

THE RELATION OF MORAL KNOWLEDGE TO REGENERATION AND REPROBATION

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(A section from the booklet "Free Will & Conscience")

Regeneration is through revelation, when the Spirit changes a man's moral character through the spiritual influence of conviction and instruction. Regeneration is when free will is effectively influenced by the truth; it is the will's embracing of the truth, or the will's yielding and obeying the truth (Jn. 6:45, 63; 8:32; 15:3; 17:17; Rom. 2:8; 6:17; Acts 9:4-6; 1 Cor. 4:15; Tit. 2:11-12; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Thes. 1:8; 1 Pet. 1:22-23; 4:17; 2 Pet. 1:2-3; 2:20; Jas. 1:18, 21-22).

Clement said, "The Word, having unveiled the truth, showed to men the summit of salvation, so that either repenting they might be saved, or refusing they might be condemned. This is the proclamation of righteousness: to those who obey, rejoicing; to those who disobey, condemnation."⁶⁵ Conversion is the correction of our will. As Augustine said, "If there be no free will, there is nothing to be saved."⁶⁶ Charles Finney said, "Truth; this must, from the nature of regeneration, be employed in effecting it, for regeneration is nothing else than the will being duly influenced by truth."⁶⁷ Again, "Regeneration is nothing else than... embracing the gospel."⁶⁸ And again, "...the sinner has all the faculties and natural attributes requisite to render perfect obedience to God. All he needs is to be induced to use these powers and attributes as he ought."⁶⁹

Apostasy, on the other hand, is the heart's utter refusal to conform to the truth of reality. Apostasy is a total unwillingness to embrace, and rejection of, the light of revelation, to such an extent that a point is crossed in which there is no return, and one is a reprobate, given up by God because of their persistent rejection of revelation (Matt. 2:31-32; Lk. 12:10; Eph. 4:30).

The more that one grows in the knowledge of the Lord, yet continues sinning even with their increased knowledge, the closer they are to reprobation, when it would no longer be possible for them to be reached or changed, because it would be impossible to enlighten them anymore than what they already have been.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:4-6).

There is a point when a person received enough knowledge that should have sufficiently secured their total conversion and perseverance in the faith, when no more knowledge could be added to the knowledge already received, which leaves the individual in total reprobation, or total inability to be saved, because they have refused to submit to all the possible influence that could have been exerted. Anyone who chooses to

sin every day while growing in the knowledge of the Lord every day grows closer and closer to total and incurable reprobation. If they have been “enlightened” and have “tasted” and have been “partakers,” to such an extent, yet they remain disobedient and rebellious, it is then “impossible” to “renew them again unto repentance.”

One who grows “in the knowledge of our Lord” must “grow in grace” (2 Pet. 3:18), or ultimately become reprobate. He that “receives the knowledge of the truth,” but continues in willful disobedience, will face “fiery indignations” (Heb. 10:26-27). Such a one will have “sorrows,” or worse, “punishment” (Heb. 10:29). The more knowledge one is given, the more obedience one must increase in. The one who grows in hardness and impenitence of heart, refusing to obey the perceived truth, treasures up wrath which will be poured out on the day of wrath (Rom. 2:5). Those that have once “escaped the pollutions of the world” through knowledge and yet are “once again entangled therein,” it would have “been better for them not to have known” than to “have known” and yet turned “from the holy commandment delivered unto them;” as the Bible says, “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.” (2 Pet. 2:20-21). The sinner with more knowledge is worse than the sinner with less knowledge.

Those who refuse the “knowledge” of God end up with a “reprobate mind” (Rom. 1:28). Those who “resist the truth” become “reprobate” because of their “corrupt minds” (2 Tim. 3:8). Reprobation is when people have rejected in their hearts all the possible light that could be given to their minds to secure their conversion, leaving the will in a state of impenitence and hardness towards all possible knowledge designed to secure repentance unto obedience.

Cyrillus Alexandrius said, “Let not the world accuse the word of God and his eternal light... for the Sun enlightens, but man rejects that grace that is given him, blunts the edge of the understanding granted him, and, as a prodigal, turns his sight to the creatures, neglecting to go forward, and through laziness and negligence buries the illumination, and despises this grace.”⁷⁰

*65 Clement; *Exhortation to the Heathen*, chap. 11.

*66 Augustine; *An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism* by John Fletcher, Volume Two, p. 206, published by Carlton & Porter

*67 Charles Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology*, 1878 Edition, p. 275, published by Bethany House

*68 Charles Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology*, 1878 Edition, p. 276, published by Bethany House

*69 Charles Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology*, 1878 Edition, p. 271-271, published by Bethany House

*70 Cyrillus Alexandrius; *An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism* by John Fletcher, Volume Two, pg 204, published by Carlton & Porter