word *action*, there are other ways in which the word is used that are less proper, which yet have their place in common speech. Oftentimes the word is used to signify some motion or alteration in inanimate things, with relation to some object and effect. So, the spring of a watch is said to *act* upon the chain and wheels; sunbeams *act* upon plants and trees; and fire *acts* upon wood. Sometimes the word is useful to signify motions, alterations, and exertions of power, which are seen in corporeal things, as considered absolutely—especially when these motions seem to arise from some internal cause which is hidden. So that *actions* more closely resemble those motions of our bodies which are the effects of natural volition, or the invisible exertions of our will. So the fermentation of liquor, the operations of the loadstone, and of electrical bodies, are called the *action* of these things. And sometimes, the word *action* is used to signify the exercise of *thought*, or of *will* and *inclination*. Thus meditating, loving, hating, inclining, disinclining, choosing, and refusing, may be sometimes called *acting*; though this more rarely done than with any of the other senses (unless it is done by philosophers and metaphysicians).

But the word is never used in common speech in that sense in which Arminian divines use it—namely, for the self-determinate exercise of the will, or an exertion of the soul, that arises without any necessary connection with anything foregoing. If a man does something voluntarily, or as the effect of his choice, then in the most proper sense, and as the word is most originally and commonly used, he is said to *act*. But whether that choice or volition is self-determined or not; whether it is connected with foregoing, habitual bias; whether it is the certain effect of the strongest motive or of some intrinsic cause—none of this ever comes into consideration in the meaning of the word.

And if the word *action* is arbitrarily used by some men to suit some scheme of metaphysics or morality, then no argument can reasonably be founded on such a use of this term to prove anything but their own pleasure. For divines and philosophers strenuously to urge such arguments, as though they were sufficient to support and demonstrate a whole scheme of moral philosophy and divinity, is certainly to erect a mighty edifice upon sand, or rather upon a shadow. Though perhaps through custom, it may now have become natural for them to use the word in this sense (if what is inconsistent with itself may be called a *sense* or *meaning*), this still does not prove that it agrees with the natural notions men have of things, or that there can be anything in the creation that would match such a meaning. And though they appeal to experience, the truth is that men are so far from experiencing any such thing, that it is impossible for them to have any conception of it.

If it were objected that *activity* and *passivity* are doubtless words of a contrary meaning; and to suppose that the agent, in its action, is under the power and influence of something *intrinsic*, is to confound *activity* and *passivity*, and make them the same thing¹—then I would answer as follows:

Activity and passivity are doubtless words of opposite meaning, as they are sometimes used—not as signifying opposite *existences*, but only opposite *relations*. The words *cause* and *effect* are terms of opposite meaning; but nevertheless, if I assert that the same thing may, at the same time, in different respects and relations, be both cause and effect, this will not prove that I confound the terms. The soul may be both active and passive in the same thing in different respects; it may be active in relation to one thing, and passive in relation to another. The word *passiveness*, when set in opposition to action, or rather *activeness*, is merely relative: it signifies no effect or cause, nor any proper existence. It is the same as being passive, or being acted upon by something else. This is a mere relation of something to some power or force exerted by some cause, producing some effect in it or upon it.

Action, when set in proper opposition to passivity or passiveness, has no real existence. A passive act² is not the same as an action; it is merely related to it. Action is the activeness of something on another thing, in an opposing relation to the other—a relation of power, or force, exerted by some cause towards another thing which is subject to the *effect* of that power. Indeed, the word *action* is frequently used to mean something that is not merely relative, but more absolute, and has real existence: as when we use *action* (not transitively but absolutely) to mean some motion or exercise of the body or mind, without any relation to any object or effect. And when it is used this way, it is not properly the opposite of a passive act—which ordinarily means nothing absolute—but merely the relation of being acted upon. Therefore, if the word *action* is used in a similar relative sense, then active and passive acts are only two contrary relations. And so it is not absurd to suppose that contrary relations may belong to the same thing, at the same time, with respect to different things.³

So it does not at all confound *activeness* and *passiveness* to suppose that there are acts of the soul by which a man voluntarily moves, and acts upon objects, and produces effects which are themselves the effects of something else, and in which the soul itself is the object of something that is acting upon and influencing it. The words may nevertheless properly have opposite meanings. There may be as true and real a difference between *acting* and being *caused to act*

¹ This was Mr. Chubb's objection, mentioned on page 54 above.

² Originally Edwards used "passion" as the term for a passive act, in contradistinction to "action" – but this causes confusion in modern English; and so "passivity", "passiveness," or "passive act" have been substituted.

³ For example, watching T.V. is passive; we merely receive information. But watching a baby is actively ensuring its safety and care, even though no action may be taken, such as feeding the baby or changing its diaper. Yet, without any action, watching is not properly "active," but passive. If those actions are taken, watching the baby changes from passive to active. Whether "watching" is passive or active is thus *related* to the needs of the baby.

(though we might suppose the soul is *both* in the same volition), just as there is between *living*, and being *made* to live. It is no more of a contradiction to suppose that *action* may be the effect of some other cause besides the agent or the being that acts, than there is to suppose that life may be the effect of some other cause, besides the being that lives, and in whom life is caused to be.

The thing which has led men into this inconsistent notion of *action* when it is applied to *volition*—as though it was essential to this internal action that the agent be self-determined in it, and that the will be the cause of it—was probably this: that according to the common sense of mankind, and the common use of language, that is how it is with respect to men's *external* actions, which are what originally were called *actions*. Men in these external actions are self-directed, self-determined, and their wills are the *cause* of the motions of their bodies, and of the external things that are done. So unless men do them voluntarily, and by choice, and the action is determined by their antecedent volition, it is not an action of theirs or something they have done. From this, some metaphysicians have been led unwarily, but absurdly, to suppose the same thing concerning volition itself: that it must also be determined by the *will*—which is to be determined by antecedent *volition*, just as the motion of the body is determined—but not considering the contradiction it implies.

It is evident in the metaphysical distinction between *activeness* and *passiveness* (though it has long since become common and the general vogue) due care has not been taken to conform language to the nature of things, or to any distinct and clear ideas. This is how it is with numerous other philosophical, metaphysical terms, that are used in these disputes, and which has given rise to inexpressible difficulty, contention, error, and confusion.

And this is how it probably came to be thought that necessity was inconsistent with action, as these terms are applied to volition. First, these terms, *action* and *necessity*, have been changed from their original meaning which signified external voluntary action and constraint (in which they are evidently inconsistent), to signify quite other things, such as volition itself, and the certainty of being. And when such a change of meaning is made, care is not taken to make proper allowances and abatements for the difference in sense. But still the same things are unwarily attributed to *action* and *necessity*, in the new meaning of the words, which plainly belonged to their original sense. And on this ground, maxims are established without any real foundation, as though they were the most certain truths, and the most evident dictates of reason.

But, however strenuously it is maintained that what is *necessary* cannot properly be called *action*, and that a *necessary action* is a contradiction, it is probable that there are few Arminian divines who, if thoroughly tested, would stand by these principles. They will allow that God is, in the highest sense, an *active* being, and the highest fountain of life and action. And they would not probably deny that God's acts of righteousness, holiness, and faithfulness, are truly and properly God's acts, and God is really a *holy agent* in them. And I further trust that they will not deny that God *necessarily* acts justly and faithfully, and that it is *impossible* for Him to act unrighteously and unholy.

Section III. The Reasons why some think it is Contrary To Common Sense, To Suppose that those Things which are Necessary, are Worthy of either Praise or Blame.

It is abundantly affirmed and urged by Arminian writers, that it is contrary to common sense, and to the natural notions and apprehensions of mankind, *not* to suppose that necessity (making no distinction between *natural* and *moral* necessity) is inconsistent with virtue and vice, praise and blame, reward and punishment. They have greatly rejoiced in arguments made from this supposition—arguments that have perplexed many who are friendly to the truth

clearly revealed in the holy Scriptures. It has seemed indeed difficult to them, to reconcile Calvinistic doctrines with the notions men commonly have of justice and equity. And the true reasons for this seem to be these that follow.

I. It is indeed a plain dictate of common sense, that natural necessity is wholly inconsistent with justifiable praise or blame. If men do things which in themselves are very good, and are fit to be brought to pass, and which have very happy effects, and yet are against their wills, and they cannot help it—or if they do them from a necessity that is outside their wills, or with which their wills have no concern or connection—then it is a plain dictate of common sense that it does not proceed from their virtue, nor from any moral good in them. And therefore, they are not worthy to be rewarded or praised for it, or at all esteemed, honoured, or loved on that account.

On the other hand, if they do things out of necessity, which in themselves are very unhappy and pernicious things, and they do them because they cannot help it—then the necessity is such that it is the same whether they *will* them or not; the reason why they are done is only from necessity, and not from their wills. It is a plain dictate of common sense that they are not at all to blame for it. There is no vice, fault, or moral evil at all in the effect of what is done; nor are those who are necessitated in this way, at all worthy to be punished, hated, or in the least disrespected on that account.

In the same way, if things, which in themselves are good and desirable, are absolutely impossible to do with a *natural* impossibility,¹ the universal reason of mankind teaches that this impossibility wholly and perfectly excuses persons from not doing them.

It is also a plain dictate of common sense that if doing things that are good in themselves, or avoiding things that are evil in themselves, is *not* absolutely impossible, but is very difficult, with a natural difficulty (i.e., a prior difficulty), and it does not consist in will and inclination itself, and if this difficulty remains the same, whatever the inclination may be, then neglect or omission is excused in some measure, though not wholly—the person’s sin is less aggravated than if the thing to be done were easy.

Instead of difficulty and hindrance, say there is a contrary natural *propensity* for the thing to be done, or the effect to be attained—separate from any consideration of the inclination of the heart. Even though the propensity does not amount to a natural necessity, it somewhat approaches it, so that doing the good thing is very much from this natural tendency in the state of things, and it is only a little from a good inclination. If so, then common sense dictates that there is that much less virtue in what is done, and it is that much less praiseworthy and rewardable. The reason is easy: because such a natural propensity or tendency approaches natural necessity; and the greater the propensity, the nearer it is to necessity. Therefore, just as natural necessity takes away or shuts out all virtue, so this propensity approaches the abolition of virtue—that is, it diminishes it. And, on the other hand, natural *difficulty* approaches a natural *impossibility*. Just as natural *impossibility* wholly takes away blame when it is complete and absolute, so natural *difficulty* diminishes or takes away some blame; it makes the thing done, less worthy of punishment.

II. Men use such phrases as “must, cannot, cannot help it, cannot avoid it, necessary, unable, impossible, unavoidable, irresistible,” etc., to signify a necessity of constraint or restraint; a natural necessity or impossibility; or some necessity that the will has nothing to do with. It may be whether men will or not, and it may be the same regardless of men’s inclinations and desires. I suppose such terms are relative in their original use among all nations. They imply as part of their meaning, some contrary will, desire, or endeavour in the case (as observed before).

¹ For example, physical or mental incapacity.

All men find, and begin to find in early childhood, that there are innumerable things which they desire to do, that cannot be done; and there are innumerable things which they are averse to, that nonetheless must be—they cannot avoid them, they *will be*, whether they choose them or not. Such terms and phrases are first formed to express this necessity which men so soon and so often find, and which so greatly and so early affects them in innumerable cases. They are first and most constantly used in the common affairs of life to signify such a necessity, and not to signify any such metaphysical, speculative, and abstract notion—as for example, that connection between the subject and predicate of a proposition, which is the foundation of the certain truth of that proposition. Those who employ themselves in philosophical inquiries into the first origin,¹ and metaphysical relations, and the dependencies of things, have borrowed these terms (for lack of others) to signify such things. But we grow up from our cradles using such terms and phrases entirely different from this, with a sense exceedingly different from what is commonly understood in the controversy between Arminians and Calvinists. And as said before, it is a dictate of the universal sense of mankind, which is evident to us as soon as we begin to think, that the *necessity* signified by these terms, in the sense in which we first learn them, excuses and frees persons from all fault or blame. Hence, our idea of excusableness or faultlessness is tied to these terms and phrases by a strong habit which was begun in childhood, as soon as we began to speak; it grew up with us, strengthened by constant use and custom, the connection growing stronger and stronger over time.

The habitual connection which is in men's minds between *blamelessness* and those terms mentioned earlier—"must, cannot, unable, necessary, impossible, unavoidable," etc.—becomes very strong. This is because, as soon as men begin to use reason and speech, they excuse themselves from the natural necessity signified by these terms in numerous instances: "I cannot do it; I could not help it." Mankind has constant and daily occasion to use such phrases to excuse themselves and others in almost all the concerns of life, with respect to disappointments and things that happen; things which concern and affect ourselves and others; things that are hurtful, or disagreeable to us or to them; or things that are desirable, but that we or others fail to obtain.

Someone that is accustomed to a union of different ideas from early childhood, makes this habitual connection exceedingly strong, as though such connection were attributable to nature. This is evident in innumerable instances. It is by such a habitual connection of ideas, that men judge the size or distance of objects by their appearance. It is attributable to such a connection, early established and growing up with a person, that he judges a mountain which he sees ten miles distant to be bigger than his nose, or further off than the end of it. We are so long used to joining a considerable distance and magnitude with such an appearance, that men imagine it comes by a dictate of natural sense. But it would be quite otherwise with someone that had his eyes newly opened, who had been born blind. He would have the same visible appearance, but natural sense would dictate no such thing concerning the size or distance of what appeared to him.

III. After men have been so habituated to connect ideas of innocence or blamelessness with such terms, that the union seems to be the effect of mere nature, they come to hear the same terms used (and learn to use them themselves) in the new and metaphysical sense, to signify quite another sort of necessity, which has no such relation to a supposed contrary will and endeavour. By this means, the connotation of a plain and manifest blamelessness is, with strong prejudice, unwittingly and unwarily transferred to a case to which it does not belong. The change of the use of the terms to a very different meaning is not noticed or adverted to. There are several reasons why it is not.

¹ What has come to be known as the *First Cause*, from which all of existence came into being.

1. The terms, as used by philosophers, are not very distinct and clear in their meaning. Few use them in a fixed, determined sense. On the contrary, their meaning is very vague and confused, which commonly happens to words used to signify intellectual and moral things, and to express what Mr. Locke calls *mixed modes*. If men had a clear and distinct understanding of what is intended by these metaphysical terms, they would be able to more easily compare them with their original and common sense; and so they would not be so easily deluded by words of this sort.

2. The change of the meaning of the terms is less discernible, because the things signified, though indeed very different, still agree some general respects. In *necessity*, as commonly used, there is a strong connection between the thing said to be necessary, and something that is antecedent to it in the natural order; there is also something antecedent in *philosophical necessity*. Though in both kinds of necessity, the connection cannot be called necessary as it relates to an opposite will or endeavour to which it is superior¹—yet in both, the connection is *prior* to will and endeavour, and so in some respect, it is superior to it. In both kinds of necessity, there is a foundation for some certainty of the proposition that affirms the event. The terms used are the same, and the things signified agree in these and some other general ways. And the expressions used by philosophers, not being well defined, have an obscure and loose meaning. Thus others are not aware of the great difference, and of the notions of *innocence* or *faultiness* which were so strongly associated with these terms, and which were strictly united in their minds ever since they can remember. And they remain united with them still, as if the union were altogether natural and necessary. Those who go about separating them, seem to do great violence to them, even to nature itself.

IV. Another reason why it appears difficult to reconcile it with reason—that men should be blamed for what is necessary with a *moral necessity* (which, as observed before, is a species of *philosophical necessity*)—is that for lack of due consideration, men inwardly entertain the thought that this *necessity* may be against men’s wills and sincere endeavors. They go away with the notion that men may truly will, and wish, and strive for it to be otherwise, but “invincible necessity” somehow stands in the way. Many think this way concerning themselves. Some who are wicked, *think* they wish they were good, and that they loved God and holiness; yet they find that their wishes do not produce the desired effect. The reasons why men think so are as follow:

(1.) They find what may be called an *indirect willingness* to have a better will, in the way observed before. For it is impossible, and a contradiction, to suppose that the will is directly and properly against itself. They do not consider, that this *indirect willingness* is an entirely different thing from properly willing the thing required by duty and virtue; and that there is no virtue in that sort of willingness which they have. They do not consider that the volitions which a wicked man may have—that he loved God—are not acts of the will at all, against the moral evil of not loving God; but only some disagreeable consequences of it. But making the requisite distinction requires more careful reflection and thought than most men are used to. And men, through a prejudice in their own favour, are disposed to think well of their own desires and dispositions, and to consider them good and virtuous, even though their respect to virtue is only indirect and remote, and what truly excites or terminates their inclinations is nothing that is at all virtuous.

¹ For example, if I will and endeavor not to fall as I step off a cliff, gravity opposes it. Gravity is antecedent and superior; and so the connection between my will not to fall, and the act of falling, is not necessary. Whereas, if I pull the trigger of a loaded and functional revolver, it is a necessary consequent that the bullet will fire. If I did not will or endeavor to fire the bullet, and yet the revolver discharged, that event was not “necessary.”

(2.) Another thing that unwarily lends and beguiles men to suppose that this moral necessity or impossibility is, or may be, against men's wills and true endeavors, is the derivation and formation of the terms that are often used to express it, which seem to directly point to and uphold it. For instance, such words as "unable, unavoidable, impossible, irresistible," plainly refer to a supposed power that is exerted, endeavors that are used, or resistance that is made, in opposition to the necessity. The persons that hear these words, not considering or suspecting that they are not being used in their proper sense (yet that sense being understood), there naturally and "necessarily" arises in their minds a supposition that it may be so indeed: that true desires and endeavors may arise, but invincible necessity stands in the way, and renders them vain and of no effect.

V. Another thing which makes persons ready to suppose it is contrary to reason that men should be exposed to the punishments that are threatened for sin, for doing those things which are morally necessary, or for not doing those things that are morally impossible, is that *imagination* strengthens the argument. The greatness of that punishment adds greatly to the power and influence of the seeming reasons against it. To accept that they may be justly exposed to a small punishment would be less difficult than exposing them to a great punishment. Yet, if it were truly a dictate of *reason* that such necessity is inconsistent with faultiness or just punishment, its demonstration would be equally certain with respect to a small punishment as to a great one, or to any punishment at all. But it is not equally easy to the *imagination*. Those who argue against the justice of damning men for those things that are thus necessary, seem to make their argument stronger by setting forth the greatness of the punishment in strong expressions like this: "A man would be cast into eternal burnings—he would be made to fry in hell for all eternity—for those things which he had no power to avoid; he was under a fatal, unfrustrable, and invincible *necessity* of doing them."

Section IV. Common sense, and Man's Natural Notions, indicate that Moral Necessity is Consistent with Praise and Blame, Reward and Punishment.

Reasons have been given for why it appears difficult for some persons to reconcile with common sense, the praising or blaming, rewarding or punishing, of those things which are morally necessary, whether those reasons are thought satisfactory or not. Yet it most evidently appears by the following things, that if this matter is rightly understood, setting aside all delusion arising from the impropriety and ambiguity of terms, this is not at all inconsistent with the natural apprehensions of mankind, and with that sense of things which is found everywhere among the common people—those who are furthest from having their thoughts perverted from their natural channel by metaphysical and philosophical subtleties. On the contrary, the following things altogether agree with the very voice and dictate of this natural and common sense.

I. This will be apparent if we consider the common notion of *blameworthiness*. The idea which the common people through all ages and nations have of faultiness, I suppose is plainly this—a person being or doing wrong, with his own will and pleasure, containing these two things: 1. His doing wrong when he does as he pleases; and 2. His pleasures being wrong. In other words, perhaps more intelligibly expressing their idea: *a person having his heart wrong; and doing wrong from his heart*. This is the sum total of the matter.

The common people do not ascend in their reflections and abstractions to the metaphysical sources, relations, and dependencies of things, in order to form their notion of faultiness or blameworthiness. They do not wait till they have decided by their refinings, what first determines the will—whether it is determined by something extrinsic or intrinsic; whether volition determines volition, or whether the understanding determines the will; whether there

is any such thing as metaphysicians mean by contingency (if they have any meaning); whether there is a sort of strange, unaccountable sovereignty in the will, in the exercise of which, by its own sovereign acts, it brings to pass all its own sovereign acts. They do not take any part of their notion of fault or blame from the resolution of any such questions. If they did, there are multitudes, indeed, the great majority of mankind—nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand— who would live and die without having any such notion as *fault* ever entering into their heads. Nor would there be even one who had any conception that anybody was either to be blamed or commended for anything. To be sure it would be a long time before men came to have such notions. Yet it is obvious that these are some of the first notions that appear in children. They discover a sense of deserving as soon as they can think, or speak, or act at all as rational creatures. And certainly, in forming their notion of it, they make no use of metaphysics. All the ground they go upon consists in these two things: experience, and a natural sense that it is fitting or agreeable to unite such moral evil as described above —being or doing wrong—with the will, and with resentment in others, and with inflicting pain on the person in whom this moral evil is found. This natural sense is what we call *conscience*.

It is true, the common people and children, in their notion of any faulty act or deed, of any person, suppose that it is the person's own act and deed. But this is all that belongs to what they understand by something being a person's own deed or action—that it is something he did by choice. That some exercise or motion should begin by itself, does not belong to their notion of an action or of doing something. If it did, they would think it is the cause of its own beginning; which is the same as saying it occurs before it begins to occur. Nor is their notion of an action, some motion or exercise that begins accidentally, without *any* cause or reason; for that is contrary to one of the prime dictates of common sense—namely, that everything that comes to be, has some cause or reason why it is.

The common people suppose, in their notion of a faulty or praiseworthy deed or work done by someone, that the man does it in the exercise of his liberty. But then their notion of liberty is only a person having an opportunity to do as he pleases. They have no notion of liberty consisting in the will first acting, and so causing its own acts; or determining, and so causing its own determinations; or choosing, and so causing its own choice. No one has such a notion of liberty except those who have darkened their own minds with confused metaphysical speculation, and abstruse and ambiguous terms. If a man is not restrained from acting as his will determines, or constrained to act otherwise, then he has liberty, according to common notions of liberty—without taking into it that grand contradiction of all, that the determinations of a man's free will are the *effects* of the determinations of his free will. Nor do men commonly have any notion of freedom consisting in indifference. For if they did, they might agree that the greater indifference men act with, the more freedom they act with—whereas the *reverse* is actually true. Common sense says that in acting, the one who proceeds with the fullest inclination does what he does with the greatest freedom. It is far from common sense to say that liberty must consist in indifference to be worthy of praise or blame. On the contrary, the dictate of every man's natural sense, throughout the world, is that the further a man is from being indifferent in acting good or evil, and the more he does either with a full and strong inclination, the more he is esteemed or abhorred, commended or condemned.

II. If it were inconsistent with the common sense of mankind, that men should either be blamed or commended in any volitions they have or fail to have in cases of moral necessity or impossibility, then it would surely also agree with the same sense and reason of mankind, that the nearer the case approaches to such a moral necessity or impossibility—either through a strong antecedent moral propensity on the one hand, or a great antecedent opposition and difficulty on the other—the less it is either blameable or commendable. So that acts exerted with such a preceding propensity, would be worthy of proportionally less praise. And when they are omitted (the act being attended with such difficulty), the omission would be less

blameworthy. As observed before, it is this way with *natural* necessity and impossibility, and *natural* propensity and difficulty. It is a plain dictate of the sense of all mankind, that natural necessity and impossibility take away all blame and praise. And therefore the nearer the approach is to these, through previous propensity or difficulty, the more that praise and blame are diminished.

If it were as much a dictate of common sense with a *moral* necessity or impossibility, as it is with a *natural* necessity or impossibility, then as we approach the necessity or the impossibility, it likewise proportionally diminishes praise and blame. It is equally the voice of common sense that persons are partly excusable in neglecting things difficult against their wills; and that they are wholly excusable in neglecting things impossible against their wills. If it made no difference with regard to excusableness, whether the impossibility were *natural* and against the will, or *moral* and lying in the will, then neither would it make any difference whether the difficulty, or the approach to necessity, is *natural* against the will, or *moral*, lying in the propensity of the will.

But it is apparent that the reverse of these things is also true. If there is an approach to a moral necessity in a man's exertion of good acts of will—being the exercise of a strong propensity to good, and of a very powerful love for virtue—then it is far from the dictate of common sense that he would be *less* virtuous, and *less* to be esteemed, loved, and praised for it. It agrees with the natural notions of all mankind that he is so much the *better* man, worthy of *greater* respect, and *higher* commendation. The stronger his inclination is, and the nearer it approaches a necessity in that respect—or the nearer the impossibility of neglecting the virtuous act, or of doing a vicious one—the more virtuous he is, and worthy of higher commendation. On the other hand, if a man exerts evil acts of mind—for instance, acts of pride or malice proceeding from a rooted and strong habit, or from a principle of haughtiness and maliciousness, or from a violent propensity of heart for such acts—then according to the natural sense of men, he is far from being less hateful and blameable on that account. Rather, he is that much more worthy to be detested and condemned by all who observe him.

Moreover, it is no part of the notion which mankind commonly has of a blameable or praiseworthy act of the will, that it is an act which is not determined by an antecedent bias or motive, but instead is determined by the sovereign power of the will itself. If this were so, the greater hand such bias or motive had in determining any acts of the will, the less virtuous or vicious they would be accounted; and the lesser hand, the more virtuous or vicious they would be. Whereas the reverse is actually true: men do not think a good act is *less* praiseworthy if the agents are greatly determined in it by a good inclination or a good motive; rather, they are *more* praiseworthy. And if good inclination or motive has little influence in determining the agent, they do not think his act is more virtuous, but less. And so too concerning evil acts which are determined by evil motives or inclinations.

Indeed, if it is supposed that good or evil dispositions are implanted in the hearts of men by nature itself (which, it is certain, is commonly supposed in innumerable cases), yet it is not commonly supposed that men are worthy of no praise or dispraise for such dispositions—although what is *natural* is undoubtedly *necessary*, nature being prior to all acts of the will whatsoever. Thus, for instance, if a man appears to be of a very haughty or malicious disposition, and is supposed to be so by his natural temper, it is no common notion, and no dictate of common sense and the apprehension of men, that such dispositions are not vices or moral evils, or that such persons are not worthy of disesteem, or odium and dishonour; or that the proud or malicious acts which flow from such natural dispositions are not worthy of resentment. Indeed, such vile natural dispositions, and their strength, will commonly be mentioned as an aggravation of the wicked acts that come from such a fountain, rather than an extenuation of them. Men in the height of their indignation often observe that it is natural for

men to act this way. They say, "It is his very nature; he has a vile natural temper; it is as natural for him to act this way as it is to breathe; he cannot help serving the devil," etc. But it is not this way with regard to hurtful, mischievous things, that any are the subjects or occasions of by natural necessity, *against* their inclinations. In such a case, with the common voice of mankind, the necessity is spoken of as a full excuse. Thus it is very plain that common sense makes a vast distinction between these two kinds of necessity, as to the judgment it makes about their influence on the moral quality and desert¹ of men's actions.

And these dictates of men's minds are so natural and necessary, that it may be very much doubted whether the Arminians themselves have ever gotten rid of them. Indeed, with regard to their greatest doctors who have gone furthest in defense of their metaphysical notions of liberty, and have brought their arguments to their greatest strength and, as they suppose, to a demonstration against the consistence of virtue and vice with any necessity—it is to be questioned whether there is even one of them that, if he suffered very much from the injurious acts of a man under the power of an invincible haughtiness and malignancy of temper, would not—from the aforementioned natural sense of mind—resent it far differently than if his great sufferings had come upon him from the wind that blows, or the fire that burns, i.e. by natural necessity; and differently than he would have if he suffered as much from the conduct of a man who was completely delirious; indeed, even though he first brought his delirium upon himself in some way by his own fault.

Some seem to disdain the distinction that we make between *natural* and *moral* necessity, as though it were altogether irrelevant in this controversy. What is necessary (they say) is necessary; it is what must be, and cannot be prevented. What is impossible, is impossible, and cannot be done. Therefore none can be blamed for not doing it. Comparisons are used, such as commanding a man to walk who has lost his legs, and condemning and punishing him for not obeying; or inviting and calling on a man who is shut up in a strong prison, to come out, etc. But Arminians are being unreasonable in these things. Let common sense determine whether there is not a great difference between *these* two cases:

The one case is that of a man who has offended his prince, and is cast into prison. After he has laid there awhile, the king comes to him, and calls him to come out to him. The king tells him that if he will do so, and will fall down before him, and humbly beg his pardon, he shall be forgiven and set at liberty, and also be greatly enriched, and advanced to honour. The prisoner heartily repents of the folly and wickedness of his offence against his prince; he is thoroughly disposed to abase himself and accept the king's offer; but he is confined by strong walls, with gates of brass, and bars of iron.²

The other case is that of a man who has a very unreasonable spirit. He has a haughty, ungrateful, and wilful disposition. Moreover, he has been brought up in traitorous principles; his heart possesses an extreme and inveterate enmity to his lawful sovereign. It is for his rebellion that he has been cast into prison, and long lies there, loaded with heavy chains, and in miserable circumstances. At length, the compassionate prince comes to the prison, orders his chains to be knocked off, and his prison-doors to be set wide open. The prince calls to him, and tells him that if he will come out to him, and fall down before him, acknowledge that he has treated him unworthily, and ask his forgiveness, he shall be forgiven, set at liberty, and set in a place of great dignity and profit in his court. But this man is so arrogant and proud, and full of haughty malignity, that he *cannot* willingly accept the offer. His rooted strong pride and malice have perfect power over him; they bind him, by binding his heart. His contrary heart has

¹ That which is deserved or merited; a just punishment or reward.

² Physical or *natural* necessity prevents his obedience.

mastery over him, having an influence on his mind that is far superior to the king's grace and condescension, and to all his kind offers and promises.¹

Now, does it agree with common sense to assert, and stand by it, that there is no difference between these two cases, as to any blameworthiness in the prisoners? Because, truly, there is a *necessity* in both, and the required act in each case is impossible. In truth, a man's evil dispositions may be as strong and immoveable as the bars of a castle. But who cannot see that when a man, in the latter case, is said to be "unable" to obey the command, the expression is used improperly, and not in its original sense, or as used in common speech. It may properly be said to be in that rebel's power to come out of prison, seeing he can easily do so if he pleases. Though by reason of his vile temperament of heart, which is fixed and rooted, it is impossible that it would please him to do so.

On the whole, I presume there is no person of good understanding, who impartially considers the things which have been observed, that will not allow that it is not evident from the dictates of the common sense, or from the natural notions of mankind, that *moral* necessity is inconsistent with praise and blame. Therefore, if the Arminians would prove any such inconsistency, it must be by some philosophical and metaphysical arguments, and not by common sense.

There is a grand illusion in the pretended demonstration of Arminians from common sense. The main strength of all these demonstrations lies in that prejudice which arises through the unwary change of the use and meaning of such terms as "liberty, able, unable, necessary, impossible, unavoidable, invincible, action," etc. from their original and common sense, to a metaphysical sense, which is entirely different. And it arises from the strong connection of the ideas of *blamelessness*, etc. with some of these terms, by a habit that has been contracted and established while these terms were used in their original meaning. This prejudice and delusion is the foundation of all those positions they lay down as *maxims*, by which most of the Scriptures which they allege in this controversy, are interpreted, and on which all their pompous demonstrations from Scripture and reason depend. From this secret delusion and prejudice they have almost all their advantages—it is the strength of their bulwarks, and the edge of their weapons. And this is the main ground of all the right they have to treat their neighbours in so assumptive a manner, and to insult others, perhaps as wise and good as themselves, as weak bigots—men that dwell in the dark caves of superstition, perversely set, obstinately shutting their eyes against the noon-day light, enemies to common sense, maintaining the first-born of absurdities, etc., etc.

But perhaps an impartial consideration of the things which have been observed in the preceding parts of this Inquiry, may enable the lovers of truth to better judge which doctrine is indeed absurd, abstruse, self-contradictory, and inconsistent with common sense, and in many ways repugnant to the universal dictates of the reason of mankind.

Corollary. From the things which have been observed, it follows that it is common sense to suppose that the glorified saints do not have their freedom at all diminished in any respect; that God himself has the highest possible freedom according to the true and proper meaning of the term; and that God is, in the highest possible respect, an agent and active in the exercise of his infinite holiness—though he acts in this, in the highest degree *necessarily*. And his actions of this kind, are virtuous and praiseworthy in the highest, most absolutely perfect manner; and they are most perfectly virtuous and praiseworthy for that very reason: because they are most perfectly *necessary*.

¹ Moral necessity prevents his obedience.

Section V. Two Objections to this Scheme.

1. Necessity Renders All Means and Endeavours to Avoid Sin, or to Obtain Virtue and Holiness, Vain.

2. It makes Men No More than Machines in Affairs of Morality and Religion.

Arminians say that if this is so, that sin and virtue come to pass by a necessity consisting in a sure connection of causes and effects, antecedents and consequents—thus it can never be worthwhile to use any means or endeavours to obtain virtue and avoid sin, seeing that no endeavours can alter the futurity of the event which has become necessary by a connection that is already established.

But I desire that this matter may be fully considered, and that it may be examined with a thorough strictness, whether it follows that endeavours and means, to avoid or obtain any future thing, must be more in vain (supposing there is such a connection of antecedents and consequents), than if the contrary is supposed?

For endeavours to be in vain, they must be unsuccessful. That is, they will not eventually be the means of the thing aimed at. This can only be in one of these two ways. Either *first*, although the means are used, the event aimed at does not follow; or *secondly*, if the event does follow, it is not because of the means, or from any connection or dependence of the event on the means—the event would have come to pass without the means, as well as with them. If either of these two things is the case, then the means are not properly successful, and they are truly in vain. The successfulness or unsuccessfulness of means in having an effect, or of means being in vain or not, consists in those means being connected or not connected with the effect. And so the effect is *with* the means, and not *without* them; or the presence of the effect is, on the one hand, connected with the means, and the lack of the effect is, on the other hand, connected with the lack of those means. If there is such a connection as this between means and end, then the means are not in vain. The more there is of such a connection, the further they are from being in vain; and the less there is of such a connection, the more the means are in vain.

Now we may determine whether it follows from this doctrine of the *necessary* connection between foregoing things and consequent ones, that the means used in order to produce any effect are more in vain than they would be if there were no connection. Therefore, the question to be answered is whether it follows from this that there is *less* of a connection between means and effect—that is, whether there is *less* of a connection if there is a real and true connection between means and effect, than there would be if there were *no* fixed connection between antecedent things and consequent ones. Simply stating this question is sufficient to answer it. It must appear to everyone who will open his eyes, that this question cannot be affirmed without the grossest absurdity and inconsistency. Means are *foregoing* things, and effects are *following* things. And if there were no connection between foregoing things and following ones, there could be no connection between means and end; and so all means would be wholly vain and fruitless. For it is only by virtue of some connection that they become successful. It is some connection that is observed or revealed, or otherwise known, between antecedent things and following ones, that directs the choice of means. If there were no established connection, there could be no choice of means. One thing would have no more tendency to produce an effect than another; there would be no such thing as *tendency* in the case. All those things which are *successful* means to other things, *prove* they are connected antecedents. Therefore, to assert that a fixed connection between antecedents and consequents makes the means vain and useless, or stands in the way to hinder the connection between means and ends, is as ridiculous as saying that a connection between antecedents and consequents hinders the connection between antecedents and consequents.

Nor can any supposed connection of the *succession* or *train* of antecedents and consequents hinder the means. From the very beginning of all things, the connection is already made sure and necessary either by established laws of nature, or by these together with a sovereign decree and by immediate interpositions of Divine power on manifold occasions, or in any other way (if there is any). I say, no such necessary connection of a series of antecedents and consequents can in the least tend to hinder—except that the means we use belong to the series; and so they may be some of those antecedents which are connected with the consequents we aim at in the established course of things. Endeavours which we use are things that exist; and therefore they belong to the general chain of events. All the parts of that chain are *supposed* to be connected; and so endeavours are *supposed* to be connected with some effects, or with some consequent things or other. And certainly this does not hinder success, except that the events they are connected with may be those which we aim at, and which we choose. And we aim at and choose them because we judge them most likely to have a connection with those events from the established order and course of things which we observe, or from something in Divine revelation.

Let us suppose a real and true connection between a man with good organs of sight having his eyes open in the clear day-light, and seeing—so that *seeing* is connected with his *opening* his eyes, and *not* seeing is connected with his *not opening* his eyes. There is also a similar connection between such a man *attempting* to open his eyes, and *actually* doing it. The connection that is established between these antecedents and consequents, however sure and necessary the connection may be, certainly does not prove that it is in vain for a man in such circumstances to attempt to open his eyes, in order to see. His aiming at that event, and using the means he has, each being an effect of his will, does not break the connection between them, nor hinder the success.

So that the objection we are addressing does not lie against the doctrine of the necessity of events by a certainty of connection and consequence. On the contrary, it is truly forceful *against* the Arminian doctrine of contingency and self-determination, which is inconsistent with such a connection. If there is no connection between those events in which virtue and vice consist, and anything antecedent to them, then there is no connection between these events and any means or endeavours used in order to attain them. And if this is so, then those means must be in vain. The less there is of a connection between foregoing things and following ones, the less there is between means and ends, endeavours and success; and to that same extent, means and endeavours are ineffectual and in vain.

It will follow from Arminian principles that there is no degree of connection between virtue or vice, and any foregoing event or thing. In other words, the determination of the existence of virtue or vice does not in the least depend on the influence of anything that comes to pass antecedently as the cause, means, or ground from which the determination of its existence ensues; because so far as it does, it is *not* from self-determination; and therefore, to that extent there is nothing of the nature of virtue or vice in it. And so it follows that virtue and vice are not at all, in any degree, dependent on or connected with any foregoing event or existence, as their cause, ground, or means. And if this is so, then all foregoing means must be totally in vain.

Hence it follows that there cannot, consistent with the Arminian scheme, be any reasonable ground of so much as a conjecture concerning the consequence of any means and endeavours in order to escape vice, or obtain virtue, nor any choice or preference of means as having a greater probability of success than others. And this is neither from any natural connection or dependence of the end on the means, nor through any divine constitution, nor revealed way of God's bestowing or bringing to pass these things as a consequence of any means, endeavours, prayers, or deeds. Conjectures in this latter case depend on a supposition that God himself is the giver or determining cause of the events sought. But if they depend on self-determination,

then God is not the determining or disposing author of them; and if these things are not by his disposal, then no conjecture can be made, from any revelation he has given, concerning any way or method of his disposing of them.

Indeed, on these principles it will not only follow that men cannot have any reasonable ground of judgment or conjecture that their means and endeavours to obtain virtue, or to avoid vice, will be successful. Rather, they may be sure they will not; they may be certain they will be in vain; and that if the thing which they seek ever comes to pass, it will not be at all attributable to the means they use. For means and endeavours can have no effect at all in order to obtain the end, except in one of two ways. Either (1) through a natural tendency and influence to prepare and dispose the mind more to virtuous acts, either by causing the disposition of the heart to be more in favour of such acts, or by bringing the mind more into the view of powerful motives and inducements; or (2) by putting persons more in the way of God's bestowment of the benefit.¹

But neither of these can be the case. Not the latter, for as just observed, it is not consistent with the Arminian notion of self-determination—which they suppose is essential to virtue—that God should be the bestower of virtue, i.e. the determining and disposing author of virtue. And not the former, for natural influence and tendency assumes *causality* and *connection*, and it assumes the *necessity* of an event, which are inconsistent with Arminian liberty. A tendency of means, by biasing the heart in favour of virtue, or by bringing the will under the influence and power of motives in its determinations, are both inconsistent with Arminian liberty of will, which consists in indifference, and sovereign self-determination, as has been largely demonstrated.

But to more fully remove this prejudice against the doctrine of necessity which has been maintained—as though necessity tended to encourage a total neglect of all endeavours as vain—the following things may be considered:

The question is not whether men may improve this doctrine of necessity; we know that many true and wholesome doctrines are abused. The question is whether the doctrine gives any just *occasion* for such an improvement—or whether, supposing the truth of the doctrine, such a use of it would be unreasonable? If anyone affirms that it would not be unreasonable, but that the very nature of the doctrine is such that it gives just occasion for it, then it must be on this supposition: that such an invariable necessity of all things being already settled, it must render perfectly insignificant the interposition of all means, endeavours, conclusions, or actions of ours in order to obtain any future end whatsoever. This is because such means, endeavours, and actions cannot in the least alter or vary the course and series of things, in any event or circumstance; all of them are already fixed unalterably by necessity. Therefore it is folly for men to use any means for any end; but it is their wisdom to save themselves the trouble of any endeavours, and take their ease.

No person can draw such an inference from this doctrine, and come to such a conclusion, without contradicting himself, and going counter to the very principles he pretends to act upon. For he comes to a conclusion and takes a course to obtain an end. Even in his ease, or in saving himself from trouble, he seeks something future, and he uses means in order to obtain that future thing. Even in drawing that conclusion—that he will seek nothing, and use no means in order to obtain anything in the future—he seeks his future ease, and the benefit and comfort of indolence. If prior necessity, which determines all things, makes vain all our actions or conclusions in order to obtain anything future, then it also makes vain all our conclusions and conduct in order to obtain our future ease. For the measure of our ease, with the time,

¹ Presumably by earning God's favor. And yet, "God shows personal favoritism to no man" (Gal 2:6 NKJ).

manner, and every circumstance of it, is already fixed by all-determining necessity, as much as anything else.

A man may say to himself, "What future happiness or misery I will have is, in effect, already determined by the necessary course and connection of things. Therefore, I will save myself the trouble of labor and diligence which cannot add to my determined degree of happiness, nor diminish my misery. Instead, I will take my ease, and enjoy the comfort of sloth and negligence." If he says that, he contradicts himself. He says that the measure of his future happiness and misery is already fixed, and he will not try to diminish the one, nor add to the other. Yet he contradicts this in the very conclusion he draws. For he makes this conclusion to add to his future happiness, by the ease and comfort of his negligence, and to diminish his future trouble and misery by saving himself the trouble of using means and taking pains.

Therefore, persons cannot reasonably make this improvement to the doctrine of necessity, that for their own happiness they will voluntarily neglect means. For the principles they must employ to this end, are inconsistent with their making any improvement at all to the doctrine. For to make some *improvement* to it, is to be *influenced* by it—to come to some voluntary conclusion in regard to their own conduct, with some view or aim in mind. But as shown, this is inconsistent with the principles they pretend to act upon. In short, the principles are such that they cannot be acted upon at all, or at least not consistently. And therefore, in every pretense of acting upon them, or of making any improvement at all to them, there is a self-contradiction.

As to that objection against the doctrine of necessity, that it makes men no more than mere machines, I would say that, notwithstanding this doctrine, man is entirely, perfectly, and unspeakably different from a mere machine, in that he has reason and understanding, and a faculty of will. And so he is capable of volition and choice; and in that choice, his will is guided by the dictates or views of his understanding; and in that his external actions and behavior—and in many respects also his thoughts and the exercises of his mind—are subject to his will. So that, he has liberty to act according to his choice, and do what he pleases. And by means of these things, he is capable of moral habits and moral acts, and of such inclinations and actions that, according to the common sense of mankind, are worthy of praise, esteem, love, and reward—or contrariwise, are worthy of disesteem, detestation, indignation, and punishment.

In these things is all the difference from mere machines as to liberty and agency, that would in any respect be perfection, dignity, or privilege; all the difference that can be desired, and all that can be conceived of; and indeed all that the pretensions of the Arminians come to, as they are often forced to explain themselves—though their explanations defeat and abolish the things they assert and pretend to explain. For they are forced to explain a self-determining power of will, by claiming there is a power in the soul to determine as it chooses or wills. This comes to no more than this: that a man has the power to choose, and in many instances, he can do as he chooses. This is quite different from the contradiction they introduce, of a man having the power to choose his first act of choice in the instance.

Or, if their scheme makes any other difference than this between men and machines, it is for the worse. Far from supposing that men have a dignity and privilege above machines, it makes the manner of their being determined even more unfortunate. Whereas machines are guided by an understanding cause—by the skillful hand of the workman or owner—the will of man is left to the guidance of nothing but absolute blind contingency.

Section VI. Third Objection: It Agrees with the Stoic Doctrine of Faith, and the Opinions of Mr. Hobbes.

WHEN Calvinists oppose the Arminian notions of the freedom of will and contingency of volition, and insist that there are no acts of the will, nor any other event whatever, that are not attended by some kind of necessity, Calvinist opposers cry out against them that they are agreeing with the ancient Stoics in their doctrine of *fate*, and agreeing with Mr. Hobbes in his opinion about *necessity*.¹

It would not be worthwhile to note so irrelevant an objection, if had it not been urged by some of the chief Arminian writers. There were many important truths maintained by the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, and especially the Stoics, that are not the worse for being held by them. The Stoic philosophers, by the general agreement of Christian divines, and even Arminian divines, were the greatest, wisest, and most virtuous of all the heathen philosophers. In their doctrine and practice, they came the nearest to Christianity of any of their sects. How frequently the sayings of these philosophers are found in many of the writings and sermons even of Arminian divines. They are produced, not as arguments of the falseness of the doctrines which they delivered, but as a confirmation of some of the greatest truths of the Christian religion related to the unity and perfections of the Godhead, a future state, the duty and happiness of mankind, etc. They observe how the light of nature and reason, in the wisest and best of the heathen, harmonized with and confirm the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And it is very remarkable, concerning Dr. Whitby, that he alleges the agreement of the Stoics with us, in which he assumes they maintained a similar doctrine with us, using it as an argument against the truth of our doctrine. Yet this same Dr. Whitby alleges that the Stoics were also in agreement with the Arminians. He supposes that they taught the same doctrine, and he uses this as an argument for the truth of their own doctrine. So that, when the Stoics agree with the Arminians, this (it seems) is a confirmation of their doctrine and a confutation of ours—showing that our opinions are contrary to the natural sense and common reason of mankind. Nevertheless, when the Stoics agree with us, it argues no such thing in our favour; but on the contrary, it is a great argument against us, and shows our doctrine is heathenish.

It is observed by some Calvinist writers, that the Arminians sympathize with the Stoics in some of those doctrines in which they are opposed by the Calvinists; particularly in their denying an original, innate, total corruption and depravity of heart; and in what they held about man's ability to make himself truly virtuous and conformed to God; and also in some other doctrines.

It may be further observed that it is certainly no better an objection against our doctrine, that it agrees in some respects with the doctrine of the ancient Stoic philosophers, than it is an objection against theirs, in things which they differ from us, that their doctrine agrees in some respects with the opinion of the very worst of the heathen philosophers. For example, with the followers of Epicurus, the father of atheism and licentiousness, and with the doctrine of the Sadducees and Jesuits.

I am not much concerned to know precisely what the ancient Stoic philosophers held concerning fate, in order to determine what truth is—as though taking heed to differ from them was a sure way to be in the right. It seems that they differed among themselves; and probably the doctrine of fate, as maintained by most of them, was erroneous in some respects. But whatever their doctrine was, if any of them held that fate is repugnant to any liberty, consisting in our doing as we please, then I utterly deny such a fate.

¹ Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) – In his book *Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance* (1656), Hobbes addressed the controversy between Catholics and Calvinist Protestants over Free Will. Catholics and Arminians endorsed man's free will. Hobbes advocated *compatibilism*, the idea that *necessary causes*, and *voluntary actions*, are compatible, as proposed by the Greek Stoic philosopher Chrysippus (c. 279-206 BC).

If they held any such fate that is not consistent with the common and universal notions that mankind have about liberty, activity, moral agency, virtue and vice, then I disclaim any such thing. And I think I have demonstrated that the scheme I maintain is no such scheme.

If the Stoics, by fate, meant anything of such a nature that it can be supposed to stand in the way of the advantage and benefit of the use of means and endeavours, or make it less worthwhile for men to desire and seek after anything in which their virtue and happiness consists—I hold no doctrine that is clogged with any such inconvenience, any more than any other such scheme; and by no means so much as the Arminian scheme of *contingence*, as has been shown.

If they held any such doctrine of universal fatalism that is inconsistent with any kind of liberty, that is or can be inconsistent with any perfection, dignity, privilege or benefit, or anything desirable, in any respect, for any intelligent creature, or indeed with any liberty that is possible or conceivable—I embrace no such doctrine.

If they held any such doctrine of fate that is inconsistent with the world being, in all things, subject to the disposal of an intelligent, wise Agent, who presides, not as the soul of the world, but as the sovereign Lord of the universe, governing all things by proper will, choice, and design, in the exercise of the most perfect liberty conceivable, without subjection to any constraint, or being properly under the power or influence of anything before, above, or outside himself—I wholly renounce any such doctrine.

As to Mr. Hobbes maintaining the same doctrine concerning necessity, I confess that I never read Mr. Hobbes. Let his opinion be what it will, we need not reject all truth which is demonstrated by clear evidence, merely because it was once held by some bad man. This great truth—that Jesus is the Son of God—was not spoiled because it was once and again proclaimed with a loud voice by the devil. If truth is so defiled that it must never be received, just because it is spoken by the mouth or written by the pen of some ill-minded mischievous man, then we shall never know when we hold any of the most precious and evident truths by a sure tenure. If Mr. Hobbes made a bad use of this truth, that is to be lamented. But the truth is not to be thought worthy of rejection on that account. It is common for the corruptions of the hearts of evil men to twist the best things to vile purposes. I might also note that it has been observed that the Arminians agree with Mr. Hobbes in many more things than the Calvinists do—such as, in what he is said to hold concerning original sin, in denying the necessity of supernatural illumination, in denying infused grace, in denying the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and in other things.

Section VII. The Necessity of the Divine Will

Some may object to what has been supposed about the absurdity and inconsistency of a self-determining power in the will; and the impossibility of the will not being determined in every case by some motive, and by a motive which (as the understanding views it) is of superior strength to any other motive. If these things are true, it follows that not only the will of created minds, but the will of God himself, is *necessary* in all its determinations. Concerning this, the author of the *Essay on the Freedom of Will in God and in the Creature* (pp. 85-86)¹ says:

“What strange doctrine is this, contrary to all our ideas of the dominion of God? Does it not destroy the glory of his liberty of choice, and take away from the Creator and Governor and Benefactor of the world, that most free and sovereign agent, all the glory of this sort of freedom? Does it not seem to make him a kind of mechanical medium of fate, and introduce Mr. Hobbes’ doctrine of fatality and necessity into all things that God has to do with? Does it not seem to represent the blessed God as a being of vast understanding, as well as power and efficiency, but still to leave him without a will to

¹ Watts, *ibid.* sec. 7. I. *Difficulty*.

choose among all the objects within his view? In short, it seems to make the blessed God a sort of almighty minister of fate, under its universal and supreme influence—just as it was the professed sentiment of some of the ancients, that fate was above the gods.”

This is declaiming, rather than arguing; it is an application to men’s imaginations and prejudices, rather than to mere reason. But I would calmly endeavour to consider whether there is any reason in this frightful representation. But before I particularly consider the matter, I would observe that it is reasonable to suppose that it would be much more difficult to express or conceive of things according to exact metaphysical truth, which relate to the nature and manner of the existence of things in the Divine understanding and will, and to the operation of the faculties (if I may call them such) of the Divine mind, than it would be with the human mind—which is infinitely more within our view, and nearer proportionately to our comprehension, and more commensurate to the use and import of human speech. Language is indeed very deficient in regard to terms used to express precise truth concerning our own minds, and their faculties and operations. Words were first formed to express external things; and those that are used to express internal and spiritual things, are almost all borrowed, and used in a sort of figurative sense. This is why most of them are attended with a great deal of ambiguity and indefiniteness in their meaning. This occasions innumerable doubts, difficulties, and confusions, in inquiries and controversies about things of this nature. But language is much less adapted to express things in the mind of the incomprehensible Deity, precisely as they are.

We find a great deal of difficulty in exactly conceiving of the nature of our own souls. Much progress has been made in past and present ages in this kind of knowledge, by which our metaphysics, as it relates to these things, is brought to greater perfection than it once was. Notwithstanding, there is still work enough left for future inquiries and researches, and room for progress still to be made for many ages and generations. But we needed to be *infinitely* capable metaphysicians, to conceive with clearness, according to strict, proper, and perfect truth, concerning the nature of the Divine Essence, and the modes of the action and operation of the powers of the Divine Mind.

And it may be noted particularly, that we are obliged to conceive of some things in God as consequent and dependent on others, and to conceive of some things pertaining to the Divine nature and will as the foundation of others, and so coming before others in the order of nature. For instance, we must conceive of the knowledge and holiness of God, as prior in the order of nature to his happiness; the perfection of his understanding, as the foundation of his wise purposes and decrees; the holiness of his nature, as the cause and reason of his holy determinations. Yet, when we speak of cause and effect, antecedent and consequent, fundamental and dependent, determining and determined, in relation to the first Being, who is self-existent, independent, of perfect and absolute simplicity and immutability, and the first cause of all things—doubtless there must be less propriety in such representations, than when we speak of derived dependent beings, who are compounded and liable to perpetual mutation and succession.

Having premised this, I proceed to observe some things concerning the aforementioned author’s exclamation about the necessary determination of God’s will in all things, by what he sees to be most fitting and best.

All the seeming force of such objections and exclamations must arise from imagining that there is some sort of privilege or dignity in being without such a moral necessity as will make it impossible to do anything other than always choose what is wisest and best. It is as though there were some disadvantage, meanness, and subjection, in such a necessity—a thing by which the will was confined, kept under, and held in servitude by something which, as it were, maintained a strong and invincible power and dominion over it by bonds that held him fast,

and from which he could by no means deliver himself. Whereas, this must be all mere imagination and delusion. It is no disadvantage or dishonour to a being, to act necessarily in the most excellent and happy manner, from the necessary perfection of his own nature. This argues no imperfection, inferiority, or dependence, nor any lack of dignity, privilege, or ascendancy. It is not inconsistent with the absolute and most perfect sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God is his ability and authority to do whatever pleases him; by this sovereignty “he does according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say to him, ‘What have you done?’”¹ The following things belong to the sovereignty of God:

(1.) Supreme, universal, and infinite power by which he is able to do what he pleases, without control, without any confinement of that power, without any subjection in the least measure to any other power; and so it is without any hindrance or restraint such that it would be either impossible or at all difficult for him to accomplish his will; and without any dependence of his power on any other power from which it would be derived, or which it would stand in any need of; it is so far from this, that all other power is derived from him, and is absolutely dependent on him.

(2.) He has supreme authority; the absolute and most perfect right to do what he wills, without subjection to any superior authority, or any derivation of authority from any other, or limitation by any distinct independent authority, either superior, equal, or inferior; he is the head of all dominion, and the fountain of all authority; and also without restraint by any obligation implying either subjection, derivation, or dependence, or proper limitation.

(3.) His will is supreme, underived, and independent of anything outside himself—his will in all things is determined by his own counsel, having no other rule but his own wisdom; his will is not subject to, or restrained by, the will of any other, other wills being perfectly subject to his.

(4.) His wisdom, which determines his will, is supreme, perfect, underived, self-sufficient, and independent, so that it may be said, as in Isaiah 40:14, “With whom did he take counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?” There is no other Divine sovereignty but this; and this is properly *absolute sovereignty*: no other is desirable; nor would any other be honourable or happy; indeed, no other sovereignty is conceivable or possible. It is the glory and greatness of the Divine Sovereign, that God’s will is determined by his own infinite, all-sufficient wisdom in everything; and in nothing at all is it directed either by any inferior wisdom, or by no wisdom at all—by which it would become senseless arbitrariness, determining and acting without reason, design, or end.

If God’s will is steadily and surely determined in everything by supreme wisdom, then it is in everything necessarily determined to what is most wise. And certainly it would be a disadvantage and indignity to be otherwise. For if the Divine will was not necessarily determined to what, in every case, is wisest and best, then it must be subject to some degree of undesigning contingency; and to that degree it would be liable to evil. To suppose that the Divine will is liable to be carried here and there at random, by the uncertain wind of blind contingency—which is guided by no wisdom, no motive, and no intelligent dictate whatever (if such a thing were possible)—would certainly argue for a great degree of imperfection and meanness, infinitely unworthy of the Deity. If it is a disadvantage for the Divine will to be attended by this moral necessity, then the more free it is from it, and the more it is left at random, the greater the dignity and advantage. Consequently, to be perfectly free from the direction of understanding, and to be universally and entirely left to senseless, unmeaning contingency—to act absolutely at random—would be the supreme glory.

¹ Dan 4:35.

It no more argues for any dependence of God's will, that his supremely wise *volition* is necessary, than it argues for a dependence of his being, that his *existence* is necessary. If it is something too low for the Supreme Being to have his will determined by moral necessity, so as necessarily, in every case, to will in the highest degree holily and happily—then why is it not also something too low for him to have his existence, and the infinite perfection of his nature, and his infinite happiness, determined by necessity? It is no more to God's dishonour to be necessarily wise, than to be necessarily holy. And if neither of them is to his dishonour, then it is not to his dishonour to necessarily act holily and wisely. And if it is not dishonorable to be necessarily holy and wise, in the highest possible degree, then it is no more mean and dishonorable to necessarily act holily and wisely in the highest possible degree; i.e., to do, in every case, what is wisest and best above all other things.

The reason why it is not dishonorable to be *necessarily* most holy, is because holiness in itself is an excellent and honourable thing. For the same reason, it is no dishonour to be *necessarily* most wise, and in every case to act most wisely, or to do the thing which is the wisest of all; for wisdom is also in itself excellent and honourable.

The aforementioned author of the *Essay on the Freedom of Will*, etc.,¹ as observed, asserts a doctrine of the Divine Will that is, in everything, necessarily determined by a superior fitness, such as making the blessed God a kind of almighty minister and mechanical medium of fate. He insists (pp. 93, 94)² that this moral necessity and impossibility is, in effect, the same as physical and natural necessity and impossibility. On pp. 54-55,³ he says,

“The scheme which determines the will always and certainly by the understanding, and understanding by the appearance of things, seems to take away the true nature of vice and virtue. For the sublimest of virtues, and the vilest of vices, seem rather to be matters of fate and necessity, flowing naturally and necessarily from the existence, the circumstances, and present situation of persons and things—for this existence and situation necessarily makes such an appearance to the mind; and from this appearance flows a necessary perception and judgment concerning these things. This judgment necessarily determines the will. And thus, by this chain of necessary causes, *virtue* and *vice* would lose their nature, and become natural ideas, and necessary things, instead of moral and free actions.”

And yet this same author admits (pp. 30, 31)⁴ that a perfectly wise being will constantly and certainly choose what is most fit; and he says (pp. 102, 103),⁵

“I grant, and always have granted, that wherever there is such antecedent superior fitness of things, God acts according to it, so as never to contradict it; and particularly, in all his judicial proceedings as a governor and distributor of rewards and punishments.”

Indeed, he says expressly (p. 42)⁶ that “it is not possible for God to act other than according to this fitness and goodness in things.”

So that, according to this author, putting these several passages of this essay together, there is no virtue, nor anything of a moral nature, in the most sublime and glorious acts and exercises of God's holiness, justice, and faithfulness. And God never does anything which is in itself supremely worthy and fit and excellent above all other things, but only as a kind of “mechanical medium of fate.” And in what God does as the judge and moral governor of the world, he exercises no moral excellency, exercising no freedom in these things, because he acts by moral

¹ Watts.

² *ibid.* sec. 7. III, *Difficulty*

³ *Ibid.* sec. 5. IV. *Advantage*.

⁴ *ibid.* sec. 3. prop. IV.

⁵ *ibid.* sec. 7. VI. *Difficulty*.

⁶ *ibid.* sec. 4. prop. XI.

necessity which is, in effect, the same as physical or natural necessity. And therefore, God only acts by a sort of Hobbesian fatality: “as a being indeed of vast understanding, as well as power and efficiency,” as he said before, “but without a will to choose, being a kind of almighty administer of fate, acting under its supreme influence.”¹ For he allows, that in all these things, God’s will is determined constantly and certainly by a superior fitness, and that it is not possible for him to act otherwise. And if these things are so, then what glory or praise belongs to God for acting holy and just; or taking the most fit, holy, wise, and excellent course, in any one instance? Whereas, according to the Scriptures, and also the common sense of mankind, it does not in the least derogate from the honour of any being, that through the moral perfection of his nature, he necessarily acts with supreme wisdom and holiness. On the contrary, his praise is greater; the height of his glory consists in this.

The same author (p. 56)² supposes that in this appears the excellent “character of a wise and good man: that though he can choose contrary to the fitness of things, yet he does not’ but allows himself to be directed by fitness;” and in this conduct, “he imitates the blessed God.” Yet he supposes it is contrariwise with the blessed God—not that he allows himself to be directed by fitness when he can choose contrary to the fitness of things, but that he *cannot* choose contrary to the fitness of things. As he says (p. 42),³ “it is not possible for God to act otherwise than according to this fitness, where there is any fitness or goodness in things.” Indeed, he supposes (p. 31)⁴ that if a man “were perfectly wise and good, he could not do otherwise than be constantly and certainly determined by the fitness of things.”

One thing more I would observe, before I conclude this section; and that is, if it derogates nothing from the glory of God to be necessarily determined by superior fitness in *some* things, then neither does it derogate to be necessarily determined in *all* things. There is nothing in the nature of such necessity that detracts from God’s freedom, independence, absolute supremacy, or any dignity or glory of his nature, state, or manner of acting. Nor is there anything in such necessity that implies any infirmity, restraint, or subjection. And if the thing is such that it well consists with God’s glory, and it has nothing tending at all to detract from it, then we need not be afraid of ascribing it to God in too many things, lest thereby we detract from God’s glory too much.

¹ Ibid. sec. 7. I. *Difficulty* (pp. 85-86)

² Ibid. sec. 5. V. *Advantage*.

³ Ibid. sec. 4. prop. XI.

⁴ Ibid. sec. 3. prop. IV.

APPENDIX

Discourse on the Five Points (excerpts) – Daniel Whitby

Slightly modernized and annotated
by William H. Gross www.onthewing.org Nov 2013

“It’s Better to Deny Prescience [i.e., Foreknowledge]
Than Liberty”

This is the text which led Jonathan Edwards to write *The Freedom of the Will*, which was the best selling philosophical treatise of an American author in the 18th century. Edwards argued that if God knows the future with certainty, then the future is already predestined. Here, Whitby says that it is better to say that God does not know the future, or that God both does and doesn’t know the future.

Discourse VI, Chapter 1.1

If there were any strength in this argument [*i.e., that foreknowledge implies determinism*], it would prove that we should not deny the liberty supposed in all the arguments we have used against these decrees, but rather deny prescience itself; for if those two things were really inconsistent, and one of them must be denied, then introducing the absolute necessity of all our actions, which evidently destroys all religion and morality, would tend more to dishonor God, than denying his foreknowledge.

“Foreknowledge and Free Will Are Both True:
Though I know not how it is so”

Discourse VI, Chapter 1.2

If you puzzle me with these enquiries, “How then can God certainly know I will do what he sees I may *not* do?” or “How can that be certainly known which neither in itself, nor in its causes, has any certain being; but may as well *not* be, or *not* be done, as to be, or be done?” This brings me, lastly, to observe that this argument only opposes what arises from a mode of knowledge in God of which we have no idea, against all the plain declarations of his revealed will, produced in great abundance, against the imaginary decrees which men have imposed upon God without just ground. The judicious Le Blanc, after he had considered all the ways the wit of man tried to rid their hands of this difficulty—how God’s prescience could be consistent with man’s liberty—breaks forth into this ingenuous confession,

Such darkness everywhere surrounds us, such inextricable difficulties occur in this matter, that I think it safest for us here to confess our ignorance, and seriously to profess, ‘the knowledge of this is too excellent for me, and so sublime, that I cannot attain to it;’¹ and to believe this is one of those mysteries of which the Son of Syrach² says, ‘seek not after that which is too hard for you; and do not search into the things that are above your strength.’

“Nor is it any shame,” says Mr. Thorndyke,

for a Christian or a divine to profess ignorance, when the question is how a matter of faith is or may be true. But in a matter so subject to common understanding as the determination of the will by its

¹ Psalm 139.6.

² Commonly called the *Wisdom of Sirach* or simply *Sirach*; also known as *The Book Ecclesiasticus* (a book in the Apocrypha). *Sirach* was written 200-175 B.C. by a Jewish scribe named Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sirach.

own choice, experience justifies what faith makes the ground of Christianity, and the reason of morality. Otherwise I would make the whole tenor of the Bible, the tender of Christianity, the whole treaty of God with man concerning his happiness, delusory and abusive. For it conditions that which no man can stir hand or foot for, till he is determined he cannot do otherwise. Because I cannot answer an objection arising from God's prescience of future contingencies, of which I can have no idea, this seems to me very reasonable.

I answer therefore to these objections, that God's foreknowledge is well consistent with the freedom of man's will and the contingency of events (since otherwise all men's actions must be necessary), though I know not how it is so; and it is therefore well consistent with his power to do the contrary; and therefore his foreknowledge that what may *not* be, certainly *will* be, though I know not how it is so; and it is therefore consistent with his commands and prohibitions, exhortations, admonitions and motives to engage me to do what I will not do; and it is consistent with all his commands and admonitions to abstain from that which I will *not* abstain. This is because the same scripture which ascribes this foreknowledge to God, also asserts my liberty to do or to refuse to do these things; it charges men's sins and final ruin on themselves, and 'sets before them life and death, blessing and cursing,'¹ requiring them to choose the one and avoid the other—though I know not how both these things are consistent. The reason for my inability to discern this consistency is only my ignorance of what this foreknowledge of God is.

Source: <http://www.constitution.org/primarysources/whitby.html>

¹ Deut 30.19.