

# Finney's Emphasis On Free Will

## Part One

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Introduction:

First of all, I consider a proper understanding of the [free will](#) of man to be a most practical doctrine from a human standpoint. For, if man does not possess freedom of the [will](#), with the resultant responsibility, the stage is set for any and all types of determinism.

If man is not free, we must search for the reasons for his actions someplace outside himself. If man is not free, then someone (perhaps God or Adam) or something (perhaps natural inability, for whatever reason) is the cause of his thoughts and actions. If man is not free, and God is the author of all that is, then perhaps we can lay the responsibility for man's actions at God's feet.

Can we really make God the cause of man's actions, and then excuse Him from the responsibility for those actions? The Westminster Confession does this by what I call "theology by definition." Section III., paragraph 1. of the Westminster Confession states: "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." By "second causes" the Westminster Confession refers to the will and volition of man, and it is understood and inferred by the authors of the Westminster Confession that God is the "first cause" of all things, by His eternal decree, or by His predestination. Notice that the Westminster Confession absolves God of being the author of sin by definition, and gives man a free will by definition, when the logic of the paragraph is flawed.

I think that a proper understanding of the free will of man will lay the responsibility for the actions of man at man's own feet. One result will be to exonerate God from the blame for any and all wrongdoing, and will also certainly absolve Him of being the author of sin. A second result will be that the responsibility for all sin will be laid upon the sinner himself.

Secondly, I will show Finney's definition of free will from his own statements, and then, as much as space allows, I will show his consistency throughout his entire theology, with specific application and emphasis in the areas of sin, holiness (sanctification), and the [atonement](#). I believe that it would be fair to say that the free will of man is one of the main themes which runs throughout Finney's sermons. I personally possess in some printed form well over one hundred of Finney's sermons, and I have not even read them all, but it is probably fair to say that I could find either direct references, or inferences, to the free will of man in every single one. Since there is so much material available, I will primarily emphasize the material from [Finney's](#) Systematic Theology, with additional material from God's Love For A Sinning World and Principles of Liberty.

#### I. Finney's definition of what he means by "free will."

"Moral agency implies the possession of free-will. By free-will is intended the power of choosing, or refusing to choose, in every instance, in compliance with moral obligation. Free-will implies the power of originating and deciding our own choices, and of exercising our own sovereignty, in every instance of choice upon moral questions--of deciding or choosing in conformity with duty or otherwise in all cases of moral obligation. That man cannot be under a moral obligation to perform an absolute impossibility, is a first truth of reason. But man's causality, his whole power of causality to perform or do anything, lies in his will. If he cannot will, he can do nothing (of moral

value). His whole liberty or freedom must consist in his power to will. The sequences of choice or volition are always under the law of necessity, and unless the will is free, man has no freedom; and if he has no freedom he is not a moral agent, that is, he is incapable of moral action and also of moral character.

Free-will then, in the above defined sense, must be a condition of moral agency, and of course, of moral obligation." "That man has intellect and sensibility, or the powers of knowing and feeling, has not, to my knowledge, been doubted. In theory, the freedom of the will in man has been denied. Yet the very deniers have, in their practical judgment, assumed the freedom of the human will, as well, and as fully, as the most staunch defenders of human liberty of will. Indeed, nobody ever did or can, in practice, call in question the freedom of the human will, without justly incurring the charge of insanity.

By a necessity of his nature, every moral agent knows himself to be free. He can no more hide this fact from himself, or reason himself out of the conviction of its truth, than he can speculate himself into a disbelief of his own existence. He may, in speculation, deny either, but in fact he knows both. That he is, that he is free, are truths equally well known, and known precisely in the same way, namely, he intuits them--sees them in their own light, by virtue of the constitution of his being. I have said that man is conscious of possessing the powers of a moral agent. He has also the idea of the valuable, of right and of wrong; of this he is conscious.

But nothing else is necessary to constitute man or any other being a subject of moral obligation, and the possession of these powers, together with sufficient light on moral subjects to develop the ideas just mentioned. "Man, by a law of necessity, affirms himself to be under moral obligation. He cannot doubt it. He affirms absolutely and necessarily, that he is praise-worthy or blame-worthy as he is benevolent or selfish. Every man assumes this of himself, and of all other men of sound mind. This assumption is irresistible, as well as universal. "The truth assumed then is not to be called in question. But if it be called in question in theory, it still remains, and must remain, while reason remains, a truth of certain knowledge, from the presence of which there is, and can be, no escape.

The spontaneous, universal, and irresistible affirmation that men of sound mind are praise-worthy or blame-worthy, as they are selfish or benevolent, shows beyond contradiction, that all men regard themselves, and others, as the subjects of moral obligation." And, therefore, as possessors of free will. (Let it be noticed that Finney's definition of free will in an early passage in Systematic Theology is logical and philosophical, rather than Biblical.)

II. Finney's presumption of free will as applied to the definition and explanation of sin.

Finney represents sin as a conscious, enlightened use of the human will in opposition to that which the moral being knows he should do, and which he has the ability to do. It is the "power of contrary choice" to that which is known to be right. In other words, knowledge and ability are essential for a moral being to be able to commit sin.

One of the major arguments against Finney's definition of sin is the theological position that man is born with an innate sinful nature, which Finney also calls an inborn "moral depravity." (In theology it is also often called an "Adamic nature" or "original sin." If this position be true, it would sufficiently explain why every man sins, by showing that every man cannot help sinning, because sin would be a part of his nature, or his constitution. Finney argues against the doctrine on the basis of Adam and angels, and answers an argument for it on the basis of circumcision. He then argues that this viewpoint outrages common sense, charges God with infinite tyranny, and fills the mouths of sinners with excuses.

A. On the subject of whether or not man is born with an innate sinful nature -

Finney addresses the question by rhetorically arguing with one of his contemporaries, a Dr. Woods of Andover, Massachusetts. Finney quotes Dr. Woods as claiming that "moral depravity (is) the same as `sinfulness.' He also, in one part of his essay, holds and maintains, that it is always and necessarily, voluntary. Still, Dr. Woods' great effort is to prove that sinfulness, or moral depravity, is an attribute of human nature....But what is sin? Why, sin is a voluntary transgression of law, Dr. Woods being judge. Can a voluntary transgression of law be denominated an attribute of human nature.?" Moral depravity, as an attribute of human nature, is understood in this context to mean that moral depravity (or, sinful nature) was innate in man at birth, by virtue of his creation. Its source is not stated, but we are familiar with the arguments which lay the blame for it at Adam's feet.

B. Finney argues, "...if sin necessarily implies a sinful nature, how did Adam and Eve sin?

Had they a sinful nature to account for, and to cause their first sin? How did angels sin? Had they also a sinful nature? Either sin does not imply a sinful nature, or a nature in itself sinful, or Adam and angels must have had sinful natures before their fall...Free, responsible will is an adequate cause in the presence of temptation, without the supposition of a sinful constitution (Emphasis added), as has been demonstrated in the case of Adam and of angels."

C. In answering an argument for innate moral depravity in infants, Finney says:

"This argument assumes, that, if they are not sinful, they must be holy; whereas they are neither sinful nor holy, until they are moral agents, and render themselves so by obedience or disobedience to the moral law...This objection assumes, that previous sinfulness is a condition of the necessity of being holy. This is contrary to fact. Were Adam and angels first sinful before they were sanctified?...That infants have a sinful nature has been inferred from the institution of circumcision so early as the eighth day after birth. Circumcision, it is truly urged, was designed to teach the necessity of regeneration, and by way of implication, the doctrine of moral depravity (from birth)." Finney goes on to say that requiring circumcision as early as the eighth day is "designed to teach that the influence of the flesh must be restrained, and the flesh circumcised, or

the soul would be lost...This very significant, and bloody, and painful rite, was well calculated to impress this truth upon parents, and to lead them from...(their child's) birth to watch over the development and indulgence of their propensities...Requiring it at so early a day was no doubt designed to indicate, that they are from the first under the dominion of their flesh, without however affording any inference in favor of the idea, that their flesh was in itself sinful, or that the action of their will at that early age was sinful. If reason was not developed, the subjection of the will to the gratification of the appetite could not be sinful (Emphasis added). But whether this subjection of the will to the gratification of the appetite was sinful or not, the child must be delivered from it, or the child could never be fitted for heaven."

D. If the human constitution sinful, God is the author of sin:

In a sermon entitled, *The Excuses of Sinners*, Finney states: "To represent the (human) constitution as sinful, is to represent God, who is the author of the constitution, as the author of sin." He goes on to deal with two excuses which men make for sin, an inherited sinful nature, and its logical consequence, inability. In discussing the inherited sinful nature, he thunders, "But the dogma is an utter absurdity. For, pray, what is sin? God answers-- "transgression of law." And now you hold that your nature is itself a breach of the law of God--nay, that it has always been a breach of God's law, from Adam to the day of your birth; you hold that the current of this sin came down in the veins and blood of your race--and who made it so? Who created the veins and blood of man? From whose hand sprang this physical constitution and this mental constitution? Was man his own creator? Did sin do a part of the work in creating your physical and your mental constitution? Do you believe any such thing? No; you ascribe your nature and its original faculties to God, and upon Him, therefore, you charge the guilty authorship of your `sinful nature.' "But how strange is this! If man is in fault for his sinful nature, why not condemn man for having blue or black eyes? The fact is, sin never can consist in having a nature, nor in what nature is; but only...in the bad use which we make of our nature...Our Maker will never find fault with us for what He has Himself done or made...He will not condemn us, if we will only make a right use of our powers--of our intellect, our sensibility, and our will. He never holds us responsible for our original nature. If you will observe, you will find that God has given no law prescribing what sort of nature and constitutional powers we should have. He has given no law on these points, the transgression of which, if given, might somewhat resemble the definition of sin. but now since there is no law about nature, nature cannot be a transgression.

"Here let me say, that if God were to make a law prescribing what nature or constitution a man must have, it could not possibly be otherwise than unjust and absurd, for the reason that man's nature is not a proper subject for legislation, precept, and penalty, inasmuch as it lies entirely without the pale of voluntary action, or of the action of man at all . And yet thousands of men have held the dogma that sin consists in great part in having a sinful nature. Yes, through long ages of past history, grave theologians have gravely taught this monstrous dogma; it has resounded from pulpits, and has been stereotyped for the press, and men have seemed to be never weary of glorifying this dogma as the surest test of sound orthodoxy! Orthodoxy!! There never was a more infamous libel on Jehovah! It

would be hard to name another dogma which more violently outrages common sense. It is nonsense--absurd and utter NONSENSE! I would to God that it were not even worse than nonsense! Think what mischief it has wrought! Think how it has scandalized the law, the government, and the character of God! Think how it has filled the mouths of sinners with excuses from the day of its birth to this hour!"

In the same message, *The Excuses of Sinners*, Finney discusses inability, which is the logical consequence of the doctrine of an inherited sinful nature, in the following quote. "With unblushing face it is proclaimed that men cannot do what God requires of them. "Let us examine this and see what it amounts to. God, it is said, requires what men cannot do. And does He know that men cannot do it? Most certainly. Then He has no apology for requiring it, and the requisition is most unreasonable. Human reason can never justify it. It is a natural impossibility. "But again, upon what penalty does God require what man cannot do? The threatened penalty is eternal death, according to the views of those who plead inability as an excuse. God requires me, on pain of eternal death, to do that which He knows I cannot do. Truly this condemns God in the worst sense. You might just as well charge God outright with being an infinite tyrant...Hence, those who plant themselves upon these grounds charge God with infinite tyranny. Perhaps, sinner, you little think when you urge the excuse of inability, that you are really arraigning God on the charge of infinite tyranny. And you, Christian, who make this dogma of inability a part of your "orthodox" creed, may have little noticed its blasphemous bearings against the character of God; but your failure to notice it alters not the fact. The black charge is involved in the very doctrine of inability, and cannot be explained out of it. "I have intimated that this charge is blasphemous against God...Far be it from God to do any such thing! Shall God require natural impossibilities, and denounce eternal death upon men for not doing what they have no natural power to do? Never! Yet good men and bad men agree together to charge God with...this very thing, and doing it not once or twice only, but uniformly through all ages, with all the race, from the beginning to the end of time! Horrible! Nothing in all the government of God ever so insulted and abused Jehovah! Nothing was ever more blasphemous and false! God says, "his commandments are not grievous;" but you, by this excuse of inability, proclaim that God's words are false. You declare that His commands are not only grievous, but are even naturally impossible! Hark! What does the Lord Jesus say? "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." And do you deny this? Do you rise up in the very face of His words and say-- "Lord, Thy yoke is so hard that no man can possibly endure it; Thy burden is so heavy that no man can ever bear it?" Is not this gainsaying and blaspheming Him who can not lie? "But you take the ground that no man can obey the law of God. As the Presbyterian Confession of Faith has it, 'No man is able, either by himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.' Observe, this affirms not only that no man is naturally able to keep God's commands, but also that no man is able to do it 'by any grace received in this life;' thus making this declaration a libel on the Gospel as well as a palpable misrepresentation of the law of its Author, and of man's relations to both. It is only moderate language to call this assertion of the Confession of Faith a libel. If there is a lie, either in hell or out of hell, this is a lie, or God is an infinite tyrant. If reason be allowed to speak at all, it is impossible for her to say less or otherwise than thus. And has not God constituted the reason of man for the

very purpose of taking cognizance of the rectitude (righteousness) of all his ways? "Let God be true though every man be proved a liar! In the present case, the remarkable fact that no man can appease his own conscience and satisfy himself that he is truly unable to keep the law, shows that man lies, not God."

E. "Selfishness is understood to be the whole of moral depravity,...

"The only difficulty in accounting for it, has been the false assumption, that there must be, and is, something lying back of the free actions of the will, which sustains to those actions the relation of a cause, that is itself sinful." (Finney finds the flawed logic of the idea that there is something behind the free actions of the will. If something is behind the actions of the will, causing it to choose one way instead of another, the will is not free. The will is as far back as you can go in a human personality.) (I was recently questioned about man's free will in an ordination council with this question. "How free is man's will?" My answer was "If man's will is 95% free, is it free? If it is 99% free, is it free?") This idea of man's will being "caused" to act in a certain way is what Finney calls a "necessitated will." This quote is from his Systematic Theology. "The dogma of constitutional moral depravity, is a part and parcel of the doctrine of a necessitated will. It is a branch of a grossly false and heathenish philosophy. How infinitely absurd, dangerous, and unjust, then, to embody it in a standard of Christian doctrine, to give it the place of an indispensable article of faith, and denounce all who will not swallow its absurdities, as heretical!" Finney asks, "Why is sin so natural to mankind? Not because their nature is itself sinful, but because the appetites and passions tend to strongly to self-indulgence. These are temptations to sin, but sin itself consists not in these appetites and propensities, but in the voluntary committal of the will to their indulgence. This committal of the will is selfishness, and when the will is once given up to sin, it is very natural to sin. The will once committed to self-indulgence as its end, selfish actions are in a sense spontaneous."

Finney continues his argument: "Real hardness of [heart](#), in the Bible use of the phrase, means stubbornness of will. So in the child, a hard heart means a will set in fixed stubbornness against doing its parent's bidding...Now the hardness of heart of which God complains in the sinner is precisely of this sort. The sinner cleaves to his self-indulgence, and will not relinquish it, and then complains of hardness of heart. What would you think of a child, who, when required to do a most reasonable thing, should say--`My heart is so hard, I can't yield.' `O,' he says, `my will is so set to have my own way that I cannot possibly yield to my father's authority."

### **III. Finney's presumption of free will as applied to his definition of holiness.**

[Finney](#) represents holiness as the opposite of sin, as the conscious, enlightened use of the human [will](#) in accordance with that which the moral being knows he should do, and which he has the ability to do. In other words, knowledge and ability are essential to be able to not sin, or to be holy. In order to deal with the method God uses to bring men to holiness, Finney discusses justification and regeneration. He argues logically that justification cannot mean that God accepts and justifies the sinner in his sins. He then

argues that regeneration cannot mean that there is a change in the substance, or in the constitution, of the sinner in order to deliver him from sin.

A. Finney defines justification as follows:

"(Gospel justification) consists in (the sinner) being...governmentally treated as if he were just; that is, it consists in a governmental decree of pardon or amnesty--in arresting and setting aside the execution of the incurred penalty of law--in pardoning and restoring to favor those who have sinned, and those whom the law had pronounced guilty, and upon whom it had passed the sentence of eternal death, and rewarding them as if they had been righteous."

B. Finney states that the ultimate ground of the sinner's justification is in the "benevolence and merciful disposition of the whole Godhead..."

This love made the [atonement](#), but the atonement did not beget this love." Finney then lays down five conditions of justification, which include (1) the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, (2) repentance, (3) faith in Christ, (4) present sanctification, in the sense of present full consecration to God, and (5) perseverance in faith and obedience is also an unalterable condition of justification." He takes strong issue with the idea of justification which is understood as follows: "With them, faith receives an imputed righteousness, and a judicial justification. The first act of faith, according to them, introduces the sinner into this relation, and obtains for him a perpetual justification. They maintain that after this first act of faith it is impossible for the sinner to come into condemnation: that, being once justified, he is always thereafter justified, whatever he may do..." Finney takes strong issue with this view, stating that "It certainly cannot be true that God accepts and justifies the sinner in his sins." The implied requirement is that the person who is justified must use his powers, primarily his will, to turn from sin, and to walk in holiness in accordance with justification.

C. In remarks upon regeneration, Finney writes:

"It (regeneration) is not a change in the substance of soul or body. If it were, sinners could not be required to effect it. Such a change would not constitute a change of moral character. No such change is needed, as 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 (implying free will).

D. "It has been said that regeneration and a change of [heart](#) are identical.

It is important to inquire into the scriptural use of the term heart. The term, like most others, is used in the Bible in various senses. The heart is often spoken of in the Bible, not only as possessing moral character, but as being the source of moral action, or as the fountain from which good and evil actions flow, and of course as constituting the fountain of holiness or of sin, or, in other words still, as comprehending, strictly speaking, the whole of moral character. `But those things which proceed out of the mouth

come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.'- Matt. 15: 18-19. `O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.'- Matt. 12:34-35.

When the heart is thus represented as possessing moral character, and as the fountain of good and evil, it cannot mean:

1. The bodily organ that propels the blood.
2. It cannot mean the substance of the soul or mind itself; substance cannot in itself possess moral character.
3. It is not any faculty or natural attribute.
4. It cannot consist in any constitutional taste, relish, or appetite, for these cannot in themselves have moral character.
5. It is not the sensibility or feeling faculty of the mind (what we today would call the emotions)

The very idea of moral character implies, and suggests the idea of, a free action or intention. "The term heart, when applied to mind, is figurative, and means something in the mind that has some point of resemblance to the bodily organ of that name, and a consideration of the function of the bodily organ will suggest the true idea of the heart of the mind. The heart of the body propels the vital current, and sustains organic life. It is the fountain from which the vital fluid flows, from which either life or death may flow, according to the state of the blood. The mind as well as the body has a heart which...is represented as a fountain, or as an efficient propelling influence, out of which flows good or evil, according as the heart is good or evil. This heart is represented, not only as the source...of good and evil, but as being either good or evil in itself, as constituting the character of man, and not merely as being capable of moral character...It is also represented as something over which we have control, for which we are responsible, and which, in case it is wicked, we are bound to change on pain of death.

"Our own consciousness, then, must inform us that the heart of the mind that possesses these characteristics, can be nothing else than the supreme ultimate intention of the soul. Regeneration is represented in the Bible as constituting a radical change of character, as the resurrection from a death in sin, as the beginning of a new and spiritual life, as constituting a new creature, as a new creation, not a physical, but a moral or spiritual creation, as conversion, or turning to God, as giving God the heart, as loving God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves...Regeneration then is a radical change of the ultimate intention, and of course, of the end or object of life...Regeneration, to have the characteristics ascribed to it in the Bible, must consist in a change in the attitude of the will, or a change in its ultimate choice, intention, or preference..."

E. After discussing justification and regeneration, Finney summarizes what is included in sanctification (holiness):

"4. It has...been shown that nothing is holiness short of full obedience, for the time being, to the moral law...7. We have seen that holiness consists...in obedience of will to the law of God, as it lies revealed in the intellect; that it is expressed in one word, love; that this love is identical with the entire consecration of the whole being to the glory of God, and to the highest well-being of the universe...8...all true saints, while in a state of acceptance with God, do actually render, for the time being, full obedience to all the known requirements of God; that is, that they do for the time being their whole duty--all that God, at this time, requires of them. 9...this obedience is not rendered independent of the grace of God..."

F. "It has long been maintained...that a person is not a Christian who does not aim at living without sin--that unless he aims at perfection, he manifestly consents to live in sin; and is therefore impenitent."

IV. Finney's presumption of free will as it relates to the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. First of all, let us see what Finney says that the atonement is:

"The English word atonement is synonymous with the Hebrew word cofer. This is a noun from the verb caufar, to cover. The cofer or cover was the name of the lid or cover of the ark of the covenant, and constituted what was called the mercy-seat. The Greek word rendered atonement is katallage. This means reconciliation to favor; from katallasso, to 'change, or exchange.' The term properly means substitution. An examination of these original words, in the connection in which they stand, will show that the atonement is the governmental substitution of the sufferings of Christ for the punishment of sinners. It is a covering of their sins by his sufferings."

B. Finney then explains that the granting of mercy always tends to weaken the law, and therefore the government, which grants mercy.

"...there is a real and great danger in the exercise of mercy under a moral government...that the exercise of mercy will be understood (by its subjects) as encouraging the hope of impunity in the commission of sin." If the penalty of the law is not carried out in one case, it gives hope to another that it will not be carried out in his case. There is a popular bumper sticker which proclaims this wrong message to the world, "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven."

C. In Lecture XXVI, entitled The Extent of the Atonement, Finney argues for a general atonement:

"That the atonement is sufficient for all men, and, in that sense, general, as opposed to particular, is also evident from the fact, that the invitations and promises of the gospel are addressed to all men, and all are freely offered salvation through Christ."

This leads us to a very important point which is necessary for us to understand. [Calvinists](#) object that we make the will of man supreme, and exalt it over the will of God, with the implication that we make man the author of his own salvation. "Thus the sinner's choice of Christ, and not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation."

Recently I had a conversation with a young missionary, who told me that one of his professors objected to the view I am promoting because it "absolutized" the will of man over the will of God. My response to him was that I believed that it has always been the will of God to save every single man and woman in the world. If that is true, and someone is not saved, where do we lay the blame? At man's feet, because he did not exercise his will in agreement with God's revealed will. Dear friends, let us not compromise on a general atonement. **It is God's will to save every single person who will ever live on this earth!**

D. The Atonement was not intended to save people without the agreement of their own wills:

Finney proclaims a general atonement, and makes this observation: "While the execution of law may have a strong tendency to prevent the beginning of rebellion among loyal subjects, and to restrain rebels themselves; yet penal inflictions do not, in fact, subdue the heart, under any government, whether human or divine." The atonement was not intended to save people and take them to heaven without the agreement of their own wills, or by God "causing" their wills to bend to His will.

E. Finney examines Romans 7

In a sermon entitled Thanks For the Gospel Victory, based upon Romans 7:25, Finney discusses Paul's great struggle in Romans 7, and his subsequent victory through the atonement of Jesus Christ. He says, "Natural weakness pertains to one's created faculties; moral (weakness), to one's voluntary purposes. Weakness of nature is a misfortune; weakness of moral purpose is a fault."

F. After discussing the weaknesses of Christians, Finney states, "If there be not some efficacious remedy for sin, in the soul, sinners must either be annihilated at death or damned.

So of Christians, if there be not some efficacious remedy, giving them victory over sin, they must be lost." This remedy is never in ourselves...Yet by this I do not mean to say that if any man would use his powers right, he could gain no relief; but I do mean to say that, apart from God, he never will use his own powers right for this end. His own will is committed in an opposite direction...Hence we are constantly pressed with the question, "Where is the power that can subdue them and give us the victory?"...Paul answers by thanking God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

G. Finney concludes, "A conscious victory over ourselves and sin is the only evidence of a saving change.

An apparent victory is the only evidence to others of our being savingly changed. This victory consists in being saved from sin, and in becoming like God (in heart and intention. Finney does not mean to imply that we will be like God in any of His natural attributes.). Nothing less is real salvation."

V. Finney's presumption of free will as it relates to the doctrines of [election](#) and perseverance.

One of Finney's dilemmas is that he believed in absolute [foreknowledge](#), not as causative of human action, but as a fact included in the broader subject of God's omniscience, and he believed that God cannot have a new thought. "...He (God) never has, and never can have, any accession to his knowledge. Every possible thing that ever was, or will be, or can be an object of knowledge, has been necessarily and eternally known to God. If this were not true, God would be neither infinite nor omniscient."

In my experience, the most common result of this understanding of foreknowledge and election is that things cannot be otherwise than they are. This commonly leads to apathy. This is clear in his sections on Election and Perseverance. In theory he seems to hold the [Arminian](#) position on election, and the Calvinistic position on perseverance, but he never allows man to escape from the two logical consequences of free will, personal responsibility and voluntary obedience.

The most common result of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints (once in grace, always in grace) is that it leads to apathy, and seems to give the "Christian" a license to sin. Finney never does this. He would say that if you are apathetic, or feel that you have a license to sin, that proves that you are not a Christian, and therefore it was not foreknown that you would be one of the elect, and that you certainly cannot persevere, since you are not one of the elect. He constantly lays the responsibility for abstaining from sin, and for obeying God, at the feet of man.

Conclusion:

I. Definition: Finney opposes all those who call man free, while holding to a theology which denies him freedom.

II. Sin: Finney is adamant that man has no constitutional depravity or sin nature which causes him to sin. He constantly and consistently lays the responsibility for sin at man's feet, through using his free will wrongly. He insists that the alternative makes God the author of sin.

III. Holiness: Finney is also adamant that man at regeneration does not receive a new constitution which now "causes" him to obey God. He still must use his free will to obey the light he has. In his discussion of judicial justification, he shows the bankruptcy of the idea that a man can be judicially justified without any necessity for voluntary obedience from that point on in his life.

IV. The Atonement: The atonement is the power of God in the life of "whosoever will" come and avail himself of its provisions. Man must use his will to come, and he must use his will to walk as a Christian on a day to day basis.

V. Election and Perseverance: Even though in theory Finney seems to hold the Arminian position on election, and the Calvinistic position on perseverance, but he never allows man to escape from the two logical consequences of free will, personal responsibility and voluntary obedience.

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