

If the volitions of the creaturely will cannot be put forth independent of the decree of God—and they cannot if He fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass—then, there can be no such thing as freedom for man in willing. This is not a mystery incapable of solution. It is a self-contradiction—a glaring absurdity, incapable of intelligent belief. Human freedom in willing, and the decree—not of God—but of the Confession, must remain in irreconcilable antagonism in the worlds of mind for ever. Then—it may be asked—why does the Confession talk about the freedom of man at all? The proper reply, we think is, that it means a fallacious, not a real freedom. It means a freedom in which God causes the volitions of will. Let it not be said, “That is forcing a meaning of your own on our Confession.” Let us, then, hear standard Calvinistic authors on the subject. We wish to get at the truth here. The first witness is Shaw, the Expositor of the Confession. He says—

“As nothing can ever come to pass without a cause, the acts of the will are never without necessity—understanding by necessity, an infallible connection with something foregoing . . . Calvinists contend that, as nothing can ever come to pass without a cause, the acts of the will are never contingent, or without necessity.”

This is clear. And this is the reasoning it involves: The acts of the will are always necessitated by a foregoing cause, infallibly producing them. But who, or what, is that foregoing cause which necessitates acts of the will? The Calvinist replies, God. We produce, in proof of this, an unimpeachable witness. Calvin, after asserting God to be the arbiter of all things, says—

“Whence we assert, that not only the heavens and the earth, and inanimate creatures, but also the *deliberations* and *volitions* of men, are so governed by His providence as to be directed to the end appointed by it. . . . Men can effect nothing, but by the secret will of God, and deliberate on nothing, but what He has previously decreed, and determined by His secret direction. . . . God exerts His power in the elect, who are influenced by the Holy Spirit; but also *compels the compliance of the reprobates.*” —Calvin’s Institutes, Vol. i. pp. 191, 211, 215.

From these quotations we learn that the “deliberations and volitions of men are the necessary product of the eternal, uncon-