

He withholds from others, be a reason for disbelieving it, then, on the same ground, the fact that the Bible represents God as having bestowed on individuals, and on the nation of Israel, distinguished privileges which were not conferred on others, would be a good reason for denying it to be the Word of God; and the fact that the Lord Jesus declared He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, confined His personal ministrations all but exclusively to them, and prohibited His disciples at first from entering any Gentile or Samaritan city in preaching the gospel, would be a reason equally good for denying that He was sent of God. On grounds similar to these infidels have actually argued against the truth of Christianity. We may add that the special love of God for His chosen is no more inconsistent with His love of pity and compassion towards men at large, than the special love which a husband owes to his wife is inconsistent with love to his fellow-men.

THE Scriptures, being mainly designed to unfold to us the scheme of redemption—the merciful purpose of God in saving a portion of our lost and guilty race, contain very full information as to His purposes and procedure towards those who are saved, so that we can easily trace the successive steps in the whole process of man's salvation from sin and misery, from its origin in electing love to its consummation in actual enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance; while they afford much less light, comparatively, as to God's purposes and procedure towards them that perish. For information on this latter subject, as on the former, Calvinists have resorted exclusively to the Word of God, seeking to keep within the limits of what is revealed; and in this respect they present a contrast to Arminians, who start with a theory of moral agency and with preconceived notions of their own, into accordance with which they have spent their ingenuity in attempting to crush the statements of the Bible. The term reprobation has been used by writers, both Calvinistic and Arminian, to denote the divine purposes and procedure towards those who perish; but from its having been frequently misconstrued and applied in a most perverted sense by opponents, it has not been employed by the Westminster divines in drawing up our standards. Any man, whatever his system of religion be, who begins to scan the purposes and procedure of God towards those who perish, soon finds himself involved in the insoluble difficulties connected with the existence of moral evil and its universal prevalence in the world; and these difficulties, in place of being relieved, are only multiplied and enhanced on the Arminian scheme.

Using the word reprobation in the sense of comprehending the whole purposes of God towards the lost, two acts are by Calvinists regarded as included in it, which are executed in time. The one of these is simply negative, consisting in their non-election, their not being chosen to everlasting life, and so not receiving in time that grace which infallibly produces faith and holiness: the other is positive, viz., His determining to punish them for their sins. The first of these acts is sovereign—God's choosing some rather than others being for reasons which he does not reveal to us; the other act is entirely judicial, is that which is called in our standards "foreordaining men to eternal death," and "ordaining them to dishonour and wrath for their sins, and to the praise of His glorious justice," and is fully executed at the day of judgment.