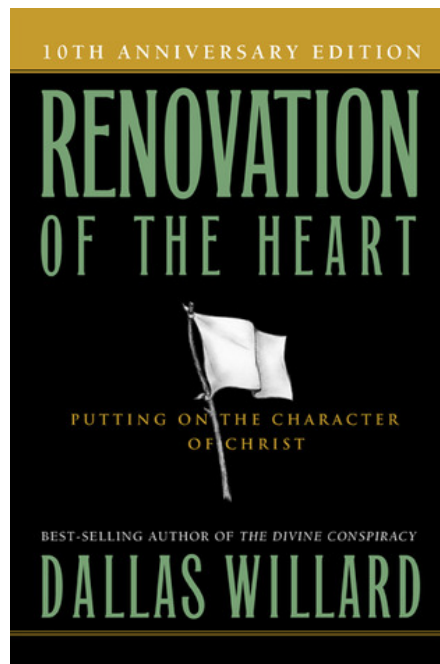




Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ

Dallas Willard , The Navigators

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As Christians, we know that we are new creations in Jesus. So we try to act differently, hoping this will make us more like Him. But changing our outward behavior doesn't change our hearts. Only by God's grace can we be transformed internally.

Renovation of the Heart lays a biblical foundation for understanding what best-selling author Dallas Willard calls the "transformation of the spirit"—a divine process that "brings every element in our being, working from inside out, into harmony with the will of God."

This fresh approach to spiritual growth explains the biblical reasons why Christians need to undergo change in six aspects of life: thought, feeling, will, body, social context, and soul. Willard also outlines a general pattern of transformation in each area, not as a sterile formula, but as a practical process that you can follow without the guilt or perfectionism so many Christians wrestle with.

Don't settle for complacency. Accept the challenge Renovation of the Heart offers to become an intentional apprentice of Jesus Christ, changing daily as you walk with Him.

Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ Details

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From Reader Review Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ for online ebook

Jeff says

This is one of the most profound and holistic books I've read in a long time. Willard has an uncanny ability to zero in on some of the deepest truths of how people are formed and developed. I can not recommend this book enough. Definitely worth the read.

Jaime says

This book challenges the way I look at what it means to follow Christ. He who began a good work will be faithful to complete it (Phil 1:6). His good work is in every aspect of our lives. His desire is not to get people in heaven, but rather to get heaven in people.

It's a very meaty read. It took our community group a good 6 months to process through it together.

Robert says

In “Renovation of the Heart – Putting on the Character of Christ” Dallas Willard supplies such a plethora of information that it is difficult to sort through everything and find a place where to begin to respond. Usually I like to pick out ideas that have an impact on me—either positively or negatively, but the abstract concepts Willard presents are not easily digested in one reading even at a stayed pace.

I want to start with a discussion on the will but I can't decide whether it is my thoughts directing my will or my feelings so it is probably best to start with an overview (I'm trying to be funny), or simply, discuss Willard's main thesis, then to deal with the devil in the details. The “heart” of this matter is the six dimensions of the human self: soul, social context, body, mind, and spirit; their interaction with each other, and how we can transform each to become a true human—a human as God planned. Understanding these six dimensions of self is essential for comprehending the entire book. And yet it is here one can get lost in the metaphysical especially in understanding the soul.

In common parlance there usually is no distinction between the spirit and the soul—the words are used almost interchangeably. But here Willard treats the soul as an abstract concept as if the other dimensions of the self bring into existence the soul. Since it is in their interaction that we find the soul it is almost like a dance with the soul of the person providing the beat. Music and dance seems like a good metaphor to picture the choreography going on that the soul is orchestrating and defining the type of music we are as a person: classical, baroque, jazz, pop, etc.

Concerning the will Willard defines this will, or spirit as “that which is self-initiating and self-sustaining” (pg. 34) and indicates that only God is purely spiritual. In chapter 8 on transforming the will Willard discusses that the will “is the one thing in this creation that God does not override” (pg. 146). Here some discussion has to be made on how the human self is different from God. Is God's self not influenced by a social contest and body, having a soul, mind, and will? Is man also not purely spiritual concerning evil things and if not how is man then responsible for his own sins? Proverbs indicates that God turns the hearts of

Kings: Proverbs 21:1 “The King’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes,” so He must override the will of some people then sometimes.

How does Willard know God does not override the will? If that’s the one thing He does not override then He can override the body, soul, social context, thoughts, and the feelings all of which Willard has already indicated influence the will so therefore God does influence the will, albeit indirectly, even in Willard’s context so is all this just to be able to say “we have a FREE will?” Probably so. I remember reading somewhere in the book Willard commented briefly concerning the issues between Augustinianism and semi-palagianism and that his book wasn’t going to cover that issue but here I don’t think he can be that silent.

Jan Livingston says

I have listened to this book eternally this summer...I guess each CD 5 or 6 times. Each time is a new revelation and pertinent to the day/situation. One or two fresh ideas percolate each time I drive around. Even my teenage kids are getting used to it and aren't complaining about the deep ideas.(This is somewhat of a miracle in itself).

The author is wise, deeply Christian yet humble...I believe he lives what he preaches and this resonates with the message to many of us who are lucky enough to learn from him.

Adam Shields says

Short Review: If it were just evaluating on spiritual wisdom this would definitely be a five star book. But I think it could have been edited better. Maybe that is because it took me so long to read it (about 3 weeks). But most of that time was really because I needed time to process the content. This is probably the best book I have read on the how and why of really changing our character to become more like Christ. It is not an easy read and certainly not a silver bullet. But it is worth reading. There are definitely places I wish he had said more or altered some of the emphasis. But on the whole I think this is a book well worth reading. I really need to read it again soon (and in print this time, since I listened to the audiobook.)

My full review is on my blog at <http://bookwi.se/renovation-of-the-he...>

Dan Sr says

So far, Willard is mixed. Chapter 2 is garbage, chapter 3 is excellent. 4 and 5 make clear how the wolf of Willard's false ecumenical gospel are donning the sheep's clothing. The whole precept of the book is that by self-determination efforts, which he calls "spiritual disciplines," a Christian can become spiritual. Willard's takes good teaching and then reverses the flesh and the spirit, and teaches self improvement through historic traditions instead of growth in Christ through walking by the Spirit. Since the two can appear similar, he becomes a wolf in sheep's clothing teaching a false gospel. I happen to be reading The Spiritual Man at the same time, and section 2, chapter 4 does an excellent job of showing Biblically how the will is part of the flesh and it works of good intentions cannot perfect a person (Gal 3:1), expressly the false doctrine that Willard is preaching.

This review seeks to compare Willard's teaching with scripture, chapter by chapter, and expose the fangs of

the wolf.

For a thoughtful Biblical analysis of this error, read Chapter 2 of Section 2 in Watchman Nee's book *The Spiritual Man*. (Nee goes off on other points, but on this exact concept he is Biblical can excellent)

In chapter 2, he defines the "spirit" of a human as the "will" or decision making aptitude. Based on that he bangles up definitions of soul and spirit and flesh and heart, etc.

Animals have a "will" or ability to decide. That does not give them a consciousness of right or wrong, or an eternal ability to accept or reject God. "You were dead in your sin...but made alive through Christ" Ephesians 2:1-5. In the flesh, we have a spirit but it is dead towards the things of God - "that which is born of flesh is flesh" John 3:3-6, and being "born again" means our spirit is regenerated and made alive by God's Holy Spirit towards God; "that which is born of Spirit is spirit."

Having read Willard before including *Divine Conspiracy*, I know that he has great insight and deep thinking about many things, but I had hesitated reading more for many years because I wondered why some of his conclusions about spiritual formation were so far off of biblical truth. This misunderstanding of the "spirit" explains it. He has great insight into some details but doesn't know which way is up vs down.

Willard needs to understand that our soul is distinctly separate from spirit (Hebrews 4:12) and that soul made up of mind, will, and emotion. Will can be controlled by flesh or spirit. But without this basis, and defining spirit as will, Willard doesn't begin to grasp that "the mind set on the flesh is death and the mind set on the spirit is life and peace" Romans 8. The "will" is what chooses to set one's mind on the flesh or the spirit for governing. It is simply illogical as well as unbiblical to conclude that "the mind set on the [will] is life and peace." Our unregenerate will is bent against God and things that are eternally good for us, and towards self and we are easily tempted by sin which is eternally destructive. Why would we set our mind on our fallen will? No, it is "the mind set on the spirit that is life and peace" meaning we are governed by listening to God.

I will continue to see how this faulty foundation unfolds in this book on spiritual formation, and I look forward to some insightful concepts. But so far is nonsense.

In Chapter 3 Willard did a fantastic job of describing the human condition as lost and wanting to be god, therefore rejecting God. Willard's insights and characterizations are profound and worth rereading a few times.

In Chapter 4, the outcome of the error starts to become obvious. Willard's thesis is that by practicing disciplines one can become spiritually better. While it is true that many virtues should be sought (2 Peter 1), the idea that practicing "spiritual disciplines" (really virtuous acts) improves a person is distinctly unbiblical: Colossians 2:20-23 "If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh."

Scripture says that the answer is walking by the Spirit, meaning submitting to God for direction. Galatians 3:3 "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

Galatians 5:16 "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."

Since walking by the Spirit overlaps in a large way with sacrifice and virtue, Willard has begun down a path of error, thinking that correlation is causation.

In Chapter 5 and the interlude, Willard goes back and restates very clearly that he thinks spirit=will and that by "willing" transformation we will become spiritual. His definition of the Kingdom seems right on, and of course it's true that true believers should want to overcome the flesh. So his method is running on the wrong

path, but down a similar direction. He is very clear to press the unbiblical concept that man can change himself by purposing to do so. It's clear to me why Willard is confused, and one of the key errors creeping in, front and center, is that Roman Catholic practices, which he calls "historic traditions" are the key to transformation. Biblically, it is true that virtues are a means to gain, but it is false gospel doctrine to teach that the flesh (our will) can change us spiritually. Any true believer in Christ, Roman Catholics included, will grow by walking by the Spirit, that is, submitting to God's Word by faith through prayer etc. But those who rely on their will instead of true spirit (the born again part of a true believer) will find that their works-righteousness increase their pride and are filthy rags before God. This is the whole emphasis on the Old Covenant (Testament) on Sabbath. We are to REST in Christ alone and grow through appropriating His life in us by prayer, faith, repentance, submitting to His Word, and other TRUE spiritual aptitudes. These are distinctly not our own "disciplines" or works of "will if the flesh" however noble our self improvement goals seem to be.

My rating is changed to 1 star because the wolf is now completely gowned in sheep's clothing.

Frans Karlsson says

A book that goes into different areas in our lives that we should work on. More ideological/ theological than practical.

Benjamin Shurance says

This is an amazing book. I hope to be formed by its wisdom in the time I have left on earth.

Bill Samuel says

Dallas Willard had an amazing ability to discern the truth which often made me wonder why I hadn't figured it out for myself since he makes such good sense. Every serious Christian should read Dallas Willard. This is one of my 2 favorite Dallas Willard books.

Chris says

This book is amazing. The very practical explanations it gives on the Christian's part of sanctification (earnest discipline) is unparalleled in contemporary Christian literature. I have never read a Christian book that gives such practical advice on disciplining one's emotions. Willard is so insightful and this book is life-changing. I find myself rereading certain parts from time to time, even after I've read them 10 times. he shows how following Christ is objectively wise and wiser than not following Christ in everyday living, and he goes the approach of objective analysis of the two options, without relying on pretty/flowery emotionalism in his persuasion.

Sunny Etta says

I read this book a year or two ago, and took time to re-read it recently. The chapters still challenge my thinking. The second half of the book is much more practical in revealing the processes for the Christian to change thoughts, feeling, will, body and soul. The questions become: do I really want God and His kingdom more than anything else in my life? Am I willing to make the choices to take the necessary steps to become more Christlike? It's a lifelong quest!

Jacob Aitken says

It's hard to write a new book on spiritual formation. Even the books that are good seem to have covered already-covered ground. What more is there to add? Dallas Willard takes a different angle. Rather than aiming for spiritual formation or spiritual disciplines, which advice always runs the risk of sounding pedantic, he speaks of "forming Christlikeness." In this review I will summarize some of his key points, note some potential problems and tensions, and end with a reflection.

Unlike other authors on spiritual disciplines, Willard is a trained philosopher and brings analytical reflection to the table. Without entering the free will debates (he likely affirms contra the Reformed tradition, of which I am an adherent), he notes that the will (or the mind, or the heart) never acts in isolation but always in conjunction with other faculties. This has important implications for spiritual growth: one simply can't "grow the mind" without growing the heart, will, etc.

The chapter on the Soul was worth the price of the book. He really broke new ground on that topic. Contra most philosophy textbooks, new age manuals, and even some Christian theology works, the "soul" is not the "ghostly-ghost stuff" that inhabits the outer shell of the body. Without getting to a precise definition of the soul (which might not even be possible), I think he is right. Especially when we get to the Hebrew texts as they refer to Yahweh's life, soul--or better yet, Nephesh--simply can't mean "the ghostly ghost stuff that is more important than the body." A better reading, if not exact, will be the center life-focus of an individual. And here I can only refer to the texts where it speaks of Yahweh's nephesh. Again, the implications for spiritual life: our whole being is involved in the process.

Reflections:

The book was much better than I expected. It wasn't pedantic and he covered ground not found in Foster and Whitney. I have some concerns about the books he recommended. Like Foster, he seemed to convey the idea that any Christian who has written on the reflective life should be consulted. I am not so sure. I highly doubt that consistent Roman Catholics, Charismatics, or others would agree one can isolate the spirituality (Francis de Sales et al) from the larger theology. Indeed, Willard's own arguments (rightly) suggest otherwise.

But by all means please read the book. It's probably the best spiritual disciplines book on the market.

Brett says

The Kingdom of the Heavens is not then and there, but here and now. Jesus' radical reordering of society in His 'sermon on the mount,' offers a sustained and penetrating look into this new reality. Willard provides a methodical and immensely practical examination of this profound sermon. Although at times drifting into

questionable exegesis, Willard's central thesis is rock solid. In particular, Willard's explanation of the Kingdom of God and discipleship make this a must-read. A-

Betsy Brown says

If you haven't read Dallas Willard, now is the time to start. I have him up there with Bounds, Wigglesworth, Andrew Murray, etc. You will read, reread, then read again. The best book on spiritual transformation that I have read!

Sean Nemecek says

The content is profound but the writing is far too academic to be accessible for most people. Willard offers some great correction for local churches. The final chapter gives practical instruction for discipleship. In it, he defines salvation as the inner transformation into Christ-likeness (as opposed to agreement to a doctrinal statement or professed belief without real change).
